

HISTORY OF THE EWES OF NIGERIA

BY

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A Typical Ewe Sandy Beach Villages in Nigeria

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The political entity known as Nigeria, now the Federal Republic of Nigeria, came into formal existence on 11th January 1914, with the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern British protectorates.

Before that date, Nigeria was made up of large ancient kingdoms and independent small communities covering part of the Sudanic belt and spreading to the Atlantic Ocean to the south, with such Kingdoms and their traditional governments commanding the respect of their subjects through dialogue.

The history of Nigeria therefore is a story of fusion (through peace) and migration many years ago. It was a story of the rise and fall of empires, a story of the infamous slave trade and its replacement with legitimate trade in tropical produces. It was indeed a story of the expansion of British influence and the birth of a nation which gained her independence from the British on 1st October 1960, became a republic in October 1963 and witnessed the first military coup d'état in January 1966.

The accepted historical narrative of the Ewe People has been one of migration from Ile Ife through present day Benin, Togo, to Ghana. In this article, the Association of Ewe Indigenes of Nigeria attempts to expand the narrative with some evidence that the Badagry area of the southwest coast of Nigeria has been inhabited by indigenous communities of Ewes for several centuries. As spelt out in the 1999 Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria, these communities possess full Nigerian citizenship (Chapter III Citizenship page 38-41), and should be recognized as such. The present narrative therefore presents an opportunity for new approaches and further research into the history of Ewes.

1.0 HISTORY



Figure 1.1: Map of Badagry in Southwest Nigeria

The Ewe people of Nigeria call their indigenous language ‘Evegbe’, pronounced ‘eBegbe’ which means Ewe language. According to Diedrich Westermann and M. A. Bryan (1952), the Ewe language is a member of the Kwa language family of the Niger-Congo family.

The Ewe people of Nigeria have a fascinating history of migration from the ancient Oduduwa Kingdom. According to His Royal Majesty, De Wheno Aholu Menu – Toyi I (OFR, LLD, JP) the Akran of Badagry; *The Eves of West Africa Vol. 1*, by Charles M. K. Mamattah (K.V.) 1978, they were said to have migrated from Ile-Ife around the mid thirteenth century, lived in ancient Benin City, and old Oyo, before migrating to KETU (Dahomey). Having dwelt in Dahomey for many years, they continued their onward journey to Notsie in present-day Togo. Under a harsh and cruel leadership of King Agorkorli, the Ewes decided to migrate westward to their present home in South-East Ghana where coastal communities acquired the Atlantic fishing occupation/trade. Throughout centuries and from generation to generation gradual back and forth



Figure 1.2a: Typical Ewe Village in SW Nigeria Grainy and Sandy (Fine or Coarse) Beaches

migrations occurred, both westward and eastward, involving the return of members of some Ewe families that led to a final settlement in the Badagry area of Southwest Nigeria. Some Ewes did not reach Ketu, Tado, Notsie or present day Ghana before returning “back” to their families left behind. Eastward returns started long before Ewes even reached Notsie and this

continued for generations as they moved westward.



Figure 1.2b: Typical Ewe Village in SW Nigeria - Grainy and Sandy (Fine or Coarse) Beaches

The Ewe ethnic group of Nigeria in the practice of Atlantic fishing trade, moved out of Badagry and spread to other parts of coastal Lagos State, where they combined coconut farming with fishing activities. For the avoidance of doubt, “Ewegbe” constitutes one of the major indigenous ethnic groups along the Lagos – Badagry

coast. They have their kith and kins in the Republic of Benin (former Dahomey), Republic of Togo, and Ghana (former Gold Coast).

1.1 ENVIRONMENT

Ewe territory in Lagos State presently stretches from Seme border (Kweme Sea-Beach) running parallel to the Atlantic ocean about 57 kilometers through to the previously well-known 'Aimloifide' at the Victoria Island, Lagos, Apese beach and Tarkwa-Bay. This area lies on a



Figure 1.3: Some Ewes of SW Nigeria Hauling in their Fishing Catch to the Shore

coarsely loose sandy beach environment with the sea breeze creating a conducive and serene atmosphere. The vegetative cover of coconut plantation in virtually every part of the area under study adds to the aesthetics of the natural environment. The coastal beaches and territory of the Ewe group is an area with

some of the most beautiful coconut filled, sandy soil drenched in brilliant sunshine. There are no rocky beaches anywhere in the area and the sands range from fine to coarse grained types. Presence of empty shells of mollusks such as cockles and scallops characterize the beaches.

Among some of the beautiful and fairly developed beaches in this area of study includes: Asakpo Beach (Suntan Beach) in Badagry, Yevunyan beach also in Badagry, Koba and Ishahayi beaches (all under Ojo Local Government Area), Vetsi, and Kobena beaches under Amuwo – Odofin Local Government Area, Tarkwa-Bay and Apese beaches in Eti – Osa Local Government, Lagos State.

In addition, the homogenous nature of the group inhabiting this territory with uniform culture, language and tradition has enhanced unity and promoted peace, coupled with mutual understanding among the inhabitants. The environment is devoid of violence with minimal level of social vices due to adherence of the inhabitants to strictly enforced social norms. The indigenous communities of the Ewes of Southwest Nigeria include the under-listed villages in Lagos State:-

Seme/Oglogbo, Kapo village, Apagui, Tsito, Agbanyo, Seshi, Boglo, Akoro, Tosuvi, Fanuyi, Asakpo, Parada, Amegovu, Yevunya, Pako, Kploerokpor, Jegeme, Kago, Ahiaba, Jivenu, Fevlo, Kushitor, Kporflisoh, Jogolo, Wordim, Dzadzeter, Alade, Gbeze, Hunsuke, Teteghan, Dadziezoh/Alfa, Gordo, Totsi, Tetevi, Adrigba, Agbo, Ganyo, Hotorwovi, Agbeme, Kundo, Torgbui, Husunugbo, Atisese, Tornyeviaji, Exe, Aliko Fianyeku, Ajigbo, Awuja, Ahiajiavu, Sevorji, Kpodo, Zuglo, Dewodi, Ahli, Zewu, Koba, Kporvi, Akumeh, Kormi-Ekpor, Kporfa, Awusa, Zanu, Blibe, Kordzopui, Besavi, Amenyorvor, Sorfor, Yaovi, Toklo, Dzadu, Gbeve, Dejiasa, Ganyo, Agovi, Aglah, Zormelo, Alamele, Gadovor, Bebli, Dorgbloe, Yao Korka, Kobena, Sorkpor, Kalaba, Kate, Tarkwa Bay and Apese Beach.

1.2 SOCIETY

Although the Ewes are individualistic and egalitarian as a people, they believe in unity of purpose. The Ewe society is basically organized to foster unity on issues such as performance of religious/traditional rites, burial of deceased members of the society, and communal labour.

- (i) **Performance of Traditional Rites:** A number of traditional rites are performed in the Ewe society. One of such is 'Nudedefu'. It is a tradition of feeding the Atlantic Ocean with rituals to enhance fish catch. In this tradition, every member of the Ewe society is mandated through the village heads to contribute some amount of money directly or through communal labour for the performance of the above rite.
- (ii) **Burial:** In modern times, this appears to be the strongest unifying factor in the Ewe society as there are various associations formed purposely for burial of deceased members. This goes with regular contribution of fees among members. Besides, there is an age-long burial association which all must belong, referred to as 'Atsorfo'. At the demise of any member of the society, the chief and traditional head of the locality together with one representative each of the paternal and maternal lineage of the deceased, send two males in a uniform wrapper on their waists to inform other members in the larger society of a death. This awareness brings all and sundry together for the burial with donations and contributions to assist the bereaved family. The Ewe society is divided into different chieftaincy headship, usually in the form of Baales and Family heads.

1.3 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE EWE SOCIETY

The social organization of the Ewe is fundamentally based on three indivisible units. These units includes: family, lineage and clan. Attempt is hereby made to treat these units separately. Please note that the clan supersedes lineage in numerical composition and size.

1.3.1 THE FAMILY

Technically speaking, the family system of Ewe society is not too different from what obtains in other ethnic groups of Africa. The family is the smallest unit or basis of the society usually headed by the father. A man and his wife (wives) form the foundation of the family while children born into the family become natural and automatic members of the family.

The traditional Ewe view is that a man should build his own house, possess the tool required for his occupation, and show sign of maturity and responsibility before thinking of establishing a family. This view however does not encourage distant removal from his father's homestead because a man usually builds his house adjacent to his fathers'. Indeed many Ewe youths build their houses in their fathers' compound while others may simply retain the rooms they occupied before marriage.

This smallest social group therefore does not comprise the nuclear family of a man, his wife or wives and their children but also the children's (son's) wives. Close relations could also allow their children to live with other members of their family. Whether a man lives in his father's compound or one built by him, he remains under the authority of his father.

Following the residential pattern described above, it clearly shows that the concept of extended family setting which characterizes most African society is not absent.

Another, common phenomenon in the Ewe family setting is that polygamy is encouraged. The co-wife relationship itself is an explosive one. ‘*ATSUSI or ATSUNYESI*’, ‘my husband’s wife’ in common usage means co-wife but it connotes jealousy. It is often believed that wherever they live together, there is always trouble.

In essence, the wife (wives), children and every member of the household is responsible to the father (head) of the family. The father is responsible to the village or clan head and he in turn is responsible to the “dufia”.

1.3.2 THE LINEAGE

The Ewe lineage may be defined as that branch of a clan found in a settlement which comprises all persons, males and females who are able to trace relationship by a series of genealogical steps through the male line to a known ancestor and theoretically to each other. It is an exogamous group for nearly ten generations which is named after its founding ancestor and has symbols of unity and strength, a stool, an ancestral shrine, a leader and common property. Within this group, every member is entitled to a number of rights, and privileges including a plot of land to cultivate, a creek to fish in, a place to live and group to care for him in the time of need.

In the past the lineage head was usually its oldest male member of the oldest living generation. Today however, the office is elective and therefore younger members with leadership qualities may be preferred to older members. Whatever his age, he administers the lineage land and other property. No transaction concerning this or other lineage interest can take place without his knowledge and approval. He judges disputes involving members of the group. As the chief ritual specialist of the lineage, he is believed to be the link between the living and the dead and the only one who can officiate with sufficient authority to the understanding of the ancestors.

1.3.3 THE CLAN

A very important key to the understanding of the Ewe society organization is patrilineal descent which is based on clans and lineages. There are fifteen clans in Ewe especially in the ANLO group. These includes: *Lafe, Amlade, Tovi, Adzovia, Bate, Like, Bamee, Klevi, Tsiame, Agave, Ame, Yetsofi, Dzevi, Vifeme and Blu.*

The Ewe word for clan is HD. This is defined as a group of people who are believed to have descended patrilineally from a common putative ancestor and share the same totemic and other observances. In other words, membership of a clan is by birth and based on paternity.

Membership of clan carried with it many attributes which distinguish members of one from the others. Some of these are names, food, taboos, avoidances and injunctions. For instance, every clan has a pair of names –one set for males and the other for females.

One interesting feature of the Ewe clan system is that some clans listed above have their funeral observances commencing from 4-5 days of burial of the dead. Others have 6-7, 7-8 days of funeral observances respectively.

1.4 CULTURE

The culture of a people according to Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary is defined as “the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon man’s capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. It goes further to state that, it is the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious or social group. It is a set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterize a company or corporation. Drawing from the above definition, the Ewes of Nigeria have a set of shared attitudes, values and practices, etc. developed over several hundred years. In most instances, these cultural values have some resemblance with that of Yoruba, Bini, in the contemporary Edo State and partly the Gu people. The reason for this is not far-fetched. This is due mainly to historical contacts and cohabitation. It must be noted that, whether either of these ethnic groups borrowed from their neighbor’s culture is not a subject for discussion in this paper. An attempt shall be made below to bring to the fore some of the interesting cultural values among the Ewe ethnic group of Southwest Nigeria.

1.4.1 THE EWE LANGUAGE

Language as a major and integral part of culture, and the Ewe language contain elements of the Bini, Yoruba and Gu (Ajah). Orthographically, the Ewe language has thirty alphabets and is as follows:-

Table 1.1: The Ewegbe Alphabets

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| A a | B b | D d | Ɖ ɖ | E e | Ɛ ɛ | F f | Ƒ ɸ | G g | Ʋ Ɂ |
| H h | X x | I i | K k | L l | M m | N n | Ɔ ɔ | O o | Ɔ ɔ |
| P p | R r | S s | T t | U u | V v | U v | W w | Y y | Z z |

One unique feature of the Ewe of Nigeria is that even though quite a number of dialect variants exists in the republics of Benin, Togo and Ghana, the Ewe of Nigeria is categorized into three dialect variants. These include: **Anlo Ewe** (the dominant group), **Be** and **Gen**. A typical Be village is Agbo under Ojo Local Government list of villages. Gen is encountered in Tarkwa-Bay under Lagos Land Local government. The three Ewegbe variants mentioned above are currently spoken in Southwest Nigeria.

1.4.2 MODE OF DRESSING

The Ewe culture lays a high premium on decency, moderation in dress code. Anyone (especially female) who appears immodest in their dressing portrays themselves in a negative light. It is assumed and traditionally believed that, only prostitutes dress in a self-exposing manner. The



traditional Ewe culture approves that a woman wearing a blouse top, should tie a double 2–yards cloth to enhance a proper cover for her privacy. Where she chooses to dress in a gown, she is expected to at least deck it with a single 2–yard fabric. Wearing trousers is

Figure 1.4: Some Typical Forms of Traditional Ewe Dressing in SW Nigeria

traditionally not approved for women. The man, on the other hand, on top of a short knicker, wears a jumper shirt together with a 12–yard cotton wrapper cloth, typical of that of a Bini man. He may decide to wear the normal shoe or traditional sandal – slippers with the local face–cap to create a good and complete fitting. The man may also choose to go in English dress.

1.4.3 NAMING

The basic function of a name is to identify a person, a place, a thing or a group of the same kind or different kinds. Among the Ewe people of Nigeria, however, a name may have three other functions, which include:

- a) Reflection of whatever is of importance and value in the circumstance under which the person was born
- b) Meaningfulness is another function.
- c) Finally, Ewe names function as to shaping up a philosophy of life for the individual or the group that bears them.

WEEK DAY NAMES

The Ewe culture encourages naming a child after the day of the week the child was born; such as represented in the table below for both males and females respectively:

Table 1.2: Typical Ewe Names Based on the Week’s Day of Birth

| WEEK DAYS | NAME OF MALE | NAME OF FEMALE |
|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| Sunday | Korshi | Korshiwor |
| Monday | Korjo (Kojo) | Ajo |
| Tuesday | Korbla | Abla |
| Wednesday | Korku | Aku |
| Thursday | Yao | Yawo |
| Friday | Kofi | Afi |
| Saturday | Kormi | Ami |

It is nearly impossible for a typical Ewe person not to have known his or her week day in which he or she was born even if he or she does not bear the week day name. Traditionally, at the birth of a child into the family, the parents consult the Ifa oracle to know which of the great grandparents the baby is reincarnating. This practice is referred to as ‘*megbekporkpor*’ in the Ewe language. Whatever revelation derived from the above practice automatically informs what name the child shall bear. However, modernization and Christianity appear to have brought this practice to a stop.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 MARRIAGE

Marriage among the Nigerian Ewes contains all the essential features with this institution throughout Africa, namely:- payment of dowry, parental involvement in the selection of spouses, betrothal, preference for certain categories of kin as marriage partners, prohibition of other categories, polygyny and conferment of certain duties, obligations and responsibilities on the spouses and their kin groups.



Figure 2.1: Bride and Groom in a Typical African Wedding Dress

By marriage, we mean a union between a man and a woman in which the two, having passed through the approved customary procedures, are legally recognized as husband and wife. In the past and still being practiced in some instances, parents or relatives actually took the initiative in selecting partners for their children (nephews, nieces, etc.) and arrange the marriage. They do this for a number of reasons; the main one being the need to force their children into families acceptable to them, and to avoid getting

linked to those of obnoxious characters and dispositions. Characteristics particularly abhorred include: criminality, witchcraft, diseases like lunacy, leprosy, a lineage curse, etc. Marriage between cross cousins, that is, a man and his mother's sister's daughter, or his father's sister's daughter is allowed in the Ewe culture.

One rationale behind this practice is the need to foster marital stability because; it is believed that those relations who are also marital partners would consider their close kinship connections in time of trouble. Their parents who would overlap at many points would also ensure harmony and peaceful resolutions of conflicts. Thus, where real cross cousins are not available, more distant ones are found. While some categories of kin are preferred as marriage partners, others are prohibited. In general terms, lineage exogamy and marriage between uterine kin and between close affines (e.g., a man and his sister's husband's sister are the most important restrictions). Marriage between in-laws is particularly abhorred because it constitutes bride exchange.



Figure 2.2: Celebratory Dance after Marriage

The prohibition extends to sororal polygyny, i.e. marriage of two or more sisters to one man. Betrothal of girls to relatives and friends (or their sons) is common. But whether the marriage is initiated through betrothal or courting, certain procedures have to be followed. Those are the formal asking of the hand of the bride by the groom's people, the marriage ceremony, the consummation, the payment of the bride price, and her conferment.

When a youth or his parents fancy a girl for him, emissaries are sent to enquire about the possibility of marriage. Traditionally, the actual parents are never sent; rather close

relatives including the lineage heads of the father and mother together with one or two women usually constitute the delegation. For betrothed girls, this initial contact is only a formality but for others, especially where the initiative comes from the couples themselves, more than one visit may be required. When agreement is finally reached, the groom's people send the bride price, which in most cases is a subject of negotiation. The bride price is usually made up of two payments, the *tabianu* (the engagement items) and *sronu* (the real marriage payment). Essential elements of both include: clothes, cash, jewelries, shoes, wrist-watch, kolanuts and drinks. These go to the bride except the kolanuts and drinks which are shared proportionally between the paternal and maternal lineage of the bride.

After the payment of the bride price, a date is set for the formal handing over of the bride to the groom, which is done in her father's house while the marriage ceremony takes place at the groom's father's house. Marriage confers a number of rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities on both the bride and the bridegroom. It is expected of the man to have his own room in the same compound with his father if he chooses to or detach completely from his parents, build his separate house but usually within the village not too far from his parents especially where farming and fishing is their main occupation. The bridegroom caters for his wife, love and protects her while the wife is expected to submit, respect, support, be faithful and take care of the home.

2.1 POLITICS

The Ewes of Nigeria have a unique structure in their political organization. A group of villages depending on the historical foundation of each, appoint a traditional leader usually referred to as 'Dufia' or Torgbui' (Baale). The Dufia is assisted by Gbotarua (Balogun). The Intelligence Report on Badagry, District File No. 3003 – 0 51, 1937, describes the politics among the Nigerian Ewes in the following terms: '...they govern themselves effectively in a more democratic way, and apart from the fact that the comparative inaccessibility of their villages is an encouragement to the occasional harbouring of thieves and experts in the illicit distillage of spirits, they are for the most part, an orderly vigorous and decent people.' The Dufia in turn appoints his cabinet members from the contiguous villages to be governed.



President
Albert Atisese O. Aiyeadun



Board of Trustees Member
Hayford Olusegun Ahiadu

Figure 2.3: Some Officers of the Association of Ewe Indigenes of Nigeria

These cabinet members (Chiefs) are referred to as ‘Dumegawo’. Each Dumega has his or her own jurisdiction covering a limited defined area as compared to that of Dufia. The next strata of the political organization are the head of each extended family.

Another important feature/structure in the cabinet is the function of a Spokesman (*Tsiami*). As a matter of tradition and respect for the Dufia (Baale), during public official functions or discussions, the Dufia is expected to have a Spokesman who in spite of the common language listens to the Dufia, and repeat to the audience. Alternatively, the Spokesman could simply ask from the audience ‘have you heard?’ while the latter replies, ‘we have heard!’ The **Tsiami** is also responsible for making sure that everything is in place at the court. Administratively, as the direct representative of the families, each family head or chief occupies an important position in the political structure (since the Ewes always believed that the Dufia’s power derives from the people – ‘*Du meno fia me o, fia e no du me*’, which literally means, the people do not live in the king, it is the king who lives with the people).

The prominence of the people in the political structure is also institutionalized in the conditional tone of their oath of allegiance sworn to the Dufia during his installation. They would give him their obedience if he ruled in their interest. Matters for resolution first go to the family head of the individual concerned. Where peaceful resolution could not be achieved, it is referred to the nearest Chief (Dumega). In most cases, matters end at this point, but where there seems to be no amicable resolution, it is referred to the Dufia, who in conjunction with his chiefs inflict fines on the offender.



**Board of Trustees Member
Chief Duhetor Marshal
Yevunya**

**Board of Trustees Member
Chief Emmanuel Sena Boglo
(Chief of Boglo)**

**Board of Trustees Member
Chief James Babatunde Bebli
(Dufia of Vetsi)**

Figure: 2.4: Other Officers of the Association of Ewe Indigenes of Nigeria

As a means of income generation, fines imposed on offenders form a major source of revenue for the Dufia. Also, a gift from wealthy individuals and visitors seeking his favour is another source of revenue. In some cases, depending on the strength and popularity of the stool, the local government offers a stipend or salary to the Dufia. One of those Dufia who benefits as such is Chief Emmanuel Sena Boglo, Segla I of Kweme Kingdom (Baale of Boglo Village). Other notable Dufia are Chief Marshal Yevunya, Duhetor I of Badagry Kingdom (Baale of Yevunya Village), Chief Korbla Wisdom Asakpo (deceased) the Baale of Jegeme (Ajido Sea-Beach), Baale of Vetsi, Chief Babatunde James Bebli, Baale of Kate Village, and Chief Kate Tettey.

2.2 ECONOMY OF THE PEOPLE

Naturally, man finds himself interacting with his physical environment to sustain life. The most important part of that interaction is geared towards satisfying his material needs. Ewe people of Nigeria as earlier emphasized are coastal dwellers and lovers of the ocean and other bodies of water. There are three major activities embarked upon by the group and these include farming, fishing and Ewe kete (kente) weaving.

2.2.1 FARMING

This is an important occupation in the coastal beaches of Lagos State where the Ewes are



Figure 2.5: Coconut Grove by a Lagos-Badagry Creek

indigenously found. The major crop cultivated in the area is coconut. According to Charles K. Mamattah in the ‘Eves of West Africa’ Vol. 1, “in 1592 Captain Vasco da Gama is alleged to have introduced coconut seedlings to one Gbele of Atokor in the then Gold Coast on board a Portuguese ship and so from Atokor, the nuts are believed to have spread to other parts of the Gold Coast, Togo and to Nigeria”. From the above assertion, one can conclude that the Ewes during the course of their journey back and forth brought along coconut seedlings from the then Gold Coast. This probably explains why currently, coconut plantations can only be found in commercial quantities in the areas dominated by the Ewes along the Southwest Nigerian coast.



Figure 2.6: A Bountiful Fruit Bearing Coconut Tree

Presently coconut plantations either feed industry and the coconut oil business, sell dry copra in the markets or harvest fresh coconut for direct sale to the public. In the recent decades the Federal Republic of Nigeria derived significant export revenue from copra exports originating from Lagos State. The coarse but rich sandy soil that coastal Lagos State is known for appears to be favourable for the production of the crop.

It is however of interest to note that, in modern time, farmers don't process their coconut into coconut oil any longer because of the labour intensive nature of coconut oil extraction business. Rather, they prefer peeling or selling it directly to retailers or bulk purchasers who in turn transport it to other parts of the country for industrial uses. The largest coconut farmers in Lagos State include: - Mr. Jogolo Normeshie, Mr. Wordim, Mr. Exe Yarogla, and Mr. Gadi Yarogla. Coconut plantation today is the major economic mainstay of the average Ewe. Besides educating a child, coconut farm is the most important legacy a parent can bequeath to his offspring, especially as the fishing business has deteriorated in recent years.

2.2.2 FISHING

Sea fishing is practiced along the coastal stretch from Seme border to Tarkwa-Bay and Apese beach in Victoria Island, Lagos. It is almost a year round activity, with July to December as peak period. In past decades, sea fishing was strictly traditional (i.e. involving the use of canoes) but due to modernization, most people rely on outboard motors for deep sea fishing. There are basically two categories of sea fishing in terms of organization and size. These include companies and individuals. The differences between the two are explained below under each name. The industry also has its own technical language!

Company: In this method, the net might be owned by a single individual who employs the services of about forty to fifty people depending on the size of the net. Usually, they use **Beach Seine Net** (yevuror). The net is very long and has to be pulled onto the shore and therefore



Figure 2.7: Fishermen from SW Nigeria Hauling in their Fishing Net to the Shore

requires many hands. Only 10 (ten) to 20 (twenty) people go out to sea to cast or arrange the net into the right position. Others pull or drag the net ashore for a catch. The net owner is the one who sets up the company. He owns the boat and engine. The manager is called 'Bozu' (Bozen) assisted by deputy 'Bozu', the secretary is called Clerk (Sekene) and keeps financial records and accounts of the company. The rest are employees.

Quite a number of Ewe men have made fortunes with this method of fishing. Among such include;- Late Yevunya Family, Woelao Agbaga family in Asakpo village, Late Kotopa Gefia, Awunyo family, Boglo, all in Badagry, while Atisese, Fianyeku, Korshi Boni Kugblenu, Ajigbo, Koba, Dotse Blibe, Agbeme, Aglah/Bebli, Jegbede, Zormelo all in the coastal parts of Ojo and Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Areas of Lagos State. In fact, the Late Korkutse Aglah got **the best Fisherman award** of Lagos State in 1985.

Individuals: Here, the net used by the fishermen in the area is **set net** (toga or sovi). These nets are generally smaller and lighter in size for an individual to manage. The nets are anchored to one place and left in the sea overnight. In all these fishing activities, the fish catch is sold to the

wives of boat owners and other women in the area who process and market. Major markets include: The Agbalata market in Badagry, Ojo market and recently Lusada market in Ogun State.

Creek/River Fishing: This is another source of fishing. The Lagos-Badagry creek is the major resource in this aspect. This elongated river that terminates at the Atlantic Ocean harbours a



variety of fish species available for the fisher folks. As ocean lovers, river fishing seems to be a secondary and alternative source of fishing especially when ocean fishing season declines. The type of nets used for this source is relatively smaller compared to the ones used in sea fishing. Such nets include: cast nets, set nets, smaller seine nets (ponpo), hooks, etc. Some of the fishes usually caught are as follows:

Figure 2.8: Typical Local Fishing Canoes

Table 2.1: Some Typical SEA Fishes in SW Nigeria

| | English Name | Local/Ewe Name |
|------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| i) | Herrings | Vetsinu/Druku/Deyi |
| ii) | Mackerel | Tsiyi/Jaru |
| iii) | Eel | Anipaye |
| iv) | Tuna | Poponku/Kpokponku |
| v) | Shrimps | Borlu |

Table 2.2: Some Typical RIVER Fishes in SW Nigeria

| | English Name | Local/Ewe Name |
|------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| i) | Tilapia | Apa/Akpa |
| ii) | Sole fish | Aforfomi |
| iii) | Cat fish | Blolo/Adeye |

2.2.3 Problems of Fishing/Fish Production

- i) High cost of fishing inputs, for example weights, nets ropes, etc.
- ii) Inadequate credit facilities for the procurement of fishing inputs, construction of canoes, and purchase of outboard engines.
- iii) Lack of storage facilities which adversely affects the management of fish output which consequently affect prices in the market.
- iv) Destruction of the continental shelf by the mechanized fishing trawlers.

2.2.4 Solutions

- i) There is the need for credit institutions or the government to assist the fisher folks financially.

- ii) There is the need for cold stores to be established along the coastal fishing communities.
- iii) Co-operative fishing is to be encouraged and government subsidizing outboard motors and fishing gears to make them affordable for the fisher folks.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RELIGION

This chapter is a description of the religious life of Ewe people of Nigeria. Emphasis shall be on the indigenous religion, Christianity and Islam.

3.1 THE INDEGINOUS/TRADITIONAL RELIGION

The ritual of worship among the Nigerian Ewe demands conscious preparations from every serious participant. There are two forms of preparations – long term and short term. Long term is part of day to day practice of all adherents of the particular object of worship, while the short



Figure 3.1: Zangbeto

term preparation becomes necessary only when the individual wants to participate in the worship. Worshippers prepare themselves for worship by observing the rules and prohibitions associated with the particular object of worship. This is because these objects are considered divine. A breach of prohibitions is known as Koruru (eating the prohibited thing). For instance, Afa (Ifa) cult members do not eat or drink anything from the palm tree. The deities ‘So’ and ‘Da’ adherents are not expected to eat Lidzi (baraccuta).

Other prohibitions come under general behaviour such as that, the sex act must not take place anywhere except in a room and on bed; that a worshipper must not have sex at least the previous night before worship. Women in their monthly menstrual periods cannot take part in organized worship and any man who comes into ‘contact’ with them is disqualified from participating in formal worship within twenty-four hours. Others include prohibition from practice of witchcraft, stealing, murder, adultery, and harbouring of evil thoughts about one’s neighbours. To prepare oneself for

worship therefore requires a strict observance of all the traditional prohibitions incumbent on the worshipper. These may be countless since people can owe allegiance to quite a number of sacred beings with each prescribing their own prohibitions for his worshippers.

3.1.1 MODE OF WORSHIP & PRAYER

When a worshipper arrives at the place of worship, he kneels down before the sacred priest, touches the floor with his elbows, jaw and forehead while greeting the object of worship through the priest in this manner. In the case of Afa (Ifa) worshipper: ‘toboko nu le do’, (Afa priest, I

bow to Afa through you). The priest then responds while touching the ground with his first finger and then the forehead of the worshipper as follows:

'Madze klo na nya o, Madze klo na ahe o, Madze klo na do o, Madze klo na ku o, etc.' Meaning, 'You shall never worship trouble, You shall never worship poverty, You shall never worship sickness, You shall never worship death, etc.' Prayer is known in Ewe as *gbedodora, arefofo or aregbedodo*. This literally means, making one's petition known to the object of worship. Through this, the Nigerian Ewes expect that their needs shall be met.



Figure 3.2: The Afa (Ifa) – Agumaga Art of Divination

Another form of prayer (arefofo) is making petition to the dead. It is believed that, the spirits of late fathers, forefathers, grandfathers and mothers live among the livings, hear, see and can intervene when called upon especially in time of danger. In this practice, the traditional head, or usually the head of the family is expected to know the names of the late fathers, grandfathers and far distant relations and their praise names (aha no nkor). He invokes the spirits of these 'dead but living' heroes, make petitions to them by telling them the needs of the family or the village, while holding the libation (*dzatsi*). The libation is poured on the ground with drinks. The libation is made up of water mixed with corn flour.



Figure 3.3: The Popular Yewe Traditional Religion/Culture

Sometimes when there is a mysterious challenge of sickness or other circumstances, the victim may consult the Afa (Ifa) priest to find out the cause of the challenge. The spirit of the late father, grandfather or mother may place a demand of food, drinks and libation on his living son/daughter. There are quite a number of objects of worship (Idols) found among the Ewes of Nigeria. Among such include: - Afa (ifa), Yeve (god of thunder), Horgbato, Atingeli (Atinga), Legba, Afeli, etc. Each of these has their peculiar prohibitions, requirements for object of sacrifice and mode of worship.

3.2 CHRISTIANITY

Christianity was first preached in 1842 in Badagry which also is the historical town of the Ewes of Nigeria. The Ewes, who were already deeply established in their indigenous religion, were initially skeptical about the Christian gospel message. Christianity was eventually accepted on part-time basis while still adhering to the traditional religion. Were it not for the introduction of



Figure 3.4: A Prayer Session by Members of Association of Ewe Indigenes of Nigeria - Lagos

modern education and its benefits, Christianity's acceptance would have taken much longer. It was not until between the 1920's and 1940's that Christianity got some level of acceptance especially in the Ewe territory along the coastal strip of Lagos State.

Some of the Ewe elders who pioneered the Christian movement though being priests and adherents of Afa (Ifa) and other shrines include the Pa Boglo Hedoh in Badagry. He embraced Christianity through the missionary activities of the Salvation Army Church. His acceptance of

the above missionary movement allowed him to readily hand over his already established Primary School to the **Salvation Army Church** in 1944. The school became known as Salvation Army Primary School, Boglo. Pa Boglo was assisted by his cousin –Moses Kunkpe.

Another Ewe elder who pioneered the Christian missionary movement along the coast was Pa Aliko Nutsugah, which also culminated into the founding of Salvation Army Primary School, Olomometa under Ojo Local Government, also in 1944.



Figure 3.5: Christian Type Wedding

It is important to note that, in spite of the above scenario, churches were not very common in the Ewe territory in those days. In modern times however, churches of various denominations through their evangelistic outreaches have sprung up along the Ewe territory. Among such include: Roman Catholic, Assemblies of God, Deeper Life Bible Church, New Apostolic Faith, Foursquare, Miracle Word Global Assembly (which ordained the first indigenous Ewe Bishop – Bishop Aglinah George Friday - in 2012), Redeemed Christian Church of God among others faiths

Another important feature of Christianity in the Ewe territory in modern times is a significant deviation from the old order of polytheism to pure and absolute Christianity. By this we mean, total abstinence from idolatry and adherence to the Christian faith alone. Thus, it is common now to see some of the lineage shrines completely deserted and unattended to because

the adherents have been converted to Christianity. This is the extent to which Christianity has influenced the modern Ewe society and culture since most of the traditional prohibitions are no longer being observed and respected.

3.3 ISLAMIC RELIGION



Figure 3.6: A Gathering of Ewe Leaders in ILE IFE on Invitation by the late Ooni of Ife (the Paramount Ruler of Ile Ife) in 2010

Islam is not as influential in Ewe culture as Christianity, because the latter brought with it Western Education. Hence, it is commonly referred to as ‘Wusa Hose’, (religion of the Hausas).



Figure 3.7: Muslims in a Prayer Session

For many decades, Ewes did not fancy Islam until recently, when a small segment of the society adopted it as their religion. It should be noted that many Ewe followers of Islam in the area are products of inter-religious marriage.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Misconceptions are indeed and in fact common place and they can be amusing if only they are not so annoying. For example, the Igbo “see” the Yoruba as cowardly and cunning while the Yoruba “see” the Igbo as brazen and foolish, all strength and no sense. Other Nigerians, at least, the man on the street sees the average Northerner regardless of whether that northerner is Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Tiv, etc. as Hausa. To worsen the matter, the average Hausa person is generally seen as uneducated, uninformed, uncivilized and therefore stupid. But this is wrong.

In the same vein to the average Nigerian everybody from Badagry is Egun and to the average Lagosian, the Egun is to them what the average Hausa is to other Nigerians – a nonentity. Yet Badagry and the coast of Lagos State generally is made up of the Egun, the Awori and Ewe.

To every Lagosian every Ewe person is “AGANYIN” and every “AGANYIN” is a cooked beans-seller, i.e., (elewa aganyin) and in turn every “elewa aganyin” is a Togolese. Most people are ignorant of the fact that the Ewe is indigenously found in four West African countries, namely: Federal Republic of Nigeria, Republic of Benin, Republic of Togo and Republic of Ghana. As mentioned earlier common misconception could be funny if only they are not so tragic. Tragic, in the sense that they could affect the destiny of an entire people as is the case with the Ewes of Southwest Nigeria.

It must be stated emphatically and unequivocally clear that the above stated assertions are mere misconceptions, historically wrong and intellectually absurd and therefore need not be taken seriously.

CONCLUSION

We wish to note that the lack of adequate study or micro history of the various communities (ethnic groups) that make up Nigeria forms the basis of numerous social-political crisis that have plagued the Nigerian nation in the recent past. According to Oguremi, Professor of History “perhaps we should make clarification at this point. Each community in Lagos State knows its own history at least enough of it to give them confidence in themselves as human beings. What we are advocating here by emphasizing the study of micro history is that this knowledge be integrated into the general culture baggage.”

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Appendix 1

Other Officers of the Association of Ewe Indigenes of Nigeria.

1. Amega Francis Abiodun (Treasurer)
2. Amega Gersion Kwaku Kunkpe (PRO & VP)
3. Amega Kelvin Kanyinsola (Secretary)
4. Amega Freeman Normeshi (Financial Secretary)

5. Dumega Fatsao Nutefe (Leader for Asakpo)
6. Dumega John Kuevoga (Leader for Gbordza)
7. Dumega Charles Alade (Leader for Dzadzietor)
8. Dumega Fatsao Bamidele Alade (Leader for Dzadzietor)
9. Dumega Daniel Dzeble (Leader for Gbordza)
10. Dumega Segun Amuzu (Leader for Kudenu)
11. Dumega William Dorgbloe (Leader for Kalaba)
12. Dumega Walter James Korshi (Leader for Dzogolo)
13. Dada Ganiat Ahiadu (Board of Trustee Member)
14. Amega Ruben Segbenu (Board of Trustee Member)
15. Bishop George Aglina (Board of Trustee Member)
16. Dr. Tayo Ogunlewe