

Ethnic Identity and Nineteenth-Century Yoruba Warfare

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In the nineteenth century Yorubaland was characterized by revolutionary political and economic changes. These changes stemmed from a series of constitutional and other socio-economic disruptions, initially in Oyo and later in other districts. The weakening of Oyo's central administration after 1800, exacerbated by the spread of Islam and the expansion of legitimate trade generated rapid political changes, the most important of which was the century-long Yoruba wars.¹

Yoruba warfare has attracted substantial scholarship. Some writers attribute the wars to attempts by various states to fill the vacuum created by the fall of Oyo. To this group, the wars were fallout of state formation processes in Africa.² The other school or the Anthony Hopkins/Economic school links the wars to global economic movements, especially those associated with falling revenue from trade in slaves, and later palm oil.³

This paper, while bridging the two schools identifies a third issue: identity crisis. Peoples and communities occupied different strata within the social system. People were also classified based on ethnicity, class, age and even gender. Each of these identities or a combination of two or more dominated the course of the nineteenth century Yoruba history. Therefore, whether with warfare, slavery, religious observations, and property ownership, there were issues over who were the combatants? Who could be enslaved or not and who could be killed at religious functions? The ways in which people identified themselves, and how others identified them were at stake in discussions about political control, religious rituals, property relation and how people fought against the status quo.

¹ On Oyo crisis see Samuel Johnson, The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest to the Beginning of the British Protectorate (Lagos: CSS Books, 1976 [1921]), pp. 178-283; Robin Law, The Oyo Empire c.1600-c.1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 245-302; "Chronology of the Yoruba Wars, pp. 211-22; "The Constitutional Troubles of Oyo in the Eighteenth Century", JAH, 12, 1971, pp. 25-44 and "The Northern Factor in Yoruba History" in Akinjogbin and G. O. Ekemode (eds.), Yoruba Civilization (Ile-Ife: University of Ife, 1976), pp. 103-132; Akinjogbin, "The Prelude to the Yoruba Civil Wars of the Nineteenth Century", ODU, 2nd Series, 1, 2, 1965, pp. 24-46 and "The Oyo Empire in the Eighteenth Century—A Reassessment", JHSN, 3, 3, 1966; J. A. Atanda, "The Fall of the Old Oyo Empire: A Reconsideration of its Causes", JHSN, 5,4, 1971, pp. 477-90; Abdullahi Smith, "A Little New Light on the Collapse of the Alafinate of Yoruba" in Gabriel Olusanya (ed.), Studies in Yoruba History and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor S. O. Biobaku (Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1983), pp. 42-71 and Atanda, "Comments on 'A Little New Light on the Collapse of the Alafinate of Yoruba'" in Toyin Falola (ed.), Yoruba Historiography (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Press, 1991), pp. 105-121.

² Saburi O. Biobaku, The Egba and their Neighbours, 1842-1872 (London: Clarendon Press, 1957); Bolanle Awe, "The Rise of Ibadan as Yoruba Power 1851-1893," DPhil, Oxford, 1964; Ajayi and Robert Smith, Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century (London: Cambridge University Press, 1964); Stephen A. Akintoye, Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893: Ibadan Expansion and the Rise of Ekitiparapo (London: Longman, 1971); Ajayi, "The Aftermath of the Fall of Old Oyo" in Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.), History of West Africa vol. 2 (London: Longman, 1987), pp. 182-191; Ajayi and Ralph Austen, "Hopkins on Economic Imperialism in Africa," Economic History Review (EHR), 25, 1972, pp. 303-306 and Adeagbo Akinjogbin (ed.), War and Peace in Yorubaland 1793-1893 (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1998) and Toyin Falola, The Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial African State: Ibadan, 1830-1900 (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1984), pp. 159-191.

³ Anthony G. Hopkins, "Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-1892", EHR, 21, 3, 1968, pp. 580-606.

This paper investigates the importance of one of these identities—ethnicity, and its centrality to the nineteenth Yoruba crisis. Because the Yoruba wars were fought with specific kingdoms, and actors came from specific locales, it is possible to comment on the motives of the combatants and ethnicities of slaves and other casualties of warfare. By doing this, it will be shown that it is possible to avoid labeling slaves under the later developed ‘Yoruba’ ethnic term and imposing them on the past, a stereotypical feature that is characteristic of several studies. Thus whether we discuss the fall of Oyo and its impact on other Yoruba districts, the formation of a ‘Yoruba’ consciousness and disputes over trade routes, ethnic affiliation became a central issue.

Until the early nineteenth century, Oyo was the most powerful Yoruba state. Oyo’s strength rested heavily on its size and its revenue base, a substantial part of which derived from trade with the central Sudan in slaves and horses.⁴ The supply of these slaves did not come out of Oyo’s expansion into the central Sudan but as a result of internal wars among the various Hausa states. The number of slaves, obviously in huge numbers, tilted against the Muslim community such that the ‘illegal’ enslavement of Muslim became one of the justifications for the Sokoto jihad and its expansion into Yorubaland.⁵ The fact that many Muslims were sold out is evident in the simultaneous frequent outbreak of Hausa slave agitations in Northeast Brazil and Sierra Leone—where most of the slaves were settled.⁶

The jihad had adverse consequences for Yorubaland. As a way towards preventing the enslavement of Muslims, the jihad leaders put laws in place to stem the tide of Hausa slave exports. According to Paul Lovejoy, Sokoto decided to “maintain inspection points on its frontiers to look for Muslims who had been wrongly enslaved”.⁷ The policy reflects the insider-outsider, ethnicity and enslavement thesis of the early seventeenth century Songhai/Moroccan scholar, Ahmad Baba.⁸ One of the crucial

⁴ Law, Oyo Empire, 211-236 and Adamu, “Delivery of Slaves from the Central Sudan”.

⁵ Johnson, History, pp. 193-222; J. F. Ade-Ajayi, “Samuel Ajayi Crowther of Oyo” and H. F. C. Smith, D. M. Last and Gambo Gubio, “Ali Eisami Gazirmabe of Bornu” in Phillip D. Curtin (ed.), Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 199-216, 289-316; Paul Lovejoy, “Partial Perspectives and Abolition: The Sokoto Jihad and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1804-1837”, paper read at “Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil”, Emory, 17-18 April 1998 and “The Clapperton-Bello Exchange: The Sokoto Jihad and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1804-1837,” in Christopher Wise (ed.), The Desert Shore: Literatures of the Sahel (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2001), pp. 201-227.

⁶ Joao Jose Reis, Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1993); Lovejoy, “Background to Rebellion: The Origins of the Muslim Slaves in Bahia”, Slavery and Abolition (S&A), 15, 2, 1994, pp. 151-180; Pierre Verger, Trade Relations Between the Bight of Benin and Bahia Seventeenth to Nineteenth Century (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1976) and Christopher Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone (London: University Press, 1962).

⁷ See Lovejoy, “Muslim Freedmen in the Atlantic World: Images of Manumission and Self-redemption, 1750-1850”, paper presented at “From Slavery to Freedom” Manumission in the Atlantic World”, College of Charleston, October 4-7, 2000.

⁸ Ahmad Baba’a, Mi’raj al-Su’ud: Replies on Slavery (Annotated and translated by John Hunwick and Fatima Karrak (Rabat: Institute of African Studies, University Mohammed V Soussi, 2000) and Humphrey J. Fisher, “A Muslim William Wilberforce? The Sokoto Jihad as Anti-Slavery Crusade: An Enquiry into Historical Causes” in S. Daget (ed.), De la Traite a l’esclavage du XVIIIeme au XIXeme siecle, vol. 2, Nantes, 1988, pp. 537-55.

decisions reached was that Sokoto and its allies should create an Islamic state. This involved wars against non-Muslim states and granting freedom to the Muslims in bondage. As some scholars and politicians would put it, the jihadist agenda was to ‘dip the Koran in the sea’,⁹ a euphemism for the total conquest and annexation of Yorubaland. It was this decision that shaped the Hausa slave resistance of 1817 and the broad Hausa-Yoruba relation in the nineteenth century and ultimately influenced the ethnic identity of slaves in post-1817 Yorubaland.

Crisis in Oyo first resulted in the diversion of a major trade route into eastern Yorubaland and later the collapse of Oyo in the 1820s. The two factors combined unleashed resources, which expanded not only economic activities but also warlordism and its attendant methods of repression. For instance,

The fall of Oyo meant that many slaves were no longer coming from the Central Sudan and new slaves had to be sought from within Yorubaland. In essence, demographic movements and the rise of Yoruba brigands also shifted the ethnic composition of Yoruba towns and of the slaves sold by the Yoruba.¹⁰ Secondly, pressures on land by incoming refugees and the evolution of a culture of conspicuous consumption among Yoruba freebooters further heightened ethnic divisions and social tension. Thirdly, the emergence of Lagos as the most important slave port in West Africa drew Yorubaland intimately into the slave trade. With the new position of Lagos, its closeness to Yoruba markets spread the frontiers of slave raiding further into the interior, thereby increasing the level of violence associated with slave recruitment.

Warfare and slave raids and the attendant movement of population had far-reaching consequences on the Yoruba country. One result of this was the increased professionalization of the military, and this contributed to greater social and economic devastation in many Yoruba states. Moreover, the Yoruba wars began to be closely associated with commerce and trade routes. Refugees followed trade routes to places of safety while soldiers and brigands followed similar routes for raids and kidnapping activities. Oyo refugees began to affect upon the political and economic lives of their hosts, and their pressure on existing towns and settlements led to new demographic movements, and socio-political problems. As Ajayi has remarked: “bands of immigrants, particularly of the warrior class, began to roam the countryside restlessly, living off the land, intervening in local disputes, acting as mercenaries and sometimes initiating quarrels of their own.”¹¹ Traders formed the third part of the tripod as they followed the routes to buy slaves and sell goods to war survivors. The major market on the eastern route was Apomu, an Ife town where slaves were sold to Ijebu traders in exchange for cowries, textiles, and after 1820, firearms. Competition for the control of the Apomu market intensified among Ife, Owu, Ijebu and Oyo authorities. In 1820, this degenerated into an open confrontation and the eventual destruction of Owu by her rivals in 1825.

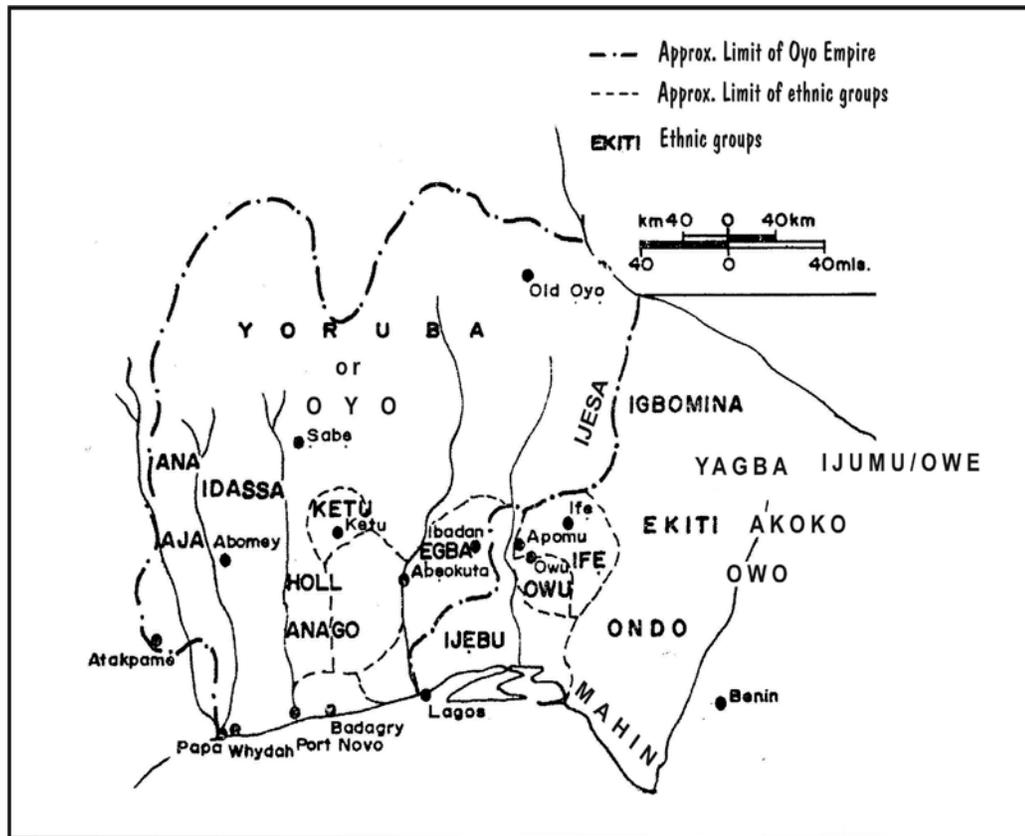
⁹ Johnson, *History*, p. 288.

¹⁰ Akin Mabogunje and J. Omer-Cooper, *Owu in Yoruba History* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1971), 48-49 and Count de Ponte, Governor of Bahia to Viscount de Amadia, Secretary of State, Lisbon and Innocencio Marques to Ponte, Oct 14, 1807 cited in Verger, *Trade relations*, pp. 235-236. See also Lovejoy, “The Yoruba factor in the Atlantic Slave Trade” (forthcoming) and Lovejoy and Richardson, ‘Demographic Patterns in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: The Yoruba Factor’, paper presented at African Studies Association Meeting, San Francisco, November 24, 1996.

¹¹ Ajayi, ‘The aftermath’, p. 145.

Slave recruitment during this period was not just a simple question of a Yoruba enslaving another Yoruba. Although people in the Yoruba region spoke mutually intelligible dialects, shared several cultural traits and had a nostalgic attachment to Ile-Ife, the true picture until about 1890 was that of a region of multiple ethnicities. Hence slaves were recruited from among the Oyo, Ife, Owu, Ekiti,¹² Ijesa, Ondo, Ikale¹³ and so on.

MAP 1: YORUBA ETHNIC GROUPS, c.1820



Modified from Afolabi Ojo, *Yoruba Culture: A Geographical Analysis* (London: London University Press, 1967).

¹² The generic name for this region in the 19th century was Efon (actually a name of the Ekiti town on the Ijesa border). 'Ekiti' or Okiti (shortened form of Ekitiparapo (hill dwellers should come together) was invented in the 1870s by the Ijesa as a call to arms terminology for people in a hilly region, inhabited by some 16 chiefdoms east of Ijesa, north of Ondo and southwest of the Niger confluence to unite against a common enemy, Ibadan. (Ijesa is sometimes added as part of Ekiti). See also Lugard, diary, January 1 and 2, 1895 in Margery Perham and Mary Bull (eds.), *The Diaries of Lord Lugard, vol. 4: Nigeria, 1894-1895 and 1898* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963), pp. 264, 266. Phillip Curtin and Jan Vansina's interpretation of Sigismund Koelle's Linguistic Inventory confuses Ki or Eki or Ekiri, a Niger confluence district near Nupe with Ekiti. See Curtin and Jan Vansina, "Sources of the Nineteenth century Atlantic Slave Trade," *JAH*, V, 2, 1964, p. 196.

¹³ This is a mixed region of Yoruba, Niger Delta and Ijebu settlers. In the late nineteenth century, population from Urhobo and Lagos completed its heterogeneous population.

The role of ethnicity in these wars is confirmed in a tradition collected by Alfred Moloney from “persons who have come from the interior” (most likely Oyo informants). The tradition suggests that the Owu war began when Ife violated a law which precluded the enslavement of those with *àbàjà* facial marks (Oyo citizens).¹⁴ Captives from the war were sold to Ijebu slave traders, but were later rescued by Owu soldiers. In retaliation, Ife and Ijebu troops attacked Owu for trying to stop a lucrative trade.¹⁵ This version contradicts a popular view that Owu and Oyo fought on opposite sides during the war. In particular Alafin Majotu, in apparent reference to the war, told the British traveler, Hugh Clapperton that he had ordered the destruction of a rebellious vassal and slave trading state.¹⁶ Whatever was the cause and sequence of the war slave trading was central to the dispute. From Owu, soldiers of fortune and refugees moved into Egba territory which had supported Owu. By 1830, most parts of the Oyo kingdom and Egba were either destroyed or engulfed in warfare and insecurity.¹⁷ With incessant warfare, a situation evolved wherein the population of whole towns and villages were dispersed into different parts of modern Yorubaland.¹⁸ All this set the stage for the creolization of the Yoruba population and a significant period in the evolution of what was to become the Yoruba ethnic identity.

Warfare, Demographic Change and Socio-Economic Transformations in Ife District

The interactions between warfare, economic transformation, religion and ethnicity in eastern Yorubaland came out clearly as the Yoruba crisis spread eastwards into the Ife and Ondo districts. Refugees from northern Yorubaland, Owu and surrounding Ife villages massed at the capital town, Ile-Ife.¹⁹ Consequently, Ile-Ife soon emerged as a cosmopolitan community with refugees from Oyo, Owu and Epo towns forming

¹⁴ For a discussion of the Yoruba law on ‘ethnicity and enslavability’, see Rev. Henry Townsend, journal for the quarter ending June 25, 1847, CA2/085b, CMS and Oroge, ‘Institution of Slavery,’ pp. 113-133.

¹⁵ Alfred Moloney to Samuel Rowe, May 12, 1881, encl. 2 in no. 1, C.4957, PP vol. LX. For details of Owu war see Mabogunje and Omer-Cooper, *Owu in Yoruba History*; Law, “The Owu War in Yoruba History”, *JHSN*, 7, 1, 1973, pp. 141-47. On trade routes around Ile-Ife, see Robin Horton, “The Economy of Ife c.AD 900-c.AD 1700” in Akinjogbin (ed.), *Cradle of a Race*, pp. 122-147 and Johnson, *History*, pp.189, 206-207. Oral traditions collected in Trinidad also attest to this route. See Maureen Warner-Lewis, “Ethnic and Religious Plurality among Yoruba Immigrants in Trinidad in the Nineteenth Century,” Lovejoy (ed.), *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery*, pp. 113-128.

¹⁶ Hugh Clapperton, journal, December 25, 1825 in James B. Lockhart and Paul Lovejoy (eds.), *Journal of Second Expedition to Africa*, 2nd edition (forthcoming).

¹⁷ On the destruction of Egba towns, see Biobaku, *Egba and their Neighbours*, pp. 8-9; Curtin, “Joseph Wright of the Egba” in *African Remembered*, pp. 317-333 and E. C. Irving, “The Ijebu country”, *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, 7, March-May 1856, pp. 65-72, 93-96, and 117-120.

¹⁸ Ajayi and Akintoye, “Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century” in Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigeria History* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), pp. 299-300; Olomola, “Demographic Effects of the Nineteenth Century Yoruba Wars” and Dare Oguntomisin, “Refugees in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland” in Akinjogbin (ed.), *War and Peace*, pp. 371-379 and 381-398.

¹⁹ Johnson, *History*, p. 230; Akinyele, *Iwe Itan Ibadan* (Ibadan: Board Publications, 1980 [1911]), pp. 295-298. Developments in Ijaye show the ethnic animosity between soldiers from Epo and Oyo Metropolitan districts. See Johnson, *History*, p. 238.

significant ethnic and religious divisions.²⁰ What was life like for these refugees who had fled to Ife which they regarded as the origin of their ancestors, and therefore their 'home'?

Warfare and slavery gave rise to the proliferation of big households. Since wealth was calculated in 'persons' and not in cash, the larger the number of dependants, the higher the status of a house.²¹ Writing in 1859, Robert Campbell observed that many wealthy Yoruba individuals could not raise 10 bags of cowries in an emergency. SO rather than store cash, the rich used their wealth to build up bands of supporters.²² The significance of large houses lay in their economic self-sufficiency, social and political power.²³ Hence rather than treat the refugees as their kin, the people of Ife began to recruit them as clients and even as slaves. The greatest beneficiaries from this development were members of the aristocracy, who captured many slaves, or otherwise got them as gifts or fines, and by purchase. As owners of big houses, the aristocrats were also the biggest landlords and patrons. The major problem however was that those been enslaved or turned into clients at this stage were the Oyo, who in the previous centuries were the imperialists of Yorubaland and were not considered enslavable by other Yoruba groups. How these factors played out among the elites shall be discussed in the dispute between the Ooni and his chiefs.

Socio-economic and political changes in Ile-Ife brought about some transformations which in turn induced problems that the town had to cope with. One of them was factional fighting among the chiefs. By the middle of the century, the crisis degenerated into a slave/refugee revolt. A major feature of post-1820 Ile-Ife history was the increased visibility of military chiefs whose power rested on their slaves. In the opinion of Jacob Ajayi, the "Yoruba military system helped to reinforce the position of the chiefs rather than that of the king."²⁴ Evidence of militarism in the nineteenth century is confirmed with the admission of war chiefs such as the Akogun and Waasin, and later

²⁰ In 1858, Modakeke (a quarter occupied by Oyo refugees in Ife) was described as a 'Muslim' town. See Daniel J. May, "Journey in the Yoruba and Nupe Countries in 1858", Journal of Royal Geographical Society (JRGS), 30, 1860, pp. 215-216.

²¹ Although we do not have statistical evidence to measure the demographic profile of Ife in the nineteenth century, qualitative estimates point to a picture of a big community. Johnson noted that refugees settled in Ife countryside in "great numbers." By the 1840s, Oyo refugees were so predominant that Apomu, Ikire, Gbongan, Ipetumodu and a couple of other originally Ife towns would have passed for Oyo towns Johnson, History, pp. 230, 558. By 1886 the population of Modakeke and Ipetumodu were estimated at 60,000 and 10,000 respectively. Johnson to Moloney, May 21, 1886, encl. 11 in no. 26, Moloney to Earl Granville, June 23, 1886, C5144, PP. In terms of their vocation, the majority of the Oyo settlers were farmers but many were also soldiers. Between 1860 and 1886, the military victories achieved by Modakeke over Ife were the handiwork of military lineages such as the houses of Ojo Akitikori and Ajombadi, who were led by Oyebade, Adepoju, Oke Pupa and Detomi. On patronage see Jane Guyer, "Wealth in People, Wealth in Things: Introduction," JAH, 36, 1995, pp. 83-90 and Karin Barber, "Money, Self Realization and the Person in Yoruba Texts" in Jane Guyer (ed.), Money Matters: Instability, Values and Social Payments in the Modern History of West African Communities (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1995, pp. 205-224. See note 23 below.

²² Robert Campbell, "A Pilgrimage to My Motherland: An Account of a Journey Among the Egbas and Yorubas of Central Africa 1859-1860" in Martin R. Delaney and Robert Campbell, Search For A Place: Black Separatism and Africa, 1860 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1969), p. 191.

²³ Lovejoy, Transformations in Slavery, pp. 179-182.

²⁴ Ajayi, "The aftermath," p. 185; "Professional Warriors" and Falola and Oguntomisin, The Military in Nineteenth Yoruba Politics (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1984).

Loodi, Segbusin and Lukosi into Ife's highest council.²⁵ Ife generals, probably not satisfied with what Ife could give them materially, and because of what was an evident disagreement with the Ooni, moved to other towns. Maye, Singunsin and Labosinde carried their slave raiding activities to, and later settled in Ibadan between 1825 and 1829.

As refugees and slaves moved into Ife territory, a large number seized control of the Egba town of Ibadan. Until about 1830 Ibadan was under the control of a confederate council led by Ife soldiers, but this changed after a short time. The shift took place after ethnic conflicts pitched Oyo against non-Oyo residents. In the resultant civil war, Oyo elements triumphed and the Ife were either killed, expelled from Ibadan or sold into slavery, while only those who had Oyo connections were spared.²⁶ It is not surprising that events that took place in Ibadan would also affect Ife in a major way.

Back in Ife, exiles from Ibadan, especially the warlords whipped up anti-Oyo sentiments. Unfortunately, there was no agreement among Ife chiefs on how to deal with Oyo refugees and slaves. On the one hand there were the exiles who gained mass support among Ife people. This group exacted revenge on Oyo settlers. Consequently, lands hitherto allocated to the Oyo were seized, and many were enslaved or forced to pay higher taxes. According to Johnson, the refugees were treated "as slaves [and] little better than...dogs".²⁷ This status is startlingly revealed in the 1886 testimony of a Modakeke man who witnessed every stage of Ife-Modakeke relations:

it has often been said by the Ife that we are their slaves, and this point we wish to dispute. We are a remnant of the Yoruba nation... When Chief Maye an Ife was expelled [from Ibadan] then we began to suffer all sorts of indignities from the Ife...we fill their houses and we were treated as slaves rather than as freemen.²⁸

Tension between the exiles and Oyo refugees threw Ife monarchs into confusion over how to resolve the differences between the military, the refugees, and the local people. Now faced with a restless military oligarchy, and heightened ethnic nationalism, who were the persons on whom the kings relied to run the administration, and to keep themselves in power? The main body of new service and loyal personnel derived through the system of palace administration. The major turning point came around 1839 when Adegunle Abeweila, whom tradition says descended from an Oyo woman, came to the throne.²⁹ Because of the opposition from his chiefs and his Oyo pedigree, he was more tolerant of the Oyo. Abeweila's support for the Oyo won the admiration of many slaves and other marginalized individuals who flocked to him as bodyguards, advisers and workers. From among these people, he recruited private guards whose loyalties were only to him.³⁰ Unfortunately, this only helped to alienate Ife people from both their ruler and

²⁵ Biodun Adediran, "Government and Administration of Ife in Pre-colonial Times", *Cradle of a Race*, p. 292.

²⁶ Johnson, *History*, pp. 238-242 and Akinyele, *Iwe Itan Ibadan*, pp. 26-31.

²⁷ 'Statement of the Bale of Ibadan on the claims of Ibadan to Gb[o]ngan, Apomu, Ikire and Ikoyi,' CSO 12/24/25/3038/1905, NAI and Johnson, *History*, pp. 230 and 239.

²⁸ 'Statement by a Modakeke man of 100+ years, April 26, 1886', CMS (Y) 1/7/5, NAI.

²⁹ Ibadan tradition says his mother was the daughter of Oluyinka, an Owu prince. See 'Dada Opadere, Bale of Ibadan's Statement,' Dec. 22, 1905, CSO 12/24/25/3038/1905, NAI.

³⁰ Modakeke (Oyo) men who became palace officials included soldiers such as Ojo Akitikori (son of the Asirawo), Oniyiku (his son, Oke, was the Balogun in the 1880s), Arigiloso, Adeworo and Ajayi (his son,

the settlers. Ife politics became extremely turbulent, with Abeweela trying either to use the Oyo to stay in power and risk the hostility of his Ife subjects, or to please the Ife, and risk rebellion from Oyo refugees and hostility from Ibadan. He chose the latter.

To consolidate his grip on power, Abeweela tightened state control over the distribution of firearms and powder. He restricted the flow of imported arms as well as maintained monopoly over those that got into the town. He also made his chiefs swear an oath that they would not kill him like his predecessors. Finally, he moved his slaves and Oyo supporters to his farmstead, Modakeke, located just outside the city gate, and he instructed them not to allow Ife chiefs to handle his burial.³¹ The physical separation of Modakeke from Ife facilitated a slave 'exodus', and the development of a revolutionary ideology among residents of the new town.³² It also drew sharp distinctions between Ife slaveholders and 'Oyo' slaves, united the stranger elements in Ife, and to some degree carved out a 'Muslim' ward. Gradually Modakeke became a safe spot for runaway slaves, refugees and criminals.³³

The growth of anti-Oyo sentiments created a feeling of oneness among the 'Oyo' in Ile-Ife, and by the closing years of the 1840s, the aliens in Ile-Ife, both slaves, freed and freeborn, had started to develop a strong 'Oyo' ethnic identity, and anti-Ife sentiments. Their ambitions merged with those of other settlers of non-Yoruba origin—largely slaves, who because of Ife's antipathy towards them, now differentiated themselves from the Ife and began to identify with the Oyo. They adopted the Oyo dialect and body marks as symbols of brotherhood and by 1850 a clearer division had emerged, polarizing Ife and settlers into free and 'slaves', superior and inferior citizens, landlord and tenant and indigene and stranger respectively.³⁴ Furthermore, ethnic and class

Adefajo was the Osi Balogun in the 1890s). The soldiers were complemented by blacksmiths, whose leader, Wingbolu, was conferred with the Ogunsuwa title derived from Ogunladin, one of Ife's most prized Orisa. See 'Oni Adelekan Olubuse's statement,' December 18, 1905, CSO 12/24/25/3038/1905, NAI.

³¹ Derin, Ooni-elect to Governor of Lagos, April 28, 1886, CMS (Y) 1/7/5, NAI and 'Statement by a Modakeke Man', April 26, 1886, CMS (Y) 1/7/5, NAI. According to the 'Modakeke man', the major shift in Ife social and power relations took place shortly after the return of Ibadan exiles around 1830. Between 1830 and 1839, three Ooni—Gbanlare, Gbegbaaje (one who carries the calabash of riches) and Winmonije—reigned on the throne of Ile-Ife in quick succession (average tenure of three years), each reign ending in regicide. The attitude of each of the Ooni towards the refugees, and by extension to slavery and the slave trade, which alternated between good and bad treatments, had a bearing on the success or failure of their tenure. The short reigns no doubt suggest some constitutional crises in Ife because it would appear that some of the monarchs were poisoned or forced to commit suicide. Therefore since the monarchs and their chiefs would have struggled to seize control of the religious institution, the incorporation of Oyo and slaves (outsiders) into the palace meant a conscious policy to raise a parallel power base. This position adequately fits the Oyo and slaves among whom were soldiers, Muslims and owners of 'non-Ife' Orisa.

³² Richard Olaniyan, "The Modakeke Question in Ife Politics and Diplomacy" in Akinjogbin, Cradle of a Race, pp. 266-271.

³³ David Hinderer, 'Condition of Yoruba country', September 19, 1853, 'Journey to the interior', August 2-September 4, 1858 and 'Second journey to the interior', August 23-September 11, 1859, CA2/049, CMS; May, "Journey in the Yoruba and Nupe Countries," pp. 215-216 and 'War in the interior', Lagos Times, December 27, 1882. On Modakeke's military outlay, Johnson wrote: it 'was first built in a circular form as a single vast compound of about two miles in circumference; the enclosed area was left covered with trees and high grass, each individual clearing out a small space in front of his dwelling. This was done for the sake of mutual protection as no one need to go out of the compound for firewood or thatch for roofing.' Johnson, History, pp. 231-32.

³⁴ R. J. B. Ross, Acting Attorney General and Harold G. Parson, Acting Resident Ibadan to Colonial Secretary, February 24, 1904, CSO 12/23/9/587/1904, NAI. Notable Oyo compounds and their founders

rivalries erased the awe and respect which non-Ife ‘Yoruba’ were supposed to accord the ancient town. Thus unlike in earlier years when Owu’s attack against Apomu was seen as a taboo—a desecration of the cradle of the Yoruba, Oyo refugees and slaves had no scruples about attacking Ife.

For Ife warlords to overcome Modakeke, it became necessary to remove the latter’s sponsor and patron, Abeweela. There are different traditions on how this happened. One version linked this to his opposition to the killing of Oyo residents for religious rituals.³⁵ According to the tradition, an Ife woman, who had lost her son, raised an alarm proclaiming that the boy was an Ife, not Oyo (Ife ni o, e i s’omo Oyo o), and should therefore not be used for any sacrificial rites. This public declaration drew Oyo elements together to make a representation to Abeweela on the issue of sacrificing their members to appease Ife’s Orisa.³⁶ He assured them of his support by appealing to Ife compound heads to check the tide of kidnappings in their domain.³⁷ Since the welfare of a town was embodied in its king, the people of Ife would have interpreted Abeweela’s action as a betrayal of traditional trust, and indicating that he no longer capable of administering the town. His appeal against the sacrifice of non-Ife indigenes could have been interpreted to mean that he either wanted to abolish human sacrifice or was in support of the use of Ife citizens for rituals. Both options translated into a violation of Ife’s Orisa rituals, which in turn meant the king was bringing bad fortunes on the town and its inhabitants. By opposing human sacrifice, Abeweela destroyed the majesty, the fear, and the respect that many of his subjects felt for him, and any fighting that Ife citizens who were not his enemies might have done for him would have been half-hearted at best. In 1886, a latter Ooni of Ife, Aderinsoye informed the British Peace Commissioners in Yorubaland, Henry Higgins (acting Colonial Secretary) and Oliver Smith (Queen’s advocate) about the importance of human sacrifice to Ife rituals and humankind: “[it] benefit[s] the world...[but for it] the white man’s arts would not exist.”³⁸ On this supposition, Abeweela’s ‘disloyal’ proclamation was quickly attributed to his Oyo ancestry. According to Ife beliefs, the king should now be overthrown, for he had abandoned his own claims to legitimacy.

were Ajombadi at Oke-Eso, Wingbolu at Iyekere (near Iwirin), Onirawo and Ojo Bada at Ijugbe; Ogungbe at Esin Oye, Oke Owu and Adefajo at Lagere and the Owu at Oke Owu under the superintendence of Chief Obalaye of Iraye-Ife. Ajombadi, Wingbolu, Onirawo, Ojo Bada and Ogungbe came from the Oyo provincial districts of Ijaye, Oko, Irawo, Ejigbo and Oje respectively; Ayanleye from Kuta near Iwo, Agbakin from Owu, Ikugbayigbe and Sorinolu from Egba. Other settlers included Oyeku, Apanla, Akin, Meminure, Emuoje, Alesinloye, Ayangbade Ajuwon, Igiyadina Lagbege, Jatina, Abegunde, Alaka Adeworo, Akinrinlo, Are Giriloso and Ajayi. Interview with Madam Elizabeth Toriola, 68 years, Ile-Ogo, Modakeke on December 10 1997 and M. A. Fabunmi, Ife: The Genesis of Yoruba Race (Lagos: John West, 1985), 116-117.

³⁵ Hinderer reported that the refugees became the favorite victims for human sacrifice. See journal, August-September, 1858, CA2/049, CMS.

³⁶ Interview with Mrs. Margaret Moradeyo, 75 years, Road 7, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife December 7 1997. Ile Ife has a popular saying a ki í fi omo Ore bo Ore (we do not sacrifice the children of Ore (an Orisa) to appease Ore). This implies and corroborates the tradition that strangers were used for sacrifices.

³⁷ Akintoye, “Ife’s Sad Century”, Nigerian Magazine, 104, March/May 1970 and Akinjogbin, “Ife: The Years of Travail,” p. 154.

³⁸ Higgins to Colonial Office, Second Part of Report to the Interior of Lagos, June 20, 1887 (entry for November 4, 1886), C5144 vol. LX, no. 8, PP.

As Abeweela could not be removed by force of arms, the Ife chiefs succeeded in poisoning him in 1849. Shortly after Abeweela's death was announced, his slaves were aware of their potential fate. In Ife's constitution, the death of an Ooni was to be accompanied by series of rituals, one of which was the killing of slaves at his funeral. Thus Ife chiefs would have used the opportunity of Abeweela's funeral to dismantle his power base. Attempts by Ife chiefs to destroy Modakeke set the stage for the Ife slave revolt or as it is popularly known, the Modakeke uprising of 1850. According to Charles Phillips, 'the slaves buried him (Abeweela) before they made known his death to the Ifes. The Ifes were vexed and when they wanted to punish the slaves, the latter conquered Ife and later stationed themselves at Modakeke where they made alliance with Ede, Iwo and Ibadan [Oyo towns] and drove Ife to Isoya'.³⁹

The significance of these events is that they highlight links between warfare, religion, economy and ethnicity. Slave recruitment and population movement resulted in economic and political competition among Ife chiefs. Because most of the refugees and slaves were Oyo, the contest soon turned into one between Oyo and Ife. Finally, the recruitment of officials into the palace not only increased the power of elite slaves but also had an impact on the rituals of the king's funeral. All of these episodes soon converged in a slave/refugee and ethnic revolt. Having shown earlier that the trade route from Ife extended southeastwards into Ondo, we shall now discuss how power and economic shifts in Ife affected developments in Ondo region.

Eastward Spread of the Yoruba Crisis and the Transformation of Ondo, c.1830-1870

Political and economic changes in northern Yorubaland, and along the Ife corridor gradually drew Ondo into the center of these developments. Thus events in Ondo and Ile-Ife were closely related—one seeming to have influenced the other. Ondo was well connected with Ife, lying to the southeast and on the trade route that linked Ijesa and Ife with Ijebu, Benin and the Atlantic coast.⁴⁰ The possession of superior weaponry enabled Ife to raid and plunder towns in Ijesa, Owu and Ondo districts and to sell slaves. The diversion of trade routes through Ife and Ondo expanded the commercial and political

³⁹ 'Story of Abeweela' in Phillips, diary, 1885, Phillips, 3/1, NAI. Ife authorities confirmed the alliance between their slaves and Oyo settlers but they denied their role in the enslavement of Oyo refugees. According to Aderinsoye, "Abeweela's slaves resorted to the strangers (Oyo) after his death and united with them. When they became numerous and powerful they began to steal Ife children and sell them into slavery." In spite of the contradiction in these statements, there is agreement on the primacy of slavery and ethnicity to the crisis and that attempts to check enslavement sparked off the revolt. On the crisis see Hinderer, 'Condition of Yoruba country'; 'Journey to the interior' and 'Second journey to the interior,' CA2/049, CMS and May, "Journey in Yoruba and Nupe", p. 215 and Derin, Ooni-elect of Ife to Governor of Lagos, April 28, 1886, CMS (Y) 1/7/5, NAI. Aderinsoye (often shortened to Aderin or Derin) was an Ife warrior and prince, whose activity was a source of anxiety to the Ooni, and whose chances of upstaging Abeweela were very high. Abeweela thus saw him as a real threat to his reign hence the plot to get rid of him. See T. A. Olowoje, 'Oke-Igbo in Ondo and Ife Power Politics in the Nineteenth Century', BA, University of Ibadan, 1970, pp. 2-3. For Aderin's career see Adediran, "Derin Ologbenla: The Ooni-elect of Ife during the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War" in Akinjogbin (ed.) *War and Peace*, pp. 149-164 and interviews with Felicia Akintunde-Ighodalo and Bishop Samuel Olufunmilade Aderin, great-grand children of Aderin, June 1, 1999.

⁴⁰ Ondo Intelligence Report, p. 11, CSO 26/30172, NAI; Michael C. Adeyemi, *Ondo Kingdom: Its History and Culture* (N. Aluko-Olokun, ed.) (Ibadan: Bounty Press, 1993), pp. 26-28 and Jerome Ojo, *Yoruba Customs from Ondo* (Wien: ACTA, 1976), p. 43.

power of the Osemawe such that the balance of power tilted in favor of the monarchy. Starting from about 1820, slaves were imported into Ondo from northern Yorubaland, Owu and the Egba districts and this continued until the destruction of Ondo around 1850. It did not take long for the new economic opportunities in increased traffic in slaves to change the socio-economic and political relations in Ondo. In Ondo, like other parts of Yorubaland, the ownership of slaves soon became a major indicator of wealth. The more slaves one possessed the more likely one was able to wield political and economic power.

The early nineteenth century saw the accession to the Ondo throne of Arilekolasi,⁴¹ renowned as the wealthiest of the nineteenth century Ondo monarchs. His reign marked a significant turning point as it saw Ondo playing more active roles in the slave trade. For instance, Ondo and Ife traders met at Oja-Ife (Ife market) located on Ile-Ife road, where they exchanged slaves for agricultural goods. Arilekolasi's rise to power was influenced by his economic power, for it was said of him in 1879: "his great wealth and power excited the jealousy and apprehension of his people, and they tried to find occasion to make insurrection against him."⁴² In order to situate his reign in its proper historical context, it is necessary to understand the various influences on his personality, placing them against the background of nineteenth century Ondo and Yoruba history.

Ondo traditions agree that Arilekolasi was a rich man, having inherited much wealth from his parents. For instance, Bada and Leigh suggest that he inherited 200 and 180 slaves from his father and mother respectively. His riches also included a substantial amount of money and cattle.⁴³ Arilekolasi and his parents had benefited from the crisis in Owu and Oyo, which enabled them to participate in slave trading around Ife. The location of their farm/trade depot on the Ife road would seem to confirm this speculation. This suspicion is heightened by stories about the Oba's antecedents. Traditions collected at Ondo and Oke-Igbo agreed on the point that Arilekolasi's mother was an Ife woman, and that he himself lived either at Ile-Ife or Ifewara before his accession to the throne. As a young man, Arilekolasi had a base at Iperindo where he kept a substantial number of farm and trade slaves.⁴⁴ Shortly after his elevation, he moved his Iperindo estate to Oke-igbo (forest farm, later corrupted to Okeigbo (forested hills) near a common market for Ife and Ondo traders.⁴⁵

The strategic location of both Okeigbo and Iperindo in relation to Ondo trade is important in analyzing why Arilekolasi and his parents decided to locate in these towns. As we have shown above, Okeigbo was the command post for Ife-Ondo trade from where commodities, particularly slaves were sold. Indeed with the destruction of Owu and Apomu, Okeigbo gradually emerged as the meeting point for Ife, Ondo, Ijesa, Egba and Ijebu traders. On the other hand, wars between Ife and Ijesa also generated many slaves. After 1840, Ibadan and Ilorin's push into north-central Yorubaland increased the scale of slave production. These attracted Ijebu and Benin traders, and Iperindo lying on the Benin-Yoruba and Ijesa-Ondo-Ijebu route became a commercial depot. As soon as Ijesa

⁴¹ The name literally means 'one who possesses a store of wealth.'

⁴² 'Notes on Ondo', 1878, Phillips 1/3/3, NAI.

⁴³ Interview with Jerome Ojo, May 20, 1980 cf. Olasiji Oshin, 'Ondo in the Nineteenth Century,' MA, Ibadan, 1980, p. 55. A source (with some exaggeration) put the number of his slaves in "thousands". See Adesoji Aderemi, the Ooni of Ife to Senior Resident, Oyo Province, July 6, 1931, pp. 28-31, Oyo Prof 2/3/644, NAI.

⁴⁴ Interview with Chief Akilapa, the Bajulaye of Ondo, February 21, 1980 (by O. Oshin)

⁴⁵ Adeyemi, Ondo Kingdom, p. 29.

was conquered, trade reduction in this area increased the lure of Okeigbo. In effect, relocation to Okeigbo should be seen as a strategic movement targeted at increased participation in commerce with Ife. We will show below how contacts made in earlier years helped Arilekolasi's reign.

Elite Slaves and Ondo Civil War, c.1845

During his sojourn in Ife district, Arilekolasi established a wide network of friends. According to Oke-Igbo tradition, Arilekolasi met Ajibike, an Egba Ifa priest, at Ile-Ife. Ajibike predicted that Arilekolasi would one day be installed the king of Ondo, and this came to pass with his election to the Ondo throne. It is not clear how Arilekolasi won the Ondo throne, but his reliance on slaves and external forces would suggest a rancorous succession process. On ascending the throne, Ajibike was invited to Ondo and appointed to oversee the royal estate at Okeigbo.⁴⁶ A variant of the tradition suggests that Ajibike's relocation to Okeigbo took place when Arilekolasi feared that he (Ajibike) might ally with Ondo people who were already complaining about his (Arilekolasi) autocratic rule.⁴⁷ From Okeigbo, Arilekolasi's slaves and followers engaged in criminal acts, kidnapping, extortion and slave dealing and no one was strong enough to stop them without attracting their wrath.⁴⁸

The excesses of Arilekolasi and his followers aroused strong opposition from Ondo chiefs and other wealthy personalities. Three names appear prominent among the opponents: Ajakaye, Timawo and Koyemi. Ajakaye was the most powerful, and the richest of the group, whose riches according to Leigh, "consisted not only in a large number of slaves, but also in cattle and money in which he stood unrivalled by anyone in the country."⁴⁹ On account of his affluence, the king sought an opportunity eliminate him and other opponents. After some time, Ajakaye and Koyemi were killed through the collusion of some of their wives and slaves.

The death of these men increased both the political and economic power of Arilekolasi and his slaves. This further mobilized his opponents. We do not have the details of the incident which led to Arilekolasi's ultimate rejection. We know however, that as disaffection to him spread among the people, he built a fortification on his farm hoping to retreat there. Before he could finish his plan, his chiefs forced him to commit suicide while his supporters escaped to Okeigbo from where they finalized plans to sack Ondo.⁵⁰

Whether at Ile-Ife or Ondo, problems arising over control of slaves were genuine concerns. As we shall discuss below, the roles of Modakeke and Okeigbo corroborate Paul Lovejoy's study of slave resistance in the central Sudan. According to him, although

⁴⁶ T. A. Olowoje, 'Oke-Igbo in Ondo and Ile-Ife Power Politics,' BA, Ibadan, 1970, pp. 10-12, 1970 and 'Evidence of Chief Aderin, the Oloke of Okeigbo' in Inquiry into Oloke of Okeigbo Chieftaincy Title, Ondo State Chieftaincy Review Commission, 1978.

⁴⁷ Olowoje, 'Okeigbo', pp. 10-12 and interview with Chief D. A. Odukunle, the Otun of Okeigbo on August 19, 1980 (cited in Olasiji Oshin).

⁴⁸ John A. Leigh, The History of Ondo (Ondo: Ondo Boys High School, 1917), p. 49; Ojo Bada, Iwe Itan Ondo, pp.61-63 and interview with Chief Fadase cited in S. I. Togbese, 'Palace Organisation in Ondo,' BA Essay, University of Ife, 1976. The most notorious of Arilekolasi's men were Ago, Ajibike, Kulajolu, Luwonran, Ajikitiogun and Laleye.

⁴⁹ Leigh, History of Ondo, pp. 47-50 and Bada, Itan Ondo, pp. 64-65.

⁵⁰ Phillips, 'Notes on Ondo', Phillips 1/3/3, NAI.

slave rebellion was less likely where slave escapes were frequent, flight alone does not prevent slave revolts especially when slavery merges with ethnicity. For instance, when slaves from common cultural backgrounds found themselves in concentrated locations, ethnic solidarity could lead to group action.⁵¹ The Yoruba wars and the possibility of being sold into the Atlantic market made it difficult for slaves in Ondo and Ife to contemplate massive flights. Those from northern Yoruba no longer had homes, and flight further south into the forest region would lead them into the hands of Ondo, Ijebu and Egba raiders and traders. As soon as Oyo slaves were concentrated and merged with Oyo refugees, revolt became an attractive option. In Ondo also, its slaves could not escape towards Mahin, Ijebu or Benin. Hence after years of frustration, they allied with Ondo and Ife rebels to sack Ondo and like Modakeke, they established their maroonage only a few miles outside the Ondo wall.⁵²

The above factor is as strong as that arising from the rise in the power of royal slaves/palace officials. These officials were executives carrying out the Oba's orders. They also formed his inner circle of advisers and had influence over him, for he was largely dependent on them for the exercise of his authority. With this power, town chiefs would appear to have been gradually edged out of major decision-making. This would appear to be one of the major complaints in Ondo as we examine the career of some of the rebels.

Like Abeweela's followers, Arilekolasi's supporters at Okeigbo and Ondo continued in their acts of lawlessness, and this even increased after his death. According to Okeigbo tradition, Ajibike sent a message to Ooni Abeweela, requesting warriors to assist the pro-Arilekolasi party. At the time the message got to Ile-Ife, Aderinsoye Ologbenla, an Ife prince and warrior, was leading a campaign against Osorogi, an Ijesa town, and it was from there that he moved to Okeigbo. The Ondo civil war provided the opportunity for Ife to intervene in the war and later to plunder. From Okeigbo, Ife forces in collaboration with Ajibike, and Kulajolu,⁵³ leading Arilekolasi's slaves as well as freebooters from parts of Yorubaland joined the attack on Ondo,⁵⁴ thus marking the beginning of the war, which destroyed Ondo town.

During the Ondo civil war, Arilekolasi's slaves also received support from some Ondo freeborn and chiefs. Indeed as we have seen with Ife, it is not impossible that divisions among Ondo chiefs encouraged the slaves to seek advantages for themselves. Disgruntled Ondo elements used the chaos to settle scores with their rivals, thereby joining the despoliation of their town.

Why were Ondo elements interested in the destruction of their towns? Apart from an obvious constitutional crisis and social tension between slaves and slave owners, the pattern of the rebellion showed some economic dimension. The northern Yoruba wars

⁵¹ Lovejoy, "Slave Control".

⁵² See 'Statement by Modakeke man,' CMS (Y) 1/7/5, NAI. In 1898, the Travelling Commissioner at Ibadan arranged a deal by which Ife and Modakeke could exchange slaves at the payment of redemption fee of 12 bags of cowries. See Travelling Commissioner's journal, December 17, 1898, IbaProf 3/6, NAI. On Okeigbo see R. Julian M. Clarke, 'Agricultural Production in a Rural Yoruba Community,' PhD, London, 1979, pp. 63-78 and Laray Denzer, *Folayegbe M. Akintunde-Ighodalo: A Public Life* (Ibadan: Sam Bookman Publishers, 2001).

⁵³ His latter history tends to suggest that he was a freeborn who joined the rebellion.

⁵⁴ Mercenaries who took part on Okeigbo's side included Akinlalu and Odo from Ibadan and Ifewara respectively. Interview with Chief Felicia Akintunde-Ighodalo.

turned Ondo into a highway to the coast bringing traders and slaves, and perhaps refugees. This shift in the direction of trade routes encouraged ambitious men who desired more participation either by relocating their economic bases or turning to warfare. It is in this sense that we should see the movement of Arilekolasi' slaves from Iperindo to Ife road, and Ile-Ife's expansion into Ondo territory. On the other hand, the interests of free trade were in potential conflict with the interests of the Oba. Instead his ruling policy had always been protectionist and monopolistic. Rather than concede a part of the trade to his chiefs, Arilekolasi brought in foreign supporters to reinforce his control. While in the early nineteenth century, the possession of 380 slaves by the Osemawe was considered staggering, similar or higher numbers were not uncommon in the 1870s. Therefore the importance of large slaveholding was not lost on Ondo chiefs. Economic power meant political power especially since all but a few of the over 50 chieftaincy titles were open to all citizens. Hence, it was easy for rich personalities to buy titles and for junior titleholders to assume higher positions. Thus it could be assumed that those who lost out in the commercial political power struggle were at the forefront of the anti-Arilekolasi movement. Those who wanted the maintenance of the status quo joined the revolting slaves.

Owing to the different motives of the rebels, there was an evident split in their camp from about 1866. Kulajolu agreed to be elected the Odunwo (Ondo's fourth highest office) and to fight against his former allies.⁵⁵ From his action it is possible to interpret him as a soldier of fortune, or someone who might have lost a previous chieftaincy contest, and therefore seized on the crisis as a means of revenge. According to Phillips "there were instances when one or two of their own chiefs made a common cause with the already powerful enemies and destroyed their own people."⁵⁶ Thus as soon as Kulajolu abandoned the rebels, he met stiff resistance from Ago, the new rebel leader, who carried out more raids on Ondo.⁵⁷ The wars destroyed Ondo and as it progressed many Ondos even built shelters in the woods where they thought they could hide safely from the insurrectionists.⁵⁸ A party under Osemawe Osungbedelola fled to Igbado while his chiefs escaped to villages such as Oke-Opa, Erinla, Ewegbin, Ateu and Iwoye.⁵⁹ From then on, the war turned into guerrilla operations, with few pitched battles, but several raids and kidnappings. Okeigbo continued her predatory activities against Ondo, raiding well into the northern half of Ondo and capturing trade around River Oni.

As the war dragged on, more warriors from Ile-Ife joined the rebels at Okeigbo. Because the wars/skirmishes were going on simultaneously with the Ife-Modakeke crisis, the influx of Ife elements into Oke-Igbo increased rapidly between 1850 and 1886. To

⁵⁵ Adeyemi, Ondo Kingdom, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Phillips, 'Address delivered at missionary meeting held in the schoolroom, Faji, Lagos February 28, 1879, Phillips 1/3/3, NAI.

⁵⁷ The role of Ago and the intensity of attacks must have been so important that the Okeigbo-Ondo wars have since been known as the Ago wars. See Adeyemi, Ondo Kingdom, pp. 29-32. Ondo tradition suggests that Ago became the rebel leader in 1866 cf. Rasheed Fawehinmi, Makers of Ode-Ondo Parts 1-3, vol. 1 (Italy: Tipolitografia di Borgosesia, 1992), p. 27.

⁵⁸ The dates tally with the presence of Ondo liberated slaves in Sierra Leone. An informant who was enslaved around 1841 put the number of Ondos in Sierra Leone in 1848 at about 30. See Sigismund Koelle's Linguistic Inventory in Curtin and Vansina, "Sources of the Nineteenth Century Atlantic Slave Trade," p. 196.

⁵⁹ Adeyemi, Ondo Kingdom, pp. 8-10.

many of the new immigrants, the Ondo crisis provided not only an escape from the pressures at home, but also an opportunity to enrich themselves through banditry. The greatest beneficiary, however, was Aderinsoye, who used the opportunity to build a strong political and economic base towards the realization of his ultimate ambition of becoming the Ooni of Ife. Unfortunately when he was elected to the throne in 1880, he could not return to Ife because of the continued conflict between Ife and Modakeke.

The fall of Ondo witnessed an outward migration of Ondo slaves towards Okeigbo, Ijebu and Ikale. Consequently, prominent Ondo chiefs, among them chiefs Lisa Ogedengbe and Ayadi Edun (later Lisa), like the Oyo chiefs of the 1830s, established a framework for the reacquisition of their lost territories and defense of existing towns. One of the crucial decisions reached by the Ondo elite was that Ondo should seek assistance from Ilesa against Okeigbo. In return, Ondo would allow Ijesa traders to have free access to Benin, Ijebu and coastal markets. Since Ondo could not overpower Okeigbo, it turned southwards against the Ikale and Idoko for slave raiding.

While the people of Ondo lived in exile, they benefited from the successes of Ibadan in Ijesa, Ekiti and Akoko districts. Located on a major trade route, Ondo received slaves through Ibadan, Ijebu, Ijesa and Benin traders. More slaves were also supplied in the 1880s as a result of the Kiriji and local wars in Ekiti. In fact, slaves from these towns were specifically sold to Ondo markets.⁶⁰ Therefore, the patterns of Ondo wars and commerce ultimately influenced the ethnic identity of slaves in the settlement.

Warfare and trade enriched Ondo chiefs, and by the 1870s, a socio-economic system strongly influenced by slavery had developed. The average size of slave holdings in the large households was about 20, but there were warlords and ranking chiefs who had over 100 slaves. In the 1840s, Arilekolasi's slaves were estimated at 380 but in 1875, the slaves and other clients of Edun were estimated at about 800. Half of Edun's dependants were his full time soldiers, whom he grouped into platoons. Each soldier had two guns, while each platoon head had five guns.⁶¹ Other Ondo Chiefs such as Sara who died in 1875 had a farm filled with his slaves while his successor who died in March 1877 had about 100 slaves.⁶²

Warfare, Banditry and Rebellion: Ethnicity and Slave Recruitment in Northeastern Yorubaland, 1820-1893

Eastern Yorubaland also felt the impact of its powerful eastern neighbor, Benin. When Benin invaded Ekiti between 1818-1823, the aim was to quell provincial revolt and regain control over the region's economy. Indeed by reasserting control over the trade routes, which linked it with Yorubaland, Benin strengthened the position of its long distance traders, the Ekhengbo (from Ekhen Egbo) (ekhen, traders; egbo, forest).⁶³ Akure and Benin traditions agree that the invasion of Akure was precipitated by a commercial dispute following an attack on a Benin tobacco trader, Ogonto, who was accused of violating an Akure law. Even though the information is scanty, it is possible to situate the

⁶⁰ Intelligence Report on Ikere District, para 32.

⁶¹ Charles Young, journal, June 9, 1875, CA2/098, CMS.

⁶² Young, journal, July 11, 1875 and Phillips, journal, March 30, 1877, Phillips collection, KDML. See also Clarke, 'Agricultural Production', pp. 81-86.

⁶³ Royal Gold Coast Gazette, 1, 21, March 25, 1823; Egharevba, History of Benin, pp. 27-34 and Akintoye, 'The North-eastern Yoruba Districts and the Benin Kingdom,' JHSN, 4, 4, 1969, pp. 539-553.

Benin invasion at this time and the economic dispute at its root, within the context of the rise in the supply of slaves by the wars in Yorubaland and Hausaland. Benin traders would have desired to tap into the northern Yoruba slave fields as well as send foreign goods into the interior. They would have also wanted alternative markets, even if temporary, to counterbalance the disruptive effect of the Nupe political crisis on Benin's trade with the Niger. Consequently, Benin soldiers, under Ologbosere Imaran and Ezemo Erebo, carried out punitive expeditions, which left so much destruction that the fear of Benin lingered on till the early years of colonial occupation. Several Ekiti, Akoko and Owo towns were sacked and in them were created Benin colonies under the Balekale (consuls).⁶⁴

With the victory, Benin reasserted its control over trade in Ekiti, Owo and Akoko, and Benin enclaves in Owo, Akure, Ikere and Ado-Ekiti became the nexus of trade between Benin and Yorubaland. Both Akure and Idanre traditions agree that owing to Benin commercial activities, a nineteenth century ruler, Deji Gbogi and an influential woman, Olokoju both of Akure founded Alade village/market (near Idanre) as a meeting point for Ekiti, Idanre, Ondo, Owo, Ijebu, Benin and Ijesa traders.⁶⁵ Imported items such as guns, salt and metal implements from Benin were sold as far as Ilesa, Ekiti and Ilorin. This earned the Ekhengbo the distinction of being called the "first long-distance traders in Ekiti." Although the Akure king's list seems to put Igbogi in an earlier century, the reference to the importation of guns would put his reign in the mid-nineteenth century. Most significant was that commercial metal products point to the position of Akure as a regional market.⁶⁶ As we shall show in chapter four, Benin traders undermined direct commercial contacts between Ekiti and Ondo for a greater part of the century.

Apart from Benin, there were also invasions from Ibadan and Ilorin. Beginning from the mid-1840s, two lines of attack were directed at northeastern Yorubaland. Around this time, remnants of the Oyo elite had agreed on three major policies: recovery of territories already lost to the Muslims of Ilorin, the protection of 'Yorubaland' (Old Oyo) from external aggression, and the conquest of new territories. Ibadan and Ijaye were to implement these policies in the eastern and western provinces respectively.⁶⁷ To achieve its target, Ibadan, in whose jurisdiction eastern Yorubaland belonged, undertook periodic campaigns in Ijesaland, Igbomina and Ekiti from about 1844 to 1876.

Ibadan's intervention in the internal affairs of eastern Yorubaland commenced with Ilorin raids into the region. Emir Abdusalam (1823-1842), Shitta (1842-1860) and Subeirun (1860-1865) attacked and conquered towns in Ife, Osun, Ijesa, Igbomina and

⁶⁴ Akintoye, Revolution and Power Politics, pp. 25-30; Intelligence report on Ogotun district, para. 30, CSO 26/29762, NAI; J. A. Mackenzie, 'Report on Owo', 1927 enclosed in Intelligence report on Owo and Ifon districts (Joseph Harold Beeley, 1934), para. 4 and 41, CSO 26/ 29956, NAI; Intelligence Report on Ikere District (N. A. C. Weir, 1933), para. 4, 28-31, CSO 26/29799, NAI; Intelligence report on Akure district, para 19-21, CSO 26/30014, NAI; A. O. Oguntuyi, The History of Ado Ekiti (Ado-Ekiti: Bamigboye Press, 1978), pp. 30-32 and History of Ekiti (Ibadan: Bisi Books, 1979), pp. 65-68. Egharevba says the trader was the wife of the Benin consul to Akure, History of Benin, pp. 45-48.

⁶⁵ Meeting of Akure and Idanre chiefs at Alade market chaired by S. M. Wood, District Commissioner for Ondo, September 19, 1912, Ondo Prof 1/1/843, NAI.

⁶⁶ Intelligence report on Akure district, p. 18, CSO 26/30014, NAI.

⁶⁷ Notes and Letters of Rev. James Buckley Wood, 1881-1896, CMS (Y) 4/1/8, NAI; Johnson, History, pp. 279-284 and Ajayi and Smith, Yoruba Warfare, pp. 67-69.

Ekiti communities.⁶⁸ Ibadan, having been assigned the duty of protecting Oyo's eastern provinces, used the excuse of curtailing Fulani conquest to attack Ijesa and Ekiti towns in the 1840s.⁶⁹ With these wars, Ilorin, Nupe and Ibadan were to become permanently involved in northeastern Yorubaland where they displayed their conflicting imperialism and nationalist ideologies. Ibadan saw her mission against Ilorin as one meant to protect 'Yorubaland' as well as to recreate the collapsed Oyo kingdom. Ilorin on the other hand saw her mission as one partly geared towards the promotion of Islam and the Sokoto Caliphate.⁷⁰ Thus eastern Yorubaland became an arena to resolve the unfinished business of the collapse of Oyo.

As Ibadan and Ilorin's intervention exposed the military weakness of the small, numerous and 'populous' polities of northeastern Yorubaland, soldiers and freebooters turned the entire region into a reservoir from where slaves and materials could be derived or exploited.⁷¹ By the 1850s, northeastern Yorubaland had become a region targeted for frequent slave raids and economic exploitation. Studies by Akintoye, Awe and Falola have shown that Ibadan, by this period, had emerged as the most powerful Yoruba state whose economic structure had come to rest strongly on the use of slave labor. The colonies, on the other hand, served as places to be levied with taxes and tribute. It is against this background that one should view the wars and slave raiding in the northeast between 1850 and 1876.⁷²

As we have shown above, one of the major consequences of the rise of Ibadan was the commencement of an era of total warfare. Some of the slaves and clients (of eastern Yoruba origin) of Ibadan warlords began to return home to launch their own military adventures. Lacking the military sophistication of Ibadan, some of the returnees were essentially freebooters, brigands and kidnappers profiting from raids. The emergence of local brigands revolutionized the political and economic landscape of eastern Yorubaland. Indeed, the slaves that were generated by these brigands formed the bulk of those who were fed into the local markets.⁷³

In Ekiti, the local acquisition of slaves did not commence on any large scale until the 1870s. This was because the region until 1876 served as a slave reservoir to its strong neighbors. The need, however, for a more efficient military organization to combat slave raiders, together with the increased opportunities for looting resulted in the appearance of

⁶⁸ Ivan F. Mustain, 'A Political History of Ilorin in the Nineteenth Century', MPhil, University of Ibadan, 1978; Intelligence reports on Ado district, p. 20, CSO 26/29734 vol. 1, NAI and Owo and Ifon districts, p. 15, CSO 26/29956, NAI.

⁶⁹ Akintoye, Revolution and Power Politics, pp. 44-45, Johnson, History, 310-312.

⁷⁰ Hinderer to Henry Venn, April 12, 1854, CA2/049, CMS; Johnson, History, pp. 294-296, 318-320 and Akinyele, Iwe Itan Ibadan, pp. 54-63.

⁷¹ Intelligence reports on Efon district (1935), p. 10, CSO 26/6/30169, NAI; Itaji district (by N. A. C. Weir, 1934), para. 18, CSO 26/29800, NAI and Johnson, History, p. 323.

⁷² The oriki (praise poems) of Chiefs Ibikunle and Ogunmola, two Ibadan warlords between 1851 and 1867, contain reference to their successes in the 1851-1855 raids on Ekiti. See Akinyele, Iwe Itan Ibadan, pp. 58-63. Ekiti towns mentioned in these oriki include Aramoko, Ijero, Otun, Ikogosi, Ipoti, Efon, Omu-Ijelu and Iyapa (now Ayetoro).

⁷³ Such warlords or brigands include Olajubu, Koloko, Oderinlo, Ayorinde Aje, Ajobo and Abayomi from Ibadan; Esubiyi of Ayede; Aduloju, Ogunmonakan, Ogunbulu Ala and Akogun Irona of Ado; Fabunmi of Okemesi, Faboro of Ido, Olugbosun of Egosi; Aderinsoye (Derin) and Ago of Okeigbo; Ogedengbe, Omole and Arimoro of Ilesa; Lisa Ogedengbe and Edun of Ondo and Aduwo, Ajo and Ole of Ikale/Mahin/Ijo.

local professional warriors. These soldiers in turn divided their operations between the service of their towns and free-lance activities.

The careers of eastern Yoruba brigands often began with highway robbery or kidnapping. Some of their captives were sold for guns and powder and others kept as soldiers. Their successes attracted other wayward young men. For example, Esubiyi established a camp, named Ayede on Itaji territory around 1850, from where he carried out raids into Akoko and Iyagba districts. By the mid 1850s, he had created an Ayede 'kingdom' which included parts of Ekiti and Iyagba and he received the praise title of "Àtá, Olú odò, agbónà kankan. Ò s'òkò Ìyàgbà, s'òkò Àkókó" (Ata, the king of rivers, which floods the roads with its waters. Lord of Iyagba and Akoko).⁷⁴ His successes attracted brigands from Ibadan, Ekiti and Ijesa into Akoko, Owo and Ora villages. Their operations in these areas earned them the title "eni tí Àkókó n'bí omo sìn l'ese òkè (he whom the Akoko worship/serve with their children in the valley). One of the freebooters, Ayorinde Aje from Ibadan was also praised as erinmi l'ódeOwo, a pè wá yan omo Àkókó (the hippopotamus of Owo, who is called to choose from among the children of Akoko).⁷⁵ Indeed by 1880, a substantial part of the population of Aduloju's and Akogun's wards of Idemo and Irona in Ado were composed of slaves and refugees from Southern Ekiti, Akoko and Owo while the same population was represented at Ogedengbe's base at Iju.⁷⁶

Slave holding in Ekiti, although slightly smaller than Ondo was large enough to alter political and economic calculations. Warlords like Falowo, Akogun and Aduloju had over 400, 200 slaves and over 150 female slaves respectively.⁷⁷ Another rich soldier was Olugbosun of Oye, who while lobbying Ogedengbe to join the Kiriji alliance in 1877, promised to pay him the price of two slaves for every slave that he might lose in the war.⁷⁸ The slave estate of an Ikere chief included about 80 women. Court records and redemption papers reveal that many people, including women also had slaves numbering from a few to about 100.⁷⁹ Large households, as we have seen in Ile-Ife and Ondo also increased the influence and authority of Ekiti soldiers. In most Ekiti towns, the leading soldiers were admitted into the kings' inner councils, where they became consultants on foreign policies. The increased political profile of the military chief of Omu-Ekiti earned him the cognomen 'A pa bírí w'lé Owá' (he who enters the king's house without permission)⁸⁰ and Ado traditions, with reference to the 1860s and 1880s, talked about mutual disrespect between military and civil chiefs.

⁷⁴ Intelligence Reports on Ayede and Ishan districts, CSO 26/31014 and CSO 26/30983, NAI; Historical Notes on Illa, Ishan, Iye and Ayede, Ikole, Ilesha, Osi, Obo, Awtun and Ajasse, IloProf 324/1917, NAK; Diary of James Thomas, October 11, 1863, CA2/038, CMS; May, "Journey in the Yoruba and Nupe"; Johnson, History, pp. 308-22; Perham and Bull (eds.), Diaries of Lord Lugard; Olufemi Olaoba, "The Ata Dynasty in Aiyede Kingdom 1850-1880: An Experiment in Traditional Political Culture", African Notes, 14, 1-2, 1990 and Andrew Apter, Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Esubiyi targeted Ilorin traders who traveled to the Egosi kolanuts market. Cf Oguntuyi, History of Ekiti, p. 69.

⁷⁵ Akinyele, Iwe Itan Ibadan, pp. 283-84. On Yoruba oríkì and hero worship see Karin Barber, "Money, Self Realization and the Person in Yoruba Texts," pp. 205-224.

⁷⁶ Oguntuyi, History of Ado, p. 39-40, 87 and Akure Intelligence Report, pp. 10-27.

⁷⁷ Oguntuyi, History of Ado, pp. 34 and 44.

⁷⁸ Akintoye, "Economic Background", p. 47.

⁷⁹ Criminal and Civil Record Book, November 1, 1910, pp. 203-205, Ondo Div 7/2, NAI.

⁸⁰ Interviews with Benjamin Akinyemi and Gabriel Omojola, Omu-Ekiti, July 21, 2001.

Slave holding was not limited to men. Many women also invested their resources in the accumulation of slaves. However, most Ondo women had few slaves and those with ten slaves or more were described as rich.⁸¹ Unlike western Yorubaland, Hausa slaves were rarely used. As late as 1890, there were very few of them and the only reference to Hausa slaves was in 1878 when Lisa Edun was reported to have three.⁸²

Warfare, Population Movement and the Formation of a Yoruba Identity

The Yoruba wars changed the demographic, political and ethnic composition of communities. Many villages suffered considerable population loss, forcing survivors from several villages to come together and establish new towns or resettled in safe places. The demographic effects of the wars were so severe that they were retained in popular traditions euphemistically as sparing only ‘three persons and a dog’ in Aramoko and ‘six people and a dog’ each in Itaji and Omu Ekiti.⁸³ In spite of the Yoruba crises, or what in Christian Mission papers is referred to as the ‘age of confusion’, the Yorubas “struggled to hold onto what they could of old identities and patterns of living”. As they fled into safety or driven into slavery, ‘they carried the springs of social identity with them in their names, praise poems, body marks, food taboos, dialects and languages, political and religious practices. In their new locations they sort out others who shared or recognised these markers’.⁸⁴ Consequently, by the end of the nineteenth century, most eastern Yoruba towns were aggregates of people from diverse communities and regions, with particular quarters occupied by those who shared several layers of common historical or cultural identities.⁸⁵ In some instances, people escaping insecurity, ex-slaves and traders settled in hitherto unoccupied territories, by seizure, purchase and negotiations as new colonists. Attacks on northern Ekiti and Okun districts induced a southward movement of population such that people who were originally Nupe, Yagba and Ijumu migrated into Ekiti. For example, around 1844, the remnants of Iye population from Yagba moved into Ekiti where they established the town of Ayede (this is where the world has pushed us).⁸⁶ Similarly, Omu an Ijumu town and remnants of two other Yagba villages relocated into an Ekiti forest hitherto used as hunting ground by Ijelu farmers, who had also relocated from Ijumu in the 1810s. Indeed, Omu and Ijelu, which used to be separated by a distance of about 70 miles in 1840, were by 1860 separated by less than two miles. In the winter of 1875 Ibadan soldiers had mistaken the two villages for one.⁸⁷ In the same vein, Nupe raids drove the villages of Iye, Iporo, Ipere and Epe southwards to Ijero district of Ekiti

⁸¹ Young, journal, February 26, 1876 and Moses Emmanuel Lijadu, diary, January 31, 1900, Lijadu Family papers (LFP) 2/1/7, NAI.

⁸² Phillips, Address delivered at missionary meeting, Faji schoolroom, Lagos (Faji address), February 28, 1879, Phillips 1/3/3, NAI and Phillips to Ven. Arch., (about March 1890), Phillips 1/1/3, NAI.

⁸³ Intelligence reports on Ayede, CSO 26/31014, NAI; Ara, CSO 26/29834, NAI and Itaji, CSO 26/29800, NAI.

⁸⁴ Peel, *Religious Encounter*, pp. 49-50.

⁸⁵ On Yoruba warfare and ethnicity, see Ajayi, “Nineteenth Century Wars and Yoruba Ethnicity”, pp. 9-19; Isola Olomola, “Demographic Effects”, pp. 371-379; Oguntomisin, “Refugees” pp. 381-398; Niyi Oladeji, “Language in Ethnic Rivalries: An Analysis of Ethnocentric Use of Yoruba in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland”, pp. 451-460 and Moyo Oladeji, “Yoruba Facialographic Art and Oyo Expansion”, pp. 487-496, in *War and Peace*.

⁸⁶ May, “Journey in the Yoruba and Nupe” and Intelligence Report on Itaji, para. 3.

⁸⁷ In Government circles, Omu is referred to as ‘Omujelu’. See Coronation Speech by Oba Ajibade Iyanda, the Owajumu of Omu Ekiti, May 27, 1989.

and Iye tradition has it that the town was peopled by remnants of population from twenty-two villages.⁸⁸ In Akure district, refugees from Akoko, Ekiti and Owo joined forces with the people of Ode Oja to form the new town of Ita Ogbolu.

Immigrants into Ekiti also included traders, soldiers, administrators and their dependants from Benin. These colonists set up farm in the forest straddling the Akure-Idanre border and occupied what is now called the Ogbon Ado (Edo quarter) of Ado-Ekiti. Similarly slaves captured by the Benin from some Ado villages and some refugees were settled at Ikere where they established Ogotun, Afao, Are, Iluomoba and Agbado quarters, all named after their previous towns. Indeed as late as 1933, Ado emigrants still constituted one-fifth of Ikere's population.⁸⁹ Population mixture in the far northeastern districts of Okun, Akoko, and Owo along the Yoruba, Edo, Nupe, Igbira and Igala border was more complex. Refugees from neighboring districts moved into this area and formed semi-autonomous communities and retained their languages or dialects.⁹⁰ A study of Ipetu-Ijesa on the Ekiti-Ijesa border, and Igbajo town on the Oyo/Ijesa border shows that a good part of their population came as a result of refugees and slaves from Yoruba, Benin and Nupe towns. At Igbajo settlers from Ekiti and Nupe towns constitute 18 compounds or 17.5 percent of the town's 103 compounds.

Nearer the coast, the hitherto Idoko, Ifore and Oka groups were totally assimilated into Ondo and Ijebu, by 1886, the only sentiments left of them were the rituals associated with Orisa Idoko and the installation of Ondo king.⁹¹ Although Okeigbo was originally Ondo, by 1860, its inhabitants were predominantly Ife and Owu and settlers from other Yoruba districts.⁹² Its most important orisa were Ife's Oranmiyan and Oramfe and Owu's Anlugbua. In the Mahin/Ikale district, the major demographic shift took place with the constant immigration of coastal people, traders, returning liberated slaves after 1870 and rubber tappers and Urhobo palm oil farmers in 1890s.

⁸⁸ Intelligence Report on Ijero District (by T. B. Bovell-Jones A. D. O., 1936), p. 7, Ondo Prof 1/1/906, vol. 1, NAI

⁸⁹ See Intelligence Reports on Ado District of Ekiti Division (1933) by N. A. C. Weir, CSO 26/1/29734, NAI; Ogotun District of Ekiti Division, Ondo Province (1934) by Weir, CSO 26/1/29762, NAI; Ikere District of Ekiti Division, Ondo Province (1933) by Weir CSO 26/1/29799, NAI, pp. 2-24 and Oguntuyi, History of Ado-Ekiti, pp. 30-33.

⁹⁰ Some Akoko villages speak languages that are distinctly Nupe, Igala, Yoruba or Edo.

⁹¹ Adeyemi, Ondo Kingdom, pp. 15, 48, 71-72; Johnson, History, p. xx and Peter Lloyd, "Osifekunde of Ijebu" in African Remembered, pp. 222-287. Of the 33 slaves that were redeemed by the Lagos Consul in 1860, two were Idoko. See Brand to Russell, December 31, 1860, FO 84/1115, PRO. Further immigration is attested to by the expansion of Orisa cults in Ondo in the 1870s. Rev. Charles Phillips described the pluralism of Ondo religion thus: "Ondos are purely heathens. Few Mohammedans. I have only seen five resident Mohammedans in the whole country since I came in 1877 three of those are Ondo slaves and they do not scruple to join in the idolatrous rites of their Master. The two remaining are Ondos, a mother and son. The mother had been in slavery in the Yoruba country and returned to Okeigbo only last year (1878). Ondos have many idols in common with other Yoruba tribes e.g. Ifa, Ogun, Sango. It is remarkable that the priests of those idols are chiefly slaves from the interior countrys [sic]". Address delivered at missionary meeting held in the schoolroom, Faji, Lagos, February 28, 1879, Phillips 1/3/3, NAI.

⁹² Phillips, journal, January 29, 1977.

Table 2.1: Ethnic Composition of Eastern Yoruba Villages⁹³

Ijesa Families	Origin	Ekiti Families	Origin
IGBAJO		Odigbo of Igede	Erijiyan
Obala OkeOja	Ado-Ekiti	Uri of Igede	Erijiyan
Aworo Ogun & Aro	Ado	Asawo of Igede	Oye
Obala Igbajo	Aramoko	Ekerin of Esure	Oyo
Leise	Aramoko	Ubamewa of Igbemo	Ise
Eyesorun	Aramoko	Alakoto of Ode	Ise
Saloro	Ijero	Uro of Ode	Ikole
Eesawe	Ijero	Ulisa of Agbado	Ise
Ese & Eleyele	Ijero	Emure of Agbado	Emure
Olodu & Obaloja	Ijero	Emure of Owo	Emure
Elemikan	Ire	Idogun of Lasigidi	Akoko
Osunji & Anigbedu	Ido	Epinmi of Lasigidi	Epinmi
Agbore	Okemesi	Isije of Egbe	Ogbagi
Lowakan	Owo	Abon of Igbaraodo	Ilesa
Odofin Ikan	Efon	Itaogbolu	Owo, Akoko, Ekiti
Aro Mayan	Nupe	Igbogun of Iju	Benin
Enuromi & Oloje	Nupe	Ogotun of Ikere	Ogotun
Kojodun Eyindi	Nupe	Are of Ikere	Are
		Igbemo of Ikere	Igbemo
IPETU-IJESA		Agbado of Ikere	Agbado
Oke-Owa	Omoo-Ekiti	Afao of Ikere	Afao
Apoti	Obo-Ekiti	Idemo of Ado	Akoko/Owo
Ikeji-Ile	Apa-Ekiti	Ogbonado of Ado	Benin
Elebedo	Ileoluji	Ikoyi of Ikole	Oyo
Apare & Odo-Ise	Efon-Ekiti	Ijesa-Isu of Ikole	Ijesa
Elekute	Aramoko	Ayesan of Ondo	Ijesa
Ejemu	Benin	Egbeoba of Ayede	Ikole
Osolo & Ojoko	Idanre	Ijoka of Akure	Owo
Odole	Aramoko	Oritagun of Akure	Benin
Onikotun	Ogotun	Ijemikin of Akure	Benin
		Eyinke of Akure	Benin
		Igiso of Akure	Benin

The ‘Yorubanization’ of modern eastern Yoruba districts accelerated rapidly after the opening of the Ondo trade route in 1870. As we shall show in chapter 4, the route became a conduit for travelers, literacy and the ‘new Yoruba identity’ from the interior and Lagos, and ‘Yoruba’ unity tended to become its ideology. Except in Ekiti and Akoko, which suffered from Oyo/Ibadan imperialism, there was not much opposition to the spread of this ideology. From these examples, it is clear that population movement

⁹³ Ademola Fasiku, *Igbajo and Its People* (Lagos: Writers’ Fraternity Ltd, 1995), pp. 18-20, 26; James Olatonade Ogunjulugbe, *The History of Ipetu-Ijesa* (Ibadan: University Press PLC, 1993), pp. 95-106 and Intelligence Reports on Ado District, CSO 26/1/29734, NAI; Ikere District, CSO 26/1/ 29799, NAI and Akure District, CSO 26/1/30014, NAI.

induced by warfare transformed the ethnic composition of several Yoruba towns and district. From this also derives the creation of a Yoruba ethnic identity, as it currently exists.

In this chapter, I have analyzed how interactions between religion, politics and commerce combined to influence the nineteenth century Yoruba wars. The chapter demonstrates how the complexity and terror of daily life which characterized the nineteenth century resulted in the transformation of Yorubaland. The crises in Oyo spread into eastern Yorubaland through the inflow of soldiers, slaves and traders. Within a short time, crises erupted leading to the rise of military oligarchies, warlords, brigands and power struggles between traders, monarchs and soldiers. The changes undermined monarchical authority and opened up opportunities for the military class. It also led to the reorganization of state structures thereby diffusing power among groups with aristocratic and mercantile origins. The conflicts also increased the scale of militarization, urbanization, commercial rivalry, reconfiguration of ethnic identities and the importance of slavery to commercial production.

These struggles sometimes took the form of slave and ethnic revolts. Historians and fiction writer often refer to the 'idyllic' days of slavery in Yorubaland—the happy docile smiling slaves whose days were devoted to serving their owners and whose nights were spent singing and dancing, but most of the slave owners living side with their by side which agitated slaves knew better. Accounts of Ondo-Okeigbo and Ife-Modakeke conflicts show that slavery could be benign, yet slaves cut throats, burnt houses and destroyed farmsteads. The idea of a rebellion was nothing new to Yoruba slaves. In fact many of these slaves were victims of the Yoruba wars, which as we have shown above were partly initiated by the Hausa slave uprising of 1817. Others were victims of the fallout of the Yoruba wars.

Despite this apparent diversity and even extreme disunity, the effects of the slave trade and warfare and the constant movements of peoples had produced so complex an ethnic admixture that it became impossible to draw meaningful ethnic boundaries. These factors complement the factors of wide linguistic and cultural connections which evolved over centuries. There were intermarriages, population movement and fellow feeling among people from different towns and districts (supra-tribal networks) among the Yoruba groups and between them and their non-Yoruba speaking neighbors. In all this intermixture was the basis of cultural affinity. Thus the view that Yoruba ethnicity or Yoruba 'ethnic' consciousness evolved in the diaspora and was imported by diasporic Yorubas would need to be reconsidered.⁹⁴ Instead it has been shown that a complex web of cultural intermixture, and wide ranging social and ethnic relationships were been woven by events which took place simultaneous with the activities of the diasporic Yoruba. By the time Samuel Crowther and other CMS missionaries decided to write

⁹⁴ Peel, "The Cultural Work of Yoruba Ethnogenesis" in Falola (ed.), *Pioneer, Patriot and Patriarch: Samuel Johnson and the Yoruba People* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1993), pp. 65-75; Law, "Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: 'Lucumi' and 'Nago' as Ethnonyms in West Africa", *History in Africa*, 24, 1997, pp. 205-219 and Lorand Matory, "The English Professors of Brazil: On the Diasporic Roots of the Yoruba Nation", *Comparative Study in Society and History*, 41, 1, 1999, pp. 72-103. For another view see 'Biodun Adediran, "Yoruba Ethnic Groups or a Yoruba Ethnic Group? A Review of the Problem of Ethnic Identification", *Africa: Revista do Centro do Estudos Africanos de USP*, 7, 1984, pp. 57-70. Some scholars have also rightly recognised the role of Islam in the 'making of the Yoruba'. See Peel, *Religious Encounter and Lovejoy*, "The Yoruba Factor in Atlantic Slave Trade" (forthcoming).

about 'Yoruba History', the region possessed the potentials for some semblance of unity and ideological communication that were both meaningful and effective. In other words most of the prescriptions by Crowther's team could be understood and accepted by the majority of the peoples in the region because the new ideology drew upon existing commonly shared beliefs.