COLONIALISM AND INTERCOMMUNITY RELATIONS: THE IFON-ILOBU EXAMPLE

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I

One major consequence of the different waves of migrations in Yorubaland up to the nineteenth century was the emergence of settlements in different places and at different times. Some of these settlements were naturally located close to one another, and, as they expanded, they had to struggle among themselves or with their host communities for the control of land and other resources, as well as seek to retain their separate identity. The desire for the control of land, exercise of dominance, as well as for separate identity, with its attendant benefits resulted in mutual distrust and antagonism and, in extreme cases, degenerated into open conflict. The cases of Ife and Modakeke, Oyo and Akinmorin, and Ogbomoso and Orile-Igbon are relevant examples.[1]

The case of Ifon and Ilobu communities is especially peculiar. Different groups migrated into the same region at different times and settled there because of an availability of arable land for agricultural practice, availability of streams and rivers, relatively secured location, and perhaps the discovery of mineral resources like rock salt. Despite the close location of these two communities and the similarity in their customs and language, their relationship has not been cordial. The closeness of these two communities, perhaps a factor in their growth and expansion, resulted in the struggle for the ownership, control, and usage of land. It also resulted in a desire to seek or exercise dominance and separate community identities, with each having recourse to superior histori-

[1]The literature on intercommunity conflicts in Nigeria is rich. For instance, see various chapters in Onigu Otite and Isaac Olawale Albert, eds., *Community Conflicts in Nigeria: Management, Resolution, and Transformation* (Ibadan, 1999).

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cal tradition. These developments have produced mutual distrust and antagonism, resulting in the desire of the communities to seek ways of asserting itself from the grip of domination.

Colonialism affected different aspects of life in Nigeria. The process of pacification and the establishment of colonial administration, while being aimed at maintaining order such that colonial policies and programs could be implemented, had profound implications on existing intergroup structures. Thus one effect of colonialism was the reordering of intercommunity relations, which created a demand for their management. One of the major preoccupations of the colonial government in Nigeria was the management of intercommunity relations. In some cases the management only brought temporary solution, as the communities soon afterwards resumed hostility or antagonism at the slightest provocation. This was the case with Ifon and Ilobu communities. Looking at this case can help to explain why the problems that characterized the relations between the two communities outlived colonial rule.

II

There is a continuing debate on the nature and impacts of colonialism on intercommunity relations in Africa. One dimension of the discourse has been to view colonialism as a destabilizing factor in otherwise peacefully coexisting traditional communities. In this sense, the territorial reconfigurations, modernization, and cultural denigration, which were direct consequences of colonial conquests and pacification, produced a revision of the existing social, economic, and political *status quo*. The culture of violence and divide-and-rule, important means of colonial control, can account for the volatile nature of contemporary intercommunity relations in many parts of Africa. The challenge of the post-colonial state has been to manage the various dislocations of the colonial legacy and to resolve the crises arising therefrom.

On the other hand, the argument of a "merrie" traditional state is hardly sustainable.[2] Many of the modern conflicts have origins that antedate colonization. The growth of population and evolving modernization or westernization were already producing adjustments or maladjustments in so-called traditional societies. Be that as it may, modern conflicts have

[2]The myth of merrie Africa imagines a precolonial Africa characterized by perfectly peaceful political, social, and economic developments. See A.G. Hopkins. *An Economic History of West Africa*. (London, 1973), 10.

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a multitude of causes. The purpose of intercommunity relations discourse is to identify those causes and their interplay.

One feature of precolonial Yorubaland was the complex hierarchy of states and communities, with princely and primogenital communities being accorded more reverence than other communities, including commercial ones. While the Yoruba civil wars may have reordered this conception, with Ibadan's emergence, in reality the concept survived. On the other hand, the impact of colonialism was more profound in denigrating known conventions of intercommunity relations and traditional order. Various authors have underscored the severity of the colonial impact. For instance, Basil Davidson cites various examples of the colonial impacts and its dislocation of traditional order.[3] The distortion and dislocation of colonialism on intercommunity relations have manifested in conflicts in Niger Delta, Ife, and Modakeke. and many other places in Nigeria.

British involvement in Ifon-Ilobu relations can be traced to the constitution of Oyo Province around 1900. Oyo Province was made up of three divisions, one of which was Ibadan. The Ibadan Division was sub-divided into twelve districts, one of which was Osogbo. The Osogbo District comprised Osogbo, Ifon, Ilobu, Erin, Ofatedo, and Ido-Osun under the headship of the Ataoja of Osogbo.[4] Conflicts and disagreements arose from these arrangements, among them, the argument that the arrangements did not take precolonial historical realities into consideration. Lesser communities were elevated over more primordial principalities. In the case of the Osogbo District Council in particular, the Ataoja's headship of the council was not accepted by Ifon on the ground that he was not a crowned ruler. It was further contended that until 1946, when he assumed an Ife crown, the Ataoja had no historical basis or authority.[5] Similarly the establishment of a Native Court at Ilobu in 1914 under the headship of Olufon was not accepted in Ifon, which considered itself the original settlement in the area, and the Olufon never sat on the court.[6]

[3]Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (Ibadan, 1992); and Adib Rashad, "The Enduring Impact of Imperialism and Colonialism on Africa" (http//www.thermacus garveybbs.com/board/msgs/10098. html-32k 2003), 2.

[4]J.A. Atanda, *The New Oyo Empire: Indirect Rule and Change in Western Nigeria 1894-1934*. (London, 1973), 45-47.

[5]NAI, CSO 26/2 12723 Vol 16, Annual Report of Oyo Province (1946), 15.

[6]Oyo Prof 149, vol. 2, Memorandum from the Assistant District Officer to the Senior resident Oyo Province, 1 March 1932.

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III

The Ifon and Ilobu communities emerged at different times in the same region between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Located north of Osun river, they are presently bounded by Ogbomoso to the north, Ikirun to the east, Ejigbo to the west, and Osogbo and Ede to the south. Evidence suggests that Ifon was the first of the two communities to emerge.[7] The two communities evolved through different stages. Ifon, for instance, was located at different places though within the same region at different times. This led to the emergence of such settlements as Ifon Eega, Ifon-Ere, Ifon-Baale, Ifon-Dile, and Ifon-Osun at different times.[8] In the case of Ilobu, population influx occasioned by pressure from Nupe and the discovery of rock salt, as well as the Fulani depredations in the Odo-Otin area resulted in tremendous population growth between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.[9]

The emergence of Ayonu was a landmark in the relationship between Ifon and Ilobu. Ayonu was the product of the marriage of Olufon Laojo's daughter to the Baale of Iregba. He eventually founded a new dynasty in Ilobu, where he migrated after losing a contest for the vacant stool of Iregba. It would seem that the emergence of Ayonu was the first conscious attempt by the different groups of migrants into Ilobu to organize themselves into a community with an identity different from Ifon.[10] But the link with Ifon could not be obliterated.

The closeness of Ifon and Ilobu resulted in interaction, their claims of divergent and different origins notwithstanding. These interactions resulted in intercommunity relations, with attendant benefits and problems. However it appears that the relationship between the two communities during the precolonial period was generally cordial, and the exchange of basic items could have taken place, particularly at the subsistence level; for instance, Ifon could have participated in the trade in rock salt from Obuotoyo, which was discovered in Ilobu. Similarly, intermarriage between members of the two communities could have taken place. More importantly, the cumulative population strength of the two communities was used to provide collective defense against enemy incursions, particularly in the nineteenth century.

[7]Abimbola Adesoji, "Migrations, Settlements and Inter-Community Relations in Irepodun Communities (now in Osun State,) 1840-1965" (M.Phil., Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, 2003), chapter 3.
[8]Ibid.
[9]Ibid.
[10]Ibid.

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Apart from providing psychological relief from fear of attack,such cooperation translated into something concrete, particularly with the construction of massive protective walls known as Odi Iyalode round the two communities. Available evidence suggests that the walls were constructed by members of the two communities, not to demarcate one community from another but to safeguard the two.[11] The two communities laid claim to being responsible for the construction of the protective walls and sought to use it as line of demarcation in the twentieth century.

Certain factors could be adduced for the type of relationship that existed between Ifon and Ilobu. It could be that, despite the claims of the two communities, both were relatively small in their formative years. In this sense it could not have been possible for the communities to be closer to one another as it is presently.[12] Their movement was therefore curtailed, limiting their relationship not only with their subjects, but also with their neighbors. In addition, land in the precolonial period had no economic value and was in abundance.[13] Ownership and usage would not have generated any disagreement, as they did in the colonial era later. Furthermore, the desire for recognition, position, and power that characterized the colonial and post-colonial period was not common in the precolonial period.

Meanwhile, the Yoruba civil wars provided an opportunity for the involvement of Ibadan in Ifon-Ilobu relations[14] The emergence of Ibadan as a republican military state placed it in a position to intervene in most places and on most issues, even when its interest was not directly affected. In addition to being interested in adventure, Ibadan desired to be the dominant power in Yorubaland, and it succeeded in checkmating Fulani aggression at the battle of Osogbo in 1840. This development, apart from enhancing the military prestige of Ibadan, gave Ibadan a foothold on the Ifon and Ilobu area, where it identified with Ilobu more than Ifon. This could be due to similarity in the way and manner both Ibadan and Ilobu

[11]Iba Prof 1/1 770, Proceedings of the Ikirun Native Court on Ifon-Ilobu Boundary Dispute. 14/9/54 and 22/2/55; Report on Land Inspection of Ifon-Ilobu Boundary 30/9/54 and 312/9/54.

[12]Wale Oyemakinde, "The Impact of Nineteenth Century Warfare on Yoruba Traditional Chieftaincy," *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 9/2(1978), 23-26.

[13]P.C. Lloyd, *Yoruba Land Law*. (London, 1962) 69-94; Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas* (Lagos, 1921), 95-97.

[14]S.A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893* (London, 1971), xviii; I.A. Akinjogbin, "Wars in Yorubaland 1793-1893: An Analytical Categorisation" in idem., ed. *War and Peace in Yorubaland, 1793-1893* (Ibadan, 1998), 40-41.

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emerged. Ibadan for instance, from its foundation in the 1830s had been an all-comer settlement, where achievement and personal bravery were yardsticks for recognition, accommodation, and promotion.[15] Similarly, Ilobu grew from a nucleus occupied by Nupe and Oyo elephant hunters into a composite community populated by different groups of migrants. This was not the case with Ifon, which was a homogeneous society.[16]

Furthermore, Ibadan had disdain for traditional authority and sought to de-emphasize this in different parts of Yorubaland. It was this attitude of Ibadan that led to the destruction of Owu Yingbin around 1834.[17] This same attitude contributed to alienating Ibadan from Ifon and endearing it to Ilobu, since the Olufon was a priest-king who sought to protect his position from strange or contradictory influence. This was not the situation in Ilobu, where the Olobu was a Baale. It was not until 1986 that the Olobu was given the concession of wearing a beaded crown.[18]

The involvement of Ibadan in Ifon-Ilobu relations introduced another party. Ibadan gave recognition and support to Ilobu. It appears that this development formed the basis of the colonial government choice of Ilobu as the base from which its policies and programs spread to other communities in the area, including Ifon. It is not known if Ibadan's involvement produced conflict between Ifon and Ilobu in the precolonial period; it is clear, however, that it laid the basis on which British authority was established.

Meanwhile, the growth in the population of Ilobu (see Table 1) resulted in a decrease in land available for settlement and farming. This in turn resulted in increased awareness and consciousness on the ownership and control of land. This development prepared the ground for the protracted boundary dispute that characterized the relationship between Ifon and Ilobu since the beginning of the colonial period.

[15]Bolanle Awe, "Ibadan, Its Early Beginnings" in P.C. Lloyd, A.L. Mabogunje, and B. Awe, eds., *The City of Ibadan* (Cambridge, 1967), 11-27; Toyin Falola, *The Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial State: Ibadan, 1830-1900.* (Ile-Ife, 1984), 15-34.

[16]Adesoji, "Migrations," 50-57.

[17]Akin Alao, "Two New Owu Settlements" in Toyin Falola and Robin Law, eds., *Warfare and Diplomacy in Precolonial Nigeria* (Madison, 1992), 73-74; Akin Alao, "New Owu Settlement in Yorubaland: a Study of the Social and Demographic Consequences" in Akinjogbin, *War and Peace*, 399-405.

[18]Oyo Prof 1/2813/vol.1. Report of the Oyerinde Committee into the Ilobu Chieftaincy 26 December 1941; Adesoji, "Migrations," 51-52.

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Table I. Population Figures of Ifon and Ilobu on the basis of 1935-36 Tax Nominal Rolls

Community	Adult Males	Estimated Total Population
Ifon	1,101	3,964
Ilobu	2,161	7,779

Source: Intelligence Report on the Osogbo District of Ibadan Division compiled by I.F.W. Schorfield (1936).

IV

Two major issues characterized Ifon-Ilobu relations during the colonial period: land ownership, control, and usage, and the exercise of authority over chieftaincy matters particularly the powers and the limitation of parties concerned. These two factors combined to engender disharmony between Ifon and Ilobu.

A close examination of the traditional Yoruba belief about land and its usage gives a deeper insight into the issues involved in land ownership and control. More importantly, it aids a better understanding of the protracted boundary dispute that characterized Ifon-Ilobu relations during the colonial period. Land among the Yoruba belongs to the community and is held only in trust by the head of the community. As the custodian of land, the community leader decided on the use of land and had the power to allocate it to any family or individual, though without denying communal ownership. Furthermore, land was not sold, but might be granted to outsiders for life and to their heirs in perpetuity. However, where the land granted was under cultivation, the understanding was that the fruit-bearing trees, especially the palm and kola nut trees, were not included in the grant, hence the common expression "the grantee is to look down not up"—that is, he was to confine his attention to plants he had cultivated and not on fruit-bearing trees that antedated his arrival.

In addition, once given, land was never taken back except under special circumstances such as treason, which rendered the grantee an outlaw. Even when left unutilized, if there were marks of occupation on it such as trees planted or a wall built, it could not be taken back without the consent of the occupiers. Land granted to outsiders for specific purposes reverted to the state on the grantee leaving the country.[19]

Land disputes between Ifon and Ilobu, arising from divergent claims, became noticeable in 1917, but it is possible that they started much earlier.

[19]Lloyd, *Yoruba Land Law*, 69-94; Johnson, *History*, 95-97.

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Ifon claimed that as the first settlement in the area, the whole land belonged to it, including the portion on which Ilobu had been settled. The claim of Ifon was supported by the dynastic origin of Ayonu, who had patrilineal affinity with the dynastic group in Ifon. Ilobu, on the other hand, had claimed that it did not take land from any group and that the founding ancestors found virgin land that they exploited for hunting purposes. As far back as 1917, attempts were made to determine the area belonging to the two communities based on accepted tradition. *Alaafin* Onikepe Siyanbola Ladigbolu, on the request of the colonial government, had pronounced that the Olufon ought to have a bigger portion of the land than the Olobu.[20] This formed the basis of subsequent decisions taken by the colonial government on the issue.

However, the pronouncement of Ladigbolu did not put the matter to rest, probably because it did not demarcate areas belonging to the two communities appropriately. The dispute continued, necessitating the further involvement of the colonial government. Acting on the investigation conducted by the District Officer in charge of Ibadan, Captain W.A. Ross, the Resident of Oyo Province insisted that the boundary between Ifon and Ilobu should be the old wall and Ilobu-Oba road to the Oponmolu stream, and that Osolo's land belongs to Ifon.[21]

This decision notwithstanding, the boundary problem between the two communities persisted. The lingering nature of the problem apparently persuaded Ross to conduct another investigation to ascertain the boundary, after which he ruled that

> Osolo's farm belongs to the Olufon and it should be within his boundary. The boundary is the old wall to the point where it cuts the Ilobu-Oba road and from there to the point where it intersects the river Oponmolu which river shall be the boundary to its confluence with the river Erinle.[22]

This demarcation, which came to be recognized as "the Ross Boundary," appeared satisfactory to all parties, and there is no record of further disputation over the boundary until 1953. However, one major clause in the Resident's letter, which perhaps was used by Ilobu to exhume the boundary dispute case with Ifon, was that his decisions were administrative and not judicial. Besides, it was stated that they had no

[20]Oyo Prof 1/1 1695, Letter from District Officer Osogbo to the Resident Oyo Province on Land Dispute between Ifon and Ilobu, 25/5/24.
[21]Ibid.
[22]Oyo Prof 1/1 1695; Letter from Resident, Oyo Province to the District Officer, Osogbo. 11/6/24.

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legally-binding effect. Perhaps this situation caused the Ikirun Native Court that sat from 1953 to 1955 to rule that there had never been a recognized boundary between the two communities.[23] More importantly, it appears that the two communities had different ideas or interpretations of what constituted the Ross boundary. Realizing the implications of the Ross boundary on Ilobu, which appeared not to have been favorable, might also have contributed to precipitating the re-opening of the dispute in 1953.

In 1953 Ilobu instituted a case against Ifon at the Osogbo Native Court on the grounds that Ifon community had trespassed into Ilobu across the boundary so demarcated.[24] Beyond this claim, it would seem that the a new elite emerged in Ilobu who were not satisfied with the Ross boundary of 1924, and this influenced re-opening the case. The case was transferred to the Ikirun Native Court, where the argument of Ilobu was that the court should set a proper and permanent boundary between itself and Ifon. It appears that the issue of who could harvest the palm trees on the disputed land was yet another reason for the resumed contest. It was observed that the court really had no jurisdiction to hear the case, being a land case, but the court hid under the District Officer transfer order to hear and determine the case.

Despite its findings, which identified the Olufon as the original owner of the land, the court ruled that the Olobu could reap the palm trees and exercise all rights of ownership on the land and that neither party should attempt trespass. The court further ruled that lands occupied by farmers from either of the two communities might be retained on the condition that they respected the landlord, who could either be Olobu or Olufon, depending on the farmland occupied. In effect, the court set a boundary different from the Ross boundary of 1924. Specifically, the Olobu was given the right to own the parcel of land

> Commencing from the wall on the main Osogbo-Ogbomoso road along the wall crossing Elentere stream joining the Ilobu-Ilie path and thence straight on to a junction where Ifon to Ilie road intersect and thence to Osun river and straight on to Adara stream on one side, bounded on the next side by the Erinle river and on the other side by the old boundary between the Olobu and the Elerin right up to the old wall on the main Osogbo-Ogbomoso where the boundary started.[25]

[23]Iba Prof 1/1 770, Proceedings of the Ikirun Native Court on Ifon-Ilobu Boundary Dispute 22/2/55.
[24]Ibid.
[25]Ibid.

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The judgment delivered on 22 February 1955 appeared favorable to Ilobu and, not surprisingly, Ifon appealed to the Osun Divisional Appeal Court sitting in Ede. The Osun Divisional Appeal Court found that the Olobu was not specific in his claim, unlike the Olufon. The court also supported the finding of the lower court that the Olufon was the original owner of the land and berated the lower court for not basing its judgment on these findings. In conclusion, the court found that the Olobu had no right to the land up to where the judgment of the lower court extended, apart from whatever right he might have derived from the Olufon. In the judgment delivered on 21 March 1955, the court allowed the appeal of the Olufon and modified the judgment of the lower court. Specifically, the court ruled that the "boundary should be according to 1917 demarcation, commencing from the wall on the main Osogbo-Ogbomoso main road between Ilobu and Ifon along this wall to its junction with the Ilobu-Oba path."[26] This gave all land from the junction of the wall and Ilobu-Oba path on the northern side to the Olufon and on the southern side to the Olobu.

Dissatisfied, the Olobu appealed to the District Officer's Court in Osogbo, which dismissed the appeal and amended the decision of the Osun Divisional Court of Appeal to read that the boundary should be according to the Ross Boundary established in 1924.[27] Again, the Olobu appealed to the Resident's Court of Appeal, and again this higher court dismissed the appeal. The court found that the Olobu had accepted the Ross boundary and held that the Ross boundary, having been accepted by both parties since 1924, was the only acceptable boundary between Ifon and Ilobu. The decision of D.M. Elliot, Acting Resident, Ibadan province read in part:

> The Ross Boundary has remained unchallenged for over thirty years and has been accepted by both sides until recently. The plaintiff (i.e. the Olobu) has brought a highly speculative action in the hope of obtaining additional land. He has little or no idea of any other boundary.[28]

Still dissatisfied with these rulings, the Olobu appealed again to the court of the Governor. The Governor's Court also dismissed the appeal, holding

[26]Iba Prof 1/1 169, Proceedings of the Osun Divisional Appeal Court Holden at Ede on Ifon-Ilobu Boundary Dispute, 14 March 1955 and 16 March 1955.
[27]Iba Prof. 1/1 780, Proceedings of the District Officer's Court in Osogbo on Ifon-Ilobu Boundary Dispute, 11 May 1955.
[28]Iba Prof 1/1 782, Proceedings of the Resident Court in Ibadan on Ifon-Ilobu Boundary Dispute, 22 August 1955.

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that the Ross Boundary had stood the test of time and was the only acceptable boundary and should be in effect "up to the point where it crosses the Oponmolu stream to its confluence with the Erinle river." The Governor further stressed that "[i]t is clearly impossible on the evidence to fix a complete new boundary that would represent a fair compromise . . ."[29]

Despite the fact that this ruling favored it, Ifon professed dissatisfaction on the grounds that the Governor had misinterpreted the Ross boundary, and applied to the colony's High Court to quash the decisions of the governor and of the subordinate court on the grounds of lack of jurisdiction. The High Court granted the application. Since the implication of the High Court's opinion was that the boundary between the two communities had never been determined, the government set up the Enahoro Inquiry under the Inter-Tribal Boundaries once and for all. In his report, E.O. Enahoro, the Inquiry Officer, made certain recommendations for the interpretation of the Ross boundary.[30] The dissatisfaction of Ifon with Enahoro's recommendation generated yet other court cases, even after the attainment of political independence by Nigeria, and the dispute between the two communities still rages without any solution in sight.

It is clear that the boundary problems between Ifon and Ilobu, which was the product of their struggle for land ownership, control and usage worsened, the problem of relations between the two communities. In the first place, aggrieved or dissatisfied parties sought redress at ever-higher levels, thereby prolonging and compounding the matter, diverting the attention of the two communities from meaningful efforts that could have brought development to the communities. As well, rather than promoting activities that could have brought benefits to both communities, the colonial government was embroiled in incessant disputes at different levels and at different times.

As a result of all this, the development of the two communities was inevitably retarded and the newly-emerging elite clamored for the provision of social amenities and facilities such as those obtained in neighboring communities like Osogbo and Ikirun.[31] Furthermore, the rancor between the two communities put the colonial government in a dilemma

[29]Iba Prof 1/1 787, Proceedings of the Governor's Court in Ibadan on Ifon-Ilobu Boundary Dispute, 8 December 1956.

[30]Report of the Inquiry made by E.O. Enahoro on the Interpretation of the Ross Boundary between Ifon and Ilobu 18th November 1980.

[31]Osun Div 1/1 1138, Letter from J.S. Ola Efunkunle, Assistant Secretary General, Ilobu Progressive Union, Ibadan, to the District Officer, Osun Division Osogbo, 17 January 1953; Osun Div 1/1 979, Letter from Secretary, Erin Descendant Trading Association, Ibadan Branch to the District Officer, Osogbo, 4 May 1950.

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regarding how to group them for administrative purposes, especially since they were not prepared to be grouped together because of their unresolved differences.[32]

V

The struggle for supremacy between the Olufon and the Olobu on chieftaincy matters came into the open after the death of Olobu Laniyan in 1940. Following the death of Laniyan on 29 March 1940, the chiefs of Ilobu, without consulting with the princes and without the knowledge of the Olufon, recommended one Salako Woleoye to the colonial government for appointment as the Olobu. The Omooba (princes) protested to the colonial government that, contrary to tradition, they were not involved in the selection of Salako. Their contention was that it was wrong for the chiefs to have single-handedly recommended Salako, especially since the custom had been for the princes to recommend a candidate to the chiefs, who acted as the kingmakers. The princes from Ilobu royal families contended further that Salako, the candidate recommended by the chiefs, was not even a member of the royal family, but a descendant of one Oguntunde, a native blacksmith who followed the founders of Ilobu from Iregba.[33]

The position of Olufon corroborated that of the princes from the royal family. In a petition written to the District Officer on 18 April 1940, opposing the appointment of Salako, the Olufon Bamkesa contended, *inter alia*, that

> [t]he man appointed by Ilobu chiefs has no blood right or any claim whatever to the chieftaincy of Olobu; their forefathers came with members of the Ruling Houses from Iregba, but they are [sic] blacksmiths originally. If the man appointed would argue the point, let him mention his forefathers' names that were ever made the Olobu of Ilobu ever since they have settled here in Ilobu till date. It would therefore be out of order if the appointment of Salako is considered without proper investigation.[34]

[32]*Proposals for the Re-organisation of Local Government Councils* (Ibadan, 1971), 14.
[33]Oyo Prof 1/2813, vol 1, Petition written by five royal families and some interest groups in Ilobu against the recommendation of Salako as the Olobu. 20 April 1940.
[34]Oyo Prof 1/2813, vol.1, Petition written by Olufon Bamkesa to the District Officer, Osogbo protesting the appointment of Salako by the Ilobu chiefs, 18 April 1940.

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Beyond this, the Olufon contended that as the natural father and landlord of Ilobu, no Olobu should be installed without his knowledge and consent.[35] However, the position of Ilobu chiefs led by Bara Ojeleye was that it was customary for the Ilobu chiefs to choose the Olobu, who after his installation would pay homage to Olufon, and that the Olufon had never been involved in the appointment of Olobu.[36] Furthermore, the chiefs contended, the inability of the princes to come together and speak with one voice made them use their discretion in the choice of Salako.[37] The position of the colonial government on the issue was that, as required by tradition, the appointment of an Olobu should receive the approval of the Olufon.[38] The Ibadan Native Administration Council, headed by the Olubadan, also supported the claim of the Olufon on the appointment of Olobu and recognized Olufon, based on "native custom" as the landlord of Ilobu people.[39]

It is clear from the positions taken by different parties over the appointment of Olobu that there is overwhelming evidence on the prerogative of the Olufon over the appointment of Olobu. Even though different parties saw this differently, it is incontrovertible that the Olufon was a consenting authority to the appointment of Olobu. It appears, however, that the growth of Ilobu; an increased awareness, possibly due to the growing influence of the elite; and a changing administrative structure created a desire in Ilobu to be free from Ifon's control. As observed by H.B. Cox, Assistant District Officer, Ibadan Northern District, Osogbo, "an Olufon had originally installed a chief at Ilobu but that the town has gradually become virtually independent of Ifon."[40]

The claims of the Ilobu chiefs and their recommendation of Salako without any recourse to the royal families, calls for a discussion of the procedure for the appointment of head chief or an Oba. In Yorubaland, once the reigning king was formally declared to have joined his ancestors

[35]Ibid.

[36]Oyo Prof. 1/2813, vol.1, Letter written to the District Officer, Ibadan by H.B. Cox, District Officer Ibadan Northern District on the appointment of Olobu of Ilobu, 13 May 1940.

[37]Oyo Prof 1/2813, vol 1, Extract from Minutes of the Ibadan Native Administration Inner Council meeting held on Monday, 26 August 1940.

[38]Oyo Prof. 1/2813 Vol 1, Notes on Ilobu Chieftaincy prepared by F.M. White, Resident Oyo Province, 14 April 1942.

[39]Oyo Prof. 1/2813, vol 1, Extract from Minutes of Ibadan Native Administration Inner Council Meeting held on Monday, 29 July 1940

[40]Oyo Prof 1/2813, vol 1, Letter written to the District Officer, Ibadan by H.B. Cox, Assistant District Officer, Ibadan Northern District, Osogbo, on the appointment of Olobu of Ilobu, 12 May 1940.

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and the necessary traditional rites are performed, the search for a replacement begins. Usually the appropriate royal family or ruling house whose turn it is to produce the next Oba is contacted. Such a family would then present candidates to the chiefs, who are the kingmakers. Qualifications for eligibility include birth, not only to a father who once reigned but in some cases while he was actually on the throne. Others include birth to a free woman, as well as lack of any physical deformity. The kingmakers would in turn consult the Ifa oracle as to which candidates had the favor of the gods and whose reign would be peaceful and prosperous. However, the final choice of ruler rests with the chiefs who represent the people of the town. Once their choice is made, a public announcement is made and the accession ceremonies set in motion.[41]

The Western State Chieftaincy Declarations corroborated this procedure, but added that persons who may be proposed as candidates by a lineage entitled to fill a vacancy should be sponsored by at least two male persons of that lineage. Furthermore, it added that the candidate who wins the majority vote of the kingmakers becomes the Olobu of Ilobu only after the approval of the Governor.[42]

In light of this, the recommendation of Salako by the Ilobu chiefs—with the apparent blessing of Ifa oracle, but without the involvement of the royal families—appeared to have been a distortion of traditional practices. In the circumstances, the claim of the Ilobu princes that the chiefs were bribed or induced with money could not be overlooked.[43] In the same vein, the insistence of the Ilobu princes that the Ilobu chiefs had no say in the appointment of the Olobu had no basis in tradition.

The claim of the Olufon over Ilobu is further corroborated by the fact that the Olufon was centrally involved in the appointment of some Olobu in the past. For instance it was reported that,

> [w]hen Olusilo, the fourth Baale of Ilobu died, the then reigning Olufon selected Alabiyi as successor . . . When Enitan, the 7th Baale of Ilobu died, Olufon again selected Aworinde, a son of Alabiyi as successor for the vacant stool. Ilobu chiefs however preferred a man of their own choice and Molara was chosen and made Baale of Ilobu. Later on however, Molara for one reason or another was expelled; the chiefs placed upon the stool the same Aworinde, the son of Alabiy.[44]

[41]Lloyd, *Yoruba Land Law*. 44; Johnson, *History*, 41-47.
[42]*Western State Chieftaincy Declarations, Osun Central Division* (Ibadan, 1957).
[43]Oyo Prof. 1/2813, vol 1, Petition written by five royal families and certain interest groups in Ilobu against the recommendation of Salako as the Olobu, 24 April 1940.
[44]Oyo Prof 1/2813, vol 1, Report of the Oyerinde Committee on the Ilobu chieftaincy Dispute, 26 December 1941.

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It appears then that the Ilobu chiefs' resentment of Olufon's involvement in the choice of Olobu, which started with the choice of Aworinde, made the Ataoja's involvement possible. The resentment of the Olufon's involvement could be due to the desire to be free from Ifon's control. Consequently, with the death of Olobu Ajayi on 19 January 1934, the Ilobu chiefs elected Laniyan with the consent of the Ataoja and chiefs of Osogbo, and urged the Resident of Oyo Province to approve the choice. A similar development took place in October 1935 following the death of Laniyan, when the Ilobu chiefs recommended Oyelade through the Ataoja to the colonial government for approval.[45] It would seem that the insistence of the chiefs on their right to select an Olobu arose out of the precedent set with the appointment of Olobu Laniyan and Olobu Oyelade.

Evidently, certain parties were interested in the relationship between Ifon and Ilobu, including the Olubadan and Council and the Ataoja of Osogbo. Apart from recognizing Olufon as the landlord of the Ilobu people and rejecting Salako Woleoye, the choice of Ilobu chiefs, the Olubadan and Council went on to support Siyanbola, the candidate recommended by the princes and supported by the Olufon.[46] The cooperation between the Ilobu princes and the Olufon shows clearly that the princes accepted their descent from the Ifon dynastic group, thereby deriving their legitimacy. In addition, it shows their understanding of the tradition and their willingness to defend it. The cooperation, however, compounded the crisis over the appointment of the Olobu and in the process prolonged it.

VI

The creation of the Osogbo Subordinate Native Authority in 1934 brought Ifon, Ilobu, and other small communities in the area into a more direct relationship with the Ataoja and his chiefs. In September 1938 the District Officer referred the affairs of Ilobu to the Ataoja. This, together with the creation of the Osogbo Subordinate Native Authority, provided the basis for the intervention of Ataoja in Ilobu affairs. In April 1940 the District Officer requested the Ataoja to mediate a settlement between the

[45]Oyo Prof 1/2813, vol 1, Letter and notes from H.B. Cox, District Officer, Ibadan Northern District, Osogbo, to the Senior District Officer, Ibadan, on the appointment of Olobu of Ilobu, 24 September 1940.
[46]Oyo Prof 1/2813, vol 1, Letter from Olubadan's Office to the Senior District Officer, Ibadan on the appointment of Olobu of Ilobu, 26 August 1940.

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Olufon and the Ilobu chiefs.[47] The mediation, as it turned out, involved the Ataoja's finding a suitable candidate as the Olobu of Ilobu. This effort failed owing to suspicion on the part of the Olufon that the Ataoja was claiming to be the overlord of Ilobu.

Indeed, it seems that the Ataoja, by virtue of his position as the head of Subordinate Native Authority and the proximity of his domain to Ilobu, desired to exercise some control over Ilobu. The revelation by the Olubadan that the Ataoja approached him twice, asking him to support Salako's appointment, buttressed this suspicion.[48] In addition, the Ataoja was consistently criticized for mediating in the Ilobu chieftaincy affairs in support of Salako and in the process depriving the Olufon of his right and influence over Ilobu.[49]

The involvement of Osogbo in Ifon-Ilobu relations only worsened matters. The surreptitious support given to the Ilobu chiefs by the Ataoja drew suspicion and antagonism from Ifon, while backing Ataoja by the colonial government portrayed it as having a double standard, inasmuch as it recognized the Olufon as the landlord who had some rights over the Olobu stool. At the same time, the government indirectly encouraged Ilobu to free itself from Ifon's control. It was understandable then that the problem of relations between Ifon and Ilobu outlived the lifespan of the Osogbo Subordinate Native Authority

It appears that the interest of Ilobu princes was based on the need to be involved in the appointment of an Olobu, at least as dictated by tradition, and to resist imposition by the chiefs. The influence of Ifon on the princes could not be completely ruled out, however. The Ilobu chiefs desired to fill the vacant stool of Olobu unilaterally and in the process ensured the emergence of a candidate acceptable to them. It appears that they envisaged that their scheming would throw off Ifon's control, in effect possibly as early as the time of Ayonu. As for the Olufon, it is clear that he was interested in preserving the age-old tradition of consenting to the appointment of Olobu, as the landlord of Ilobu. The Olubadan and Council sought to retain relevance in the politics of Ifon and Ilobu, there-

[47]Oyo Prof 1/2813, vol 1, Letter and notes from H.B. Cox, District Officer, Ibadan Northern District Osogbo, to the Senior District Officer, Ibadan on the appointment of Olobu of Ilobu, 24 September 1940.
[48]Oyo Prof. 1/2813, vol.1, Extract from Minutes of Ibadan Native Administration Inner Council meeting held on Monday, 29 July 1940.
[49]Oyo Prof 1/2813, vol 1, Extract from Minutes of Ibadan Native Administration Inner Council meeting held on Monday, 12 August 1940; Letter from Olubadan's office to the Senior District Officer, Ibadan on the appointment of Olobu of Ilobu, 26 August 1940.

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by building on the foundation laid in the nineteenth century. Its support, however, had shifted to Ifon's side in the twentieth century. One major factor in this shift could have been the new-found appreciation and respect that Ibadan acquired for the traditional monarchical institution with the emergence of Olubadan as a crowned ruler in 1936.[50] As for the Ataoja, it appears that the need to extend his area of influence and in the process legitimize his emergence as a crowned ruler was paramount.

In the event, neither Salako Woleoye nor Siyanbola, supported by the Ilobu chiefs and the Olufon and the Olubadan and Council respectively, was appointed by the colonial government. The refusal of the princes to present another candidate after Siyanbola was rejected led the Ilobu chiefs to propose yet another candidate, Sanusi Araoye, who eventually became the thirteenth Olobu of Ilobu.[51] Rather than allowing the appointment to become a subject of another debate, the colonial government merely informed the Olubadan and Council of it. Faced with no other option, the Olufon, as well as the Olubadan and Council, reluctantly accepted the appointment.[52] There is no evidence that the Ataoja did not support the appointment of Araoye as Olobu.

VII

It is clear that the colonial government had a measure of respect for tradition in its management of Ifon-Ilobu relations. This could be seen in the establishment of the Ross Boundary in 1924, based on the pronouncement of Alaafin Onikepe Ladigbolu in 1917. The Ross Boundary became a reference point in the history of Ifon-Ilobu relations, particularly on land matters. Similarly, the colonial government's recognition of the right of the Olufon to assent to the appointment of Olobu constituted respect for tradition. However, by maintaining that the decisions leading to the setting up of the Ross boundary were administrative only and devoid of legal effect, the same colonial government sowed the seed of future disputes—disputes that outlived colonial rule and are still generating heat in the present.

Perhaps the colonial government could have resolved the boundary problem between the two communities if it had been consistent with its interpretation of the Ross Boundary. Instead, different colonial officers

[50]CSO 26/2 12723, vol 14, Annual Report on the Oyo Province (1936) 7.
[51]Oyo Prof 1/2813, vol 2, Letter from the Acting Secretary, 16 June 1943.
[52]Oyo Prof. 1/2813, vol 2, Extract from minutes of Ibadan Native Administration Inner Council meeting held on 21 June 1943.

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gave it different interpretations at different times and the feuding parties capitalized on this. By allowing a Native Court to handle the land case, which legally was outside its jurisdiction, the colonial government erred. Inevitably, the Ikirun Native Court case generated other cases, prolonging and aggravating matters.

Similarly, by directing the Ataoja of Osogbo to find a suitable candidate for appointment as the Olobu, the colonial government showed itself less responsive to tradition, since the directive denied the Olufon his traditional prerogative over Ilobu. The imposition of Sanusi Araoye as the Olobu against the wishes of the Ilobu princes, as well as the Olufon, constituted a breach of tradition since this supported the claim of Ilobu for freedom from Ifon. Consequently, the Olufon lost his consenting authority over the Olobu chieftaincy, while Ilobu secured freedom from Ifon's control. Not surprisingly, Ilobu exploited this factor, and its large population, to dominate Ifon politically, particularly in allocating political privileges, at least until 1996, when the two communities were placed in separate local jurisdictions.

Certain considerations influenced the decision of the colonial government in the process of managing Ifon-Ilobu relations. One of these was the amount of taxes raised, given that the population of Ilobu was far greater than that of Ifon, at least in 1935/36.[53] If we accept that population projections of the subsequent periods were based on the 1935-36 tax nominal rolls, then for a larger part of the colonial period, the Olobu earned more than the Olufon. This contributed to Olobu's claim that it was superior to, and independent of, Olufon. Interestingly, for a long time after the attainment of political independence by Nigeria, the Olobu generated more revenue than the Olufon.

Another instance where tax revenue was used as a deciding factor was the contest for the vacant Olobu stool in 1940 mentioned above. Following the initial inability of the colonial government to find a feasible solution, it used the number of taxpayers to determine which of the two candidates was the more popular, largely by asking the taxpayers to indicate their interests in a particular candidate through the process of voting. The whole idea was eventually jettisoned.[54]

[53]Osun Div 1/1 438. Letter from Assistant Secretary Ilobu Progressive Union to the District Officer, Osun Division, Osogbo, 17 January 1955; Private papers of Oba Ashiru Olatoye Olaniyan, Olobu of Ilobu.

[54]Oyo Prof 1/2813, vol 1, Letter from the Senior District Officer to the Senior Resident, Oyo Province, 28 January 1941.

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VIII

The inamicable relationship between Ifon and Ilobu did not originate with colonial rule, but started with the movement of groups of people into a seemingly virgin land. The growth in the population of these settlements resulted in increased demand for land. This resulted in the struggle for increased land rights. The period and the circumstances of the settlement of different groups in the region became reference points in exercising control, not only over land but also over chieftaincy.

Meanwhile, the establishment and growth of Ibadan's influence in the region and its disdain for traditional dynastic authority resulted in the relegation of Ifon and the rise of Ilobu to prominence. This legacy, coupled with its large population, prepared Ilobu for the position of dominance it enjoyed during colonial rule. The demands of colonial rule made it easy for the government to identify with Ilobu, thereby building on the foundation laid during the era of Ibadan dominance. Ilobu became a center from which colonial presence, policies, and programs spread to Ifon and other smaller communities in the area. However, Ifon's desire to reassert its control over Ilobu, particularly in the 1940s, brought out the inherent contradictions in colonial rule clearly.

The issues that characterized the relationship between Ifon and Ilobu are hardly peculiar to the area, but are commonplace phenomena throughout Yorubaland. In some areas the problems have gone beyond mere antagonism into open conflicts. There is a need to address these issues more concretely, with the end of ensuring that the ramifications are reduced to the barest minimum, even if not totally resolved.

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