

IKORODU: THE EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF A CITY

Faruq Idowu Boge, Ph.D

Department of History and International Studies

Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos

Abstract

The evolution of Ikorodu is a subject of a sort of controversy among historians. Contesting traditions of origin claim to have laid the foundation of Ikorodu. The socio-cultural development of Ikorodu has transformed it from a small immigrant settlement to a Yoruba city. Much attention has been paid to the economic and administrative history of Ikorodu. Yet, the few academic engagements on its traditions of origin are limited. Although Charles (2022) harps on the Olusoga tradition of origin of Ikorodu, his work tends to neglect the other accounts, which if combined, could help us appreciate the people's behaviour over time. The article examines the three plausible accounts of traditions of the origin of Ikorodu. It historizes the birth of Ikorodu city as a division of Lagos State. The article assesses the socio-cultural and economic transformations witnessed by the city due to transitional forces of colonialism and "metropolitics." This examination helps us understand why some socio-cultural practices persist with the people, and the factors responsible for their resilience. What changes have occurred in the traditional practices of Ikorodu City? Using the qualitative approach, the paper adopts primary and secondary sources for gathering historical facts. Whereas interviews and archival materials constitute the primary sources, the secondary sources consulted are government records, books, and journal articles.

Keywords: Ikorodu, evolution, development, traditional practices, metropolitics

Introduction

Ikorodu is an ancient city that has transformed from a purely traditional to modern society. Located within the south-western part of Nigeria, the city has a relatively large landmass and a rapidly increasing and diverse population. Precisely, the city is located within the north-eastern part of Lagos State. The indigenous settlers of the city are predominantly Remo and Ijebu sub-ethnic groups of the Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria. Etymologically, Ikorodu derives from two Yoruba words, *Oko* and *Odu*. While *Oko* means farmland, *Odu* is a local name for the specie of vegetables that germinated abundantly within the ancient enclave. Therefore, the autochthonous settlers and early migrants were comfortable referring to the area as *Oko-Odu* (Boge, 2021). Later, the

appellation became corrupted to *Ikorodu*, particularly for the ease of pronunciation. Some accounts asserted that the establishment of settlements within Ikorodu dated to the seventeenth century, particularly during the epoch of the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Ajetunmobi, 2003). However, according to the Remo tradition of Ikorodu origin, the city's foundation is traced to Orile Ofin (now Sagamu), where the sons of Oba Koyelu (the first Akarigbo of Ofin-Remo) migrated to form a new settlement within the enclave (Western Regional Government, 1957). This tradition emphasized that Oga (Ogarenmade) was the leader of the initial settlement that was thus established. This prompted the popular praise-phrase *Omo Ikorodu Oga*, which is used to accord the indigenes of Ikorodu. It must be emphasized that the initial migration by Oga and his entourage into the enclave was influenced by economic expansionism (hunting and farming), exploration (to discover new places), and independence (creating a new settlement different from the mother-town, Orile-Ofin (Boge & Adebayo, 2018).

There is also the Ijebu tradition of Ikorodu origin, espoused by the Awujale of Ijebuland (Oba Daniel Adesanya) during the Martindale Commission of Inquiry of 1937 (Martindale, 1937). According to this tradition, the first man to settle in Ikorodu was Ade-Oga, who was sent to occupy the area by his father, the Awujale of Ijebu-Ode. One Ayonta accompanied Ade-Oga, and both initially settled in the Agbele area before moving to *Igbodu* (*Oko Odu* in the Remo tradition). It was from this nucleus that the territory began to expand and the population gradually swelled to include socially heterogeneous groups. However, there is a third version of the tradition of Ikorodu origin, which emphasize that the Oga, Remo or Ijebu migrant group only came to the area to join an existing organized community of people who had been led into the area by one Ogborinmaja (Lagos State Government, 1988). While the Remo tradition and the place of Oga in the historical origin of Ikorodu seem to be the most popular, there is every possibility that the Oga group only came to establish political hegemony over the settlement. Ikorodu officially became an administrative component of Lagos in 1894, and the politico-administrative merger provided credence for the pre-existing and pre-colonial socio-economic, political, and socio-cultural interrelations between Ikorodu and Lagos. However, despite the socio-economic interactions, socio-cultural assimilations and political alignment with Lagos, Ikorodu still maintains some indissoluble affinities with its Remo and Ijebu roots. Though socio-economic activities within Ikorodu were sleepy in the first half of the twentieth century, the situation began to assume much lively activities during the post-colonial period. The area gradually morphed into a modern city with several ramifications.

The traditional political system of Ikorodu is largely a reflection of the general practices in Yorubaland. It is typically a monarchical system, with a king (i. e. the Oba) being selected through a ritual process that includes consultation with the Ifa oracle. The king, once crowned, assumed the position of a representative of the deities and the people's ancestors, usually for life. The Obaship institution in Ikorodu has transformed from *Elegure* during the earliest formative period to *Oloja* from the period the settlement became strategic for the trans-Atlantic slave trade and to *Oba* since the colonial epoch. In 1949, Ikorodu was accorded the status of an *Ilu Alade* with the traditional crown granted by the Awujale of Ijebu-Ode, and the adoption of *Ayangburen* as the title of Ikorodu monarch (National Archives Ibadan, 1949). Some accounts believe that nineteen such rulers have been installed in Ikorodu (Owolabi, 2015). Apart from being of royal descent, other considerations such as level of education, exposure, popularity, acceptability, good character, richness, and connections with influential government officials and appointees now constitute determining factors for who is selected as Ikorodu monarch. The government gazette recognizes two major royal houses (Lasunwon and Rademo) for producing the monarch of Ikorodu on a rotational basis (Lagos State Government, 1988). The traditional selection process is superintended by a group of kingmakers, locally called the *Iwarefa*. It is important to add that the final approval for whoever is chosen by the *Iwarefa* now resides with the State Government based on the established gazettes and regulations.

Ikorodu monarchy has emerged as one of the major paramount rulers in contemporary Lagos State since the early 1970s. Before the actual coronation, however, the Oba-elect must observe the traditional seclusion for three lunar months in the *Ipebi*. In the *Ipebi*, the Oba-elect undergoes training courses on leadership qualities, the history of the town, and the culture and traditions of the people, among others, where various civic organizations tutor him. He, therefore, graduates from the seclusion as an incarnate of the previous monarchs of the city.

Within the traditional setting, every law in the society originated or was sanctioned by the monarch, who was the final arbiter on major civil and criminal matters. There are the palace staff known as *odi* (headed by the *Ogbeni Odi*) that are regularly at the beck and call of the king for the effective administration of the city. The king is assisted by a group of people usually called the council-of-chiefs, which comprise the Olisa, Odofin, Oliwo, Aro, Lemo, Iyalode, and Balogun, among others. These chiefs constituted the *Ilu Committee* or the *Igbimo*, which assisted the *Ayangburen* in the day-to-day administration of the city. Apart from the council-of-chiefs, the three major traditional wards into which Ikorodu is originally divided also have their heads, including Jagun for the Ijomu ward, Agbon for the Isele ward, and Baale for the Aga ward. In addition to the three big wards

were about eighteen quarters individually known as *Itun*, including Itun-maja, Itun-waiye, Itun-sokun, Itun-pate, Itun-degun, Itun-olire, Itun-meko, Itun-mori, Itun-laiyeode, Itun-ojoru, Itun-elepe, Itun-eyita, Itun-lubajo, Itun-fegboye, Itun-wolo, Itun-oloja, Itun-nla, and Itun-domigaran. There were also a few squares called *Ita* including Ita-elewa, Ita-muja, Ita-mito, Ita-agbodo, and Ita-kamoju. These territorial dissections represent settlement patterns, tribal and ethno-cultural compositions. For instance, while Itun-ojoru represents the early migrants from Ojoru quarters in Abeokuta, Itun-olirere refers to the area where the Olire shrine is located. More importantly, these territorial clusters are also used for administrative purposes. For each cluster, there is a leader who executes policies in consonance with the preferences of the monarch. Through these leaders, the king's regulations and decisions percolated into the entire society. As the city expanded and modernization occurred, new areas such as Aiyeluja, Gbasemo, Aga-titun, Lowa, Oke Ota-Ona, Anibaba and many others, including some estates, emerged.

The place of some traditional civic associations such as the Osugbo, Awo Opa, Abilefo, Oga-Nla, Oro, Agemo, and Eluku in the traditional political administration of Ikorodu cannot be underestimated. Some of these associations performed judicial functions, while others engaged in executive and legislative functions. The Osugbo, for instance, is a representative town assembly that performed both legislative and judicial functions within the city. Apart from presiding and making pronouncements over civil and criminal cases within the city, the Osugbo cult has the authority to react against any arbitrary decision of the monarch. Records indicate that an independent Osugbo cult had been established for Ikorodu since 1630 (Boge, 2021). The Oro Cult is responsible for executing some of the decisions made by the monarch. The Oro Cult also ensures that rituals that would cleanse the city of evil occurrences are intermittently performed. The transition from the traditional political system began with the formal introduction of colonial rule in 1894. From this period onward, the Ikorodu monarch, his high chiefs, and the Osugbo became subservient to the colonial authority by which some were placed under stipends (Oduwobi, 2015). Henceforth, they began to only exercise authority on behalf of the government. Between 1894 and 1913, the District Commissioner at Sagamu remotely supervised affairs at Ikorodu. To this extent, a Central Native Authority, which comprised the Oloja, Balogun, and two other chiefs, was established in 1901 to administer Ikorodu on behalf of the colonial authority (Boge, 2014). The native authority was supervised by a Resident Officer who resided in Ikorodu. From 1913 to 1938, Ikorodu was administratively aligned with the Epe District under the supervision of a District Officer stationed at Epe, while an Assistant District Officer was stationed at Ikorodu for effective administration. In consonance with the British indirect rule system, a native council was also created to act as an advisory body for the colonial authorities concerning the affairs at

Ikorodu. During the administrative re-organization in 1938, Ikorodu was separated from the Epe District and placed under the Ikeja District of the Lagos Colony and Districts. A District Officer who directed the affairs at Ikorodu was stationed at Ikeja, and a native authority was established for Ikorodu. The Ikorodu Native Authority was composed of representatives (chiefs) from Ikorodu and adjoining communities who had agreed to come under the city's native administration. A native treasury and a native court were established for the township to ensure effective administration. Specifically, the Ikorodu Town Council, which comprised thirty-two members, was inaugurated under the supervision of Mr Gibbons. In the composition were ten chiefs (seven males and three females), a representative of the Muslim community, a representative of the Christian community, and twenty selected representatives from various wards making up the township (National Archive Ibadan).

Owing to the 1954 constitutional amendment and the introduction of the federal system of government in Nigeria, Ikorodu was dismembered from the Ikeja District and was placed under the Western Regional Government. Two administrative layers were established for Ikorodu and its environs. The first layer was the Ikorodu Divisional Council, where the *Ayangburen* of Ikorodu (the most recognized paramount ruler within the area) was appointed the President. Other members of the Divisional Council included the Olisa of Ikorodu, the Aro of Ikorodu, the Odofin of Ikorodu, the Lemo of Ikorodu, the Oloja of Igbogbo, the Baale of Baiyeku, and the Oloja of Ijede (Lagos State Government, 1988). The second layer consisted of local councils, which were the Ikorodu Local Council, the Ijede Local Council, the Igbogbo/Baiyeku Local Council, and the Eti-Osa Local Council, all within the purview of the Ikorodu Divisional Council. This was the administrative structure in Ikorodu throughout the colonial period and till 1967, when the twelve-state federal structure was introduced in Nigeria as part of the measure to curtail the disintegration of the newly independent country. Ikorodu became the headquarters of the administration of the Council with the attendant socio-economic and political relevance.

In May 1967, the Federal Capital Territory of Lagos and Colony Province were merged to form Lagos State, encompassing the entire areas initially under the jurisdiction of the Ikorodu Divisional Council. In May 1968, the Ikorodu Division was created as one of the five administrative divisions of Lagos State via the Administrative Division (Establishment) Edict (Lagos State Government, n.d.). Ikorodu Division thus comprised the Ikorodu District Council, the Eti-Osa Local Council, the Ijede Local Council, and the Igbogbo-Baiyeku Local Council. The Sole Administrator System was adopted for the newly created divisions. Mr Balogun was the Sole Administrator for Ikorodu Division between 1967 and 1969, while Mr J. A. Oshinyinka was the Ikorodu Division Sole Administrator between 1970 and 1971 (Lagos State Government, n.d.). In 1969, the

Lagos State Council of Obas and Chiefs was created, comprising paramount kings and important chiefs in Lagos State. The Ayangburen of Ikorodu was made the deputy chairman during this inception. Following the report of the Ogunnaike Tribunal of Inquiry on Local Government Administration, the Eti-Osa Local Council was excised from Ikorodu Division, and the Imota Local Council was brought within the jurisdiction of the Ikorodu Division in 1971 (Uthman, 1997). Even with little administrative re-organization, the Sole Administrator System was maintained for the divisions. Mr Ajala and Mr J. V. Hundeyin were appointed to the Ikorodu District Council in 1972-1973 and 1974-1975, respectively (Lagos State Government, n.d.).

There was a nationwide local government administrative re-organization in Nigeria through the Local Government Edicts of 1976 (Uthman, 1997). Whereas there are few changes in some other parts of Lagos State, the newly created Ikorodu Local Government Area remained what it was in 1971. The election of December 1976 produced Prince Akinsanya as the first Executive Chairman of the Ikorodu Local Government Council. Subsequently, Chief H. O. Onafowokan, Mr S. O. Sanusi, and Mr R. A. Solawon were consecutively the Executive Chairman of the Council between 1977 and 1979. Through the Local Government (Interim) Law of 1980, the Jakande administration increased the number of local councils to 23. The Ikorodu Council was dissected into two: the Ikorodu Local Government Council and the Irepodun Local Government Council. Ikorodu town was the headquarters of the Ikorodu Local Government Council, and towns such as Ipakodo, Isiu, Gberigbe, Odogunyan, Olorunda, Mowo, Owutu, and Majidun came under the geo-administrative space (Lagos State Government, n.d.). Mr M. A. Ajisebutu and Mr W. A. Jaiyesinmi were the Executive Chairmen of the Ikorodu Local Government Council for 1980-1982 and 1983-1983, respectively. Owing to the military incursion into politics in 1983, the newly created twenty-three local councils were reverted to eight and the Sole Administrator System was re-introduced. Ikorodu town was the headquarters, and Mr J. A. Omolola was appointed as the Sole Administrator of the Council between 1984 and 1987.

In May 1986, the Sole Administrator System was abolished in Lagos State, and the Caretaker Committee System was adopted. The Committee consisted of an Administrator as the Chairman of the Council and four other members who acted as the supervisory councillors. With the nationwide local government election in March 1988, the Executive Chairman System was re-introduced, where Mr M. A. Awolesi was elected as the chairman between 1988 and 1989. After the suspension of the democratic transition processes, Mr M. A. Twins was appointed the Chairman of the Council between 1989 and 1990. During the 1991 nation-wide local government elections in Nigeria, Mr M. A. Awolesi was again elected as the Executive Chairman, where he was at the helm of affairs

till 1993. After the annulment of the June 12 elections and the introduction of the interim national government, Otunba S. O. Oladehinde was appointed as the Chairman of the Caretaker Committee for the Ikorodu LGA between 1993 and 1996. Another nationwide local government election conducted in March 1996 produced Alhaji Akibu Akinwunmi as the executive chairman of the Ikorodu LGA, though his tenure lasted till October 1996, when the political transition was again abrogated. Mrs O. O. T. Benson was appointed as the Sole Administrator for Ikorodu LGA. Chief W. A. M. Gbadamosi emerged as the local government election winner for the Ikorodu LGA in March/April 1997. Another suspension of the political transitions led to the appointment of Mrs G. O. Mabawonku as the Sole Administrator of the LGA, who piloted the affairs till May 1999, when the fourth republic was birthed. From 1999 till date, Engr. Dele Kuti, Alhaji Waheed Junaid Owokodu, Alhaji Sheriff Adisa Anipole, and Hon. Wasiu Adesina had respectively won elections as the executive chairman of the Ikorodu LGA. There were occasions when Caretaker Committees were appointed to supervise the affairs of the Council before actual elections were conducted. However, in 2003, the Lagos State Government re-organized the Local Administration in the State, and the Ikorodu LGA was dissected to have the Ikorodu Local Government Area (LGA), the Ikorodu North Local Council Development Area (LCDA), the Ikorodu West LCDA, the Igbogbo/Bayeiku LCDA, the Imota LCDA, and the Ijede LCDA.

The Socio-Cultural Practices and Transitions

Ikorodu is a city adept in traditions and culture; even modernity is yet to completely suppress the people's pre-existing practices. Central to the religious beliefs of the people is the existence of the omnipotence and omnipresence of *Olodumare* (God, the Creator of the universe), who dictates every affair of humans and would recompense people according to their deeds. *Olodumare* is highly revered and worshipped through the deities such as *Oro*, *Eluku*, *Agemo*, *Ogun*, *Sango*, and *Obatala*, among others. Like many other Yoruba communities, the people of Ikorodu believe in ancestor worship, which is locally called *baba komagbo* (High Chief Adegboyega Adeyeri, personal communication, 19 November 2020). They believe that the ancestors have powers to influence the affairs of the living and must therefore be worshipped by offering regular sacrifices. To that extent, there is the existence of tombs (locally called *orori*) where offspring and descendants of notable parents and progenitors often offer prayers and sacrifices. Thus, when people are confronted with challenges and life-threatening issues, they were often instructed by diviners to make sacrifices and offerings to appease the spirits of their dead parents or ancestors. Furthermore, people believe in the life-after-death and that a dead person could reincarnate. Therefore, children who are born after the death of a parent or relative could

be named *Babatunde* (father comes back again), *Yetunde* (mother comes again), or *Iyabo* (mother returns) to reflect their belief in reincarnation.

The *Oro* Cult is prominent throughout Yorubaland. It is a form of ancestor worship which is very popular in Ikorodu. Apart from other rituals, the spirit of *Oro* is invoked through the sound of a bullroarer, locally called *ape*, which is usually whirled in the air to produce a noisy sound (Nolte, 2010). The *Oro* spirit can cleanse the society of evils spirits and calamities, such as the outbreak of diseases, and child and maternal deaths. The spirit also purifies the society of curses, which may result from abomination acts and bad deeds. Female folks' participation in the *Oro* Cult's activities is limited and restricted. It is an abomination for the female folks to have physical contact with *Oro*; curses are rained on any female who catches a glimpse of *Oro*. Usually, *Oro* activities are confined to dead hours of the night, but the female members of the society are restricted from coming out during the annual *Oro* festivals. However, it should be stated that restrictions are only effective in the traditional nucleus of the city where the shrines and heritages are located. This area is dominated by indigenous people who are supposed to have a good understanding and are ready to abide by the traditions and culture of the ancient city.

Apart from the two major *Oro* Cult groups (i.e., Magbo and Liwe), other *Oro* groups have shrines and grooves (locally called *igboti* or *uti*). Thus, Segu Lubu, Elegbejeun, Liworu, Aige, Onikapala, Eyita, and Moro are shrines located in different parts of the city. Officers such as Alashe, Olumale, and Ajana are hereditarily selected to manage the activities of the shrine and each *Oro* group. Each *Oro* Cult traces its root to places outside Ikorodu. For example, while the origin of the Magbo *Oro* Cult is traced to Igboire in Abeokuta, that of Liwe is traced to Isheri Olofin and Segu Lubu group is traced to Batoro in Sagamu (Adegboyega Adeyeri, personal communication, 19 November 2020). Two separate *Oro* festivals (the Magbo and Liwe) come up annually in Ikorodu, falling between April and July. Each of the festivals lasts for seven days with the *OjoIwaye Oro* (the arrival day of the *Oro* deity), where the spirit of the *Oro* is brought to town, marking the beginning, and the *Isemo* (seclusion), where females' movement is restricted signifying the close of the rituals for the year. Due to modernization, it has become a prohibition for the *Isemo* to be fixed on Fridays, Sundays, Muslim festival days, Christian festival days, and during the Muslim fasting month (Ramadan). One of the important aspects of the annual *Oro* festival is the socio-cultural practice of *Ere Oro*, in which a traditional group of local singers and orchestras produce songs that are supported by *apepe* (bamboo tree cut into sizes) sounds for entertainment to abuse social deviants, and to praise good acts within the society (Sanni & Boge, 2021).

Agemo Cult is another popular cultural religion among the people of Ikorodu. The annual *Agemo* festival is generally known as a fertility festival among the entire Ijebu and Remo communities (Lagos State Government, n.d.). It is a form of ancestor worship that prevents epidemic diseases, ward-off evils, and drought and famine in the land. Varieties of *Agemo* deities such as *Olire*, *Felewa*, *Orisa-Nla*, *Sedu*, and others are worshipped in Ikorodu. The shrines of the *Agemo* deities are known as *igboseke* and four of them are located in Itunmaja, Itunmori, Itun-olire, and Aga areas of Ikorodu. The annual *Agemo* festival features sacrifices, dance and performances, and magical displays lasting for seven days. *Isinra* (whipping competition) is another interesting aspect of the *Agemo* festival, where adult males in several clusters of two persons whip each other to entertain spectators. People watch the competitors with keen interest and shower encomium on the better contestant. The *isinra* aspect of the festival is meant to test maturity and teach perseverance among the city's adult males.

The *Eluku* Cult is another prominent cultural religion among the people of Ikorodu. It is regarded as a highly exclusive ancestor cult for the core indigenes of the city alone. The right to belong and participate in the activities of the *Eluku* Cult is used to determine the indigenous status of the city's populace. This is reflected in the popular *oriki* of the town, which says, *omo Elukumedenmeden, imaleafeleja*. The *Eluku* festival is occasioned annually, and the activities are restricted to the night hours when a series of rituals and gyrations are performed. The *Olumale* is at the helm of affairs, and two shrines of *Eluku* are located in Ikorodu. A good number of Ikorodu people are worshippers of the *Ogun* deity and many *ile-aro* (*Ogun* shrines) are located in Ikorodu. Many people, particularly those whose means of livelihood are dependent on materials made of iron; usually visit the *baba-nle-aros* (*Ogun* priests) to make sacrifices for the *Ogun* deity. Materials such as yam, dog, hen, palm oil, and palm wine are used to make sacrifices to the *Ogun* deity. There is an annual *Ogun* festival in Ikorodu where the *Bashogun* leads worshippers and the town's people, including the king, to perform sacrifices. During the annual *Ogun* festival, the *Bashogun* holds the sword while the *Mosene* family beats the drum (Lagos State Government, 1988). The *gbedu* and *tipe-tipe* drums commemorate the festival with local songs. While the *Mosene Elewu-ala* family leads the celebration, artisans such as *alagbede* (ironsmiths), farmers, public transport drivers, and others actively participate in the festival.

Many other traditional deities are worshipped and celebrated by the Ikorodu people. One of these is *Inamu Arere*, whose origin is traced to the early migrants from Benin. The *Inamu* shrine is located at the Salu-Apesi Compound of the Itun-Nla area of the city (Ladega, 2016). *Asa Agere* is another cultural deity of the Ikorodu people. During *Asa Agere* festival, a band of pole dancers usually move around the town to entertain the

public with dance and offering prayers for the good health and progress of the town (Lagos State Government, n.d.). The *Egungun* masquerade is another deity worshipped by a section of the people, and the shrine is located close to the Yewa stream in the Aga ward of the city. The *Eso* or *Igunuko* masquerade, whose origin is traced to the Nupe people, is also worshipped by a group in Ikorodu. There is an annual *Igunuko* festival, and the shrine is located close to the Etunrenren stream along the Lowa area of the city. Other traditional cults and religions include Ifa, Obaluaye, Sango, Ijo Orunmila, and Ogboni.

By the close of the nineteenth century, the two global religions of Islam and Christianity had been established in Ikorodu. The people embraced these religions in their numbers, though many still combine traditional religious practices with the new religions. One of the accounts of origin refers that Islam came to Ikorodu through the effort of AlliOpebi, an Ikorodu indigene slave-returnee from Sierra Leone (Junaid-Eko, 2003). The town's first mosque was located in the Itunmaja area of the city. The two religions grew rapidly during the twentieth century as many mosques and churches were built in different parts of the city. Islamic groups such as Ahmadiyyah, Anwar-ul Islam, Ansar-ur-deen, Ansar-ur-Lahi, Riyyadul Janat, Jamatul Islamiyah, Shamisdeen, Tabligh, Tijaniyah, Qadriyyah, NASFAT, Qareeb, and many others have their branches in Ikorodu. Islamic festivals such as Ileya, Itunu awe, Kayo-Kayo, Maolud Nabbiy, and Hijrah are celebrated in Ikorodu. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) was the first missionary group to set a foothold in Ikorodu in the mid-nineteenth century (Ladega, 2016). The group was led by C. A. Gollmer and was welcomed by Chief Aina Odukanmade, who was a high chief in Ikorodu. Mr Parker, a freed slave from Sierra Leone of Ikorodu origin, was the first Christian Leader in Ikorodu, and the CMS around the Obun-Ale area built the first church in the town (Bawa-Allah, 2010). The church, now called the Anglican Church, was later moved to the Anibaba area in the Ijomu ward of Ikorodu. The second church within the city was constructed by the Methodist Church of Nigeria within the vicinity of the Ita-Elewa area. From this period onward, Christianity started to grow steadily within Ikorodu as many denominational churches such as Christ Apostolic Church, Catholic Church, Foursquare Gospel Mission, Kingdom Hall of Jehovah Witness, Celestial Church of Christ, Cherubim and Seraphim, Redeem Christian Church of God, Winners Chapel and many others established their branches. Popular Christian festivals and activities such as *keresimesi* (Christmas), *odunaji'nde* (Easter), *ajodun-ikore* (harvest festival), *isoji* (revival), *iso-oru* (night vigil) among others, are regularly carried out in Ikorodu. Missionary groups from the two religions were the first to establish formal schools in Ikorodu. Ikorodu's parents ensured that their children attended these schools, which later resulted in the array of Ikorodu indigenes in different professions in the later years.

The age group is an important means of social stratification in Ikorodu city. One of the major attributes of the age-set system was their uniforms, known as *anko*, or *asoebi*, within the general Yoruba socio-cultural practices (Osemobho, 2020). From the ageset during the pre-colonial and colonial periods, these age groups transformed into different social societies (locally called *egbe*) during the post-colonial period. Age-based social societies such as Ifelodun, Kilomoje, Kila, Singuru, Diya, Meso, Abimbola, Majeoabaje, Maiyegun, Olowolagba, Kolapo, Bobakeye and others, were prominent in Ikorodu. As there were male sets in these societies, women also organized themselves either age-based or husband-based. Almost every Saturday, these societies gather at social events such as burial ceremonies, naming, wedding, graduation, housewarming, iwuye, and birthday, among others. Ikorodu local musicians such as Saka Eruja, Nosiru Atunwon, Sadiku Agbaku, EkineGoloba, and others were invited to entertain the people (Adegboyega Adeyeri, personal communication, 19, November 2020). Non-Ikorodu musicians such as Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, Collington, Salawa Abeni, Wasiu Ayinde among others, were also invited to Ikorodu to entertain at some of the occasions mentioned above.

The age sets also contributed to the development of the town. In the olden days, these sets constructed footpaths, roads, bridges, and the palace, among others. They assisted in the maintenance of law and order by serving as security guards and checkmating criminal activities. They assisted in promoting inter-communal relationships between Ikorodu and its environs by mingling and marrying from neighboring communities. In the modern time, these agesets have transformed into social clubs, professional groups, and community-based non-government organizations such as Oriwu Club, Exclusive Club, Ikorodu Club, Ikorodu-Oga Development Association, Ikorodu Division Resource Development Group, and Ikorodu Division Human Resource Development Board, among others. These groups contributed to the development of the city in many ramifications. The traditional delicacies and recipes of the people include *ebiripo* (grated cocoyam preparation), *ikokore* (grated water-yam preparation), *obeegusi-ogiri*, (mashed locust beans soup), *sagbodo*, *asaro*, *sagidi*, and *akaraoka*. Traditionally, the male folks gab themselves in *agbada*, *buba*, *sokoto*, *filagobi*, and *dansiki*, while the female folks dressed in *iro*, *buba*, *gele*, and *ipele*, among others. Costumes for beautifications such as *ileke*, *egba-owo*, *egba-orun*, *laali*, *yerii* (earrings) and others were also adorned by the women folks.

The Traditional Economic Activities and Transitions

Agriculture was the mainstay of the Ikorodu economy during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Food crops such as cassava, maize, rice, vegetables, pepper, melon, beans, and

fruits such as orange, banana, tangerine, pawpaw, mango and cashew were grown (Lagos State Government, n.d.). Species of yam that was cultivated within the area included *obisu*, *akosu*, *ewura*, *isu-alo*, *kokofunfun*, and *koko pupa*. Different banana species such as *agbagba*, *omini*, *paranta*, *wobo* were also cultivated. Cash crops such as cocoa, oil palm, rubber, and kola nuts were cultivated particularly during the colonial period. The people also practised poultry farming and agro-processing activities such as cassava smoking (garri production). The surplus agricultural produce from the area was exported to neighboring communities, especially Lagos (Boge and Adebayo, 2018). Lumbering of tropical woods where chunks of wood were distributed within Ikorodu and to neighboring communities was another agro-allied activity that the people practised. The coastal and fishing communities of the city benefited from this. The woods were used for the construction of canoes.

Traditional livestock keeping, especially the rearing of goats, sheep, and pigs, was common among the people. This involved allowing the animals to roam about the environment in search of grasses and grains, though feeds are supplied to the animals early in the morning in some cases. Reproduction among the animals involves the process of mating in the course of their roaming. Matured stocks could be used for consumption, commercial, and sacrifices. Poultry keeping was also common among the people and chickens were locally raised through the traditional methods by allowing them to roam about in search of feed. In some cases, maize was provided as feed for them. Mating took place during the roaming, and eggs were laid in secluded areas, though the owners always ensured that a traditional incubator was provided. Once about ten eggs had been laid, the hen lay on them for about three weeks to provide the necessary warmth to warrant the hatching. Once hatched, the chicks in the company of the hen roam about for about a month or two before the chicks are weaned. Raised chickens are consumed, sold in the market, used for sacrifice, or presented as gifts. Though the colonial rule assisted in promoting agricultural activities, many policies and institutional frameworks were introduced by the post-colonial governments to improve agriculture in Ikorodu. Among these were the establishments of the Ikorodu Farm Institute, the Ikorodu Farm Settlement, the Erikorodo Poultry Farm, Farmers Cooperative Societies and others (Boge, 2021). With these policies and programs, modern and mechanical agricultural practices were introduced.

Craftworks such as basket and cloth weaving, metal production, and gold-smiting also formed parts of the people's traditional economic activities. Crude farming implements such as cutlasses, short-handled hoes, blades, and others were produced by the *alagbede* (blacksmiths). Cloth dyeing was also an important aspect of the traditional economy of Ikorodu people, particularly among the women folks. Clothes were dyed using ointment

(locally called *aro*) derived from soaked *odu* leaves inside big clay pots, locally called *kokoamu*. Women who engaged in this business were called *Iyaalaro* (Boge & Adebayo, 2018). Drum making is another occupational activity of some people in Ikorodu and some families are known for drumming (*onilu*). Clay pot making was the means of economic sustenance for a section of the people. Hunting was also part of the people's economic occupation, and instruments such as traps, bows, arrows, spears, and Daneguns were used for hunting. Though many took hunting as a part-time occupation, there were families whose major economic activity was hunting. Games caught were usually sold, consumed, or shared among kith and kin.

Trade and commerce constituted an important aspect of the people's economic activities. The city has a long history of commercial interactions with its neighbours, such as Igbogbo, Agbowa, Imota, Baiyeku, Ijede, Ibeshe, Oreta, Ipakodo, and Isiu, among others (Allison, 1982). These interactions were aided by markets in Ikorodu, Ejirin, Epe, Agbowa, and Ikosi, where many traders from different parts of Ijebuland came to trade. These markets also allowed the Ijebu people to trade with Lagos merchants who were always coming to these markets to exchange interior goods with the coastal and European products. The markets became the traditional center points of the Ijebuland during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. In these markets, the Ijebu, the Egba, and the Awori exchanged their products, especially during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Local products such as plantain, yam, maize, cassava, palm oil, fruits and others were brought to these markets in exchange for European products such as gunpowder, arms and ammunition, mirror, tobacco, rum and European clothes. These commercial interactions and activities contributed to socio-economic developments in Ikorodu. A trading port at Ebute-Ipakodo was significant to the growth of trade and commerce within Ikorodu as many Ikorodu indigenes became middlemen and prosperous. Ikorodu people established a flourishing trade with the Portuguese, and the articles of trade included clothes, spirits, tobacco, and farm produce. (Boge, 2015). Also, a substantial part of arms and ammunition between and Lagos and the hinterland passed through Ikorodu. In essence, the economy of Ikorodu improved substantially because of its strategic location as a short route and center of trade between the hinterland and coastal Lagos.

During colonial rule, many indigenous entrepreneurs began to emerge in Ikorodu. Among them were Iyalode Patricia Efun (water transport, trade, cassava processing etc.), Mr Joseph Shonubi (water transport, trade, etc.), Alhaji S. O. Gbadamosi (trade, commerce, importation, textile, banking, etc.), and Alhaji R. A. Allison (trade, commerce, importation, textile, etc.). The collaborations between Alhaji S. O. Gbadamosi and Alhaji R. A. Allison, for example, led to the establishment of both the Ikorodu Trading Company (IKOTRACO) and the Ikorodu Ceramic Industry (ICI). In addition, by the 1930s, Mr S.

O. Kamson and Mr J. F. Kamson, both of Ikorodu origin, had established flourishing textile trade in Lagos, where various kinds of singlets were being manufactured. This progress laid the foundation for commercial and industrial development during the post-colonial period as many small-scale, medium-scales, and large-scale industrial outlets were established within the city. In 1976, the Lagos State Government designated a large portion of the Ikorodu landmass at Odogunyan as the Ikorodu Industrial Estate, which harbours a series of industrial outlets (Boge, 2019). Thus, by the close of the twentieth century, the city's economy had morphed from pure agriculture to a predominant commercial, service, and industrial economy.

Conclusion: The City in Ikorodu

The word *city* has received a quantum of scholarly attention, (Vasconcelos, 2015) and a number of parameters have been used to describe it. Among these parameters are vastness, dense population, heterogeneity, permanent settlement, administrative boundaries, transportation network, effective communication, commercial hubs, strategic to industrial outlets, dependent on the rural communities for agricultural produce, presence of recreational centres, and accessibility to potable water. In terms of vastness, population density, and heterogeneity, modern-day Ikorodu is a relatively expansive Yoruba city with an increasing population rate. Ikorodu has become a permanent settlement that has witnessed an administrative transformation and clear-cut administrative boundaries. The presence of road networks and the installation of telecommunication masts have contributed to effective transportation and communications in Ikorodu. Since the 1970s, Ikorodu has become a hub for commercial and industrial activities, harbouring giant industrial outlets such as PZ Cussons, Nichemtex Limited, and Lucky Fibre, among others. Infrastructural and social facilities such as water and electricity are sited in Ikorodu, though the infrastructures face dilapidation due to over-use. However, despite these developments, the city still maintains its Yoruba-ness in culture, economy, social life and politics.

References

- Ajetunmobi, R. O. (2003). Ethnic composition and culture history. In Rasheed Ajetunmobi (ed.), *The Evolution and Development of Lagos State*, pp. 1-15. A-Triad Associates.
- Allison, A. N. (1982). *Ikorodu and her immediate neighbours: Economics, political, and socio-cultural relationship*. (First Degree's Long Essay). University of Ibadan.
- Bawa-Allah, T. O. (ed.). (2010). *In his reign: A Compendium of Ikorodu Development*. Bab Sherif Prints.

- Boge, F. I. (2014). An administrative history of Ikorodu, 1894-1960. *Lagos Historical Review*, 14, 135-150.
- Boge, F. I. (2015). Ikorodu in nineteenth century: A historical foundation of suburban society *SAU Journal of Humanities* 3(1 & 2), 28-47.
- Boge, F. I. & Adebayo, P. F. (2018). The economy of Ikorodu under colonial rule, 1894-1960 *Al-Hikmah Journal of History and International Relations*, 5(1), 26-37.
- Boge, F. I. (2019). Dynamics of economic development in Ikorodu division of Lagos state, 1960-1999. *Ilorin Journal of History and International Studies*, 9(2), 106-128.
- Boge, F. I. (2021). *A historical study of socio-economic development of Ikorodu division of Lagos state, Nigeria, 1894-1999*. (Ph.D.'s Thesis). University of Ilorin.
- Junaid-Eko, N. (2003). Islam in Lagos State: An Early Historical Experience. In R. Ajetunmbi, *The Evolution and Development of Lagos State*, pp. 110-116. A-Triad Associates.
- Ladega, A. O. (2016). *The lion of Oke-Ado*. Never Say Never Publication.
- Lagos State Government. (1988). *The Report of the Committee on the Remuneration and Classification of Obas and Chiefs, November 1988 (339)*. Lagos State Ministry of Information
- Lagos State Government. (1988). *The Report of the Committee on the Remuneration and Classification of Obas and Chiefs (323-339)*. Lagos State Ministry of Information.
- Lagos State Government. (n.d.). *Ikorodu: Lagos State (1-10)*. Lagos State Ministry of Information and Culture.
- Lagos State Government. (n.d.). *Lagos State Local Governments*. Lagos State Ministry of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports.
- Lagos State Government. (n.d.). *Welcome to Lagos State: An Authoritative Guidebook on Lagos State*. Lagos State Printing Press. (LASRAB -900, 966911).
- Martindale, H. M. (1937, December). [Commission of Inquiry Appointed to Inquire into the Political and Administrative Relations between the Awujale of Ijebu-Ode and the Akarigbo of Remo] (Exhibit G. 73). *National Archives Ibadan (NAI)*.
- National Archive Ibadan (NAI). (1937). *Ikorodu Area: Intelligence Report and Reorganization*, EDC 4/3/9, 30.
- National Archives Ibadan (NAI). (1949, 14 October). [From Mr. Parkin to E. A. Carr]. Ikorodu Affairs.
- Nolte, Insa. (2010). *Obafemi Awolowo and the Making of Remo: The Local Politics of a Nigerian Nationalist*. Africa World Press.
- Oduwobi, T. (2015). British annexation of Epe and Ikorodu, 1892-1894: A historical survey. In O. B. Olaoba, S. Ademola Ajayi, and V. O. Edo. (eds.). *Yoruba History*

- and Historians: A Festschrift for Professor Gabriel Olorundare Oguntomisin*(53-70). John Archers Limited.
- Osemobho, Ewalefoh Ernest. (2020). Aso Ebi as a Nigerian Culture. In Toyin Falola and Dipo Olubomehin (eds). *Yoruba Nation and Politics Since the Nineteenth Century (154-164)*. Pan-African University Press.
- Owolabi, A. (2015). *The big deal: an historical perspective*. Precious Sunrise Publishers.
- Sanni, H. A. &Boge, F. I. (2021). Gbara and Ere Oro musical genres and antisocial behaviours in Ikorodu township of Lagos state, Nigeria. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Bamenda University, 4(2), 111-125.
- Uthman, B. (1997). How Lagos got 20 councils. *Lagos State Bureaucrats; Journal of the Lagos State Public Service*, 4(1), 60-66.
- Vasconcelos, P. A. (2015). The metamorphoses in the concept of the city. *Mercator, Fortaleza*, 14(4), 17-22. www.mercator.ufc.br
- Western Regional Government. (1957). *Proceedings of Inquiry in Respect of Declarations for all Chieftaincies Carrying Traditional Members of Ikorodu Local Council* (9-10).