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661-28

NAME OF AUTHOR/NOM DE L'AUTEUR ROBERT ARTHUR SARGENT

TITLE OF THESIS/TITRE DE LA THÈSE POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN THE BENUE BASIN, c. 1300 - 1700

UNIVERSITY/UNIVERSITÉ DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED/ GRADE POUR LEQUEL CETTE THÈSE FUT PRÉSENTÉE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

YEAR THIS DEGREE CONFERRED/ANNÉE D'OBTENTION DE CE DEGRÉ 1984

NAME OF SUPERVISOR/NOM DU DIRECTEUR DE THÈSE DR. J.B. WEBSTER

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Abstract

The following study reconstructs a regional political and economic history of the Benue Basin of Central Nigeria between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries. This reconstruction utilizes three focal states as representative of the correlations between economic development, commercial expansion and political centralization and consolidation. As a reaction against ethno-centric studies which concentrate exclusively upon a single ethnic group or polity this regional framework incorporates an examination of the political and economic developments in Benin, Idah and Kwararafa. A major theme running throughout this regional analysis is the correlation between politics and economics, reflected in the rise of Benin as an imperial trading formation, the emergence of Idah as a major commercial and political administrative enclave, and the decline of Kwararafa as that state sought to redefine relations to regional and long distance trade, commercial production, political authority and the administration of a central place as a basis for the exploitation of commerce. The representative nature of Benin, Idah and Kwararafa define the regional base of the study, and expose the analysis to a further consideration of these states in the context of regional relationships with other Benue Basin social formations. Therefore, while focusing upon the three representative states this discussion also considers a number of other Benue Basin social formations, including Aboh, Nupe, Onitsha, Bornu, and Kano.

The sources for an extended regional reconstruction must include the widest possible range of information. The evidence for Benue Basin history, therefore, includes oral traditions, archival sources, travel accounts, missionary records and a large collection of published and unpublished works. As a synthesis of regional evidence this correlation of data, reflected in the bibliography, provides a massive amount of detailed evidence which can be related to regional history. This reconstruction also calls upon evidence not directly related to the Benue Basin, but which provides important information concerning events which impacted upon the political and economic developments in this region. The evidence from the trans-Saharan trade and the European Atlantic-overseas trade were particularly important. While ethno-centric studies might artificially isolate their evidence and reconstruct insulated political and economic histories, regional reconstructions cannot. Therefore, this Benue Basin political and economic history calls upon the widest selection of regional sources in an effort to place regional history in a proper perspective vis à vis extended regional and global events.

Acknowledgements.

The research and writing of this thesis is clearly indebted to a great many people and agencies. I am very grateful for their kindness, patience, assistance and co-operation. At the risk of inadvertently omitting an important source of inspiration or support I would like to particularly thank the following individuals and groups or institutions.

- The Canada Council
- The Nigerian Commonwealth Scholarship Board
- The University of Ibadan
- Dalhousie University
- The Benue State Government
- The Benue State Local Government Authorities
- All the individuals and groups who kindly consented to be interviewed during the research phase in the Benue Basin area.

The number of individuals who have provided both material and moral support, guidance and inspiration are numerous. Deep thanks are particularly due to

- Bertin Webster
- Maureen Sargent
- Alfred Unomah
- Erim Erim
- Attah Ajii
- and last but not least Leslie Adamson

Abbreviations Appearing in Text

A B U	Ahmadu Bello University
B V P P	Benue Valley Project Paper
C A A S	Canadian Association of African Studies
I H T	Igala Historical Text
J H S N	Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria

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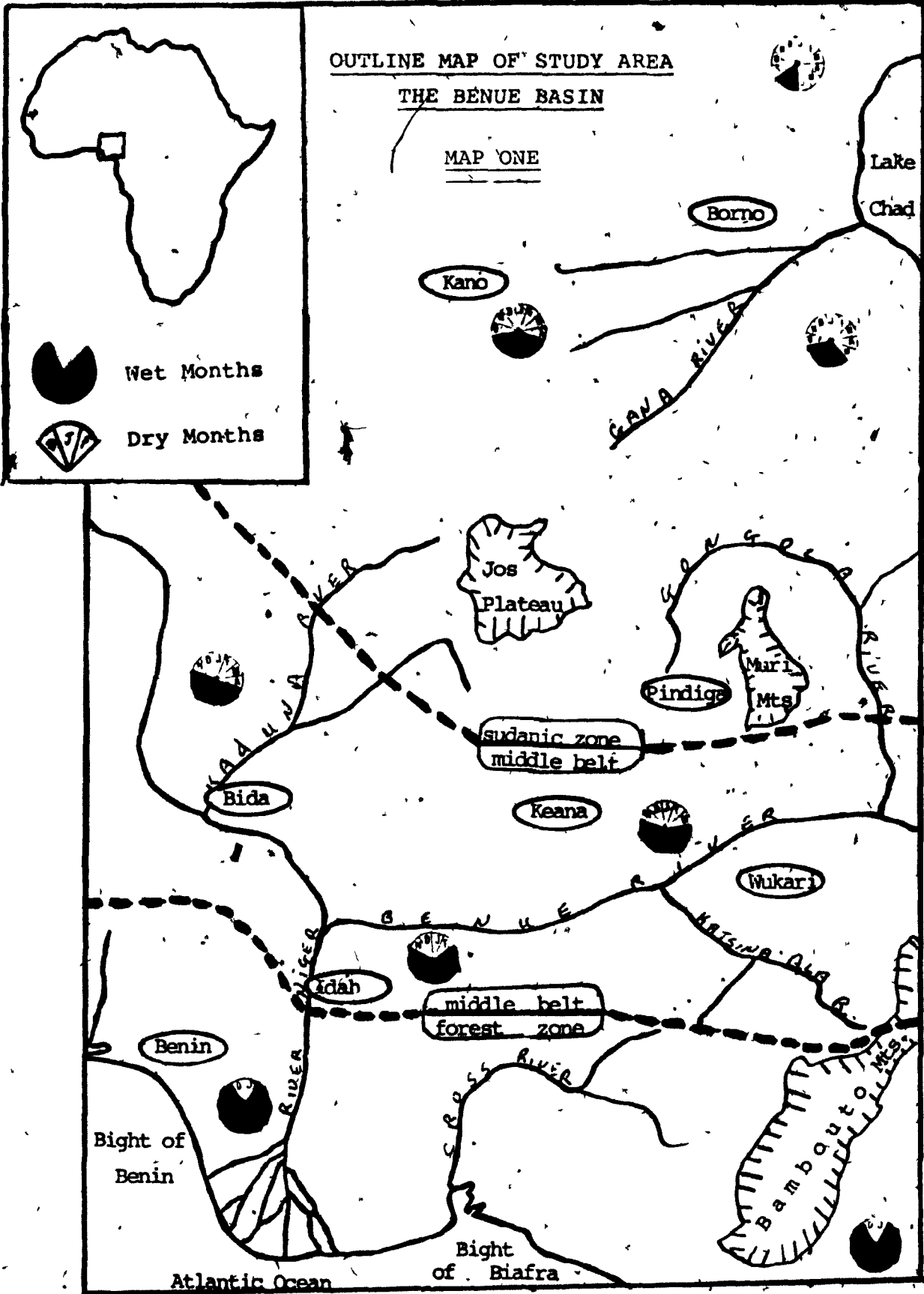
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to Benue Basin History

The Benue Basin can be described as the geographic region which encompasses the main drainage features of the Gongola, Benue and lower Niger river systems in West Africa.¹ The region probably covers in excess of 12,000 square kilometres, and includes a number of distinctive climatic zones.² The Benue Basin also contained a number of pre-colonial political, cultural, ethnic and social divisions. The correlation of such widespread diversity within a single geographic entity necessitated a restrictive definition of representative samples of this political, economic, climatic and ethnic variation. The delineation of three focal states within the region reflecting the various sub-regional distinctions provides the necessary focus. Through a concentration on Benin, Idah and Kwararafa as the pivotal states, and an examination of political evolution and the relationship of administrative adaptation to economic factors it has been possible to establish a reliable perspective on regional history between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. This study considers the relationship between political institutions and economic development as a crucial determinant in Benue Basin history. The discussion also correlates migration, drought, famine, commerce, wars, and other forms of inter- and intra-societal interactions in the analysis of the focal states.³ A secondary theme examines the political, economic and demographic



linkages between the various capitals or central places and their respective hinterlands. This theme considers, therefore, the distinctions between central political hierarchies (elites) and subordinate tribute paying vassals (commoners). Although the discussion concentrates on the evolution of political institutions and authority and the relationship of administrative change to trade, surplus production and appropriation and the general economic climate, it also examines social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious factors as an integral part of the overall regional historical development.

To develop the concept of regional history it is necessary to break the region into component parts, concentrating upon the three focal states of Benin, Idah and Kwararafa.⁴ As the reconstruction develops, the numerous links between the three sub-regional representative states become more obvious and the basis of regional history re-emerges. It is important to note, however, that the extended relationships of these polities to the larger region are integral to the regional reconstruction. The extended relationships of Benin, Idah and Kwararafa, in fact, reinforces their status as focal states, and necessitates the correlation of the connections between them and a wide variety of other states, ethnic groups and cultures. For example, there are a large number of Benue Basin states which claim relations with Benin, including Onitsha, Akure, Owo, Ijebu, Lagos, Agbor, Aboh, Oyo, Warri, and Idah, to name but a few. In the middle belt, Idah interacted with Idoma, Alago, Igbirra, Okpoto, Igbo, Edo, Nupe, Yoruba, Bassa, Jukun and a number of other

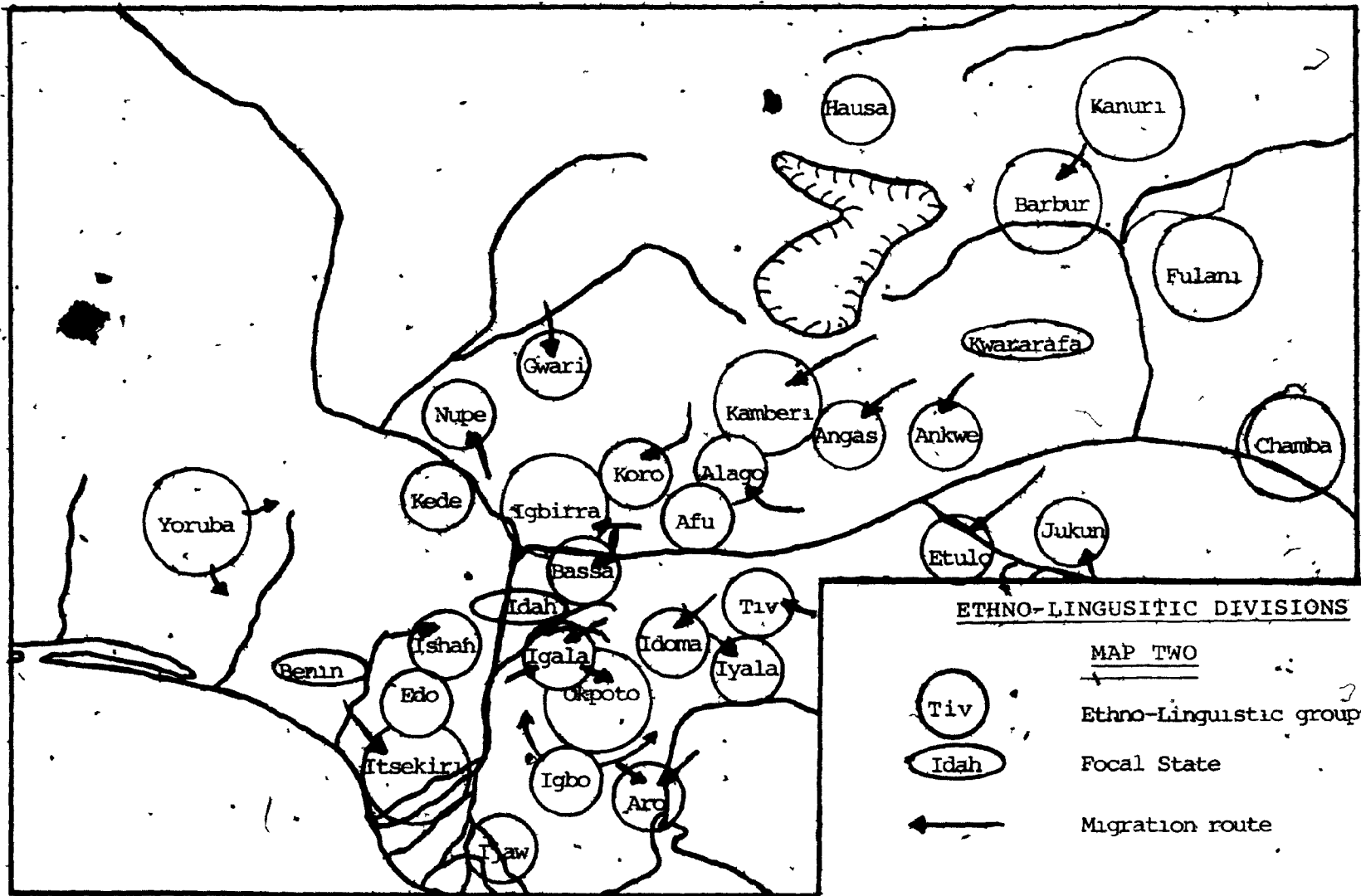
linguistic groups.⁵ Furthermore, Idah established political and economic ties with Onitsha, Aboh, Bida, Koton Karifi, Panda, Wukari, Keana, Oturkpo, Benin and a number of other Benue Basin polities. Indirectly and at various stages throughout the history of this region there were connections between the focal states and a number of other ethnic groups in the Benue Basin, including the Ishan, Itsekiri, Iyala, Etulo, Bassa, Tiv, Abakwari, Mada, Chamba, Kanuri, Hausa, Kamberi, Koro, Aro, Ankwe and Angas. Therefore, despite the fact that Benin, Idah and Kwararafa have been delineated as focal states the differentiation and regional variation have been taken into account and related to the development of the principal polities.

The Benue Basin as defined here spans forest, middle belt or derived savanna, and sudanic or savanna proper. The three pillars of this regional reconstruction are located in these respective geographic zones. The historical unity of the region stems primarily from the commercial and socio-political interactions between these polities and the climatic and geographic diversity. As the forest zone polity of Benin evolved between 1300 and 1500, Yoruba, Edo, Iqala, Igbo and Ishan were incorporated under the imperial authority of the Bini monarchy. Imperial expansion also brought Benin into direct political and commercial contact with Lagos, Ondo, Ijebu, Ife, Oyo, Ekiti, Akure, Agbor, Aboh, Warri, Mahin, Onitsha and Idah.⁶ Benin, therefore, was at the centre of an expansive network of economic, political and social relationships which emphasized the regional nature of Bini historical development. The delineation

of Benin as one of the focal states stems from the critical centrality of this forest zone polity in regional and sub-regional political and economic organization. The same arguments may be put forward for Idah and Kwararafa and thus their status as representative focal states is enhanced in the regional context.



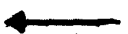
Idah, located within the derived savanna of the middle belt, can be identified as a prominent polity within the diverse range of Benue Basin states. The expansion of this commercial and ritual enclave as the capital of a riverain polity through three dynastic periods⁷ brought the Idah elite into direct contact with Onitsha, Koton-Karifi, Aro, Aboh, Benin, Bida, Kwararafa, Keana and Greater Doma,⁸ and a number of other chiefdoms and ethnic groups within the Benue Basin. Through this complex association of regional relationships Idah can be defined as a representative state and clearly qualifies as the middle belt pillar of the regional reconstruction. Idah also represents political and economic developments evident not only in the derived savanna zone but in the Benue Basin as a whole.

Finally, Kwararafa can legitimately be described as a sudanic zone pillar of the Benue Basin regional structure. Kwararafa, at various times in her history, established relationships through war, trade and diplomacy, with Kano, Katsina, Zaria and Bornu. Kwararafa also competed with other sudanic zone polities for political and economic hegemony in the sudanic region. The association of Kwararafa within the northern commercial exchange pattern represented only one aspect of the total involvement of this polity in Benue Basin political and economic development. In fact, while



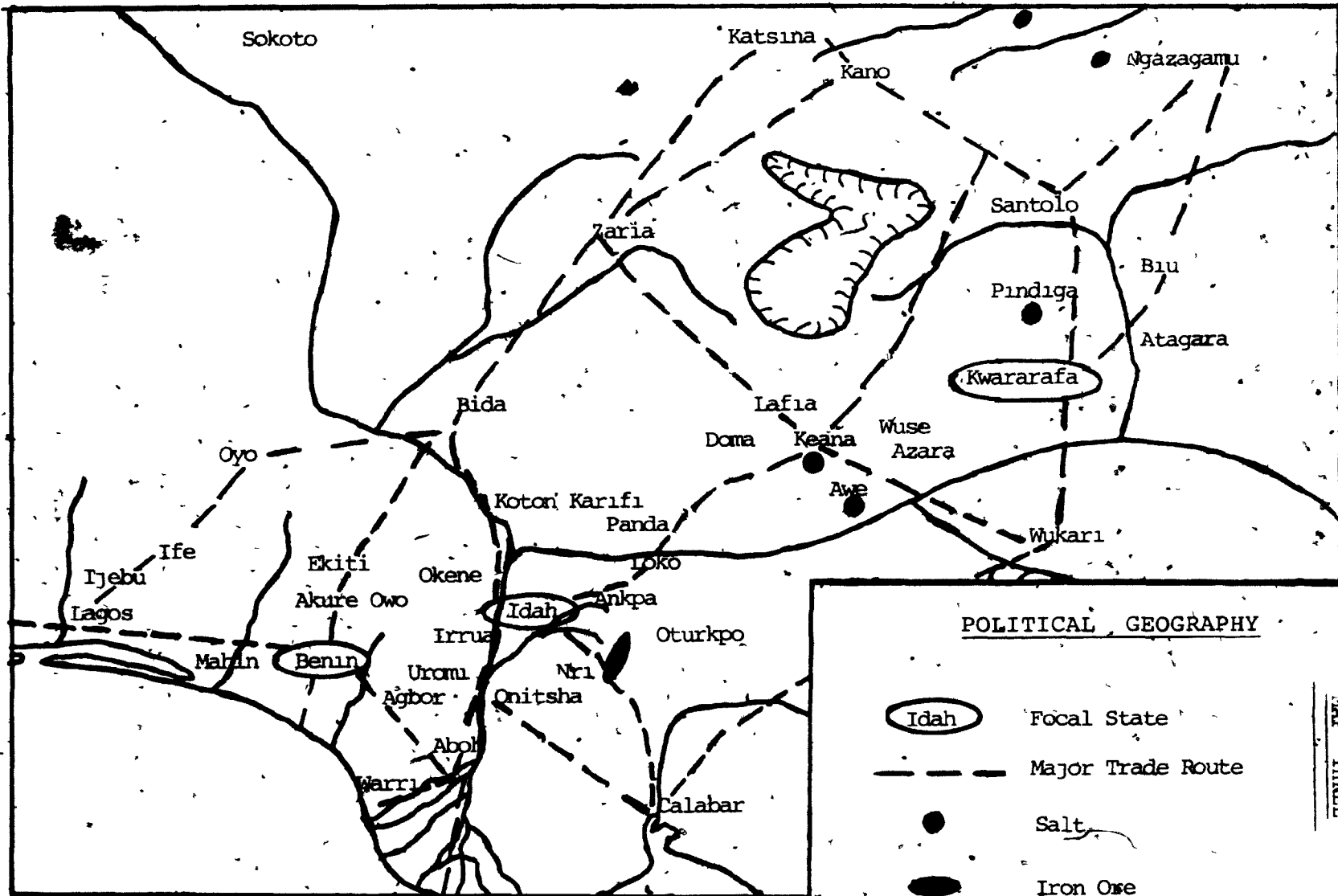
ETHNO-LINGUISTIC DIVISIONS

MAP TWO

-  Ethno-Linguistic group
-  Focal State
-  Migration route

Kwararafa was predominantly a sudanic state, by c. 1600 the capital of this multi-ethnic confederation had shifted into the derived savanna of the Benue Valley. During the seventeenth century Kwararafa may be classified as a middle belt trading formation,⁹ in direct competition with Idah rather than Kano or Bornu. As Kwararafa became more intricately associated with commercial relations of the middle belt, its political influence spread as far south as Calabar. The ethnic diversity associated with this shifting Benue Basin focal state included Greater Doma, Hausa, Abakwari, Jukun, Koro, and Kanuri, to name but a few.¹⁰ This polity also influenced and conversely was influenced by a number of ethnic groups and independent polities on the periphery of the Benue Basin. It is possible to conclude, therefore, that while this regional analysis emphasizes the three focal states of Benin, Idah and Kwararafa, there is inherent within this representative sample a direct or indirect connection to virtually every major (and for that matter minor) political and ethnic group in the entire region.

One of the main features of the following analysis is the development of a political and economic history of the Benue Basin utilizing the three representative states as prime examples of socio-economic, demographic and administrative evolution. However, this discussion also considers the relationship between the various factors in this transformation and particularly identifies the connection between politics and economic change. No discussion of the general political economy of such an extended region can ignore demography, environment, religion, linguistics and cultural factors.



POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

○ Idah	Focal State
- - - - -	Major Trade Route
●	Salt
●	Iron Ore

MAP THREE

On one hand, therefore, this reconstruction might be considered a political and economic history of the Benue Basin between 1300 and 1700, and represents an attempt to place three focal states in a regional framework. On the other hand, this historical reconstruction is a regional analysis which utilizes three focal states from the centre of respective sub-regions, and develops regional chronology, political history and economic relations from the sub-regional base to a Benue Basin regional context.

While it has proven relatively easy to identify the various polities and ethnic groups in the Benue Basin, it is equally as important to define the variety of political institutions and structures. The Benue Basin contained, in fact, a wide diversity of polities and administrative systems.¹¹ This variation included highly centralized hierarchical political structures dominating clearly defined geographic divisions and maintaining clear distinctions between elite and subordinate fractions. Benin, Idah and Kwararafa are prominent examples of this form of centralized political organization, although the three focal states differed substantially in style and type of relationship between elite and commoner. There were also acephalous societies, such as the Tiv, which played an important role in the political and economic evolution of the entire region, and who were organized along segmentary social lines and operated effectively without hereditary leadership. The Idoma and Alago, on the other hand, were represented by smaller scale chiefdoms with a relatively small central elite exercising minimal authority over a segmentary social formation. The Okpoto population,

prior to c. 1500 at least, was dominated by a tiny ritual or priestly hierarchy which maintained political authority through the control of religious institutions. Finally, there were city trading states such as Kano, and imperial trading formations such as Bornu, Benin and Kwararafa.

Economic diversity in the Benue Basin ranged from relatively small agrarian lineage or village formations loosely organized in a segmentary social and political structure to highly organized commercial enclaves and trading formations. There were also examples of economic systems designed to monopolize and exploit a single natural resource, such as salt, and utilize this resource as the primary basis of community wealth. Other polities were primarily concerned with trade, and organized production, appropriation and distribution to facilitate commercial activities. In general terms, however, production for the majority of the population in the Benue Basin was based upon agrarian activities and while entrepreneurs could develop surplus exchange between agriculturally distinct regions, the commoner population remained farmers, petty traders and localized producers. Throughout the Benue Basin and in spite of its political and economic diversity there was an impression of economic complementarity or unity. The various sub-regions and sub-divisions were, in fact, connected through a widespread local, regional and long-distance commercial exchange network. The variety of production and economic specialization in ecologically distinct regions provided incentive for trade and commercial endeavours. Therefore, while it is possible to emphasize the regional distinctions, and

environmental differences, ranging from Sahara-sudanica through derived savanna to the southern forest zone, it is also important to define similarities and relations within the extended regional framework.

In the Benue Basin, commercial exchange of primary production (pepper, camwood, fish, beans, yams, millet, maize, cattle, sheep and goats) connected the various sub-divisions in complementary economic unit.¹² Southern yams, produced in the relatively moist regions, were exchanged for northern millet and cattle. Kola nuts also provided a major incentive for regional exchange and contributed to the north-south commerce.¹³ In terms of secondary production, including metals and metal products, cloth, salt, horses, beads and carvings, the Benue Basin was no less complementary. Kano cloth, for example, could find a ready market south of the Benue. Furthermore, as Benin and Idah developed as major cloth producing centres, markets for these secondary products could be found in the long distance trading network that linked Kano with the coast through a number of intermediaries. In fact, the Benue Basin was directly related to the international commercial network of the trans-Saharan trade; and direct correlations between political and economic developments in the Benue Basin can be related to variations in this commercial system. The analysis of Benue Basin history, therefore, considers ethnic, linguistic, political, cultural, and economic diversity, but examines the evidence from three focal states which operated in a related commercial environment and developed complementary exchange as representatives of the sub-regional

variations in a unified economic setting.

One of the drawbacks to regional synchronism in an extended geographic region with the diversity evident in the Benue Basin is the limitation imposed by the availability and nature of the evidence. The diversity itself presents a number of restrictions, including a limitation of the chronological data. Without detailed historical reconstructions for all the ethnic groups and states in the Benue Basin, complete cross-referencing and synchronism is not possible. Furthermore, this discussion has been restricted to a period of time that might reasonably be covered in a limited space, and considers some aspects of regional history in the four hundred-year period. It would be possible, on one hand, to develop the ethnocentric examination of Benin alone and expand that aspect into a Bini-centric historical reconstruction. However, considering Benin as only one component in a regional reconstruction, and representative of forest zone development, suggests a certain cohesion in the regional approach, and expands the comparative material between the various sub-regions. In terms of chronology, any attempt to expand the time frame for this analysis would result in an enlarged set of regional parameters and necessitate a reconstruction that would double or triple the size and scope of this work.

A second limitation imposed upon this regional analysis comes from concentration on the three focal states. The identification of Benin, Idah and Kwararafa as the representative pillars of political and economic history in the regional context requires detailed consideration of the internal organization of these polities. This

fundamental organization implies that similar detailed analysis cannot be afforded to the many other states and ethnic groups in the region. However, the focus on political, demographic and economic change provides an avenue whereby the regional framework may be pursued without necessarily detracting from the historical perspective in one state or another. It would seem, therefore, that restrictions imposed upon subject matter, number of social formations, and the time frame serve to bring the regional concept into focus. Through a detailed analysis of Benin, Idah and Kwararafa, and based upon the evidence that these three states were directly or indirectly related,¹⁴ an examination of their regional associations and relationships creates a representative historical reconstruction of the Benue Basin.

The basis of this regional history is a regional chronology that was established from a number of independently dated chronological progressions correlated in a regional dating framework.¹⁵ This regional chronology has been summarized on the following chart (Chart II): This schematic representation of regional chronology reveals a basic periodization of the Benue Basin past between 1300 and 1900. This periodization includes an era of "wet-prosperity" in which relative prosperity and stability persisted from 1300 to 1590. The period of reliable rainfall was followed by an arid century in which drought and drought-related famine affected a large portion of the Benue Basin, including Keana, Kwararafa, Idah, Kano and Bornu.¹⁶ The evidence from regional chronology, therefore, suggests that the four hundred year period under examination here

can be divided into two basic eras; including a long period of wet-prosperity from 1300-1590 and the dry, drought-ridden century from 1590 to 1700. The regional chronological chart endeavours to correlate this basic periodization of Benue Basin history with political events, economic forces, demographic movements, environmental factors and basic generation dating.¹⁷ This dating progression provides the core regional chronology, and when correlated with individual genealogies or regnal lists for single states or even sub-regional chronologies for the three focal pillars, establishes a sound dating framework upon which the substance of political and economic history can be based.

Regional history in this discussion starts with a fairly detailed analysis of the evolutionary changes in Benin between c. 1300 and 1550. The examination of Benin, as the focal state in the forest zone of the Benue Basin, and the southern sub-regional pillar in the regional chronological and historical reconstruction, dominates chapters two and three. Chapter two, in fact, considers the development of Benin from a segmentary redistributive chiefdom after a dynastic change in c. 1320-1347, and examines the relationship between political transformation, administrative development and economic factors. As trade and commerce increased during the first generations of the fourteenth century, and the first reign of the new monarchy in Benin, this relatively undifferentiated chiefdom evolved from a small segmentary state into a major national trading formation. Prior to the advent of the second dynasty, Benin was undifferentiated from many other village chiefdoms in the southern

Benue Basin forest zone.¹⁸ Economic advantage, positive and energetic leadership, and the co-ordination of the new dynastic administration with an existing Bini elite contributed to the emergence of the trading formation and the development of the national ideology.¹⁹ Chapter three examines the expansion of the national trading formation and the relationship between political centralization and military expansion under the conquest state. This discussion also correlates the geographic changes and policy shifts with the expansion of commercial production and exchange, elite monopolies, and the development of regional and long-distance trading networks under a series of aggressive and ambitious rulers. While this analysis concentrates on the multi-causal relationships and considers economics as a crucial factor, it would be naive to underestimate the contribution of human dynamics and positive-aggressive leadership.

Chapter four concludes the analysis of Benin through a detailed examination of the growth of the conquest state, and the development of regional domination by this imperial trading formation. In fact, between c. 1455-1509, Benin emerged as a major forest zone imperial trading formation²⁰ linked to four complementary trading systems. The expansion of the conquest state and the enlargement of the imperial formation, therefore, can be linked to commerce, trade and the control of trade routes. Also, the growth of Benin established direct political and economic contacts with Lagos, Akure, Owo, Ekiti, Agbor, Idoani and Idah. The latter half

of chapter four picks up events relative to the conquest of Idah, and introduces the middle belt pillar of this Benue Basin regional reconstruction. The conquest of Idah and the foundation of a peripheral Bini administrative enclave on the Niger in c. 1507-1537 provided an important link between the forest zone state and the middle belt.²¹

Chapter five considers the relationships between Benin, Idah and middle belt commercial development, shifting the focus directly to the middle belt and examining the Bini administration in the riverain enclave. This discussion, therefore, concentrates on the second Idah dynasty and the political and economic evolution of the middle belt between 1507 and 1687. This analysis introduces the commercial administration by a Bini dynasty on the periphery of the Benin empire, and considers the impact of centralized political institutions on Idah's social, religious, economic and political development through one hundred and eighty years of Bini rule. The direct peripheral-vassal relations between Benin and Idah were eventually severed in a rebellion of the peripheral administration in 1515-1516.²² Idah emerged as the capital of an autonomous national trading formation with aspirations to dominate overland and riverain commercial traffic in the confluence region. The developments in Idah after the hard won political independence gained in the Benin-Idah war provide an interesting comparison with the expansion of Benin. Benin was associated with four complementary exchange systems, while Idah was active in two. The examination of commerce and the relationship between central administration and

economic impact of trade established Idah as the centre of a Niger commercial alliance. This alliance, although not formalized in the strictest sense, established an economic pattern for commercial exchange along the major riverain transportation system in West Africa. Furthermore, the Niger alliance provided political, cultural, linguistic and economic links between Idah and Warri, Bida, Onitsha and Aboh. This riverain trading system was, therefore, an important economic factor in the development of the Bini dynastic era in Idah. The second trading network centred on Idah was an overland route for the north-south exchange of goods that utilized the Loko river crossing point on the Benue to facilitate sudanic-forest zone commercial exchange.²³ The relationship between Idah, as the capital of a significant national trading formation under a Bini administration linked to relatively prosperous exchange systems, and the general economic development of the confluence region dominates the discussion in this chapter.

The organization, administration and exploitation of commercial ventures in the middle belt and confluence region substantially altered the political and economic focus of the entire region. The character of the Bini dynasty in Idah, in fact, reflected the relationship between political centralization and subsequent underdevelopment of peripheral subject areas. In this context the examination of the interrelationship between the capital enclave and the periphery suggests that while there was clearly economic growth (improved trade relations, export, and production) there was not economic development which "improved standards of living" for the

majority of the Idah population.²⁴ In fact, the process of central exploitation in the Bini dominated capital and the oppression and repression of subjugated Okpoto and Igbo subjects in the hinterland contributed to the underdevelopment of the rural periphery. A similar process occurred in the organization of imperial Benin. However, the analysis in chapter five is primarily concerned with the relationships between the Bini dynasty and nobility and the subordinate Okpoto and Igbo populations in the Idah enclave between c. 1507-1687.

The evidence suggests that the Bini dynasty in Idah was a highly exploitative and coercive central administration which appropriated peripheral production at an ever increasing rate. This appropriation of Okpoto and Igbo surplus labour and tribute facilitated central commercial aspirations, and undermined hinterland economic initiatives. This form of repressive central government, where a highly differentiated state elite exploited a subservient vassal population, represented a major departure from the relatively egalitarian Okpoto administration. Furthermore, Bini exclusivity and coercive exploitation created a highly polarized society with clear distinctions between central Bini elite and subordinate Okpoto-Igbo commoners. Although exploitation fueled the commercial activities and aspirations of the capital and central elite in Idah, and contributed to the development of the national trading formation, the increasing appropriation of hinterland production did not foster economic development. Also, while Bini nationalism served to support the Bini administrative policy and encourage the expansion of

the national trading formation, Okpoto-Igbo commoners developed a counter-nationalism which deprived the social formation of social and political cohesion. In this respect at least, the discussion in chapters two to five are indirectly concerned with the style of central domination and administration, and examines the process or regional exploitation correlated with the expansion of the elite and capital enclave with the underdevelopment of the periphery of each state.

In chapter six the discussion turns to the political and economic developments in Kwararafa and the sudanic zone. This analysis considers Kwararafa as the northern pillar of the Benue Basin regional reconstruction and examines the relations of this state to Kano and Bornu. Kwararafa, as a sudanic zone trading formation, also relates to the evolution of economics, trade, commerce and demography. This sub-regional analysis considers the rise of Kwararafa as a major polity and a significant economic force in the upper Gongola River Valley, and eventually documents the decline of the state and retrenchment into the Benue Valley. This reconstruction covers the period between c. 1300 and 1600, and establishes Kwararafan political and economic influences in the sudanic zone and middle belt. Kwararafan politics are integral to regional developments as they related to the competition between Greater Doma, Abakwariga and Jukun commercial and administrative aspirations. In fact, one of the major contributions to a regional analysis in chapter six is the destruction of the myth that Kwararafa and the Jukun were synonymous throughout the period under discussion.

Jukun authority in Kwararafa did not become prominent until the mid-eighteenth century.

Chapter seven concludes the regional reconstruction of Benue Basin history with an examination of the Kwararafa diaspora that began in c. 1597-1627 and continued for at least three generations. This diaspora eventually gave rise to a number of smaller successor political units in the middle belt and provided the impetus for the foundation of a number of new political regimes. Included in the demographic and administrative change, and the development of a substantially altered political geography, were the foundations of new dynasties in Idah, Keana, Doma, and a number of new administrations among the Idoma, Etulo, Jukun and Alago.²⁵ The Kwararafa diaspora, therefore, created a relatively new demographic and settlement pattern, and a substantially changed political geography throughout the middle belt. This transformation contributed to the overthrow of the Bini dynasty in Idah, and the foundation of the third Kwararafan dynasty in that riverain capital. The latter half of this discussion concentrates on the dynastic change at Idah as a representative example of political and economic development after c. 1600. This analysis reconstructs a perspective on the revised geopolitical and economic focus in the Benue Basin during the seventeenth century, and endeavours to place this transformation in a regional context.

The organization of this regional study transcends ethnocentric reconstructions normally associated with pre-colonial historiography. It is, therefore, indicative of the emerging

potential in pre-colonial African history, which suggests that regional evidence can be incorporated and correlated in a detailed examination of regional events, trends and a general discussion of prominent personalities or states. This type of historical reconstruction has been made possible by the availability of a vast amount of data collected by a variety of researchers who generously made their material available.²⁶ In this sense, perhaps, the need for co-operation becomes an essential ingredient in the development of regional history. Also, the impression about regional reconstruction in the Benue Basin has been further enhanced by the correlation of a relative standardized chronological methodology. If the various contributions to regional history had employed different techniques, or dated according to century-based methodology, the correlation and synchronization of regional data would have been difficult if not impossible. Therefore, the correlation of events in one Benue Basin social formation with either regional data - such as famines, droughts, wars, migrations or major economic trends - or single events occurring in neighbouring or even distant states outside the Benue Basin serve to corroborate events in other societies and expand the regional nature of the reconstruction. For example, this reconstruction makes it possible to correlate the evolution of Benin as an imperial formation with A) the growth of other trading enclaves in the Benue Basin during the same time frame, B) the economics of the trans-Saharan and Atlantic overseas commercial exchange patterns, C) emigration and immigration in major demographic fluctuations, D) the occurrence of regional environmental

changes, such as droughts and drought related famines, and E) the development of Benin's commercial productivity and the impact on the associated sub-regional economy. Wherever possible the evolutionary changes in political administration, productive capacity, central organization, demography, social structures, and economic relations within a particular social formation in the Benue Basin, have been examined in the light of regional evidence and compared to regional developments.

One possible contribution that this attempted regional reconstruction might provide is in the area of a new typology for the definition and/or description of pre-colonial social formations. Previously the identification of a political or social unit had been restricted to the labels of specific polities. For example, terms such as chiefdom, chieflet, state and kingdom have been the normal devices through which specific socio-political institutions have been described. However, recent developments have provided a much more utilitarian appraisal of the various socio-political and economic units evident in pre-colonial Africa. This new system of identification developed by J.B. Webster,²⁷ not only describes the political structure, but also identifies the economic base for the particular socio-political unit. Webster utilized, for example, the reference "redistributive segmentary social formation" to describe a relatively small geo-polity administered by a limited authority elite which managed to appropriate small amounts of village or lineage production in the form of allegiance or redistributive tribute. The population in this type of socio-political and economic

structure would normally be divided either ethnically, linguistically or by lineage and village and would, therefore, be considered "segmentary".²⁸ The utilitarian value of the label 'redistributive segmentary' can be seen in the relative simplification of the process of identification and the clarity of the description. In other words a complex political, social and economic entity can be readily identified and each component of this institution or structure has been accounted for without the necessity of further expansion upon specific details for that unit.

The second typology, and one to which a redistributive segmentary chiefdom might evolve, is the tributary social formation. In this type the chief has usually developed more centralized authority and is able to appropriate surplus from the gerontocratic lineage or village organizations for the support of a small but influential state elite. Tribute, in this type of social formation becomes the primary means of support for the state elite, whereas in a redistributive segmentary chiefdom the chief may be the only individual exempt from communal labour. It is important to note, however, that as the economic aspect of this descriptive typology relates to the surplus generated in a particular society, tribute is not a means of production. In this typology 'tribute' clearly refers to the appropriation of village or lineage production, and implies an underlying social productivity that generates the surplus for the support of the state elite.

A third classification, and one that appears throughout this discussion, has been referred to as the trading formation. Webster

suggests, in fact, that there were four types of trading formation, including "the imperial trading or multi-ethnic empires ... national trading formations ... segmentary trading formations ... and city states."²⁹ The specifics of the social formation define the classification into which it would logically fall. For example, at a certain point in time Benin evolved from a national trading to an imperial trading formation.³⁰ Basically, however, the trading formation can be described as a socio-political and economic unit in which the primary support for the enlarged numbers of state elite is derived from commercial levies on trade. This revenue is subsidized through the articulation of commerce with tribute, and the appropriation of slave labour and productivity. However, in a trading formation the principle support for the state elite comes from commerce and the administration of trade.

Productivity in any typology of social formation may be supplemented by the appropriation of slave labour. One of the major categories of production in pre-colonial Africa was, in fact, through the organization of slaves and slave labour. This particular means of production, and its associated socio-political institutions hardly ever appeared as the principle organizational system in a pre-colonial social formation. Slavery, however, does appear in a number of states in the Benue Basin, and the appropriation of slave labour and slave production appears in varying degrees for the support of the slave-owning elite. In Benin, for example, slave labour in the national and imperial trading formations was an important aspect of the economic nexus and, as the following

discussion clearly reveals, contributed to the development of commerce, politics and the socio-economic structure of the society.

The slave and slavery system was, of course, that system where the distinctions between dominant and dominated were most clearly defined and where the state elite were primarily supported by slave production. In Benin, Idah and Kwararafa there were semblances of the slave production mode, but none of these representative states in the Benue Basin developed a major dependence on this form of production.

Underlying and basic to all the typologies previously discussed would be the gerontocracy of the village or lineage organizations. It seems, in fact, that gerontocratic lineage production is basic to all social formations; and, for example, in a tributary state the appropriation of surplus by the state elite comes in the form of allegiance, support or redistributive tribute payments from the gerontocracy. In Benin the Otu system established the gerontocratic organization of village and lineage life, and provided the principles upon which the labour and resources of the society were developed to meet state tributary demands.³¹ In the chapters dealing with Benin it is quite clear that the gerontocracy remained active, productive and provided the fundamental reproductive capacity of the tributary, national and imperial trading formations. As this socio-political and economic formation evolved through time, the gerontocracy of lineage and village remained stable and persistent as the base of the entire socio-economic structure. Increased demands by the state elite may have imposed subtle or even violent changes on the

gerontocratic Otu structures, but the basic system remained intact.

One of the fascinating aspects of this new terminology and the identification devices for pre-colonial social formations is that the system incorporates not only the political definition but the fundamental social and economic structures as well. In this way a single typology can serve to explain and define the attributes of a particular state. In the analysis of the evolution of Benin between 1300 and 1550 (chapters two, three and four), the state evolved from a segmentary redistributive chiefdom to an imperial trading formation. This evolutionary process was related to changing economic factors, including the expansion of commercial activities, and is reflected in the classification of the social formation at a particular moment in time. The identification of an imperial trading formation, for example, not only describes and defines the basic political institutions in the central hierarchy, but also explains the fundamental economic structure through which the state elite derived support and which accounted for the development and expansion of the polity. This label, therefore, clearly establishes the multi-ethnic character of the state, and distinguishes this formation from national trading, redistributive and gerontocracies. The contribution to the development of pre-colonial political and economic historiography through the utilization of these functional definitions can only be summarized as an important step in the evolution of pre-colonial studies, and a major advance in the delineation of social, political and economic structures.

The sources for this regional history of the Benue Basin, as may be expected in an extended reconstruction, are extremely varied.

These sources include an extensive collection of orally preserved data which have been recorded by a number of pre-colonial specialists. These oral traditions, for the most part at least, have been collected in the Benue Valley History Project.³² Other orally preserved data were recorded by historians of specific social formations, and subsequently found their way into published form. The contributions by J.U. Egharevba are the best examples of published oral traditions in the Benue Basin. The extensive collection of data recorded by Egharevba have been edited and organized prior to publication.³³ E.O. Erim, on the other hand, created a large collection of Idoma oral evidence, which was subsequently typed and presented to the Benue Valley History Project in its original form. Erim utilized this data to reconstruct Idoma history, and through his analysis of Idoma traditions contributed to the regional data bank in the Benue Basin.³⁴ In terms of primary sources for this reconstruction, the evidence from Egharevba, Erim and a number of other contributions are critical for the development of regional historiography.

The primary sources for the Idah component of this regional reconstruction are the Igala historical texts from this writer's own research. Field work among the Igala of the Nigerian middle belt involved the collection and recording of 241 interviews between January 1977 and January 1978.³⁵ This material will eventually be included in the Benue Valley History Project collection. This

research was supplemented by interviews in areas neighbouring the Igala population, and was designed to seek out and record data relevant to Igala regional relationships. This material included interviews among the Bassa, Igbo and Igbirra. The collection of evidence, coupled with the secondary material on the Igala could be utilized for an ethno-centric study of this middle belt population. In fact, a number of papers and articles directly related to Igala history have been produced.³⁶ However, when this data is coupled with the oral evidence from the collective memory of other Benue Basin communities the prospects of a regional history clearly emerged. In fact, the Igala oral traditions provide only a small part of the overall primary evidence for this regional reconstruction. This evidence does, however, provide detailed information about Idah in this regional survey.

Other sources for this regional history include the archival material that is so richly available, and a vast collection of secondary source material. The anthropological and ethnographic reports of a large number of colonial officials, the travel accounts, journals and supporting documentation from merchants, adventurers, explorers and missionaries all contribute to the development of Benue Basin history. European contacts and the documentary evidence of European activities in pre-colonial Africa are quite varied in content, scale and availability. For example, relevant documentation for the coastal areas date back to the mid-fifteenth century. Portuguese accounts provide details of Benin City in the sixteenth century.³⁷ European activity and documentary evidence for the Niger

region, on the other hand, begins in 1830 with the exploration by the Landers brothers. This secondary material increases dramatically through the latter half of the nineteenth century as Europeans became increasingly active on the Niger.³⁸ Beyond the confluence region, however, supporting evidence is relatively poor; and detailed accounts of the Idoma, Alago, Jukun or Tiv, do not appear until the twentieth century. In the sudanic states of Borno and Kano, secondary documentation is much less of a problem. These states had a long history of literate traditions, and maintained contacts with Tripoli and the Arab world through correspondence and various pilgrimages to Mecca. This type of supporting evidence in the sudanic zone helps confirm the reconstruction and provides access to information about relations with Kwararafa.³⁹

It is interesting that the variety of evidence available in archives and contemporary records is strongest in those areas where oral evidence is weakest. The data from the coastal belt and forest zone, for example, is clearly supplemented with evidence from various European sources. The information on the sudanic zone also benefits from literate traditions. In the middle belt, however, the oral evidence is clearly the most complete and detailed, while supporting data from European sources is relatively weak except after 1830. The collection of Arabic, Portuguese, Dutch, French and English documentation, therefore, serves to complement the mass of orally preserved evidence, and provides the opportunity to analyze regional events from two perspectives. The correlation between these two forms of historical data is, in fact, remarkably complementary, and

provides the opportunity to critically evaluate oral evidence against documentation, and vice versa.

The secondary source material for this regional study contains an extremely large collection of evidence, and includes a number of published and unpublished works. The Igala Kingdom, by J.S. Boston, for example, contributes to the knowledge and general understanding of the Igala in the Benue Basin.⁴⁰ This volume, however, does contain some errors and mis-interpretations of historical evidence, and has been severely criticised by M.J. Ruel and E.J. Alagoa.⁴¹ Another important secondary source, and a fairly informative account of Onitsha history, can be found in The King in Every Man, by R.N. Henderson.⁴² Finally, although by no means the last secondary source worthy of note as an important contribution to regional history, we can mention the works of C.K. Meek. Meek has provided a number of important published works on the Benue Basin, including A Sudanese Kingdom, which provided a great deal of information about the Jukun.⁴³ In terms of identifying the significant secondary sources it is difficult to emphasize one volume over another. The few sources that have been mentioned here stand out only in that they provided a rather significant amount of data about a particular ethnic or political component in the Benue Basin. A great many other secondary sources are worthy of consideration, but space precludes a detailed analysis of all available secondary material.

In terms of source material for the methodology of pre-colonial oral history and the analysis of orally preserved evidence a number of important publications are available. For example, the literature

of methodology was launched in 1965 with the publication of J. Vansina's Oral Tradition.⁴⁴ In the intervening period a great deal has been written and published about the methodology of pre-colonial historiography. Prominent contributions include D.P. Henige, The Chronology of Oral Tradition; and J.B. Webster, Chronology, Migration and Drought in Interlacustrine Africa.⁴⁵ Both volumes are pre-occupied with dating, a subject about which more will be said. There are also a number of other important contributions to the methodology involved with reconstructing pre-colonial history, but most of this significant data is contained within larger works concerned with ethnocentric reconstruction. J. Lamphear's work on the Jie of Uganda, for example, contributes to the understanding of an acephalous society without the benefit of detailed genealogical or regnal list information.⁴⁶ D.W. Cohen, in Historical Traditions of the Busoga, contributed to the development of totemism as a possible source for the identification of pre-colonial relationships.⁴⁷ E.O. Erim, as previously mentioned, contributed to the understanding of pre-colonial ethnicity, and substantiated the claim that the Idoma did not originate from a single ancestral base.⁴⁸ A large number of other sources dealing with the methodology of oral history have been cited in the bibliography.

In terms of economic history of the Benue Basin it is harder to identify a particular source which makes a significant contribution to the general understanding of this aspect of the past. However, a number of articles and some monographs have contributed important details and significant data about the economic history of the region.

D. Northrup's Trade Without Rulers, for example, provided some background on the Igbo-Aro trade network in the fifteenth century.⁴⁹ For the Benue Valley, A.E. Afigbo has contributed a number of important articles and seminar papers.⁵⁰ Perhaps the most important contribution on economic history, however, comes in P. Lovejoy's examination of the salt and kola industries in the Chad Basin, Gongola Valley, and the Benue system.⁵¹ A.C. Unomah also contributed to the analysis of the salt industry with a detailed article on the Awe salt trade in the Benue Valley.⁵² Trade and commercial-exchange patterns, are for the most part more highly developed in the literature for the southern half of the Benue Basin. A comprehensive analysis of trade patterns has yet to be pieced together from the numerous ethnocentric studies, although this discussion does take a step in that direction. The analysis of regional and long-distance trade, utilizing the focal states as the centre of the commercial exchange patterns, is an integral part of this regional study and directly relates to the evolutionary changes in political structures evident in the Benue Basin between c. 1300 and 1700.

Finally, it should be noted that all the sources mentioned here have been listed in the extensive bibliography. This complete listing has been arranged alphabetically by author, and has been divided according to the nature of the particular source. The divisions evident in the bibliography include: books, articles and unpublished material. Included in the latter category are all the oral evidence, field notes, interviews, seminar papers, anthropological reports and unpublished dissertations. The list of

unpublished material also includes the evidence collected from the Nigerian National Archives in Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna. The field notes of various researchers, collected and identified as Historical Texts have been listed. The Igala interviews have been completely listed, including reference to interview number, date, place and informants. This information has been considered vital to the definition of the numerous historical texts, and facilitates adequate referencing to a particular source. Other field notes and interviews have been listed according to the particular researcher's own formula for identifying the particular historical text, and a select list has been included in the bibliography.

In order to correlate the extensive regional data and develop an overview of regional events it has been necessary to reconstruct a viable regional dating progression.⁵³ Chronology, as the basis of history, is the only mechanism through which such a wide variety of evidence may be efficiently and effectively utilized in a reconstruction of regional history. In other words, each contribution to the regional data bank has to be placed within the regional chronological structure; and only through the correlation of such data can it be integrated and utilized. A historically significant reconstruction that utilizes vague relative or century dating cannot effectively be incorporated into the regional structure dated according to the generation principles. The synchronization of regional data can be the only effective basis for the corroboration of regional reconstruction. Therefore, a standardized dating progression was developed through which the comparison of evidence

might proceed. For example, the Aro evidence, which is extremely important in the reconstruction of economic and political history in the Benue Basin, has to this date at least, been presented as century-based dating. Events in Aro history dated to the seventeenth or eighteenth century are difficult to correlate with events - famines, droughts, or wars, for example - which may have occurred in those centuries. The major famines of 1720-1750, and 1780-1810, could both be referred to as eighteenth century events; and any reference in the Aro ethnocentric material to a particular development in that century might be linked to either or both.⁵⁴

Obviously, to eliminate problems of synchronization, to facilitate regional reconstruction and to develop regional historiography it is imperative to adopt a standardized dating methodology. Therefore, wherever possible this study endeavours to correlate all related linguistic, ethnic and political structures through a regional dating progression based upon generation length dating techniques. Where chronological synchronism has been hindered or prevented by the lack or style of data, suspected relationships and connections have been postulated. These suspected synchronisms cannot, however, be explored in similar detail to those correlations which provided detailed chronological references through standardized generation dating.

The rationale for an extended regional analysis can be supported from a number of complementary factors. Firstly, this type of extended area study represents an aversion to ethnocentric history which is isolated from regional events and from obvious connections,

to neighbouring or contiguous social formations. Ethnocentric history can be extremely valuable in that it provides a detailed analysis of a single society or polity. It is only through the development of a number of ethnocentric reconstructions that regional historiography can be launched. However, if these isolated studies are artificially insulated from the regional data bank, and the impact of regionally significant events has been purged, their value is correspondingly diminished. Furthermore, ethnocentrism does not explore regional synchronic evidence, such as inter-marriage, wars, treaties, migrations and trade connections. Such neglect of regional correlations can not only distort the view of the past, but serves to prevent subsequent incorporation into a regional perspective. Secondly, the analysis of regional history provides a perspective on the past which can be quite different from that of a smaller regional or single ethnic study. For example, a political change in one state might be rationalized, superficially at least, from single society sources. The analysis of a war should also be balanced by the evidence from both sides in the dispute. If one were to only read the Benin side of the Benin-Idah war of 1515-1516, for example, a certain perspective and possible interpretation of those events would be lost. The same political change or war, when seen in the light of regional evidence and balanced by the perspective from both sides in the conflict, may reflect an entirely different conclusion. The foundation of the second Idah dynasty is a case in point. This political transformation in Idah could be rationalized as a conquest of the Okpoto

monarchy. It could also be seen as an expansion of the imperial authority of Benin, and the establishment of a peripheral administrative centre in the expanded Benin empire. The conquest of Idah must also be related to the commercial developments in the region, and an overt desire on the part of the imperial administration to control and dominate major north-south trade routes. An ethno-centric study of the Igala, and Idah history in particular, would not necessarily reveal these facts so clearly evident in the regional data bank. Therefore, regional synchronization and regional historiography provide a different perspective on the past and assist in the development of a viable economic, political and social history of a varied ethnic, linguistic and cultural region.

One unfortunate aspect in the presentation of a regional overview, and the attempted focus upon three representative states, is that this methodology might create a static impression of the Benue Basin past. Although it is possible to identify the various political units, ethnic groups and language sectors at a particular moment in time, this also, inadvertently, creates the impression that this situation persisted before and after that moment. Such identification can subsume ethnic groups and polities that have disappeared or that have been assimilated by another polity or ethnic group. For example, few maps show the location and geo-political extent of Kwararafa, primarily because that state has subsequently disappeared. Also, in the middle belt a significant demographic, economic and political contribution was made by the Okpoto population. However, since c. 1500, various factors have caused Okpoto culture, language

and socio-political institutions to slowly disappear. Today it is difficult to confirm Okpoto origins for any individual or group. Certain indicators, such as totemic holdings, may provide the last surviving link which identifies a particular group with the assimilated Okpoto. Any representation of ethnic variety in the Benue Basin, based upon current information and perceptions, will tend to offer a relatively static view of that population, and will clearly not show an Okpoto contingent. It should be noted, therefore, that wherever possible a more complete picture has been presented; but it is virtually impossible to present an accurate image of the political, economic, ethnic and linguistic and cultural diversity at a single moment in time which reflects the totality of historical developments.

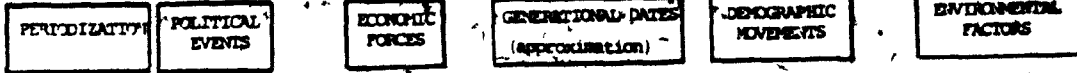
The following chapters explore regional history in the Benue Basin and utilize the focal states of Benin, Idah and Kwararafa to develop the regional perspective. This discussion contributes, therefore, to the development of an extended regional basis for historical reconstruction and utilizes local, sub-regional and regional chronology. This discussion also endeavours to utilize effectively a new typology for identification of particular pre-colonial social formations, and correlates the evidence for the evolution of particular states with political change and economic factors. Finally, this analysis develops a perspective on the relationship between central or capital enclaves in a particular state and the subordinate population in the periphery or hinterland of the various polities. In this respect the attempted regional

history concentrates on political, economic and social factors in an ethnically mixed and politically diverse region. The Benue Basin is, in some respects at least, an ideal launching ground for regional historiography in West Africa, and this preliminary analysis provides a foundation for the extension of regional analysis and the expansion of regional synchronism.

CHART II

REGIONAL CHRONOLOGY IN THE BENUE BASIN:

STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

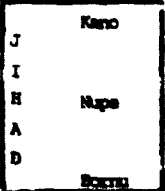


c. 1270-1300

PERIODIZATION	POLITICAL EVENTS	ECONOMIC FORCES	GENERATIONAL DATES (approximation)	DEMOGRAPHIC MOVEMENTS	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	
WESTERN	Dynastic Change Benin Foundation of Oyo		c. 1300-1330	Yoruba Diaspora Benin & Oyo	Yoruba Famine	
			c. 1330-1360			
	Tributary State Benin		c. 1360-1390			
		Regional Trade Expansion	c. 1390-1420			
		Coastal Trade Expansion	c. 1420-1450	Ga Edoas Benin		
		National Trading Formation, Benin	c. 1450-1480	Urho & Isha Edoas		
		Dynastic Change Idah & Iri		c. 1480-1510	Bornu Capital Shifts Nyangasu Benin Expansion to Idah	
		Imperial Trading Formation, Benin		c. 1510-1540	Idah Colonizes Nupe Babur Settle Biu	
		Expansion of Nupe		c. 1540-1570	Turmoil in Oyo	Drought & Famine Bornu
	DORRY	Macroan Invasion of Songhai	Atlantic Trade Diversifies Trans-Saharan Trade Shifts	c. 1570-1600	Agbor Diaspora Onitsha & Abok	Drought & Famine Bornu
Dynastic Change Benue			c. 1600-1630	Benue Diaspora Begins	Drought & Famine Tshuotoo & Bornu	
Dynastic Change Idah			c. 1630-1660	Agatu Diaspora Begins	Drought & Famine Bornu	
Dynastic Change Kano Expansion of Oyo		Benue Salt Trade Expands	c. 1660-1690	Jukun Colonisation Benue Valley	Drought & Famine Bornu & Kano	
SOUTHERN	Dynastic Change Idah		c. 1690-1720			
		Atlantic Trade Expansion	c. 1720-1750	Emigration from Idah to Kano	Drought & Famine General (Continental)	
		Slave Trade Boom	c. 1750-1780			
			c. 1780-1810	Bassa & Refugee Migration Across Benue	Drought & Famine Severe & Widespread	
		Expansion of Legitimate Trade	c. 1810-1840	Second Jukun Colonisation Benue Valley		
EUROPEAN			c. 1840-1870		Drought & Famine Kano	
			c. 1870-1900			
			c. 1900-			

WESTERN
DORRY
SOUTHERN
EUROPEAN

SONGHAI
PEAK



Endnotes to Chapter One

1. Refer to Map No. 1 which diagrams the main geographic, climatic and political features of the Benue Basin.
2. The climatic distinctions in the Benue Basin range from the sudanic zone in the north where lower rainfall averages dominate, and two to three months of rainy season are considered normal, to the southern forest zone which has high and consistent rainfall up to ten months of the year. In the central region (an area described as the middle belt) rainfall averages are relative consistent five to six months of the year, representing a transitional zone from the forest to the sudanic region.
3. Marriage relationships between prominent representatives of different polities or cultures would be a good example of significant inter-societal interaction. Such a political liaison would be relevant to both political and economic exchange, and might be directly relevant to the regional reconstruction.
4. Refer to Chart I which schematically outlines the three focal pillars in the Benue Basin regional structure.
5. Map II endeavours to identify the major ethno-linguistic divisions evident within the Benue Basin. It should be noted, however, that this kind of general overview establishes a static impression and does not provide for the disappearance of states or ethnic groups or migrations which were a prominent feature of Benue Basin regional demography.
6. Map III delineates the political geography of the Benue Basin, and extends some of the regional relationships beyond this defined base. Calabar, Oyo and Sokoto are normally considered outside the Benue Basin, and yet these states have a bearing upon the internal developments of this region.
7. The dynastic chronology of Idah has been analyzed in R.A. Sargent, "A Methodology of Chronology: The Igala Core Regnal List", History in Africa, Vol. 11, 1984. For the preliminary work on Igala chronology refer to R.A. Sargent, 'Dating Collateral Succession: The Igala Kingdom in the Middle Belt', Benue Valley Project Paper No. 15, 1975. The Benue Valley Project Collection, in the Killam Library, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S., Canada, includes project papers and research notes identified with the team of researchers involved in the original Benue Valley History Project funded by the Canada Council. This collection has been microfilmed for distribution.

8. The term, 'Greater Doma', has been utilized throughout to identify a particular population which was the progeniture of the Idoma, Etulo, Alago and contributed a large number of settlers to the Igala ethnic group. These successor populations, the majority of which are classified linguistically in the Idoma sub-group of the Kwa language family, emerged after the Kwararafa diaspora of c. 1600 (refer to Chapter Seven for more details).
9. A trading formation is a particular type of social formation in which the majority of elite revenue is derived from the levies on and administration of commercial exchange. A trading formation, therefore, is distinct from a tributary formation in which tribute provided the major source of elite revenues.
10. The influence of Kwararafa spread onto the Jos Plateau and subsequently altered the political geography and demography of that environmentally distinct sub-region. Refer for more information to J.M. Morrison, 'Jos Plateau Societies: Internal Change and External Influences, 1800-1935', University of Ibadan, Ph.D., 1976, pp. 36-40.
11. A number of the types of social formations evident in the Benue Basin have been described and defined more fully later in this brief introduction. These descriptions have been adapted from J.B. Webster, 'A Typology of Social Formations in Pre-colonial Africa', paper presented to the Canadian Association of African Studies Conference, Université Laval, 1983.
12. Primary production can be defined as basic food stuff or consumer goods necessary for daily life. In many respects, however, primary production in one sub-region became luxury goods in another.
13. P. Lovejoy, "Long Distance Trade and Islam: The Case of the Nineteenth Century Hausa Kola Trade", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 1973.
14. The relationship between Benin and Idah, for example, has been more fully discussed in Chapters Three and Four. Benin established a related royal dynasty in Idah in c. 1507-1537, which dominated the confluence region for one hundred and eighty years. Kwararafa-Idah relations, on the other hand, can be examined through the rise of the third Idah dynasty which emerged from the Kwararafa diaspora in c. 1597-1627 (Chapter Seven) and dominated Idah from c. 1687-1717 until the present.
15. Refer to Sargent, "A Methodology of Chronology", and for a full discussion on regional dating refer to R.A. Sargent, 'A Benue Basin Regional Chronology', paper originally presented to the Dalhousie University History Workshop, June 1983.

16. The correlation and synchronization of drought and famine references have been undertaken in S. Nicholson, "Climatic Variations in Sahel and Other African Regions During the Past Five Centuries", Journal of Arid Environments, Vol. 1, 1978; J.B. Webster, 'Periodization in African History; c. 1050-1850', Benue Valley Project Paper No. 34, 1983; and S. Nicholson, 'A Climatic Chronology For Africa: Synthesis of Geological, Historical, and Meteorological Information and Data', University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ph.D., 1976.
17. The regional chronology chart (Chart II) has been dated according to a thirty year generation average, which falls central to the range of years in 69% of all dated dynasties in the global context. Refer to D.P. Henige, Chronology of Oral Tradition, Quest for a Chimera, Oxford, 1972, p. 123. Also refer to D.H. Jones, XI, 2, 1970; and J.B. Webster, "Noi' Noi' Famines as an Aid to Interlacustrine Chronology", in Chronology, Migration and Drought in Interlacustrine Africa, edited by J.B. Webster, New York, 1979.
18. The forest zone of the Benue Basin, according to the definition applied here, does not include the Niger Delta and the region west of the delta, or Igboland.
19. The definition of a pre-colonial polity with a dominant state class which maintained might, power and authority indicates that a class state had emerged. Clearly, therefore, an imperial trading formation would have had a dominant and subordinate distinction in which the ruling elite exercise power and authority over the subordinate class. The evolution of class differentiation and the state has been analyzed elsewhere. Refer to R.A. Sargent, Conjunction, Conflict and Class: The Evolution of the State, forthcoming.
20. An imperial trading formation can be defined as a major polity where the "elite was supported by partially transferred surpluses extracted by various methods, from trade and commerce", Refer to Webster, 'A Typology', p. 13.
21. As Thurstan Shaw so clearly noted the Benin invasion of Idah and the foundation of the peripheral Benin dynasty in that riverain capital probably reflected the growing importance of Niger commercial traffic. T. Shaw, Nigeria, Ibadan, 1973, p. 172.
22. The fixed date for the Benin-Idah war was established by a Portuguese missionary who wrote to King Dom Manuel of Portugal in 1516 that he had participated in a major conflict on the side of the Oba of Benin. Refer to E. Sanceau, The Reign of the Fortunate King, 1495-1521, New York, 1969, p. 73, and Sargent, "A Methodology of Chronology", op. cit. For further clarification of the definition of a national trading formation refer to Webster, 'A Typology', op. cit.

23. Refer to Map Three, "The Political Geography" which shows the major trade routes in the Benue Basin.
24. R. Palmer and N. Parsons, The Roots of Rural Poverty, London, 1983 (reprint), p. 3.
25. The one large Kwararafa confederacy fragmented after c. 1600, and a number of separate polities emerged. This fragmentation accounted for a large number of distinct polities in Idomaland alone. Refer for example to E.O. Erim, The Idoma Nationality, 1600-1900, Enugu, 1981.
26. E.O. Erim and J.N. Orkar, for example, made significant contributions to the development of the Benue Basin pre-colonial data bank. Erim generously made all his research material available through the Benue Valley History Project, and this data is contained within the Benue Valley collection at Dalhousie University. However, Erim's study of the Idoma and Orkar's work on the Tiv were basically ethnocentric studies of only two groups in this extended region. Refer to Erim, The Idoma Nationality, op. cit., and J.N. Orkar, 'A Pre-Colonial History of the Tiv of Central Nigeria, c. 1500-1850', Dalhousie University, Ph.D., 1979.
- Other researchers who have contributed to the regional data bank include J. Morrison, J.B. Webster, J. Agi, A.I. Adefuye, A.C. Unomah and a number of others. Much of this information has been collected in the Benue Valley History Project. Igala research by this author will soon be deposited with this collection, and consists of two hundred and forty-one Igala Historical Texts, and a number of other interviews collected outside Igalaland among neighbouring and related communities. The bibliography identifies the wide variety of oral texts related to the Benue Basin, and lists the data from the various contributing researchers who made this regional reconstruction possible.
27. Webster, 'A Typology', pp. 6-9.
28. Ibid.
29. Webster, 'A Typology', p. 13. Webster went on to add that "the warrior state might well be considered a fifth sub-type of trading formation".
30. Sargent, 'Evolution of an Empire' where the evolution of Benin from a national to an imperial trading formation is discussed. Also refer to Chapters Three and Four of this discussion.
31. H.L.M. Butcher, "Some Aspects of the Otu System of the Isa Sub-tribe of the Edo Peoples of Southern Nigeria", Africa, Vol. 8, 1935.

32. The Benue Valley History Project was originally funded by the Canada Council, and involved Canadian and Nigerian historians in two sessions of field work in the Benue Valley in 1974 and 1976. The Benue Valley material is currently being micro-filmed in the Special Collections section of the Killam Library, Dalhousie University.
33. For example, J.U. Egharevba, A Short History of Benin, Ibadan, 1968, and The Concise Lives of Famous Iyase, Benin, 1948, are only two of Egharevba's publications. A full listing is available in the bibliography.
34. Refer to Erim, Idoma Nationality, 1600-1900, op. cit.
35. This research was undertaken while a post-graduate student at the University of Ibadan, under the direction of A.C. Umoh and J.B. Webster. The original outlines of Igala research were, however, established during the initial stages of the Benue Valley History Project, and were expanded upon when E.O. Erim developed research among the eastern neighbours of the Igala.
36. R. A. Sargent, "Igala Masks: Dynastic History and the Face of the Nation", Tricksters, Transvestites and Warriors, edited by S.L. Kasfir, forthcoming and "The Rise and Decline of the Igala State in the 19th Century", in E. Isichei, (ed.), Central Nigeria Perspectives, forthcoming.
37. Portuguese contacts with Benin were established as early as 1482, and by 1515-1516, Portuguese missionaries were established in the Benin capital. Refer to Sanceau, The Reign of the Fortunate King, op. cit.
38. A large number of travel accounts and journals were published in Europe as the explorers moved up the River Niger in greater and greater numbers after 1830. These records include accounts of the 1841 expedition to establish a European settlement at Lokoja. Refer to T.J. Hutchinson, Journal of an Expedition Up the Tshadda, Niger and Benue, London, 1855 among others. All these sources have been listed in the bibliography.
39. For example, refer to The Kano Chronicle, translated by H.R. Palmer, and reproduced in J.A. Burdon, Northern Nigeria, London, 1909. A number of other chronicles and accounts can be found in the various gazetteers which were collected for the various provinces in the sudanic zone. All these sources have been listed in the bibliography.
40. J.S. Boston, The Igala Kingdom, Ibadan, 1968, equally as informative about the Igala refer to M. Clifford, "A Nigerian Chiefdom", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society, LXVII, 1936.

41. M.J. Ruel, review of The Igala Kingdom, in Man, Vol. 4, 1969 and E.J. Alagoa, "Kingship: Myth or History", Lagos Notes and Records, 1972.
42. R.N. Henderson, The King in Every Man, New Haven, 1972.
43. C.K. Meek, A Sudanese Kingdom, London, 1936.
44. J. Vansina, Oral Tradition, London, 1965.
45. Hénige, The Chronology, op. cit.; and Webster, (ed.), Chronology, Migration and Drought, op. cit.
46. J. Lamphear, Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda, London, 1972.
47. D.W. Cohen, Traditional History of the Busoga, London, 1972.
48. Erma, Idoma Nationality, op. cit.
49. D. Northrup, Trade Without Rulers, London, 1978.
50. A.E. Afigbo, "Trade and Trade Routes in Nineteenth Century, Nsukka", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, VII, 1, 1973, and "Pre-Colonial Links between South-eastern Nigeria and the Benue Valley, paper presented to the A.B.U. Niger-Benue Seminar, Jos, 1974.
51. R.E. Lovejoy, "The Bornu Salt Industry", The International Journal of African History, XI, 4, 1978; and P.E. Lovejoy, "The Kambarin Beriberi: The Formation of a Specialized Group of Hausa Kola Traders in the Late Nineteenth Century", Journal of African History, 14, 1973.
52. A.C. Unomah, 'The Middle Benue Region and the Muslim Impact (c. 1800-1900), Benue Valley Project Paper No. 18, also refer to A.I. Adefuye, 'Keana, the Gift of Salt', Benue Valley Project Paper No. 21, and J.B. Webster and R.A. Sargent, 'Oral Traditions and Economic Issues', Benue Valley Project Paper No. 14. Clearly the most informative paper in the Awe salt industry is A.C. Unomah, 'The Lowland Salt Industry' in Studies in the History of Plateau State, Nigeria, edited by E. Isichei, London, 1982.
53. Chart I graphically shows the three pillars of the Benue Basin dating progression and the relationship of the focal states to the regional data bank.
54. For example refer to F.I. Ekejiuba, "The Aró System of Trade in the Nineteenth Century", Ikedga, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1972, p. 13.

CHAPTER TWO

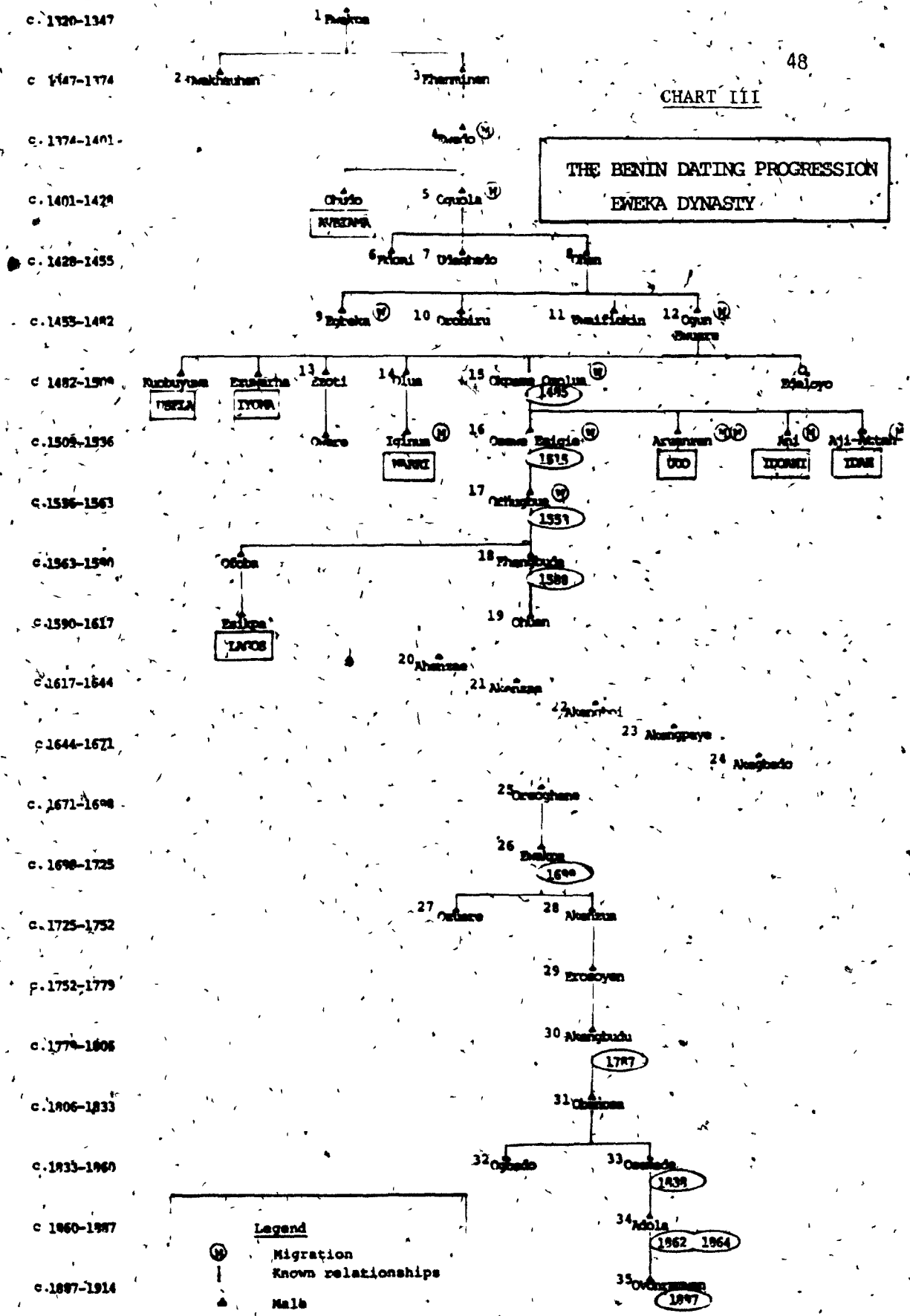
Dynastic Change and Political Centralization,

Benin, c. 1300-1455

The following reconstructs an important transitional phase in the political and economic evolution of Benin. The analysis is primarily concerned with the transformation of an interscursive political relationship in a segmentary redistributive chiefdom, and the development of a West African commercial empire or imperial trading formation.² The history of Benin can be divided into two dynastic periods, the Igodo dynasty which ruled prior to c. 1320-1347, and the Eweka monarchy which has retained sovereignty since then.³ This reconstruction provides only a relatively superficial examination of the first dynastic period. However, the analysis does provide a background for the more detailed consideration of economic, social and political developments under the Eweka monarchy. The available data establishes a connection between the evolution of central government and an expansion of commercial exchange. The process of political centralization and coercive domination, coupled with the development of social differentiation and increased exploitation, culminated in the rise of an expansive commercial empire. The roots of commercial imperialism, therefore, can be found in the fall of the Igodo dynasty and the ascendancy of the Eweka administration. The following discussion considers

CHART III

THE BENIN DATING PROGRESSION
EWEKA DYNASTY



Legend

- ⊙ Migration
- | Known relationships
- ▲ Male
- ♀ Female
- ⊙ (with date) Fixed Date
- S Succession number
- ⊙ (with symbol) War

Source: J.U. Egharevba

briefly the Igodo period, then concentrates on the evolution of the Eweka dynasty and the growth of paramount central authority in Benin between c. 1320-1455.

The era of the Igodo dynasty was characterized by a relatively undifferentiated administration in which perhaps only the Ogozo (chief) was exempt from communal labour.⁴ The restricted central authority exacted a minimal amount of allegiance tribute from the gerontocratic village-communal society. The administration apparently did not possess sufficient authority, skill or influence to increase tribute demands or appropriate village-communal production in order to advance commercial exchange. The Ogozo was able to support a small group of craftsmen known as the Onwina and Igbeseamwan - carpenters and wood and ivory carvers respectively - through redistribution of accumulated tribute.⁵ Artisan production was primarily of luxury goods for elite consumption and not developed for commercial exchange. Trade, too, was the preserve of the elite, and confined to a limited exchange of luxury items, including cloth, beads and camwood.⁶ The authority of the Ogozo was restricted by his advisors and titled officials who had been elevated from the gerontocratic village Otu network. These officials (supported by their own tribute systems) included the Esago (premier and greatest war chief) and the Onojie (village chiefs).⁷ The intercurative power relations between the Ogozo and the title holders provided an effective mechanism to control the influence of the Ogozo. Succession was determined by a Council of Kingmakers, and excluded princes became village chiefs (Enejie).⁸ The Enejie apparently

retained clearly defined areas of authority and a degree of political autonomy vis-à-vis the power of the central authority or Ogosó. Also, the hereditary status of the Enejie clearly established them as part of the state nobility. The division of authority and the interspersive power relations between the royal fraction and the village administration seem to define the character of the Igodo dynastic administration. Order was maintained through regular council meetings in which the Enejie could exercise an extremely effective and influential voice. The interspersive relationship between the Ogosó and the gerontocratic village Otu representatives in the council indicated that a balance of power was achieved between various segments of the administration.

The organization of the village authority, and the production at the village communal level was based upon certain gerontocratic principles: Village and lineage elders retained at least symbolic control of land, land usage and productive and reproductive organizations. The prominent structure at the village level was the Otu system (age grade) which was utilized to increase the productive capacity of the village population. The Otu system became,

... an organized system of public opinion, a complete guide for the activities of each individual and the method whereby every man was enabled to take his proper place in society with the maximum of usefulness. If a man did not comply with the requirements of custom he was a nobody ...g

H.L.M. Butcher went on to describe the age organization as it operated at the village level of Benin society and suggested how

the various grades contributed to village production.

Those in the lowest Otu ... are called Egbonughele sweepers of the street. Under this name are classified all the youths of the clan ... They perform all the ordinary communal tasks, they hew wood and carry water, mix mud for house building, and clean the farm paths. The actual tasks are usually apportioned among themselves, the elder boys assisting the younger. Next come the Igele, the adults in the prime of their strength, most of them with homes and families. They were called out for work when it was beyond the power of the youths. The senior Igele only went to war in a major conflict, leaving minor raids to the younger men. Though individually they had no legal right to speak in the full village council, yet their preponderance of numbers and the fact that they were the Elders of the future lent considerable weight to their ideas. They formed the main body of public opinion. Above them come in some groups a rank called Igbama which are 'Junior Elders' - if they may be so described. These are the heads of families, seniors in the small divisions of the villages, who have in some cases performed a promotion ceremony to free themselves from the obligation of communal labour, but who are not yet admitted to the full clan councils. Finally come the Edion, the Elders, the grave and reverend seniors of the village, the repositories of custom, the village tribunal of justice, at the head of whom is the Odionwere or senior elder ... In most groups he is the administrative as well as the religious head of the village, just as the Onojie is the head of the whole group ... 10

Surplus production was collected by the Edion and Odionwere and funnelled to the Ogozo or Enejie. The Edion also had considerable influence with the Onojie and tended to ensure that the Council of State would consider the wishes of the gerontocratic-village society. The last monarch in the Igodo dynasty apparently attempted to govern without the advice and consent of the council. Ogozo Owodo (c. 1293-1320) "never convened a meeting except in times of trouble or

crises."¹¹ Chief Owodo was eventually banished from the throne by the combined efforts of the Enejiè, Kingmakers Council and village Odionwere. It would appear, therefore, that the paramount authority of the chief was restricted by the intercursive relations with the Council of State. But the behaviour of Owodo suggests economic changes had begun which were about to challenge intercursive relations upon which the small polity of Benin had been built. These changes apparently were encouraging the Owodo to exercise greater independence than had been possible with his predecessors.

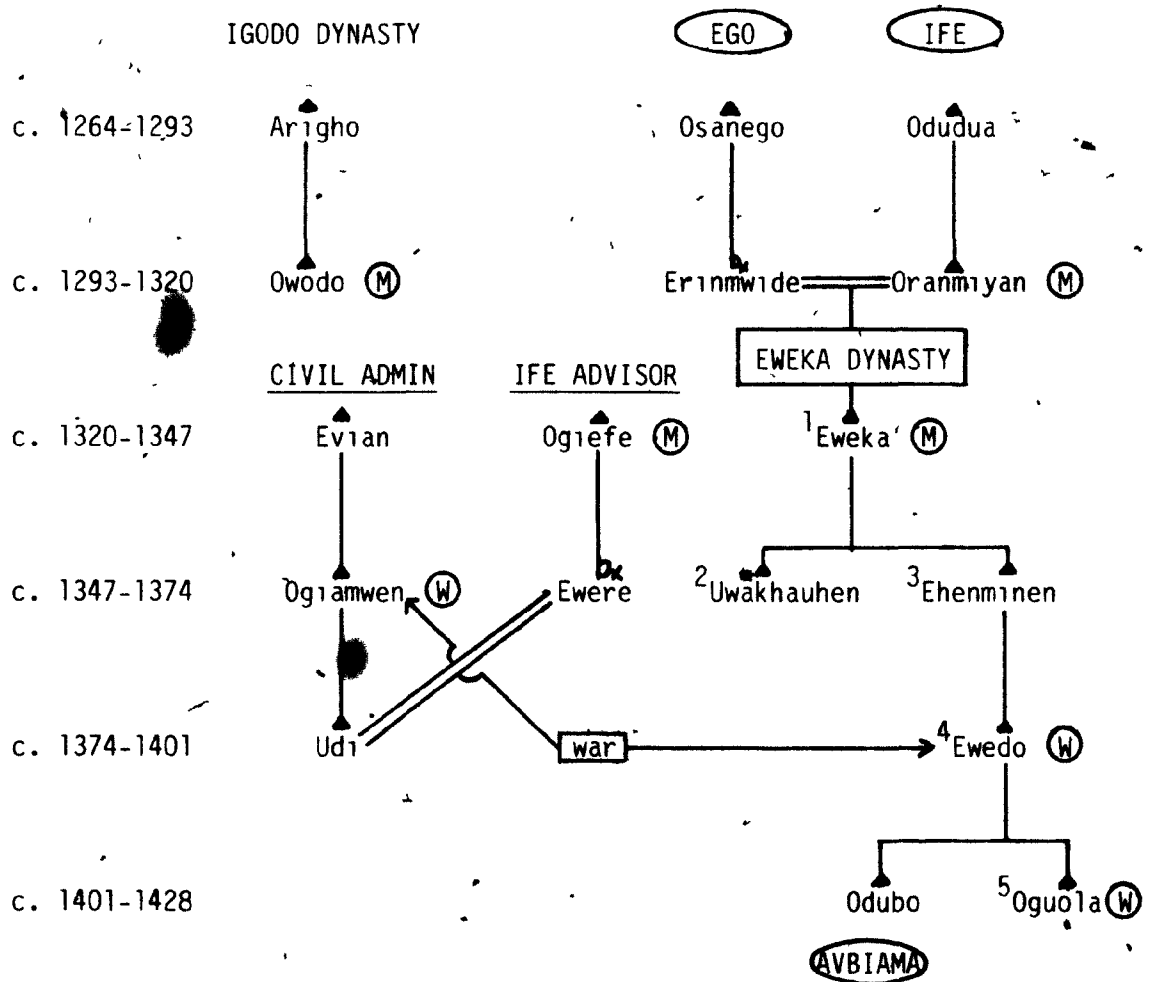
After the removal of the unpopular Owodo, a commoner, Evian,² became civil administrator of the government. He had become prominent during Owodo's reign and as civil administrator was considered a temporary bi-partisan figure. Evian, however, endeavoured to legitimize the rule of his family by appointing his son as successor. The Council of Kingmakers, the titled nobility, state bureaucracy and "the people refused" to accept Ogiamwen (the son),¹² arguing that he was not a legitimate contender for the Ogoso title.

While this was still in dispute the people indignantly sent an ambassador to the Oni Oduduà, the great and wisest ruler of Ife, asking him to send one of his sons to be their ruler.¹³

Benin, under the Igodo dynasty, had been a segmentary social formation with the capital at the centre of a constellation of chiefdoms creating a secondary social formation. This structure suggests that the population in any one segment was not particularly large. It also appears that the population was mixed Edo- and Igbo-speaking.

CHART IV

Schematic of the Dynastic Change in Benin



Legend

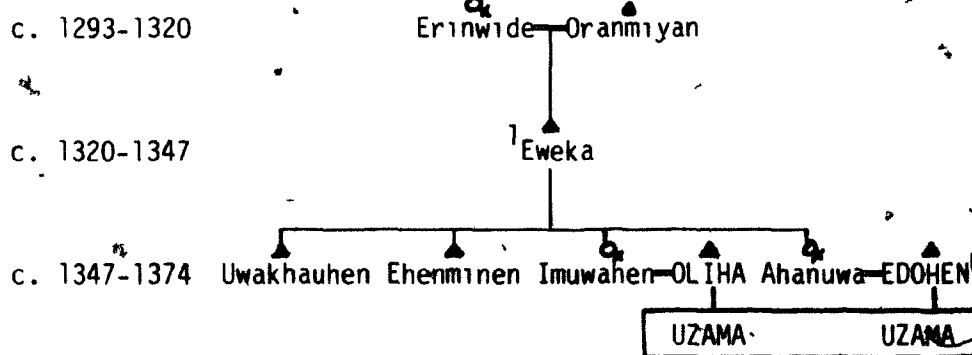
▲ Male	Known relationship	EWEKA Dynastic name
♀ Female	== Marriage	Ⓜ Migration
Ⓜ War	↔ Cross Reference	Ⓜ Chiefdom name

Certainly the Otu structure was very similar to the age grades utilized to organize production among the Igbo. One might surmise, therefore, that the Igodo dynasty represented the third cultural element in this ethnically mixed population. By seeking greater central authority the Igodo dynasty had achieved the near impossible, the united action of the two subordinate and contentious groups in the social formation. However, it was unthinkable that one of the subordinate ethnic elements, represented by the Ebian lineage, could replace the Igodo dynasty as paramount in the redistributive social formation, thus the invitation to Ife.

The approach of another candidate for the throne, Eweka from Ife, represented a political compromise in the potentially violent competition for paramount authority. The fact that Eweka was the son of a marriage between the Ife ambassador (Oranmiyan) and a daughter of a powerful local chief provided at least a rudimentary claim to legitimacy.¹⁴ The chieftaincy in the vassal village of Ego had been founded by an unsuccessful royal prince of the Igodo dynasty, and the daughter was therefore related to the previous royal house and thus provided female-side legitimacy to the Eweka lineage. Furthermore, Oba Eweka aligned the new dynasty with the Kingmakers Council, under the leadership of the Oliha, and made its members hereditary nobility. Previously, the Uzama Nihinron had been appointed bureaucrats representing the village Otu system.¹⁵ The alliance of the Eweka dynasty and the Kingmakers Council founded a Yoruba-speaking monarchy as at least the ritual head of the central administration. The establishment of an hereditary Uzama council,

moreover, enhanced the power, authority and prestige of the councillors and created an interspersive relationship between the Eweka monarchy and the Uzama Nihinron. The hereditary principle removed a substantial democratic element from the system of administration, and shifted political power from the villages to the central government. It also set the stage for future conflict within the central governing elite, specifically between the monarchy and the Uzama Nihinron.

CHART V

Schematic of the Eweka-Uzama Alliance

The foundation of the new dynasty did not immediately alter the relationship between the central authorities (monarchy and Uzama Nihinron) and the village organization. Tribute payments, for example, were not apparently increased and the dynastic change did not substantially enlarge the bureaucracy or nobility. The introduction of the title of Oba¹⁶ to replace the Ogosu title of the

former dynasty seems to have sufficiently divorced the new monarchy from the discredited reputation of the previous rulers. Finally, the Eweka monarchy was more dependent upon the goodwill of the Uzama Nihinron, and initially at least looked to this influential body for economic and political support. The fact that Oba Eweka had married two of his daughters to Uzama members seems to have contributed to the relationship between the new dynasty and the Uzama nobility.

The Uzama Nihinron, including the Oliha, Edohen, Ezomo, Ero, Eholo n'Ire and Oloton had apparently made the final decisions to approach the Oni of Ife. The Oliha had been the ambassador to Ife, indicating perhaps that there had been an organized conspiracy to overthrow the Igodo dynasty and restrict the authority of the Evian lineage. The new dynasty, with no independent power base and no recognized palace, was extremely dependent upon the Uzama. The Oba lived in the Uzama palace and exercised whatever measure of authority he was permitted by the Uzama.

Eweka I was succeeded by one of his older sons, Uwakuhien, who in turn was succeeded by his brother Ehenmihen, another of Eweka's sons. There were no events of importance during their reigns but traditions says that there was peace, concord and contentment throughout the kingdom. The chiefs [Uzama and Enejie] wielded much influence during these reigns. Uwakuhien and Ehenmihen reigned and ended their days in the Usama [Uzama] palace. 17

The second Benin dynasty had been established formally under Oba Eweka I in c. 1320-1347 and was recognized as official heirs to political authority since Eweka was "crowned ... at Usama."¹⁸ The administration, although basically different was apparently unable to impose fundamental changes in the operation of the political and social structures. Relationships between the titled officials, such as the Uzama Nihinron and the Onojie remained unaltered. Power was officially exercised by the Oba, but was highly regulated by the Council of State and regular council meetings in which the Onojie and Uzama represented a powerful if not decisive voice. It is possible to conclude, therefore, that although personalities had changed there had not been any effective alteration in the style, demands or intercursive power relations in the new administration.

A fundamental reorganization of political relations in the state began during the reign of the fourth king, Oba Ewedo (c. 1374-1401). Ewedo partially freed the monarchy from the domination of the Uzama Nihinron by moving his palace from Usama to Benin. The move was not undertaken without opposition. Ewedo had to fight to establish his claim to an autonomous capital. The Uzama Nihinron, village chiefs and local authorities violently objected to the move, looking upon it as a threat to their power and authority and, of course, substantially altering the status quo. Certainly a monarchy residing in the Usama palace would be relatively easy to control, especially if the ruling elite were dependent for its maintenance and support on the Uzama Nihinron. Tribute payments, for example, had been funnelled through the Uzama network of clients and appointed officials, and

only secondarily arrived in the hands of the Oba. Establishment of an autonomous palace necessitated a redefinition of the tribute system, allowing the Oba to generate and receive tribute through an independent network of officials. The relocation of the royal palace, therefore, was an important step in the organization of the central government.

Prior to his [Oba Ewedo's] coronation he was much concerned because of the power and aggrandizement of the Uzama Nihinron (Kingmakers) which equalled that of the Oba, and decided to remove the seat of his government from Usama which was in their midst, to the present palace. He made all the necessary arrangements for his removal ... without informing the Uzama Nihinron ... So Ewedo left Usama about an hour after his coronation ... Ewedo had to undergo similar troubles to those which his great-grandfather Prince Oranmiyan had from the ferryman at the Ovio River. Itsekherhe refused to allow him to pass over his ground, so a bridge was made ... As the Oba landed from this bridge Ogiawwen took up arms to prevent his entry into the city ... but through the aid of royal troops the Oba was able to take up his residency on the site of the present palace ...





A period of seven days was fixed at the end of which they [Ewedo and Ogiawwen] should meet for a fair fight. In this the leader of Ogiawwen's forces, Oliha-Ogiawwen, was killed and Ogiawwen was pursued and defeated ... he surrendered and made peace with the Oba. By the treaty of Ekiopagah he was made a chief, retaining the nickname Ogiawwen as his title ... Ever since, every Oba has to cross a bridge at Itsekherhe quarter on his coronation day and, on the seventh day fight with Ogiawwen in memory of the victory ... 19

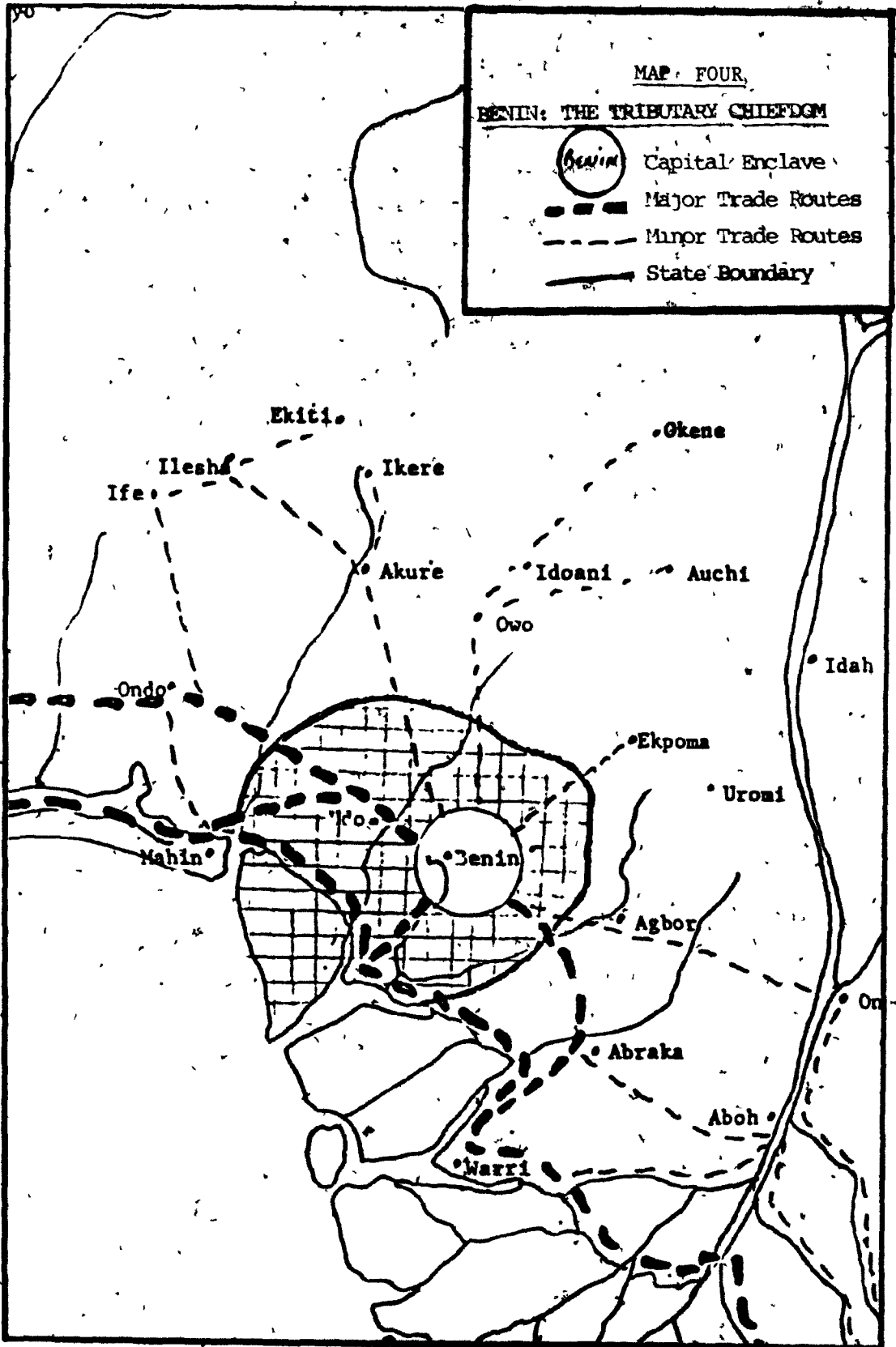
It is significant that Oba Ewedo had to fight the combined forces of Ogiawwen and Oliha; Ogiawwen was the son of Evian who had been nominated by his father as the main contender for the paramount

position in the state in c. 1347-1374, and the Oluha was the leader of the Uzama Nihinron.²⁰ These two men represented two factions in the state elite which had combined to overthrow the Igodo dynasty. The factions had, however, subsequently failed to agree upon the system of administration and called upon Eweka from Ife to establish the government.

Possibly since the foundation of the Igodo dynasty (c. 969-996), the Uzama bureaucracy had dominated Benin. After Oba Eweka had established the Uzama chiefs as hereditary nobles their power had been greatly enhanced since they were no longer responsible to village authorities. Once the struggle between Ewedo and the Uzama began it would have been natural for the supporters of the old Igodo dynasty to align with the latter. One can only assume that Uzama domination had become a burden upon the village gerontocracy since Ewedo triumphed in the confrontation with the Uzama Nihinron because he had the support of the people. Naturally, Yoruba may have settled in Benin as a consequence of the Eweka dynasty; but there is no hint of this in the traditions. It must be assumed, therefore, that many people in Benin looked upon the Oba as potential protection against the exactions of the Uzama and the Enejie who represented the Igodo regime. Eweka's grandson was successfully challenging the same forces which had overthrown the old dynasty. One can only assume that economic changes - presumably the growth of commercial exchange - had progressed in the century interval such that an independent royal tributary system was possible. Traders probably had an interest in a more centralized system free of the harassment

MAP FOUR,
BENIN: THE TRIBUTARY CHIEFDOM

-  Capital Enclave
-  Major Trade Routes
-  Minor Trade Routes
-  State Boundary



of the Uzama chiefs. Possibly also a growth of the urban population which involved an escape from the Otu agricultural mode of production permitted more people to look directly to the king for protection and promotion of their commercial welfare.

The relocation of the royal palace enabled the monarchy to establish independent authority in the state. The autonomy of action and decision-making processes enabled Ewedo to exercise some control over the existing east-west trading system which connected the Niger delta to the Lagos lagoon. Ewedo's move, therefore, not only strengthened his political power but also established dynastic control over an important commercial route. Furthermore, the foundation of the Oyo Kingdom to the north-west of Benin during this period under a genealogically-related Yoruba-speaking dynasty²¹ indicated that the growth of hinterland commerce may have been affecting political developments in a regional context. The foundation of Oyo, in the southern reaches of the savanna zone, facilitated north-south exchange between coastal, forest and savanna regions.²²

Historians to date have not examined the foundation of Oyo in relation to commercial exchange, but there are indications that Oyo did establish commercial relations with northern trading formations from a very early period.²³ The establishment of a more centralized Benin monarchy in c. 1374-1401 was probably related to the expansion of north-south trade as well as the desire to participate in the growing east-west commercial system.²⁴ Quantitative economic evidence is poor for this period; however, the economic foundation of political change is stronger in subsequent generations of the second

dynastic period.

The foundation of an independent palace under Oba Ewedo, based upon the definition of new economic principles, was only the initial step in the reorganization of Benin. The Oba also established a number of minor titles,²⁵ and significantly altered the investiture procedure for all appointed and hereditary officials. Previously, the Uzama Nihinron had been able to appoint and invest secondary titles on their own prerogative. These appointed bureaucrats would, naturally enough, owe their allegiance to the Uzama; and the King-makers would benefit from any fees or tribute attached to the title. Ewedo abolished this privilege and established all patronage within the Oba's authority. To administer the new patronage system Oba Ewedo created the Iyase (Town) chief who was responsible for appointing and investing all secondary titles, including the Uzama councillors.²⁶ The only exceptions were the confirmation of the Iyase title and the appointment of the Oliha, both of whom received their office directly from the Oba. The reorganization of the title system and the establishment of the Oba's gift-patronage rights contributed to the realignment of political power and authority in the state.

Oba Ewedo took one other significant step to reduce the influence of the Uzama by forbidding them the right to carry "swords of state."²⁷ Ewedo reserved this privilege exclusively for the monarch, and the sword of state became symbolic of the growing paramount authority of the Eweka monarchy. The fact that Ewedo could "confirm titles on ... commoners in order to enlist their support against the nobles [Uzama]"²⁸ from the relative security of his own palace,

protected by his own loyal and tested troops, and tour the streets of Benin displaying the sword of state indicated the substantial change in the balance of power.

One of the negative effects of the reorganization of the administration instituted by Oba Ewedo was the increase in tribute requirements from the vassal village producers. The expansion of the state bureaucracy, through the addition of a number of new titled officials, placed an additional burden on the redistributive capacity of the monarch. This in turn translated into a demand for larger non-commercial tribute payments from the village Otu system. This would seem to be the period when tribute was demanded from the rural areas of the capital enclave twice yearly, thereby doubling tribute payments.

Twice yearly, every village in the Benin kingdom was required to send tribute to the Oba in the form of yams, palm-oil, and other foodstuffs ... The more remote vassal chiefs beyond the suburban area of the capital sent slaves and livestock ... 9.

The imposition of increased non-commercial tribute apparently caused adaptations in the village Otu system. In some villages the Igbama age organization seems to have been abolished. It was no longer possible to purchase exemptions from communal labour. In other villages there seems to have been an integration of the Igele age grade, and an increase of Igele labour to provide for the required surplus. The expansion of titled officials (bureaucrats and nobility), therefore, established an additional burden on the

gerontocratic village Otu system and imposed certain modifications on the gerontocracy.

Further impositions on the village productive capacity may have occurred through the expansion of elite commercial activities. As previously suggested, part of the motivation for Oba Ewedo's move to an independent palace arose from the desire to control commercial exchange. As trade developed so did the exploitative nature of the administration. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the reign of Oba Ewedo imposed a two-fold increase in tribute demands, one to provide the necessary non-commercial tribute for redistribution and elite support, and the second to facilitate expansion of elite participation in commerce. Ewedo therefore converted the segmentary redistributive chiefdom of Benin into a segmentary tribute paying social formation,³⁰ and it appears as if the desire for control of long-distance trade was a crucial motivating factor in this transformation.

The reorganization of the administration under Oba Ewedo, while centralizing power, nevertheless provided for a reasonably effective system of checks and balances. Previously such checks had been established through the relationship of the monarchy to the Council of State; and excesses were, partially at least, mitigated by the effective voice of the Eneje and Odionwere. The new system provided for an initial restriction on the monarch through the required nomination and installation by the Uzama Nihinron. Also, the actions of the Uzama were checked by the Iyase Chief who was responsible for their installation. The Oba controlled the appointment of the Iyase. This tripartite system of checks and balances, although

recognizing the hereditary nature of the royal and noble faction of the elite, created at least a nominal control over excessive power manipulations by any one element in the central administration. Internal competition between members of the same family or faction for a particular appointment provided the opportunity for an interplay of restrictions and checks on any one particular individual. More significantly, however, the Eneje and Odion were had been eliminated from an effective voice in the administration of the state. The structure clearly established the constitution of the central government, and defined the relationship between elements in the administration. The potential for integral power on the part of any one segment was restricted.

The appointment of commoners to even relatively minor positions served, on one hand, to minimize potential discord within the exploitative state system. On the other hand, the establishment of an enlarged state bureaucracy enhanced potential for upward social mobility. Despite these mitigating circumstances, opponents of the centralized administration, particularly factions of the state elite, were not so easily pacified. The Council of State system, whereby Eneje previously retained a significant voice in the decision-making process, had been abolished. The development of an autonomous capital and the establishment of competing factions in the state elite, provided the opportunity for internal friction. As the paramount authority in the social, political and economic framework exhibited tendencies toward regional domination the tension between the hegemonic factions increased. However, the ability of the monarchy to align commoners with the paramount authority and against the Uzama

established a solid base of support for the new constitutional arrangement.

In the new form of government the status of traditional administrative centres, such as Udo, was seriously threatened. The leadership of vassal villages had been founded by unsuccessful candidates for the throne of Benin during the Igodo period. The rise of the Eweka monarchy imposed an alien and, as its power increased, presumably unwelcome supreme authority. Located approximately thirty miles west of Benin, Udo was within the suburban area of the capital enclave and therefore dominated by the Benin elite establishment. However, Udo leadership also apparently nursed political and economic ambitions beyond the status of vassal-village within the Bini administrative sphere. Two factors seem to have encouraged the development of Udo ambitions: religion and economics. Let us consider each in turn.

Udo was an important religious centre within the Benin state. Oba Ewedo had, in fact, been placed under the care "of the priests of Ugbo" prior to his coronation.³¹ The Ugbo and Udo ritual specialists apparently provided an important 'indigenous' religious base in the society prior to the advent of the Eweka monarchy. With the development of the independent capital the ruling elite no longer turned to Udo or Ugbo ritual specialists thereby reducing their stature as part of the state complex of religious systems. In this respect political developments had affected religious stature, and Udo was feeling the effects in its ritual specialist community.

In terms of economic development the establishment of Ewedo's palace and the reorganization of the central administration clearly created a capital enclave in the tributary-social formation. The fact that the motivation for the fundamental changes in the political and economic structures in Benin was based upon long-distance trade and the desire of the central administration to control trade established an area of conflict between the capital and competing peripheral centres such as Udo. Udo was located astride the same east-west trade route as Benin, and given the opportunity for independent decision-making could have exploited this commercial network. However, as a vassal tributary and ancillary part of the Benin tributary chiefdom, the potential for exploitation of regional or long-distance trade was denied. Udo could not, therefore, operate within the commercial infra-structure in competition with the capital enclave without incurring the wrath of the Oba. Based upon the aspirations of the central administration and the ambitions of the vassal chiefdom at Udo, serious opposition and confrontation developed.

A second potential competitor was Agbor, approximately sixty miles east of Benin. Agbor was apparently founded in a migration of Igbo-speakers from Udo in c. 1401-1428 under the leadership of Dein. Dein forced various disparate groups around Agbor to recognize, at least nominally, his authority and thereafter enabled his son, Igbudu, to establish a powerful Igbo-dominated polity.³² It is certainly interesting that the migration from Udo occurred as Oba Ewedo was instituting the more coercive and exploitative regime of the tributary social formation. Perhaps the exodus of Igbo-speakers represented an effort to free the population from Bini exploitation.

and re-establish the redistributive formation. Whatever the case, the competition from Agbor in terms of economic development was eventually undermined through the expansion of Benin influence and administrative structures. Eventually Agbor was subordinated through diplomacy to tribute-paying status within the Benin sphere. This incorporation proceeded relatively slowly and was perhaps not totally complete until c. 1509-1536, when Benin paramount authority was firmly entrenched militarily.

It is evident that Agbor's political structures were copied from the Benin of a much earlier period.³³ The political acculturation of Agbor, therefore, suggests that although the potential for competition existed there was also an important political interaction between the Yoruba dynasty in Benin and the Igbo leadership in Agbor. Part of this interaction may have been fostered by the marriage of Igbudu to a Yoruba-speaking woman called Ufo. The successor to the Agbor throne was sent by his mother (Ufo) to "learn human relations and art of government" in her own country.³⁴ In this way Benin political culture was imported into Agbor, and the system of central administration in this competing Igbo enclave came to resemble the Benin style established by Oba Ewedo.

Another indigenous enclave bordering Benin was located approximately eighty miles to the north-east. Ekpoma was apparently the weakest potential opponent of the development of Benin domination by the Benin administration. Whereas Udo was certainly the most persistent, violent and vociferous opponent of the growth of Benin power, Ekpoma seemed unable or unwilling to resist the expansion of Benin influence. Perhaps the relatively quiescent nature of Ekpoma

reflected a dependency on the control and development of gold mining.³⁵ Generally speaking, the emergence of Benin as a centralized state exercising regional powers occurred in the face of three potentially aggressive pockets of resistance. In reality only opposition from Udo materialized as a serious threat to the territorial ambitions of Benin. The resistance from Agbor was undermined by the slow process of political acculturation and Bini diplomacy, whereas Ekpoma became an economic dependency after military defeat and was forcibly co-opted into the Benin sphere of political and economic influence.

The main area of friction and continuing tension within the tributary formation was between the Onojie of Udo and the Oba of Benin. The former, backed by a relatively influential group of Igbo ritual specialists, continued to express opposition to the exploitation of the capital elite. The major issue, however, seems to have been economic development; and Udo as a vassal tributary peripheral enclave was expected to provide for the needs of the capital. Given the tantalizing fragments of data it may be possible to formulate a perception of the economic relationship between the capital (Benin) and the periphery (Udo) of the tributary state. This explanation may also serve to expand upon the apparent juxtapositioning of Udo, Benin and Agbor as they sought to establish connections to the east-west commercial system.

All three communities - Udo, Benin and Agbor - were linked to an Aro-dominated trading system which stretched from the delta to the lagoon. One of the more important developments of the early Eweka dynastic period had been the detachment of Benin from total

dependence upon the east-west trade, and its pioneering efforts in the commercial system oriented towards the north. Furthermore, by the time of Oba Ewedo (c. 1374-1401) Benin had developed at least the rudimentary ability to dominate regional affairs and the eastern trading system. One of Ewedo's sons, for example, spent a great deal of time and energy leading "an expedition to Ibo-land where he remained for many years fighting."³⁶ This campaign may have been organized to develop Bini domination of eastern commerce. In any case, by the time of Ewedo, the Aro religious (and probably commercial) agents were established in Udo and Agbor. These agents presumably exercised a great deal of religious, political and economic influence. Therefore, Bini economic policy may have reflected a desire to establish independent commercial activities free from Aro influences. Bini policy eventually undermined Aro authority and forced the Aro to emigrate from Benin.³⁷

It is important to emphasize that religious domination represented much more than a simple consideration of non-secular matters. Religion was an important mechanism for the control of markets and market activities, and could be used to ensure peaceful passage of traders through potentially violent areas. Ritual specialists, therefore, became overt agents of imperial expansion and domination of commercial exchange. This was clearly the case in the extensive Aro trading system,³⁸ and appears equally significant in the later control by Benin over regional and long-distance trade. The persistent opposition from Udo, therefore, must be examined in the light of the inter-related political, religious and economic rivalries.

Upon the death of Oba Ewedo, Prince Oguola succeeded to the throne. Oba Oguola reinforced the status of the capital as the administrative centre and took steps to provide for the security and defense of the palace and government headquarters. The ability of the Oba to mobilize a labour force capable of the large-scale community construction envisaged by the monarchy suggests a substantial population within the capital. Furthermore, the extent of the city walls suggests that urbanization was becoming a major factor in the development of the capital enclave.

Oguola set men to the task of digging trenches right around the city to keep out enemies, especially his greatest and most powerful enemy, Akpanigiakon of Udo, ... This work took over three years and after its completion ... in order to have peace and liberty Oguola married one of his daughters to Akpanigiakon.³⁹

Marriage diplomacy did not improve relations between Udo and Benin, and Akpanigiakon declared war against the capital. The Bini defenses rallied under the command of Ogiobo (the Iyase),⁴⁰ and Akpanigiakon was driven off and eventually killed. The Udo elders of the Otu system and the Igbo bureaucracy were brought to Benin and executed in an effort to prevent any renewal of opposition. Ogiobo was appointed administrator of Udo as a reward for his military service, and thereby became the first appointed vassal administrator in the expansion of Benin. The evolution of the tributary state and segmentary social formation that developed into a nation state would eventually bring all the Edo-speaking people into one

political structure.⁴¹

Perhaps more significant in the continuing transformation of Benin was the domination of the trade routes and commercial developments. For the maintenance and continued expansion of the artistic community, particularly those with brass casting skills, it was necessary to ensure supplies of copper. Thurstan Shaw has argued that copper supplies were available through the trans-Saharan trade system; on-going research is endeavouring to identify the source of these minerals.⁴² It is interesting that the trans-Saharan trade system in c. 1401-1428 was fairly active and that the Benue Basin experienced a period of wet prosperity (c. 1050-1580). The volume of north-south trade reaching Benin apparently met the needs of Benin metal workers which meant, in effect, that the copper trading network was functioning and accessible to Benin traders. Benin had previously been involved in the luxury-exchange of camwood, cloth, salt, canoes, beads and specialized agricultural products.⁴³ The expansion of the north-south system in c. 1401-1428 primarily for the importation of copper, horses, leather, livestock and iron (probably from Oyo) witnessed an increased production of export produce including: camwood, salt, dried and/or smoked fish, cloth, kola, beads, oils, (palm and fish)⁴⁴ and limited amounts of gold.

The subjugation of the traditional Udo rivalry paved the way for the development of Benin as an important administrative and commercial centre. The capital had also developed a refined artistic community under the auspices of the ruling elite. General peace and security enabled successive monarchs to encourage further development of hinterland production for the consumption of the capital and

commercial enclave. Oba Udagbedo, for example, has been remembered in Benin traditions as a kind and industrious ruler who "much encouraged" farming.⁴⁵ The expansion of agriculture was, in fact, necessary to provide for the growing urban and specialized population, and was required to ensure the reproductive capacity of the state. Tribute to the paramount was funnelled through the Iweguae palace Otu and consisted of both commercial and non-commercial production. The non-commercial accumulation was redistributed by the Iweguae to the artistic, crafts and other specialized workers in the capital and palace. Thus the Oba, as the paramount authority, established a pattern of inter-dependency and inter-relationship between his own ritual and political status and agrarian producers and the specialized services in the capital enclave. It is possible, therefore, to suggest a general pattern in the relations between state authority and the gerontocracy of the village Otu production of commercial and non-commercial surplus.

Organization in the state was reflected in an extension of the Otu system through the state bureaucracy and palace hierarchy to the village age set system. The development of a national Otu structure effectively linked every individual in the capital enclave and hinterland region within the palace-centred Otu organization. With the expansion of the crafts and artisan producers under the auspices of Oba Oguola,⁴⁶ there was an increase in the demand for food-tribute from the vassal villages. Artisans were basically producers of non-commercial luxury goods, and in order to provide their subsistence the Oba demanded greater amounts of tribute and increased the coercive and exploitative nature of the administration. Apart from

regular, twice yearly tribute payments from the suburban areas of the capital enclave, the Oba added

... ad hoc levies [which] were raised for particular purposes. Thus if the Oba needed ... [a particular commodity for export including his monopolies of ivory, camwood and pepper] he could send out his palace officials to organize their collection.⁴⁷

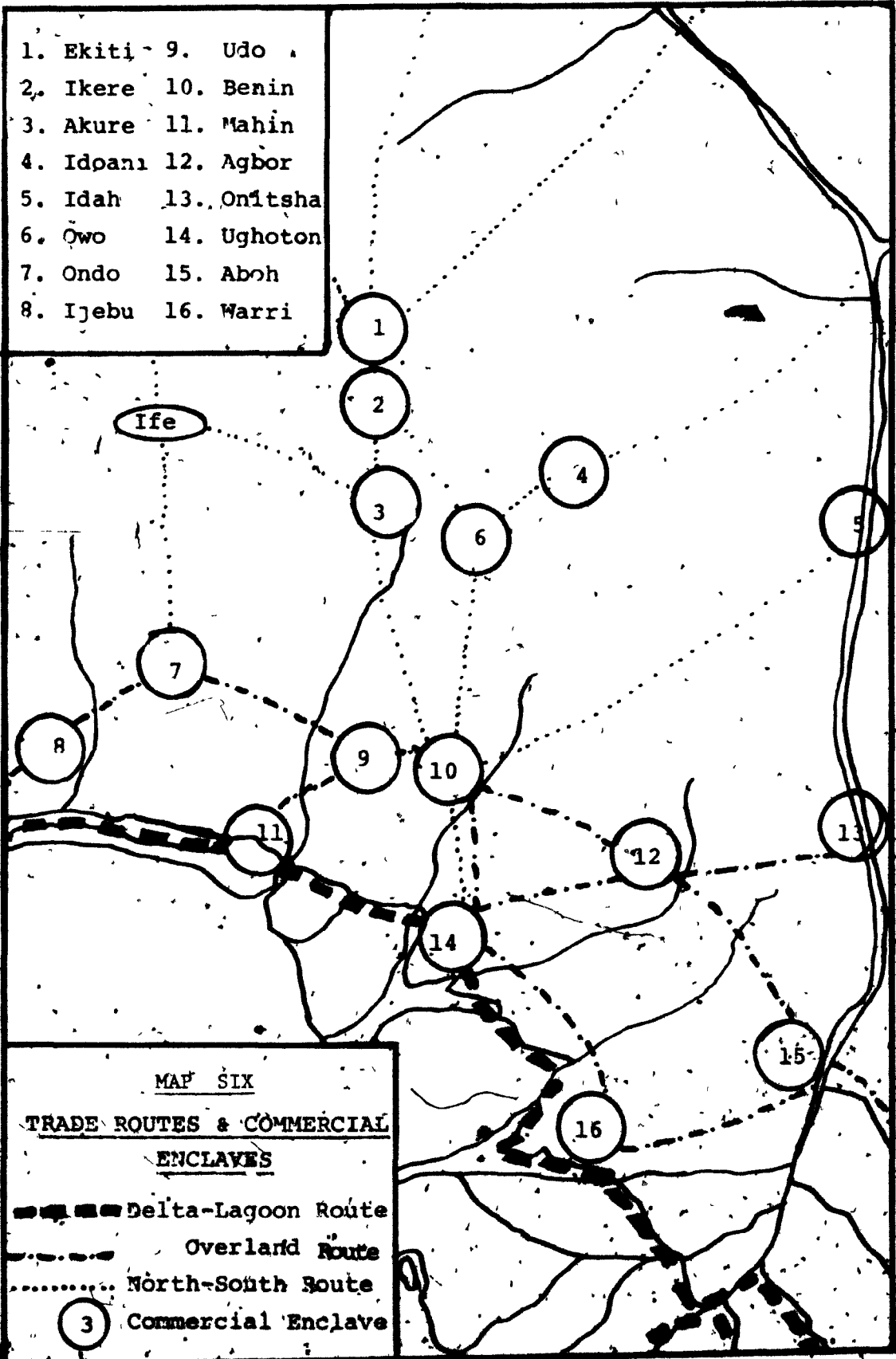
The relationship of individuals in the urban centres⁴⁸ to the agrarian producer in the hinterland was basically determined through the organization of the redistribution of state accumulated tribute. The Oba and state elite - including the Iyase, Oliha, Uzama, regional representatives, Enejie, and palace bureaucrats - provided the focus for the state administration. This elite segment of the population was supported by the vassal tribute-paying producers who formed the subordinate segment of the society. As trade and commerce increased it provided luxury-support for the state elite but did not decrease the demands upon the tribute system which provided basic necessities for the expanding elite as well as commercial production for the development of trade. However, despite these burdens, which had increased since c. 1374-1401, the gerontocratic-village Otu remained relatively unchanged except that it was forced into the production of ever greater surpluses.

The three sons of Oba Oguola, Edom, Udagbedo and Ohen ruled in succession in c. 1428-1455. Apparently the exploitation by the state elite prompted a reaction from parts of the subordinate segments in the tributary social formation. The emigration of the Ga,





for example, during the reign of Oba Udagbede was probably related to the growing exploitation and increased central domination by the ruling elite. Furthermore, the exodus of the Urhobo and some Ishan groups in the following generation seems to support the contention that certain subordinate segments in the state resisted the exploitative demands of the state.⁴⁹ Opposition to the increasing state requirements for commercial, non-commercial and ad hoc levies were also reflected in the civilian upheavals of c. 1455-1482. Possibly reacting to the feelings of oppression throughout the society the Uzama Nihnrnon attempted to reassert its authority when Oba Ohen's eldest son succeeded to the throne. In fact, Oba Egbeka had several "civil wars with the Uzama."⁵⁰ It would seem therefore that the development of an exploitative coercive central administration did not proceed without opposition, including the emigration of the Ga, Urhobo, Ishan and violent confrontations with the Uzama who exploited domestic unrest.

One of the more important developments during this period (c. 1428-1482) was the introduction of the Olokun cult by Oba Ohen. The Olokun cult was established in order that the monarchy might exercise religious domination of trade and commerce, not only through the north-south trading network but also in the east-west waterborne trade. Furthermore, the development of the Olokun cult, as a major ritual specialization, was designed to establish elite control of commerce and wealth. It also suggests that Aro ritual and commercial agents were losing their special status in Benin. Oba Ohen was apparently aware of the commercial significance of royal control of trade, commerce and related religious institutions

- 1. Ekiti
- 2. Ikere
- 3. Akure
- 4. Idoani
- 5. Idah
- 6. Owo
- 7. Ondo
- 8. Ijebu
- 9. Udo
- 10. Benin
- 11. Mahin
- 12. Agbor
- 13. Onitsha
- 14. Ughoton
- 15. Aboh
- 16. Warri



MAP SIX
TRADE ROUTES & COMMERCIAL ENCLAVES

 Delta-Lagoon Route
 Overland Route
 North-South Route
 Commercial Enclave

and introduced Olokun as the medium of state domination:

The beginnings of Olokun devotion is attributed to Benin's Oba Oghen ... The Olokun cult, at that early date [c. 1428-1458], had a political dimension rooted in the Benin state's perception of the significance of overseas trade ...

It has been stated that Olokun worship was established prior to European landings. This would be consistent with the suggestion of an early east-west lagoonal trade among various Guinean littoral peoples.⁵¹

Olokun devotion and the administration of trade was initially centred at the cult shrine in Ughoton. However, direct authority for the cult priesthood was provided through the palace in Benin. The appointment of royal relatives as the Olokun priest established the Oba as the direct Olokun authority. The cult, representing the god of wealth,⁵² became a significant commercial deity through which the pursuit of trade was sanctioned and blessed. The fact that Olokun was associated with the sea, and yet appears as an important commercial cult in states far removed from the ocean suggests that the development of hinterland commerce was facilitated through common Olokun worship.⁵³ For example, the development of Benin iron industries was initially dependent upon iron supplies from the mines in Oyo. Oyo adopted the Olokun cult as part of the state religious system which probably encouraged trade between the two Olokun states. Furthermore, the fact that Olokun chief-priests were not only appointed by but often related to the Oba indicated the degree to which the paramount in the capital was concerned with the administration and domination of the cult and commerce. It seems reasonable

to assume that the founding of the Olokun cult signified that Benin had finally established control of the east-west lagoon trade and replaced the Aro agents.

The creation of an expanded commercial network and the establishment of prominent long-distance trade encouraged not only the development of a powerful ruling elite. But, "it was in the interest of traders to uphold the integrity of the Benin polity in order to ensure a state of security in which trade would flourish."⁵⁴ The success of the monarchy in developing commercial activity probably contributed to the internal security of the elite. By c. 1455-1482, trans-Saharan trade was increasing dramatically; and north-south exchange patterns were on the verge of their most productive period.⁵⁵ The fact that Egbeka could repeatedly subdue the Uzama indicates the efficiency of state coercive powers, and suggests that the political and economic policies of the administration were firmly entrenched. The eventual erosion of Uzama influence and the restrictions on its participation in the growing wealth of the state provided the apparent justification for this fraction to compete for hegemonic power. On the other hand, the evidence clearly indicates that the Oba had developed strong control over state functions and could withstand violent opposition from any competing segment. The stage was apparently set for an era of aggressive military expansion and concerted administrative change which would further entrench the ruling elite in the paramount positions in the tributary formation.

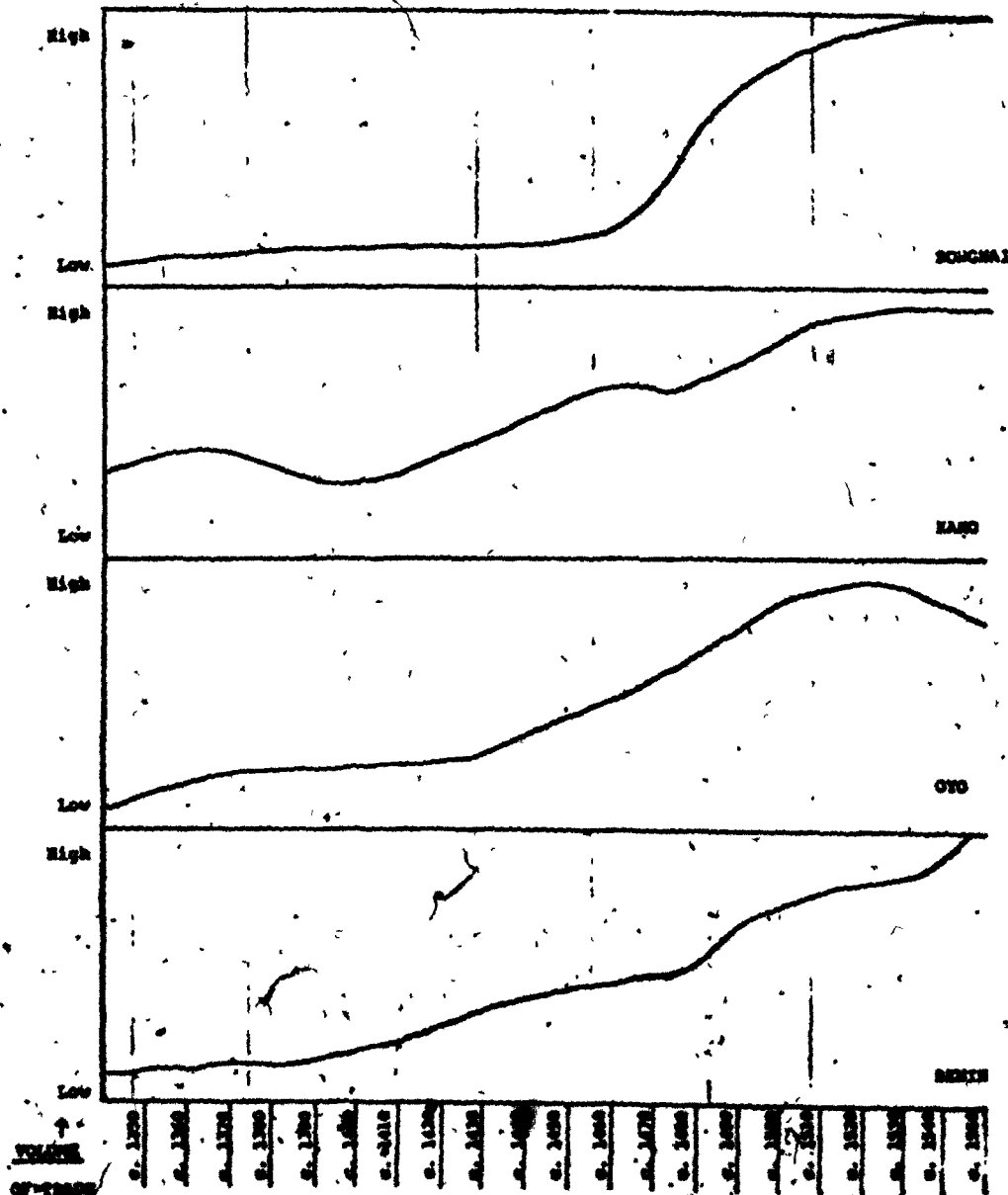
It is possible to conclude that the subjugation of the Uzama by Oba Egbeka effectively altered the status of the Kingmakers. Previously there can be no doubt that the Uzama Nihinron were an

SOCIAL CONDITIONS	SECONDARY	REDISTRIBUTIVE	TRIBUTARY	NATIONAL TRADING	IMPERIAL TRADING
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CHART VI

ECONOMIC CYCLING	DEPRESSION	RECOVERY	ECONOMIC BOOM				
MARKET SQUANDERS	Ebermairon	Ruede	Oguola	Oben	Buare	Otolua	Esigie

This graph has been pieced together from a variety of information, and represents a relative overview of north-south commercial patterns and not absolute figures based upon quantified data.



important fraction of the state elite and could actively and legitimately compete for hegemony. However, after the losses in the civil wars it could be argued that the Uzama were effectively unable to compete for such power and were reduced to bureaucrats.⁵⁶ The process of social differentiation and the ability to identify various strata and fractions can be inferred from Benin traditions. The competition for paramount status - political, social, economic and religious - within the ruling fraction clearly indicated that there were distinct segments in the dominant group. Furthermore, it is possible to see the distinctions between the dominant and subordinate strata in the society, with the former receiving tribute from the latter.

Through the decline in Uzama political fortunes and the corresponding increase in the authority of the Oba it is possible to see the development of integral power in the central hierarchy. The monarchy had increased state demands for tribute, and successfully survived the resulting protests. The exodus of the Ga, Urhobo and Ishan apparently did not seriously affect production.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the violent opposition from Udo and the Uzama Nihinron served to enhance the stature of the ruling elite rather than undermine its authority.

In conclusion, therefore, it is possible to suggest that Benin passed through a number of stages between the foundation of the first dynasty and c. 1455. The society began as a gerontocratic lineage formation represented by the Otu system. The first dynasty established a chief over the Otu and created a segmentary redistributive social formation.⁵⁸ The second dynasty strengthened the power

of the central elite at the expense of the gerontocratic Otu but real political and economic change came under Ewedo and Oguola who created a tribute paying social formation. This latter change was prompted by the growing importance of trade and commerce along both the lagoon route and the overland route to the north. By c. 1455 Benin was apparently evolving towards a national trading formation.

The development of integral power relations forced an expansion in the productive capacity of the subordinate gerontocratic village Otu system, but had not imposed any substantive changes in the organization of this basic structure. In the early stages of the second dynasty relationships between the Eweka monarchy and the productive segment had remained relatively stable. After c. 1374-1401, however, Oba Ewedo dramatically altered the economic, social and political balance in the state, and expanded commercial, non-commercial and ad hoc levies from the gerontocracy. The increasing exploitative nature of the tributary social formation was continued by Oba Oguola until demands apparently surpassed the tolerance of some groups of the subordinate segment who migrated away (protested with their feet). The increases in royal powers, coupled with the decline in effective checks previously exercised by the Uzama, corresponded with the development of highly coercive and exploitative state authority. Benin can, therefore, be characterized in the words of Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch as a developing social formation on the verge of territorial consolidation and expansion. She argued that,

... as the state organization became more centralized it began to use the concept of territorial power ... [but] the prestige of the sovereign never completely effaced tribal patriarchal authority. At most, the kingship took the form of a superimposed bureaucracy which nevertheless respected the structure of rural life.⁵⁹

By c. 1428-1455 the administrative system in Benin, and the policies of the ruling elite, had proceeded to the stage where the administration not only respected the Otu system at the village level but was dependent upon its gerontocratic organization of production. The state bureaucracy and nobility had expanded to the point where large scale non-commercial tribute was necessary for redistribution. Trade had not yet developed to the stage where the dominant segment could turn to it as a primary source of support, and village production was, and remained, vital for the reproductive capacity of the state and state class.⁶⁰ The next chapter will analyze the stages by which Benin became first a nation state and thereafter evolved into an imperial trading formation.

Endnotes to Chapter Two

1. D.H. Wrong, "Some Problems in Defining Social Power", in Recent Sociology, On the Social Basis of Politics, edited by H.P. Dreitzel, London, 1969, pp. 46-60. Wrong defines interscursive power as "relations characterized by a balance of power and a division of scopes between the parties" Opposing this form of power relationship we can identify "integral power, in which decision making and initiatives to action are centralized and monopolized by one party alone". For the purpose of this examination the first Benin dynasty represented a clear example of the interscursive power relationships, especially characterized by the balance of power established between the Ogozo (King) and the representatives of the Council of State, Kingmakers and Onojje (village chiefs). This system can also be defined as a redistributive social formation, where a chief presides over a gerontocratic-lineage or village formation and a minimal amount of allegiance or redistributive tribute is appropriated to support a very small central elite (chief and nobility) segment in the formation.
2. The descriptions or typologies of economic and political structures utilized throughout this discussion have been adopted from J.B. Webster, 'A Typology of Pre-Colonial African Social Formations', paper originally presented to the Canadian Association of African Studies Conference, Université Laval, Quebec City, May 1983.
3. The chronology of this discussion and the reconstruction of Benin's historical evolution has been based initially upon the dating progression established by F.B. Ataba, 'Recent Developments in the Use of Non-Documentary Evidence, with Special Reference to Totemism and Regional Chronology', Dalhousie University, M.A., 1976. The chronology established by Ataba has been utilized as one pillar in the development of a regional dating progression. The refinements in dating techniques and the addition of more corroborative information has improved the chronological progression for Benin, and has contributed to the regional chronology for the Benue Basin. A large number of independently dated regnal lists, genealogies and sub-regional dating progressions have been compiled in R.A. Sargent, 'Benin to Bornu: A Regional Chronology', Benue Valley Project Paper (hereafter cited as B.V.P.P.) No. 30, April 1983. For the basic dating structure for this discussion refer to the numerous genealogies and charts appearing throughout this discussion.

4. The monarchy and administrative system, including the Onojie and Ogoso, were relatively undifferentiated from the commoner population in that they were not solely dependent upon tribute as a means of reproduction. That is to say, with only the single exception of the Ogoso (king), all state officials had to provide at least part of their own food supplies. The organisation of the state was based upon the gerontocratic village Otu system of age classification. The gerontocracy, at the village level provided the administration, organization, judicial and in some cases religious leadership for the community. Relations with the central authority were maintained through minimal allegiance or redistributive tribute payments.
5. J.U. Egharevba, A Short History of Benin, (third edition), Ibadan, 1960, p. 1. It is important to note that this volume has undergone some substantial changes from edition to edition. The majority of references to this work are to the fourth edition of 1968. Only where specifically noted will the citations come from any of the other three editions. One of the major changes that appears in the third edition, and is unfortunately absent from the fourth, are the extensive and informative appendices.
6. J.D. Fage, "Some Remarks on Beads and Trade in Lower Guinea in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", Journal of African History, III, 2, 1962, pp. 343-344. Fage suggested that there was an early east-west trading system connecting the Niger delta with the Lagos lagoon. This suggestion is also supported by E.J. Alagoa, "Long-Distance Trade and States in the Niger Delta", Journal of African History, XI, 3, 1970, p. 319.
7. Egharevba, History of Benin, (third edition), p. 4, identifies a large number of villages in "Benin division [that] have hereditary chiefs (Eneqie) who are descended from sons of the different Ogosos". The list of villages includes Ihimwirin, Avbjama, Oka, Idogbo, Utesi, Oguà, Urhobo, Ute, Eyaen, Ahd, Irighon, Azagba, Igó, Egbaton, Ughoton, Udo, Esi, Okha, Umoghumwun, Orgho, Uhen, Okenuhen, Okhumwun, Ikohá, Use, Ego, Ekho, Ebue, Irokhin, Udeni, Erua, Ugha, Orhua, Urhuekpen, Amagba, Ugbu, Egbueko, Ekhua, Ogan, Ogbokhirima, Okua, Owe, Ominara, Unuame, Ugo, Ikpako, Ugogua, Ayem, Orio, Uwan, Egbaen, Idumwonina, Ohovbe, Ogheghe, Uvbe, Ité, Iguogbe and Izikhiri. The most important of these villages for this discussion, at least, are Ughoton and Udo. Both villages eventually became significant in the development of Benin as a political and commercial centre. Ughoton was the major coastal port through which Benin participated in the east-west lagoon trade, and the latter developed as a major opponent of Benin political and economic hegemony under the second dynasty. Throughout this discussion a distinction has been maintained between the nobility and the state bureaucracy. The former hold hereditary positions and status, while the latter are generally appointed officials who hold status only through the lifetime of the appointee.

8. Egharevba, History of Benin, (third edition), p. 4. The allocation of rural fiefs to unsuccessful individuals seems to have relieved some of the political pressures in the capital of the social formation, and provided independent tribute networks for the economic support of the Enejie.
9. H.L.M. Butcher, "Some Aspects of the Otu System of the Isa Sub-tribe of the Edo Peoples of Southern Nigeria"; Africa, Vol 8, 1935, p. 150.
10. Ibid., pp. 151-152.
11. Egharevba, History of Benin, (third edition), p. 2.
12. Ibid., p. 5.
13. Egharevba, History of Benin, (third edition), p. 6. A.F.C. Ryder states that "after banishing the last ruler of the first dynasty . . . the people tried to establish a non-monarchical form of government, but when dispute arose they sent to Ife asking Odudua to give them one of his sons as their ruler". Ryder, "A Reconsideration of the Ife-Benin Relationship", Journal of African History, VI, 1; 1965, p. 25.
14. Refer to Chart VIII which clearly shows the relationship of Erinwide to the Chief of Ego and her marriage to Oranmiyah.
15. Egharevba, History of Benin; (third edition), p. 9.
16. When Benin became the centre of an empire Oba could be translated as 'emperor'. However, while in the Yoruba system, Obu meant a ruler subordinate to Ife. Initially at least the Eweka dynasty might be seen this way.
17. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 9.
18. Ibid., (third edition), p. 8. The name of the location of the palace is Usama while the title of the Kingmakers Council has apparently been differentiated by utilizing "Uzama". This distinction was employed by Egharevba, and has been adopted here. It is also significant that the Usama palace was located across the Ovio River from the present site of the palace in Benin City.
19. Egharevba, History of Benin, pp. 9-10. It is interesting speculation that there is a distinct similarity between 'Itsekherhe' and the 'Itsekiri' ethnic group in the Niger Delta region.
20. R.E. Bradbury, Benin Studies, edited by P. Morton-Williams, London, 1973, p. 138.

21. The Ewaka dynasty in Benin and the dynasty in Oyo claim similar origins in Ife. For more detailed information refer to R. Law, The Oyo Empire, 1600-1836, Oxford, 1977; S. Johnson, A History of the Yorubas, Lagos, 1921; Ryder, "A Reconsideration of the Ife-Benin Relationship", *op. cit.*, and also G.A. Akintola, 'The Origins of the Ewaka Dynasty of Benin: A Study in the Use and Abuse of Oral Tradition', Joint Seminar, University of Ibadan, April 1976.
22. For more information about the effects of specialized production refer to R. Roberts, 'Multiplier Effects on the Ecologically Specialized Trade of Precolonial West Africa', African and Imperial Seminar, Dalhousie University, February 1980.
23. Law, The Oyo Empire, p. 214. Also refer to P. Morton-Williams, "The Influence of Habitat and Trade on Oyo and Ashanti", in Man in Africa, edited by M. Douglas and P.M. Kayberry, London, 1969, pp. 79-98.
24. Refer to the maps in this chapter which show the relationship of Benin to the various trade routes crossing this region.
25. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 10. Oba Ewedo "created various minor titles including the Uwange, the Master of the Oba's Wardrobe; Esekhurhe, the Recorder of the Deaths, etc. of each Oba; and Osodin and Uso, the Keepers of the Oba's harem". He also established a prison known as 'Ewedo' after his name, and appointed keepers called Erigo.
26. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 138.
27. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 10.
28. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 136.
29. Ibid., p. 53. Throughout this discussion I have endeavoured to maintain a distinction between non-commercial and commercial tribute. This distinction implies that non-commercial levies were to provide basic support (food, etc.), while commercial tribute was required to facilitate commercial exchange.
30. J.B. Webster, 'A Typology of Social Formations', *op. cit.*
31. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 9.
32. Refer to J.O. Ijomah, 'The Evolution of Kingship Among the West Niger Igbo Chiefdoms, with Particular Reference to Benin Influences', unpublished manuscript included in the Benue Valley collection as Benue Valley Project Paper No. 29, 1981.
33. Ijomah, 'The Evolution of Kingship', *op. cit.*, clearly identifies the process of political acculturation in Agbor.

34. J.B. Webster, J. Bucher, et al., 'A Critical Analysis of the Royal Chronicle of Agbor', Benue Valley Project Paper No. 18, p. 5.
35. C.G. Okojie, Ishan Native Laws and Customs, Yaba, 1960. This volume contains an extensive collection of Ishan traditions; and this evidence was analysed by J. Miller, 'Ishan-Benin Relations', c. 1455-1509', Dalhousie University Honours Essay, 1983.
36. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 41.
37. J.W. Hubbard, The Sobo of the Niger Delta, Zaria, 1948, p. 198. Hubbard also suggested that the founders of Aboh and Onitsha were descendants of Arp agents who had been in Benin "for a long period".
38. For a more detailed discussion refer to J.F. Stevenson, Population and Political Systems in Tropical Africa, New York, 1968, pp. 188-277, and S. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles and Intergroup Relations", Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, 14, 1958, p. 312.
39. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 11. A map of the Benin City walls has been included here to show the extent of the construction. In fact, the overall construction, occurring during the reign of Oba Oguola (c. 1401-1428) and improved during the reign of Oba Ewuare (c. 1455-1482) resulted in more than ninety miles of walls and ditches. For more details refer to G. Connah, "New Light on the Benin City Walls", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. III, No. 4, 1967, pp. 593-609.
40. J.U. Egharevba, Concise Lives of the Famus Iyase, Lagos, 1946/47, p. 12.
41. The Edo language family (I.A.4.3.) of the Kwa (I.A.4.) subgroup, in the Niger-Congo (I.A.) linguistic classification includes Bini, Esan (Ishan), Emai, Ososo, Okpe, Uhami, Ghotuo, Epe, Degema, Urhobo, and Iyekhee among others. Refer to the language chart at the end of this work which endeavours to show the relationships between various language families.
42. T. Shaw, Igbo Ikwu, (2 volumes), London, 1972. Also refer to R. Mauny, "A Possible Source of Copper for the Oldest Brass Heads of Ife", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. II, No. 3, 1962, pp. 393-395.
43. Specialized agricultural products, based in part on ecological variations, can encourage commercial exchange between different ecological zones. Beans, for example, produced in one zone may be a highly prized luxury commodity in another.

44. M.D.W. Jeffries, "Arab Knowledge of the Niger's Course", Africa, Vol. 25, 1995, p. 86 identifies fish-ohl as a trade commodity, far up the Niger from a relatively early period.
45. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 11.
46. Refer to G. Connah, "Benin", in Lecturers on Nigerian Pre-history and Archaeology, edited by Thurstan Shaw, Ibadan, 1969, p. 54. Connah suggested that Benin "iron-workings ... and cire perdue casting techniques were to become second to none". Also refer to Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 11.
47. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 53.
48. The state contained a number of peripheral urban enclaves including Udo, Ughoton, and to a lesser extent Agbor, and the major population complex of the capital. The area contained within the Benin City walls constructed by Oba Oguola covered approximately 36 square miles.
49. Refer to M. Manukrañ, Akan and Ga-Adangme People, Part 1, Ethnographic Survey of Africa, edited by P. Forde, London, 1950, p. 67; Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 12. For the Urhobo refer to Hubbard, The Sobo of the Niger Delta, and O. Ikime, The Isoko People, A Historical Survey, Ibadan, 1972, pp. 6-14. The Ishan are discussed in Okojie Ishan Native Laws and Customs.
50. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 13.
51. B.I. Belasco, The Entrepreneur as Culture Hero, New York, 1980, pp. 77-78. Also refer to A.F.C. Ryde, Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, London, 1969.
52. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 34.
53. Law, The Oyo Empire, pp. 217-218, and also Belasco, The Entrepreneur, p. 130 where he states that "the Edo [Benin] Olokun was assimilated as a Yoruba god".
54. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 49.
55. Refer to the following chart.
56. Although the Uzama retained their hereditary status, and theoretically at least remained members of the nobility, they were nevertheless reduced to a much lower status in the central hierarchy of the state.
57. Refer to Stevenson, Population and Political Systems, for a full discussion on the demography of state formations.

58. The terminology was developed by Webster, 'Typology of Social Formations in Precolonial Africa'.
59. C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, "The Political Economy of the African Peasantry and Mode of Production", in Political Economy of Contemporary Africa, edited by P.C.W. Gutkind and I. Wallerstein, Beverly Hills, 1976, p. 92.
60. Technically speaking every 'class' is a state class. However, for the purpose of this discussion a state class refers solely to the dominant group in the social formation which holds power of decision making and initiatives to action.

CHAPTER THREE

The Conquest State and Commercial Imperialism,

Benin, c. 1455-1509

After the death of Oba Egbeka in c. 1455-1482 the succeeding monarchs embarked on a process of imperial expansion. The basis of state wealth had been established through the development of the delta and lagoon commerce, and the increased importance of commercial exchange through expansion into three other trading systems provided the impetus for the creation of the conquest state. The following discussion endeavours to examine the process of imperial expansion, and the relationship of the conquest state to commercial controls. Oba Ewuare, in c. 1455-1482, for example, initiated policy designed explicitly for the expansion and consolidation of Benin authority in a regional context which in turn was directly related to the control of trade and trade routes. Oba Ozolua, who eventually attained the highest position in the state after a prolonged struggle against opposing forces, energetically pursued the expansionist policy. The reign of Ozolua marked the period of greatest territorial growth, the development of state monopolies and commercial domination of an expanding trading nexus.

The expansion of the economic and commercial nexus, under Ewuare and Ozolua, established Benin as a major trading state at the core of four inter-connected and competitive exchange systems. These

commercial exchange patterns included: (1) the east-west lagoon trade, (2) the Igbo-Aro dominated interior trade through the delta to the east; (3) a north-south hinterland trade linked to the trans-Saharan system, and (4) the European overseas trade at the coast. The analysis of the conquest state also considers the correlations between each of these four commercial networks and a distinct religious system, including (1) the Olokun cult; (2) the Igbo-Aro ritual specialization; (3) Ifa; and (4) Christianity. It is possible to establish clearly defined relationships between each religion and the trading system to which it was attached. The consolidation of the central administration in the capital enclave of the expanding state created a social formation which was dominated by economic considerations, and which was not against the use of force to attain commercial hegemony in all four exchange systems.

The brothers that followed Oba Egbeka to the throne in c. 1455-1482 marked the rise of a series of aggressive leaders who actively sought the nomination to the throne. This often violent competition was probably as much a reflection of the general disarray in the Uzama Nihinron after their losses in the civil wars, as it was a desire to attain the paramount position in an increasingly wealthy polity. Normal succession would have been assured by Uzuma nomination and the investiture of the Oba by the Oliha. However, after the succession of Oba Orobiru, two surviving brothers vigorously contested the nomination. One brother was eventually assassinated after an extremely short tenure, and the installation of his assassin, Oba Ogun Ewuare,² gave rise to an extremely ambitious and powerful ruler. Not only did Ewuare kill his closest rival, but he

also embarked on an active process of military organization and determined territorial expansion.

He [Ewuare] fought against and captured two hundred and one towns and villages in Ekiti, Ikare, Ikere, Kukuruku, Eka and Ibo country on this side of the River Niger. He took their petty rulers captive and caused the people to pay tribute to him ... It was he who had the innermost and greatest walls and ditches made around the City ... these doings earned for him the title Ewuare Ogidiyan (Ewuare the Great).³

The main thrust of Ewuare's conquest appears to correspond with his interests in greater control over the interior, east-west trade and its northward links on the Niger. Ekiti and Ikere lay on the main trade route to Oyo, and this was one of the main trade routes in the entire region. The conquest of Kukuruku provided the Oba with the control of the Niger route, which was the second major commercial link into the savanna trading system and the connections to the trans-Saharan commerce. Trans-Saharan trade, in fact, was on the verge of the greatest boom in the history of that economic system. The peak has been described by A.A. Boahen as "the period 1490-1590 when the Songhai Empire under the Askias and the Bornu Empire under the Sefuwas dominated the Sahara and Sudan, and maintained such political stability and order as have probably not been known in those areas since that time."⁴ In fact, the Askias did a great deal to foster the golden age of Sudanic trade.

Commerce flourished under Askia. He instituted the Muslim practice of market inspectors to enforce honesty and justice, as well as standardization. The trading cities of Timbuktu and Jenne prospered, especially since the traders were free from conscription into the army and could devote themselves to trade. Large amounts of European merchandise found its way south to these markets, in exchange for gold, slaves, kola nuts, and ivory.⁵

In the Kano Chronicle the reign of Sarkin Yakubu in 1452-1463, for example, was described as a period of increasing involvement in the trans-Saharan trade and growing peace and prosperity. In this respect at least the situation in Benin, Timbuctoo, Jenne, Bornu and Kano are perhaps indicative of the general sense of prosperity that pervades this period.

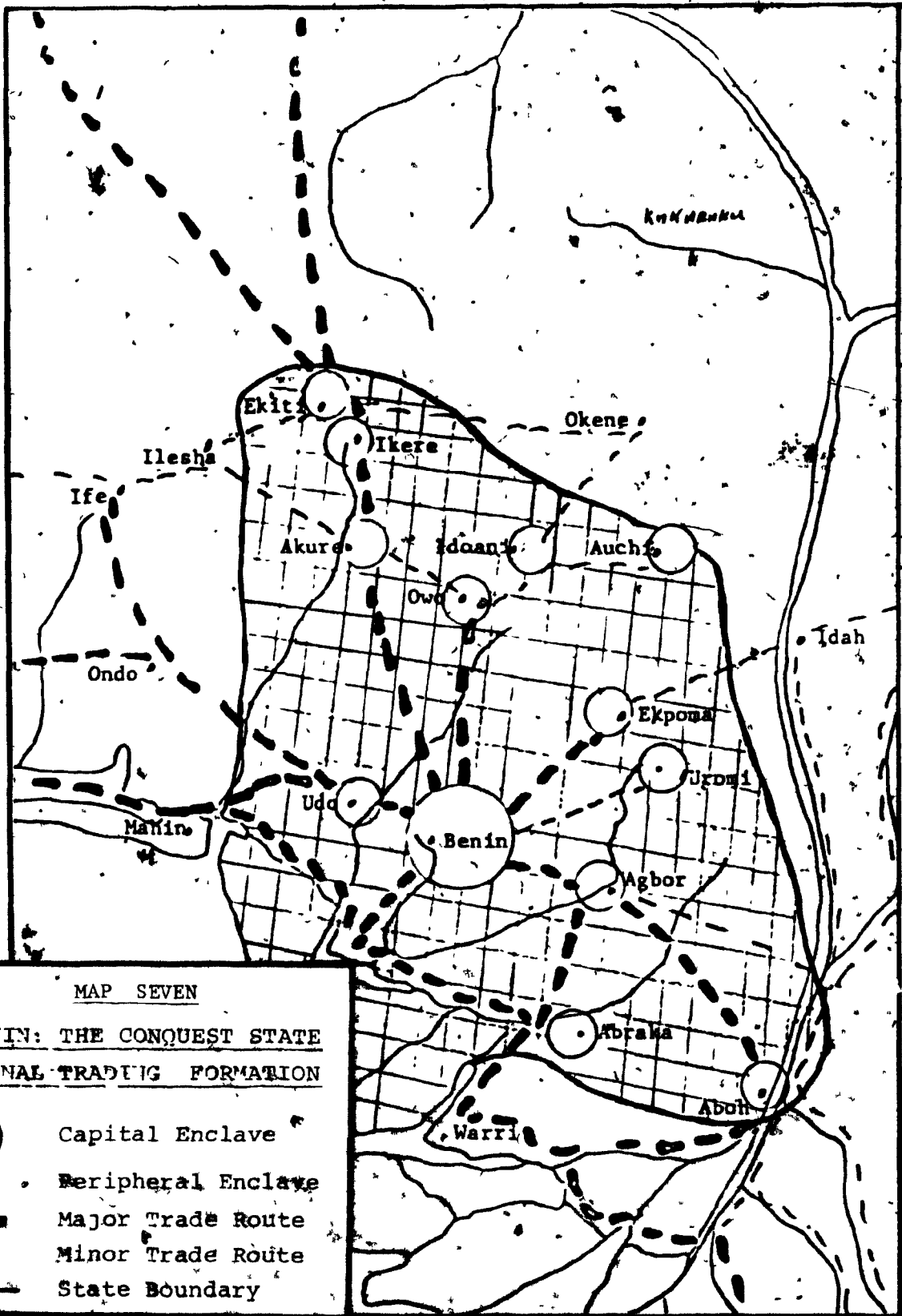
... Asbenawa came to Gobir, and salt became common in Hausaland. In the following year merchants from Gwanju began coming to Katsina; Beriberi came in large numbers, and a colony of Arabs arrived. Some of the Arabs settled in Kano and some in Katsina. There was no war in Hausaland in Yakubu's time.⁶

It is interesting that as the trans-Saharan trade entered this prosperous period events in a number of states, including Kano, Songhai, Katsina, Bornu, Benin, Zaria, Oyo and Kwararafa reflect the development of commerce and general economic growth. In 1421-1430, during the reign of Sarki Dauda of Kano, for example, "Zaria, under Queen Amina, conquered all the towns as far as Kwararafa and Nupe."⁷ It would seem, therefore, that the economic boom generated an expansion of a number of trading formations, including Benin, and the

process of imperial growth under Oba Ewuare represented a general phenomenon of enlargement of political scale prompted by the desire to secure control of trade routes.




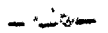

The establishment of the conquest state provided for an administrative system that was to become standard in the domination of conquered or annexed territory. Military conquest followed by the appointment of an administrator over an indigenous ruler, or the establishment of a vassal-tributary relationship with the indigenous ruler recognized as the Bini representative, became the mechanism whereby Oba Ewuare and his successors in Benin expanded central authority. The active pursuit of imperial expansion through appointed governors and vassal chiefs enabled Benin to create and manage a large trading empire. The conquest of Ekiti, Ikere and Kukuruku, for example, clearly established the state's paramount authority in areas vital to the control of the north-south trading pattern. In fact, the dominion engineered by Oba Ewuare and controlled by a succession of powerful rulers, influenced political, economic and social affairs across the whole stretch of territory from the Niger to the Ogun River, and from the coast to the confluence region.⁸ Apparently the same sense of political order and stability had been created by Benin as that which fostered the economic boom in the trans-Saharan system under the Songhai pax.

One of the important regions that had been conquered in the expansion of the state under Oba Ewuare was the commercially significant Yoruba region between Benin and Ekiti which included Uwo, Owo, Akure and Ikere. Owo, located approximately fifty miles from Benin, sat astride the main north-south trade route, and represented



MAP SEVEN

BENIN: THE CONQUEST STATE
A NATIONAL TRADING FORMATION

-  Capital Enclave
-  Peripheral Enclave
-  Major Trade Route
-  Minor Trade Route
-  State Boundary

a major gain for the Benin state.

Owo appears to have been very closely controlled from Benin. This was probably due partly to Owo's comparative nearness to Benin and her location along the main routes. The Olowo sent tributes to Benin annually through a resident official and the Owo had to pay to the Oba of Benin obeissance customarily due to an Oba. For instance, in most parts of Yoruba country any hunter who killed a tiger or leopard had to give it up to the Oba. In Owo, any hunter who killed either of these animals was made to carry it to the Oba of Benin. Moreover, Owo was made to surrender its princes as hostages in the Benin court. Many Owo rulers therefore had Benin education and were responsible for introducing Benin culture to Owo.

When Owo rebelled against the authority of the Oba, Ewuare "swallowed his dislike and made friends with" Chief Iken of Usela.¹⁰ Chief Iken was asked to quell the rebellion. During Iken's absence on the campaign, Oba Ewuare placed his son in Usela to act as temporary administrator. Iken was killed shortly after he had suppressed Owo and brought this important commercial centre under the Oba once again. With no legitimate successor in Usela to inherit Iken's crown, Ewuare's son - Kuoboyuwa - became Onojie.¹¹ Oba Ewuare also established an alliance with the chief of Umela; and utilized this ally to bring the "rebellious people of Akure to their minds."¹² The rebellion was suppressed and strong Benin controls were established over Akure, Ekiti, Ikere and Owo.

Akure, where there was already a sizeable Edo trading community, became a sort of Benin military outpost, from where Benin armies led out expeditions into the Ekiti interior ... A secondary post seems to have grown up at Ikare [Ikere] ... As military ventures the Benin invasions appear to have been remarkably successful ... the evidence would seem to justify our regarding Owo and many Ekiti and Akoko towns as part of the Benin empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ... In Ekiti, Benin control was firmest over Akure and Ikere kingdoms ... Akure and Ikere had Benin military outposts, while a large Benin trading community lived at Akure and Igbara-Oke in the Akure kingdom. According to Akure chiefs ... Akure "used to send him (Oba of Benin) yearly presents. Whenever our king is dead and we want to enthrone another we used to obtain the sanction of the king of Benin before doing so; and have to send the following presents, namely three slaves, ivory and corals to the king ... and give one slave to the resident from Benin." 13.

The fact that Akure, Ekiti, Ikere and Owo were important commercial centres on the main north-south trade route, controlled directly by an appointed Bini resident, indicates the degree of Bini influence. The economic impetus from the trans-Saharan trade boom, 14 therefore, provided an explanation for the expansion of the conquest state and the development of an imperial trading formation. The effects of commercial prosperity in the Sudan were reflected in the imperial expansion of Benin under Oba Ewuare, and in the similar expansion of Oyo, Zaria, Nupe and Kwararafa as major trading formations. 15

The relationship between religion and commerce, as revealed in the development of the Olokun cult control of the lagoon trade, and the Aro ritual system which dominated the eastern interior trade, provided the administration with a mechanism for the maintenance of

paramount authority in the commercial nexus. The expansion of Nupe, as a major trading formation on the middle Niger, fostered the spread of Ifa and its system of divination as a significant commercially-oriented religion in the hinterland trading system.¹⁶

Olokun, the Aro ritual system, and Ifa established palace-dominated religious institutions which controlled markets, standardized exchange systems, and organized commercial transactions. Furthermore, these religious institutions provided the mechanism whereby commercial exchange between disparate groups - politically, culturally and linguistically - could function effectively. In this respect the reign of Oba Ewuare was significant because it established the Bini monarchy at the centre of three trading systems dominated by three palace controlled religious institutions which provided the common ground for commercial exchange.

Oba Ewuare took the important step of incorporating the Olokun cult, originally founded by Oba Ohen in c. 1428-1455, into the palace sphere. The significance of the lagoon trade and the expansion of the port of Ughoton apparently forced the Oba to establish direct control over Olokun worship. It would seem that to develop commercial management through Olokun, and successfully exploit the east-west lagoon trade for the benefit of the capital enclave Ewuare "had to restrain the growing power of the coastal trading outposts."¹⁷ Therefore,

... Olokun worship was elevated to the level of state devotion and became a formidable political weapon wielded through the agency of the Olokun priest-chiefs, who were either of the royal lineage or were the kings offspring.¹⁸

In terms of the Aro ritual system, Oba Ewuare extended palace controls by appointing two recently arrived Igbo as priests of the royal gods of Ora and Uwen.¹⁹ The incorporation of these Igbo ritual specialists was in itself not surprising. Igbo and Aro ritual specialists had been influential in Benin for some time, and had previously exercised considerable influence over the monarchy.²⁰ However, to appoint Osa and Osuan as agents of royal deities might indicate a direct affront to indigenous Igbo religious institutions which had become aligned with Udo's political and economic ambitions. On the other hand, the appointment of two recent arrivals, who presumably had commercial links to the eastern interior trading system, may have served the Oba's purpose. As newcomers to the state the appointees would have been easier to control, and would have exhibited less kinship or "descent-group based" concepts of authority.²¹ The palace, therefore, adopted a simple expediency to expand direct control over an important religious institution which apparently had economic ramifications into the eastern interior trade.

The introduction of Ifa from Nupe during the reign of Oba Ewuare established the third commercially important religious institution in the state. The rapid expansion of Ifa divination clearly indicated the remarkably pervasive attributes of that ritual

system. Furthermore, the fact that Ifa was adopted by a large number of diverse political, cultural and ethnic entities suggests that it was an efficient mechanism in the promulgation of long distance commercial exchange.

...the whole system was invented by ... Setilu, who was born blind in Nupe ... He had many pupils and admirers who were spreading his teachings. ... Setilu crossed the Niger and reached Benin, then Ife, where he settled down for good ... it was carried from Ife to the far distant places of the Gulf of Guinea only during the 16th and 17th centuries. This would also explain the close similarities of the Ifa terminology, preserved up to this day, over a relatively very extended area.²²

Ifa represented much more than a simple religious institution introduced from a northern trading partner. Implications of Ifa divination intruded upon state decision-making processes, where, for example, Ifa priests were consulted as to a particular course of action. Also, Ifa was an important mechanism for market control and organization of commercial activities, and, therefore, entered into the economic welfare of the social formation. Domination of such a pervasive system is not solely a religious concern, but was directly involved with secular authority as well. Ifa divination in the hands of a priesthood not fully integrated into the state elite, or perhaps one supporting political and economic rivals, could seriously effect the ability of the monarchy to exercise effective economic, social and political control. The Ifa system, although alien to a large majority of the population in Benin,

would have been attractive to the central administration as it contributed to state control of religion, markets, commerce, decision-making and political authority. In fact,

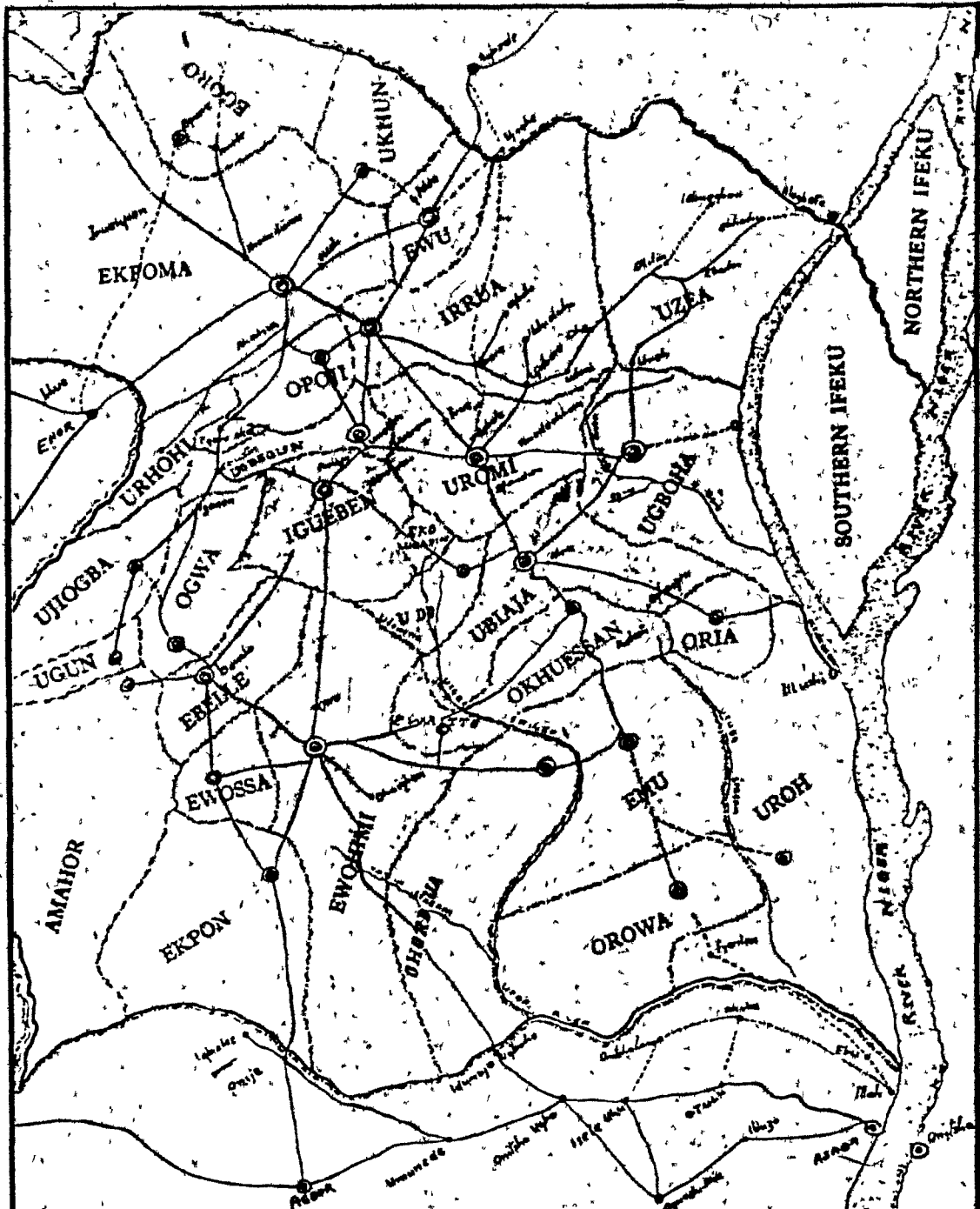
...obstructions to the fulfillment of one's destiny or on another level, barriers to the smooth conduct of the market, may be penetrated through the central religious institution, Ifa divination.²³

The development of Ifa in a regional context facilitated the expansion of trade, especially between two societies which held common Ifa traditions. Therefore, the domination of Ifa by the Benin monarchy represented more than direct palace control over internal religious and economic functions. The international implications, which encouraged commercial exchange between diverse socio-linguistic groups who both held Ifa as a central religious institution, contributed to the expansion of Benin as an imperial trading formation and, concurrently, strengthened elite control over long distance trade. This particularly significant development expanded the commercial links with Nupe and Oyo which had identical Ifa systems. The reign of Oba Ewuare, therefore, was particularly effective in the foundation of direct palace controls over Ifa, the Olókun cult, and the Igbo-Aro ritual system. The domination of these religious institutions established the Obā as the paramount authority, in every major commercial network in the economic nexus, and expanded his influence in the religious sphere.

Another of Oba Ewuare's major accomplishments was the extension of Bini influence over the Ishan chiefdoms. Ewuare managed to incorporate a number of Ishan polities as vassal-tributary adjuncts of the Benin national trading formation. Some of these chiefdoms had been founded in migrations away from the exploitation and domination of Oba Ewuare.²⁴ However, the freedoms gained by the migrants were short-lived. Ewuare incorporated the Ishan chiefdoms after convening a conference of the Ishan leaders in Benin,²⁵ and appointed those that attended as Enejie of their respective communities. No less than nine Ishan chiefdoms were thus incorporated in the imperial sphere, including the chiefdoms of Upraja, Ugbaha, Uromi, Ewomi, Ohordia, Ekpoma and Ugbegun. C.G. Okojie, in his collection of Ishan traditions, described the Ewuare conference in the following terms.

Ewuare the Selfish invited all the War Leaders in Ishan to Benin City ... There ... Ewuare played his master stroke; working on the human love for power, he created those who attended Ojie (King) of their people and made it abundantly clear that the honour was not transferrable. The title made each invested person the unquestioned ruler and master of his people responsible only to his good self - EWUARE!²⁶

Oba Ewuare extended Benin domination into conquered, and annexed territory for the purpose of establishing control of commerce. He also embarked on a process of centralization in the internal administration of the capital. Ewuare created the Eghaebho n'Ogbe (Palace Chiefs) and the Eghaebho n'Ore (Town Chiefs) who performed



MAP EIGHT
ISHAN CHIEFDOMS
Principal Towns

almost all state and government functions, excluding only military command.²⁷ He also appointed ten new titled officials, including Eson, Osuma, Edogun, Ihaza, Ehioba, Eriyo, Osia, Ogu, Utomwen and Osogua.²⁸

Apart from Ologbose which was hereditary, all the titles were in the Oba's gift, and any of his freeborn subjects (except the heirs to certain hereditary offices, subjects of the Uzama, and the Oba's close agnates) could aspire to them.²⁹

The organization of patronage and clientage as part of the Oba's gift system created, in effect, a number of subordinate title holders who supported the royal-commoner relationship. The Oba could utilize titles as rewards for faithful or outstanding service to the state, palace or monarchy, and in this way established a relatively large and devoted group of state supporters. The fact that every "freeborn man in the Benin kingdom considers himself a member of one of the palace Otu" organizations,³⁰ suggests that social and political relations between individual, lineage and village on the one hand and the palace on the other were clearly defined. Upward social mobility could be achieved through the village Otu system, and ultimate elevation into the Edion ranks.³¹ However, even more prestige and social, political and economic benefit could be attained through access to the palace Otu organization. This meant that

... each individual had a sense of personal identification with the central institutions of the state, and thus they helped maintain popular support for a highly exploitative political system. In its relation to the capital, the village had the quality of a peasant culture ... the ultimate pinnacles of ambition lay outside the village. Relatively few managed to transpose themselves ... yet virtually everyone had a kinsman or neighbour who had succeeded in doing so. When a man was made an elder ... of his palace [organization] ... he automatically became an elder of his village and, to this extent there was a measure of integration of village and palace hierarchies.³²

In addition Oba Ewuare organized the capital into "corporate wards, each characterized by [a] particular craft or ritual service."³³ The corporate wards developed Otu organizations similar to those in the villages, and each ward paid allegiance tribute through their own Otu hierarchy. Each ward was also tied to the palace through the relationship of the ward Edion, ward chief and a particular representative in the palace administration. In this way the Oba created a centralized authority which dominated the capital, the general population, and the overall administrative bureaucracy of the state.

To further extend palace controls over various aspects of social and political life Oba Ewuare initiated policies designed to reflect the domination of the paramount ruler. For example, "he is said to have been the first Oba to persuade his freeborn subjects to let their sons take up retainer service in the palace."³⁴ Ewuare also

... decreed that all his freeborn ... subjects should be marked with the common pattern of scarification which distinguished evien-Oba from royals, slaves, and foreigners, all of whom were excluded from the palace.³⁵

Only suitably marked individuals, thereafter, could aspire to palace appointments in the central Otu system, and it is interesting that the Ishan adopted Bini markings during the reign of Oba Ewuare.³⁶ Although Ishan traditions suggest that they adopted Bini scarification because they were proud of their Bini origins, it seems more likely that it was an act of political expediency through which the Ishan could become integrated into the palace Otu system. The organization of the state had, it would seem, become highly codified and extremely rigid. The various policies implemented by Oba Ewuare contributed to the development of codes whereby rights of access to the palace hierarchy were clearly defined. In fact, the whole trading formation was forged into a relatively cohesive and organized political, social and economic structure through the policies of the central monarchy.

Oba Ewuare was also credited with the creation of the Ediaken title which indicated the paramount status of the monarchy. The Ediaken, or heir apparent,³⁷ was appointed to sit as the seventh member of the Uzama Nihinron. The role of the Uzama as the King-makers Council must have been substantially altered and its influence greatly reduced. Nomination would have become almost automatic, and yet a predominant vote against the Ediaken, presumably, could negate the nomination of the heir. However, perhaps more

significant, were the obvious controls on the deliberations, actions and decision of the Uzama councillors. It would seem, therefore, that Ewuare had restricted the authority of the Uzama and increased the integral power of the monarchy.

Upon the death of Oba Ewuare his eldest son, Ezotɔ, was nominated to succeed to the throne. Unfortunately Ezotɔ died shortly after his installation, and his son, Prince Owere, was nominated to inherit his father's crown.³⁸ Ezotɔ and Owere were the first two individuals to hold the Ediaken title and be members of the Uzama Nihinron. It is also possible that in their capacity as Uzama councillors they may have been adherents of traditional religious and cultural values. However, Prince Okpame Ozolua, Oba Ezotɔ's younger brother, assassinated Owere and his mother while they were on their way to accept the nomination. The Uzama Nihinron, apparently sitting without an Ediaken, called upon Prince Olua, Oba Ezotɔ's other brother, to take the crown. Olua refused the nomination apparently fearful of violent reprisals from Prince Okpame Ozolua. The Uzama then turned to Princess Edeloyo in a desperate attempt to avoid nominating Prince Ozolua. Edeloyo accepted the nomination but was eventually deemed ineligible when she came down with "a female complaint."³⁹ It is possible, however, that Edeloyo was deterred by her aggressive and ambitious brother, rather than by some infirmity. In this dilemma the Uzama Nihinron finally convinced Prince Olua to accept the nomination. In order to ensure a peaceful coronation Olua sent his youngest son to guard the approaches to Benin, and prevent possible reprisals from Prince Okpame Ozolua. This son established himself at Eho, and prevented

any encroachment upon the capital by the dispossessed prince. Olua mounted the throne with some trepidation but the coronation proceeded in relative peace, and Oba Olua ruled Benin in a degree of harmony and security.

Unfortunately the present state of research makes it difficult to relate the three competing male candidates - Oweré, Olua and Okpame Ozolua - to the three dominant religious institutions in Benin. However, the fact that there were three religions and three candidates suggests certain intriguing possibilities. Given the pattern of succession, and normal circumstances it might be possible to imply relationships between the three legitimate candidates⁴⁰ and the competing religions. For example, Ezotj and Owere were probably fairly conservative candidates, and perhaps even opposed the new religious orders. The fact that the Uzama broke normal collateral succession to nominate Owere indicates their preference for conservative and traditional candidates. The eventual nomination of Olua represented a compromise decision which avoided the possible installation of Prince Ozolua, and yet provided a royal successor. Opposition to Ozolua's nomination might have been fostered as much because of his assassination of Owere as it was because of his preference for Ifa.⁴¹

During the reign of Oba Olua he sought the advice of his eldest son, Prince Iginua. With Prince Okpame Ozolua banished to Ora for the murder of Owere, Iginua held the Ediaken title. It is also interesting, and perhaps significant, that Iginua appears to have been a supporter of Ifa, and based his advice to his father, the Oba, upon the counsel of Ifa priests.⁴² The counsel of the heir managed

to offend or alienate a large number of people. The following tradition recalls how Iginua was called upon for advice, and reveals the potential despotic nature of Iginua's rule should he have inherited the throne. The tradition also indicates how Ifa divination would have generated opposition in the society, and why Iginua, as the most prominent proponent of the religion, was eventually forced to flee.

Once Olua sent to the royal wine maker for some wine, who replied that there was no wine, and why did Olua send to him for it instead of preparing it for himself? The Oba then sent to Omare who was in charge of the royal dogs ... asking him to send him a dog for sacrifice ... The reply sent back that there were only three dogs and that he had sent one to the Oliha, one to Edohen, and he had sacrificed the third to the god of his own medicine. The Oba called his son, Iginua, to ask his advice ... Iginua advised his father to sacrifice the old woman at the beginning of the new year, in order that the sun might be less scorching and to avert epidemics ... He also advised that the lame man [who had insulted the Oba] should be nailed to a stool by a long nail from his head through the length of his body ... Also, that a present of a woman should be sent to the wine-maker and, when he came to the palace to return thanks, his hands and feet should be bound together and tied to a cow's leg (sic), so that he could be dragged about the streets until he died. Lastly, that he should send presents of a coral necklace and anklet to the Omare, and when he came to give thanks to the Oba, he should be sacrificed to the gods of medicine instead of the dog. Olua did so to all four. But because of the bad advice which Iginua had given to his father, the people said they would not have him [Iginua] for their Oba. 43

The tradition recounting Iginua's activity as a state advisor provides some evidence about internal conditions in Benin; it is historically important for a number of less obvious reasons. For

example, the fact that a minor official, Omare, had given one royal dog to the Oliha and another to the Edohen, the first the leader of and the other an important member of the Uzama Niniron⁴⁴ suggests that the Uzama had recovered from the civil war, and were exercising a degree of influence in the capital. Given the fact that rival royal candidates had been squabbling over the throne, it would seem reasonable to expect that the Kingmakers might exercise an unusual amount of authority. The mounting opposition to Prince Iginua by the Uzama was probably an expression of opposition to Ifa and the increasing role of northern trade and Yoruba merchants in the commercial exchange system. Resistance to the prince increased to the point where Oluia feared for the life of his son, and suggested that Iginua should leave Benin and "found a kingdom by the sea";⁴⁵ probably reflecting the rising concern regarding the coastal or overseas trade. Iginua accepted the proposal and quietly crept out of Benin.

Ginua [Iginua] ... was smuggled out of Benin in a wooden box, but was escorted by seventy Benin chiefs. When clear of the Benin kingdom Ginua emerged from the box clad in his regalia and led the astonished escort to new settlements as their king [Olu, after the name of his father Oba Olu] ... Ginua's son, Ijijen succeeded him and led his people to Okpotomo here they met Itsekiri who acknowledged the king and gave him land near his own settlement, where he [Ijijen] built his town and the capital of the kingdom of Warri.⁴⁶

The foundation of Warri, under a Benin dynasty, represents one of the first royal emigrations from Benin. The large number of Benin

chiefs and supporters who accompanied Iginnua suggests that he had acted as spokesman of a significant faction in Benin. This was also a period when Portuguese traders were increasing contacts with the Guinea coast, and trade could become an economic basis for the new political entity. The Bini monarchy of Warri established very close relations with the Portuguese, and developed as an important peripheral authority of the Benin empire. Warri's economic base was firmly rooted, from the outset, in lagoon-delta trade, Niger commerce, and the overseas Atlantic trade with the Europeans.

By the year A.D. 1588 they [Portuguese] had become so friendly with the Itsekiri, that they had established trading stations at Warri and Gborodo. Their export was principally slaves, and spices and pepper from Benin, and occasionally elephant tusks. Among the Portuguese was one magnate named Mingo, who took one of the Olu's daughters, Princess Magheghoeye, for a wife, and by her had a son, whom he named Anthonio. Anthonio went to Angola for education, and when he returned to Warri, he struggled for, and gained the position of Olu, although he was a mulatto, and, coming from the female side of the royal tree, had no right to the throne. 47

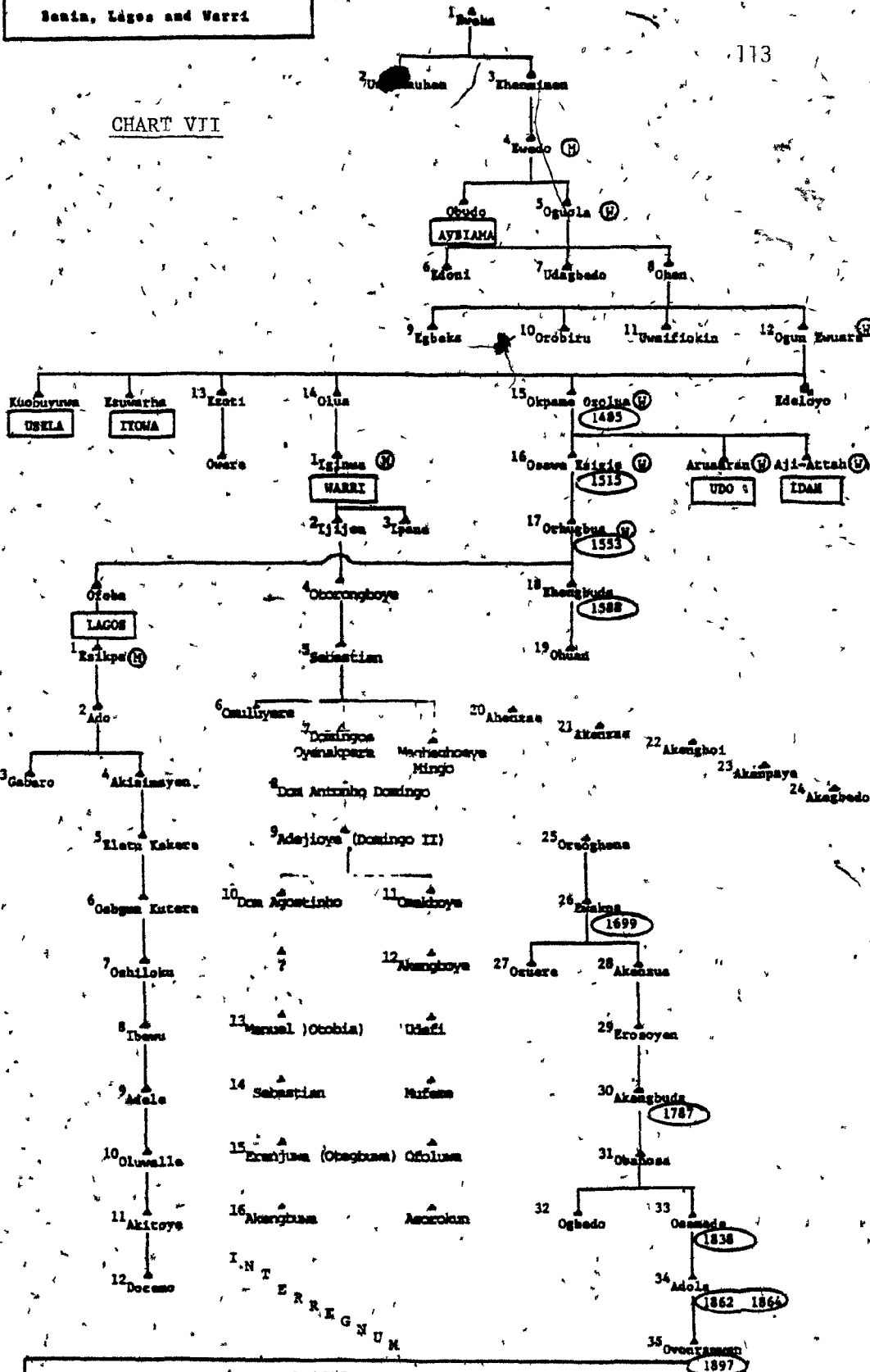
Upon the death of Oba Oluá in Benin the successors to the throne had, for the most part, been either killed or banished. In this political vacuum the Uzama Nihinron attempted to exercise authority. This experiment may also have represented a general reaction against the prospect of nominating Prince Okpame Ozolua who had so violently disrupted the two previous successions. The Uzama Nihinron, therefore, initiated a system of government which enhanced their own authority and stature while attempting to diminish or even eliminate the power of the Oba. The Uzama endeavoured to govern

BENIN SUB-REGIONAL CHRONOLOGY
Benin, Lagos and Warri

BENIN SECOND DYNASTY

CHART VII

- c. 1320-1347
- c. 1347-1374
- c. 1374-1401
- c. 1401-1428
- c. 1428-1453
- c. 1453-1482
- c. 1482-1509
- c. 1509-1536
- c. 1536-1563
- c. 1563-1590
- c. 1590-1617
- c. 1617-1644
- c. 1644-1671
- c. 1671-1698
- c. 1698-1725
- c. 1725-1752
- c. 1752-1779
- c. 1779-1806
- c. 1806-1833
- c. 1833-1860
- c. 1860-1887
- c. 1887-1914



LEGEND

- (M) Migration
- (W) War
- 35 Succession Number
- ▲ Male
- ▲ c.1860-1887 Calculated date
- Known Relationships
- (1787) Fixed Date
- LAGOS Chiefdom Name
- ♀ Female

Source: J.U. Egharevba

Benin under a "republican form of government",⁴⁸ with the Oliha as president. It might be noted that this Uzama rule was really a disguised return of the authority of the first Igodo dynasty. The experiment in republicanism failed and rebellion, disorder and general confusion ruled instead. In this confusion the Uzama Nihinron finally invited Prince Okpame Ozolua to return from Ora and become the next Oba of Benin. Okpame was eventually installed as the fifteenth monarch in the Eweka dynasty, and became widely known by his royal title, Oba Okpame Ozolua (The Conqueror).⁴⁹

Oba Ozolua "fought and won no less than two hundred battles."⁵⁰ Not the least of these battles had been his struggle to gain the title of Oba of Benin. Ozolua's response to the attempted and repeated interference with his nomination was a reform of the succession pattern in the state. The Uzama Nihinron had initiated a precedent when they rejected normal collateral succession to nominate Prince Owere as the primogenitary candidate. Ozolua now attempted to establish primogeniture as the rule rather than the exception. The implementation of this policy may have received support from the christian segment in the society, and perhaps had the sanction of Ozolua's own Ifa supporters. However, the constitutional change advocated by the new Oba would not have been popular with the Uzama Nihinron since it eroded any remaining authority vested in the Oliha and Uzama. The appointment of Ozolua's eldest son, Prince Esigie, as the Ediaken established the final step in the implementation of primogenitary succession, and served to remove any potential check on the power of the Oba previously exercised by the Uzama. This important constitutional change by Oba Ozolua relegated the members,

of the Uzama Nihinron to purely symbolic functionaries.

... the Uzama had not always been set apart from the management of the state ... Up to the reign of the sixteenth Oba, Esigie, Oliha is portrayed as the Oba's main antagonist ... Ritual expression is still given to the ancient opposition between the Oba and Uzama in ... the form of pantomimic battles ... This rite, and myth's relating how various kings got the better of the Uzama, have a continuing social meaning in that they reassert the Oba's unchallengeable supremacy ... But it is likely that they refer, also, to an historical decline in the power of the Uzama correlated ... with the rise of the Eghaebho [Town and Palace Chiefs] ...; and with a shift towards a doctrine of automatic primogenitary succession to the kingship ... They continued to receive the new kings installation fees and to inaugurate his reign, but they had no more effective voice in determining his identity.⁵¹

Oba Ozolua was also famous in Benin traditions because he actively fostered Christian missions in the capital,⁵² which served to exacerbate the conflict among the competing religious systems already seeking hegemony in the state. Although Ozolua himself never developed close personal ties with the mission, he encouraged his son and heir to do so. Esigie learned to speak and read Portuguese and his apparent commitment to Christianity offended even the Oba. He was eventually suspected of "intriguing with the Portuguese" against the throne.⁵³ To placate the Oba, Esigie advised "them [the missionaries] to go away and return after he had himself become Oba."⁵⁴ It would appear that Oba Ozolua was not so easily satisfied; he came to favour his second son, Prince Aruanran. The Oba established Aruanran as the Binu administrator in Udo, and thereby created, inadvertently one must assume, the circumstances that would

eventually led to a civil war between Esigie and Aruanran.

Portuguese trade had introduced a fourth religious system into Benin with Esigie as the spokesman for both Atlantic overseas commerce and Christianity, while the Oba favoured Ifa, and Aruanran at Udo supported the Aro oracle. The impending struggle would be among the commercial factions employing religious ideology and supporting different royal candidates.

Oba Ozolua is perhaps most famous in Benin traditions as a military leader. His expansion of the conquest state incorporated a vast amount of territory in the Benin empire. Once firmly established on the throne Ozolua began an active pursuit of imperial policies which served to establish Benin as one of the most important long-distance trading states on the Guinea coast. His systematic destruction and incorporation of states on the periphery of the empire appears to reflect the importance of domination over hinterland commerce. The defeated territories include Ijebu-Ode, Owo, Oromi, Uzea, Ejide, Umagba, Ewiagkagbu, Ogbe, Oka, Utekon, Iwu and Igusi to name but a few.⁵⁵ Perhaps the most significant military success was the defeat of Ijebu-Ode⁵⁶ which controlled access to the vast interior markets of the Oyo empire, and dominated a major east-west trading system. Oluwa had inaugurated the policy of royal administrators with Iqinua at Warri, and Oba Ozolua followed with the appointment of Aruanran at Udo. Oba Ozolua also sent royal governors to Idoani, Okpe, Owo, Ijebu-Ode and Ora.⁵⁷ Idoani traditions, for example, recall the establishment of the Bini dynasty as follows.

Some time in the middle of the sixteenth century, the first Oba of Idoani in the person of Ani, was reported to have entered the town ... there is the imperialist account which states that the Oba of Benin ... had commissioned a number of his children to found new kingdoms and that Ani was one of the Princes commissioned by the Oba of Benin ... considering the circumstances of the entry of Ani to Ido, it is reasonable to assume that he came in conquering mood, but like other imperialists of his age, he soon recognized the fact that while he might succeed for a brief period in subduing the native population, he could not hope to retain their loyalty and keep the peace unless he enjoyed their confidence.⁵⁸

Oba Ozolua's final military campaign was prompted by a rebellion of Agba the Onojie of Uromi. Agba apparently felt exploited under the paramount authority of Benin established by Oba Ewuare in c. 1455-1482, and aspired to sever the vassal-tributary relationship between Uromi and Benin.⁵⁹ Agba felt that this domination had been accomplished by a "trick ... which had brought his father, Ichesan, ... under the suzerainty of Benin."⁶⁰ Agba succeeded in securing a secret alliance with Ekpoma, but failed in his efforts to secure Idah's support for the rebellion

Agba, the Ogie or Onojie of Uromi, rebelled and demonstrated a hostile attitude against his overlord, Ozolua, and urged all the people in Ishan to join him to make war on Benin ... Ozolua was ultimately compelled to declare war on Uromi and organized a sharp operation against the Onojie. At first Agba ... went to Idah to seek the help of the Attah but he was treated with every indignity and discourtesy. He therefore returned home to face whatever might be the consequences.⁶¹

The King of Idah, Eggarah-Eri, refused to assist Agba of Uromi for fear that Ozolua might turn the Bini army against the Okpoto capital.⁶² Although the most influential and prestigious Okpoto sovereign on the eastern bank of the River Niger, the Idah monarch was no match militarily for the more numerous forces of Benin. Furthermore, a number of recent refugees from the military campaigns on the west bank had migrated to Idah to seek sanctuary under the paternal wing of the Okpoto monarchy. Their message had been to avoid conflict with Benin because "Ozolua is a fierce and violent warrior who conquers better equipped and more able enemies."⁶³ This message did not go unheeded in the Okpoto court at Idah, and Agba was turned away without the help he sought.

Ozolua was apparently informed of Agba's mission to Idah, and the position and stature of the Okpoto polity was brought to his attention. He, therefore, dispatched his son, Aji-Attah, toward the Okpoto capital on the Niger. Aji-Attah was supported in his campaign by a number of settlers, a substantial segment of the Bini army and the moral support of his father. The bulk of the Bini army, however, remained under Ozolua and prepared for the final assault on the rebel stronghold of Uromi.

Oba Ozolua defeated Agba in a prolonged conflict, and the Uromi forces eventually fled before the victorious army of Benin. In the aftermath of battle both Agba and Ozolua were killed.⁶⁴ Ozolua the Conquerer had led his last military expedition, and according to Benin traditions was poisoned "by his own soldiers for ungratefulness and selfishness."⁶⁵

With the disappearance of the two great leaders Ozolua and Agba, from the theatre of war, the two sides wandered about without leaders. The Binis finally went home and Uromi people returned from the bush to rehabilitate and resettle their town. 66

One of the more important aspects of the Benin-Uromi war was that it represented one of the last military campaigns of the conquest state, and therefore of the Benin Empire. Oba Ewuare had instituted the policy of regional administration through appointed vassals, and his successor, Oba Ozolua, had expanded on this administrative policy. It is interesting that Ewuare did not utilize royal administrators, but tended toward the appointment of loyal retainers. With the introduction of primogenitary succession, however, a considerable pool of administrative talent had become available. Oba Ozolua utilized this talent to expand and develop the process of regional administration and domination, and established a number of sons as governors of peripheral states. With the first sign of imperial weakness, these royal administrators might seek total independence, thereby creating an internal and inherent weakness in the imperial formation.

The establishment of the conquest state under the successive administrations of Ewuare and Ozolua served to clearly define the parameters of the Benin empire. Powerful and ambitious leadership in the capital had transformed Benin from a relatively circumscribed polity, which nevertheless had important commercial ties to a regional and long-distance trading system, to an enlarged imperial state. This transformation had incorporated a number of significant

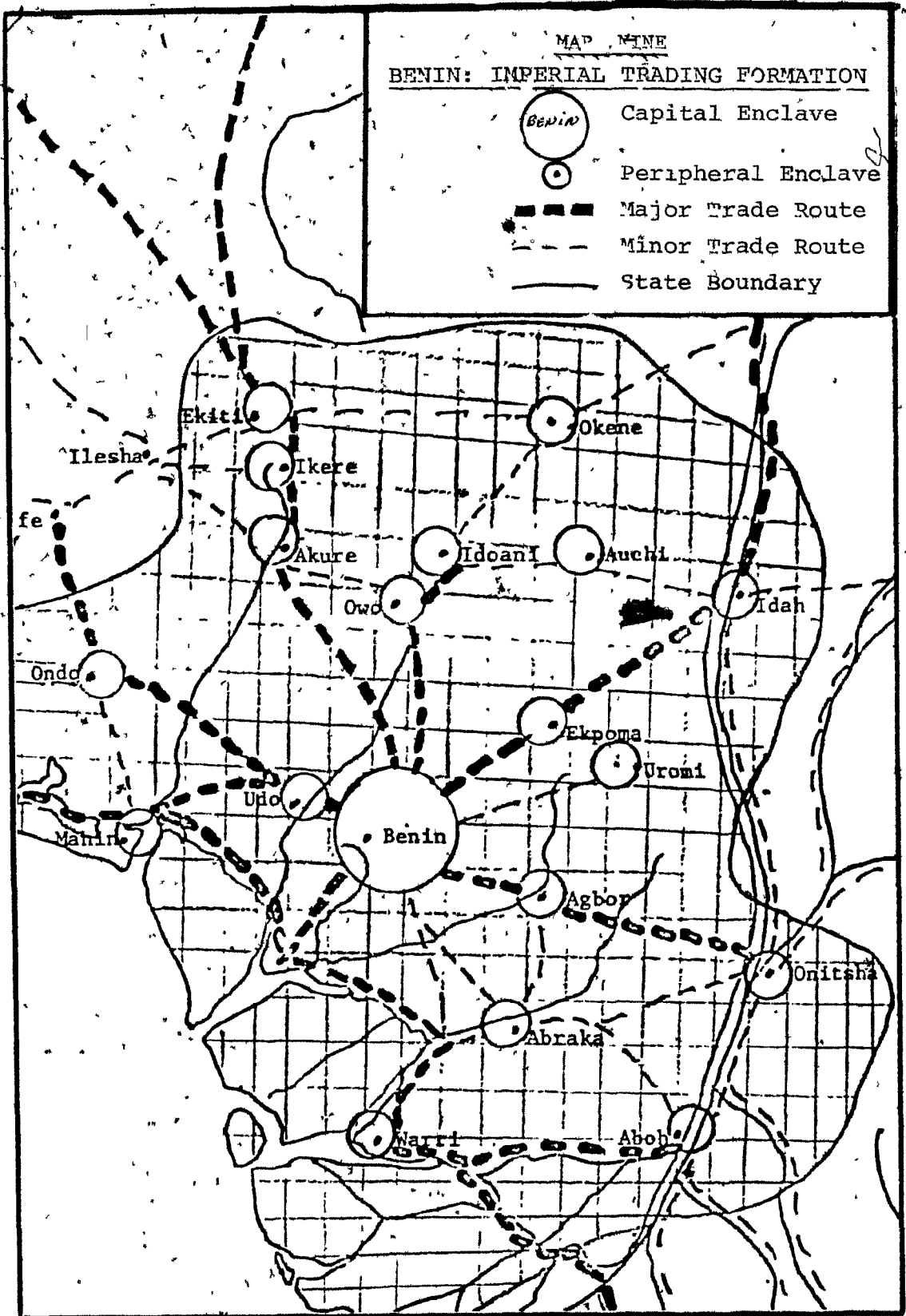
peripheral states under Binu paramount authority, which established direct control over politics, economics and social affairs across a vast territory. The territorial expansion, coupled with the development of hegemonic and integral powers, established the Oba of Benin as the dominant figure in an increasingly wealthy imperial state. The power of the Oba, especially Ewuare and Ozolua, was felt as far north as the confluence region and as far west as the Ogun River. Benin had, therefore, emerged by c. 1482-1509 as the dominant forest political and economic force, and had established a sophisticated, centralized administration, and had built up coercive powers to maintain and enlarge imperial control. Binu, therefore, had emerged as a powerful imperial trading formation.

It would seem that the development of commercial exchange, under the auspices of the imperial government, generated increased demands for tribute from the village gerontocratic producers. The increasingly heavy burden of tribute and appropriation of surplus production from the Otu system may have been somewhat eased by the incorporation of an expanded slave labour force. The conquest state provided a means for the acquisition and incorporation of slaves, and facilitated the development of a domestic slave-labour system. Unfortunately it is difficult to gauge the effects of slave labour on the productive capacity of the state. However, the sparsity of evidence suggests that it was not employed, to any great extent at least, as a royal monopoly or for the direct support of the paramount. Slaves seem to have been part of the Oba's tribute demands, and were redistributed through the monarch's gift and patronage system. Basically, however, it appears that the gerontocratic-village

organization was coerced into increased productivity to meet the rising demands of the dominant segment in the society, and to facilitate development of the commercial exchange networks forged by the conquest state.

A final point should perhaps be emphasized in the ability of Benin to develop imperial ambitions and coercive powers as a conquest state. Military service became part of the required obligations of the Igele age rank in the Otu system. The excessive demands on military service generated by the almost constant military activity on Oba Ozolua must have placed increasing pressures on the Igele grade. The eventual assassination of Oba Ozolua by his own soldiers seems, therefore, to reflect the growing dissatisfaction in the dominated segment of the population. The actions of the disaffected soldiers also suggests that the military could express an intercursive power relationship even with the paramount authority in the state. The productive capacity of the polity, required to meet demands for increased commercial, non-commercial and ad hoc levies, as well as provide months of military service every year, were probably stretched to the limit. Although Oba Ozolua had managed to expand the tribute base in the imperial state by including a large number of new vassal-tributary villages, this apparently was not enough to mitigate the excessive demands of the conquest state. Furthermore, Ozolua had managed to remove restrictions imposed on the integral power from any competing state elite fraction, such as the Uzama Nihinron. However, as previously noted Oba Ozolua also experienced the ultimate restriction when he was murdered by the military in an expression of their intercursive power. The fact that Oba

Esigie took limited reprisals for the assassination of his father indicates either that his aspirations for ultimate power in the state administration overcame his grief regarding his father's untimely death, or that the excessive power manipulations of his father had produced an intolerable drain on state resources. The reign of Oba Esigie (c. 1509-1536) marked a new commercial age in Benin development, and the administration was more concerned with commerce and commercial domination than with military expansion and territorial aggrandizement. The conquest state of Oba Ozoluwa gave way to the consolidation of an imperial trading formation under Oba Esigie:



Endnotes to Chapter Three

1. A conquest state can be defined as a polity which expands geographically for whatever reason through the use of force. Territorial aggrandizement, economic expansion to control trade routes, conquest and annexation of potential and/or real enemies (defense and security) all can contribute to the development of a conquest state. The most critical aspect of this type of polity is the ability to sustain military capability.
2. J.U. Egharevba, A Short History of Benin, (fourth edition), Ibadan, 1968, p. 13.
3. Ibid., pp 13-14. Also refer to G. Connah, "New Light on the Benin City Walls", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, III, 4, 1967, pp. 563-609. Connah estimated that construction would have required 5,000 men working full time to be completed in one year. The innermost walls include less than ten percent of the total construction.
4. A.A. Boahen, "The Caravan Trade in the Nineteenth Century", Journal of African History, III, 2, 1962, pp. 349-350.
5. Anne W. Pardo, "The Songhay Empire Under Sonni Ali and Askia Muhammad: A Study in Comparisons and Contrasts", Boston University Papers on Africa, Vol. V, 1971, p. 55.
6. J.A. Burdon, Northern Nigeria, Historical Notes on Certain Emirates and Tribes, London, 1909, p. 32, particularly the Kano Chronicle, translated by H.R. Palmer, and extensively quoted by Burdon. The dates for Yakubu's reign come from the Kano Chronicle.
7. Burdon, Northern Nigeria, p. 31.
8. Refer to the map which shows the conquest state under Oba Ewuare, and the expansion of Benin from a national to an imperial trading formation. Also refer to P. Morton-Williams, "The Oyo Yoruba and the Atlantic Trade, 1670-1830", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, III, 1, 1964, p. 30 where he discusses the western extent of the Benin empire.
9. S.A. Akintoye, "The North-eastern Yoruba Districts and the Benin Kingdom", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, IV, 4, 1969, p. 550.
10. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 14.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 14. At a later date Oba Esigie (c. 1509-1536) established Usela as the home of the Queen Mother, and all subsequent monarchs sent the Queen Mother to Usela with the title Iyoba. It is interesting to note that Chief Iken was probably a descendant of the Igodo dynasty whose great great grandfather had been an unsuccessful candidate for the Igodo crown. The establishment of a Bini prince, Kuoboyuwa, as the hereditary chief of Iken, represented, in effect, a change in dynasty in Usela. It is also interesting that Kuoboyuwa is an unusual name, perhaps indicating that his mother was a representative of the indigenous population. More detailed research may, in fact, uncover that Kuoboyuwa's mother came from Usela, and that the prince was at least a semi-legitimate successor as an Usela chief. This possible interpretation would have made Kuoboyuwa a female side candidate for the Usela title, and could have thereby contributed to his acceptability as the new administrator after Iken's untimely death.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 15. Akure was another major commercial enclave on the main north-south trade route, and therefore represented an important administrative centre in the economic nexus of the Benin commercial empire.
13. Akintoye, "The North-eastern Yoruba Districts", pp. 348-350.
14. Evidence about the trans-Saharan economic boom under Sonni Ali and Askia Muhammad has been relatively well documented by Pardo, "The Songhay Empire", *op. cit.*, and E.W. Bovill, Caravans of the Old Sahara, London, 1933, pp. 82-113. Bovill stated, for example, that the "rise of Songhai power on the Niger had brought political stability to a vast area and this had naturally stimulated the caravan trade". (p. 105).
15. Nupe and Kwararafa are discussed in some depth later in this work.
16. Milan Kalous, "Ifa Divination", New Orient, 6, 4, 1967, p. 123.
17. B.I. Belasco, The Entrepreneur as Culture Hero, New York, 1980, p. 79.
18. Ibid.
19. Egharevba, History of Benin, pp. 15-16.
20. Oba Ewedo, as previously noted, had been placed under the care of the Igbo priests prior to his nomination and installation as Oba in c. 1374-1401.
21. C.G. Okojie, Ishan Native Laws and Customs, Yaba, 1960, p. 181.

22. Kalous, "Ifa Divination", p. 123. Kalous says that Ifa terminology is almost identical among the Idoma, Bini, Ibo, Igala and very similar among the Nupe, Tiv and Jukun.
23. Belasco, The Entrepreneur, pp. 56-57.
24. Okojie, Ishan, p. 209. For the relative locations of all the various Ishan chiefdoms refer to the following map.
25. J.E. Miller, 'Ishan-Benin Relations, c. 1455-1509', Dalhousie University Honours Thesis, April, 1983.
26. Okojie, Ishan Native Laws and Customs, pp. 209-229. The emphasis (EWUARE!) was added by Dr. Okojie.
27. R.E. Bradbury, Benin Studies, London, 1978, p. 133.
28. Egharevba, A Short History of Benin, (third edition), p. 79.
29. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 67. There was a continuing discrimination against the Uzama subjects in these appointments, which effectively restricted Uzama patronage and political power.
30. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 62.
31. H.L.M. Butcher, "Some Aspects of the Otu System of the Isa Sub-tribe of the Edo Peoples of Southern Nigeria", Africa, Vol. 8, 1935, p. 151.
32. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 62.
33. Ibid., p. 139.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Miller, 'Ishan-Benin Relations'.
37. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 139.
38. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 19. Much of the following account has been reconstructed from Egharevba's extensive work.
39. Ibid., p. 20.
40. The nomination of Princess Edeloyo was presumably an act of desperation, and she probably did not represent a viable successor.

41. It is possible that the religious preference of the candidates was linked to their respective economic interests in specific trading networks.
42. Egharevba, A Short History of Benin, p. 21.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., p. 9.
45. Ibid., p. 21.
46. P.C. Lloyd, "The Itsekiri". in The Benin Kingdom, edited by D. Forde, as part of the Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Part XIII, London, 1957, p. 179.
47. W.A. Moore, History of the Itsekiri, London, 1936, p. 88.
48. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 22.
49. Ibid., p. 23.
50. Ibid.
51. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 58.
52. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, p. 67.
53. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 27.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 25.
56. The relationship between Benin and Ijebu has been explored at least superficially by Belasco, The Entrepreneur as Culture Hero, p. 19 where he states "Past Benin hegemony over the Ijebu" is a factor in the Benin domination of coastal trade.
57. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 24.
58. D.O. Asabia and J.O. Adegbesan, Idoani Past and Present, Ibadan, 1970, pp. 10-11.
59. Okojie, Ishan, p. 323.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., p. 227.

62. Igala Historical Text, (hereafter cited as I.H.T.), No. 5, the Attah of Idah, the Achadu and the Igala Mela clan heads, group interview at the palace, January 9, 1977.
63. I.H.T. No. 120, Igala Mela clan heads, group interview, Ochi-jenu clan as primary informants, July 18, 1977.
64. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 25, and also in Okojie, Ishan, p. 225.
65. Ibid.
66. Okojie, Ishan, p. 225, and Miller, 'Ishan-Benin Relations', pp. 50-53, deals with much the same material.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Imperial Formation and Peripheral Rebellion

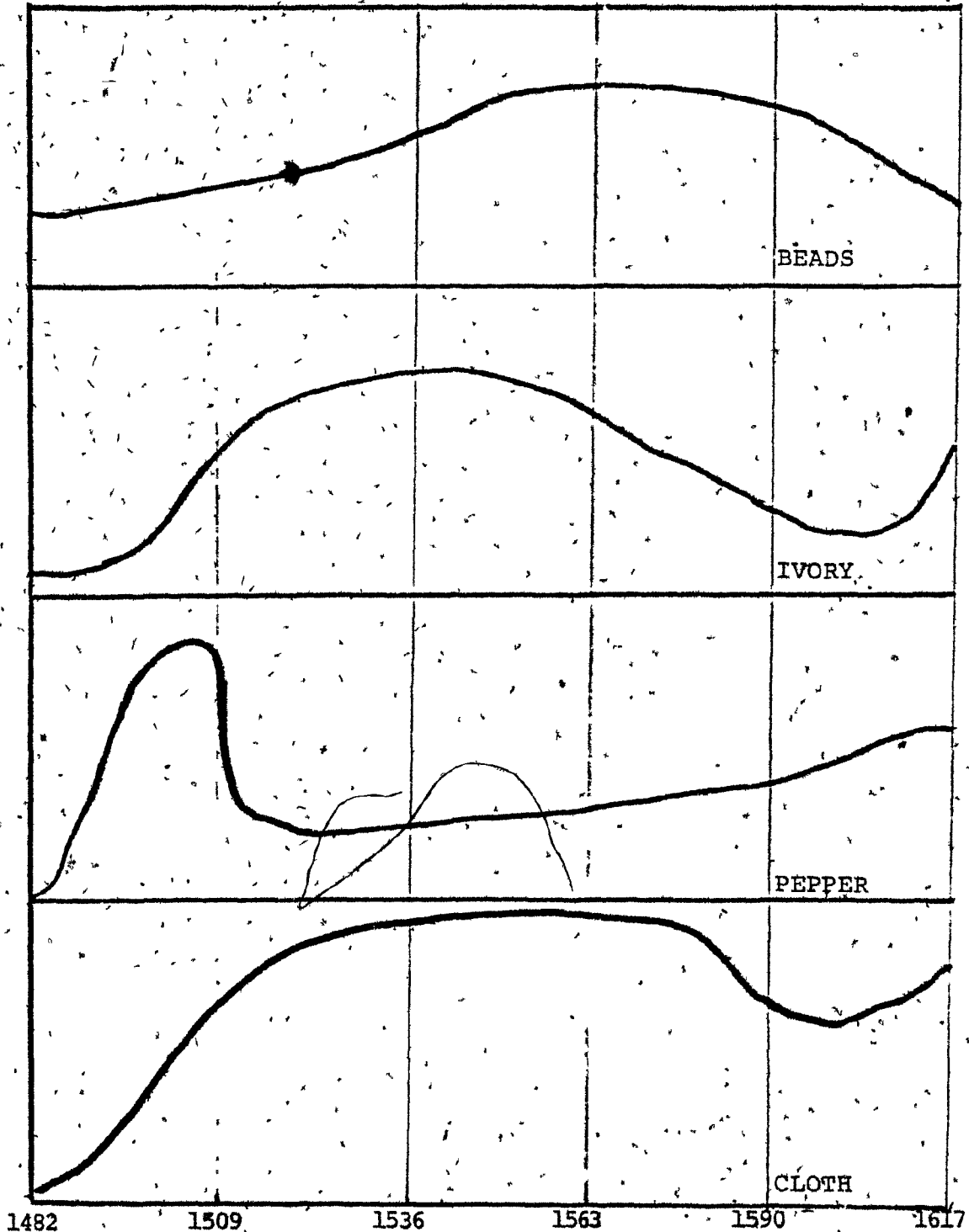
Benin and Idah, c. 1509-1536

The region of Oba Osaue Esigie in Benin marked the beginning of a new economic age in the development of the imperial trading formation. The state was active in three relatively prosperous commercial networks, including the booming trans-Saharan trade system and the expanding European overseas trade. In fact, the latter was on the verge of surpassing north-south hinterland commerce. The reign of Oba Esigie, therefore, might be described as the golden age of Bini economic development, and can be seen as a period when commercial production, economic development and the management of trade by the central elite pushed the state into the forefront of regional economic and political affairs. At the same time, however, the establishment of regional administrative and commercial centres, designed to assist in the organization of production, and establish an orderly flow of goods into the central enclave economy, while contributing to the government of the empire, gave rise to competing political and economic ambitions in these regional centres. The following discussion clearly shows that the development of regional administrative enclaves, which had access to commercial production on the periphery of the imperial formation, added impetus to the expression of peripheral ambitions toward autonomous economic and independent political action. The rebellion of Idah, a Bini

BENIN'S OVERSEAS EXPORT TRADE

c. 1482-1617

This graph has been pieced together from a wide variety of evidence, and represents a relative overview of Benin's commercial exports and not absolute figures. The impressions have been constructed from various European accounts, and are relatively sketchy.



royalist enclave along the Niger established during the expansion of the conquest state, responsible for the organization of Niger trade, provides an opportunity to examine the relationship between the capital enclave (Benin) and a peripheral centre (Ibadan).² Initially, however, this discussion attempts an examination of the 'new age of commerce', and relates this economic development to the consolidation of the imperial trading formation.

The evolution of the imperial formation had propelled Benin from a petty chiefdom in c. 1293-1320 to an enlarged imperial structure that dominated a vast stretch of commercial activity during the reign of Oba Esigie in c. 1509-1536. The emergence of the paramount central elite exercising integral power relations, supported by a palace bureaucracy, and dominating regional and long-distance trade established the infra-structure of the imperial formation. The coercive and exploitative nature of the administration had been clearly defined, and operated through a series of subordinates in the vassal-village Otu system and regional administrative centres. The infra-structure of the state can be described, in general terms at least, as follows,

The organizational ensemble of political and economic controls built into the Benin division of labor, buttressed by a statist cult structure [Olokun and Ifa], enabled the palace to siphon off the surplus labor of several social sectors: non-food producing, luxury goods, artisans, producers of external trade goods ..., and other producers of goods which supported the various strata of Benin society.³

It is significant that the major commercial exchange, whether routed into the north-south overland trade or into the Atlantic coast overseas system, was of the luxury commodity variety. It has been argued, in some quarters at least, that long-distance luxury trade does not seriously effect the basic productive capacity of the state.⁴ The exchange of copper, beads, cowries, cloth and female slaves would seem to represent a luxury exchange pattern in which surplus could be siphoned off for the benefit of the state elite and the development of elite wealth. Just because the majority of the trade was in luxury goods, however, does not undermine the basic fact that the volume of trade was increasing and these economic opportunities provided for the expansion of elite accumulation. In fact, elite wealth grew according to the volume of trade and the capacity of the dominant segment in the society to organize and appropriate production on commercially viable levels. The introduction of cowries and the monetization of the economy in the commercial enclave during the reign of Oba Esigie provided the opportunity for a further expansion of the exchange system, and dramatically increased the capacity of the elite to dominate commercial activities.

Esigie had inherited a powerful and sophisticated commercial empire. The new monarch had also, prior to his ascendancy to the throne, forged close relations with the Portuguese missionaries in the capital. These missionaries quickly returned after Esigie's installation,⁵ and with them came a fairly substantial increase in Portuguese commerce in the coastal trading ports. This expansion of overseas commercial activity apparently sparked renewed competition from peripheral states in the imperial formation; an economic rivalry

that would not appeal to the central elite in the capital enclave.

The constitutional principles of primogeniture, and the installation of Oba Esigie as paramount in the imperial capital did not deter Prince Aruanran from pursuing his claim to the Bini throne from his peripheral enclave at Udo. It is tempting to argue that the rise in the volume of north-south commerce in which Udo and Idah were better located geographically than Benin to dominate gave impetus to the rebellions in both subordinate centres. Oba Esigie was eventually forced to attack Udo in an effort to permanently silence his vociferous brother. In the battle, Prince Aruanran's only son, Oni Oni, was killed, and Aruanran himself committed suicide to avoid capture.⁶ There was a subsequent short period of peace, but the confrontation policies of Udo eventually forced another major military encounter between the capital and peripheral state.

... Osemwughe, the Iyase of Udo, to avenge the defeat and death of his master, challenged the Oba to fight. So troops were sent against Udo once more. In this campaign a series of battles were fought and the town of Udo destroyed. Osemwughe and the other rebels fled ... after a short time Osemwughe had to pay a yearly tribute to the Oba his overlord. These people were called Emwa n'Udo (the Udo deserters) which was later contracted to Ondo ... Shortly after his return from the war, Esigie made a law that no prince should be made ruler of Udo any more ...⁷

With the destruction of Udo the rebellious population scattered throughout the region; this exodus included the Emwa n'Udo to Ondo and the migration of groups into the Ishan area which established the chiefdoms of Ubiaja and Udo-Ishan.⁸ With the dispersal

of the Udo population, Esigie had finally removed the most persistent intra-state rival which had been threatening the development of Bini paramount authority since the reign of Oba Ewedo in c. 1374-1401. The destruction of Udo, therefore, paved the way for the development of unopposed Bini authority and an expansion of coastal trade. Esigie extended Bini contacts with the Portuguese by sending an ambassador to Lisbon, an unprecedented move that clearly indicated the sophistication and international awareness of the ruling elite.⁹

Esigie therefore sent Ohen-Okun, the Olokun priest at Ughoton, with him (John Affonso d'Aveiro) as an ambassador to the King of Portugal, asking him to send priests who would teach him and his people the faith. In reply the King of Portugal also sent some Portuguese traders who established trading factories at Ughoton, the old port of Benin. They traded in ivory, Benin cloths, pepper and other commodities ...¹⁰

The Olokun cult had been originally important as the state dominated cult mechanism which controlled the delta-lagoon trade. The advent of Portuguese commercial activity, in fact, introduced another component in this east-west trading system controlled by the Olokun priesthood. The Portuguese became carriers in this trade, and fostered the export of Benin cloth production all along the Guinea coast. These coastal contacts, organized through the cult medium, greatly expanded an old trading system which had been controlled by the priest of the Olokun cult. This explains why Ohen-Okun, the Olokun priest at Ughoton, was chosen as the Bini ambassador to Portugal.

It would appear that the expansion of coastal trade reinforced elite control of commercial activity as the overseas trade was "grafted on to an earlier system of long-distance trade" already controlled by the ruling segment.¹¹ The dual economy in the imperial formation, which distinguished between the capital enclave, peripheral centres and the hinterland, contributed to the rapid development of overseas commerce. The capital enclave and peripheral centres were already equipped to handle commercial activities, and the state dominated infrastructure - including production, transportation and collection of commercial produce - provided the mechanism for easy satisfaction of European commercial demands. This would also imply that the Obā had control over the coastal trade, and the maintenance of this dominant role was necessary for the development of an organized state response to the new economic opportunities. The expansion of coastal trade, therefore, served not only to reinforce the dominant status of the state elite, but also contributed to the growing distinction between the capital enclave and the imperial hinterland.

The expansion of European overseas commerce seems to have fostered the further development of royal monopolies. The strict control and elite monopolization of European trade encouraged, for example, the production of pepper, ivory and camwood as exclusive preserves of the Obā. A.F.C. Ryder also suggested that "elephant hunters constituted a special class in Benin with an organization resembling that of other trades and skills devoted to the service of the Obā."¹² These special service and craft organizations were part of the supported segment of the population; provided for by the

redistribution of accumulated surplus tribute. It is also possible that, in the case of the ivory hunters at least, the by-product of their activities (meat) became the property of the hunters and, therefore, provided a further incentive for their participation in commercial production for the Oba. More importantly, however, the development of the royal monopolies provided the opportunity for the state elite to avail themselves of imported luxury commodities, and developed their economic base at the expense of agrarian and hinterland producers.¹³ The distinctions between capital enclave and imperial hinterland would appear to have been widening.

One of the important commodities introduced fairly early in the Portuguese trading period under Oba Esigie were European firearms.¹⁴ The exchange for these new and potentially devastating weapons encouraged Oba Esigie to establish a special service ward in the capital charged with the care and maintenance of the Oba's arsenal.

... at Benin City there is a ward, Iwoki, dated to Esigie's reign, which is charged with the care of the Oba's guns and cannon. Some Iwoki members even claim European descent ... Further, when European iron became a critical commodity, this added to the importance of the European connection, signified by the 'shrine of the gods of iron' at which the Iwoki worship (which is called Ogun-Esigie).¹⁵

In the imperial trading formation under Oba Esigie the dominant mode of production was still the gerontocracy of the village Otu system. However, as state monopolies and increasing revenues from commercial taxation provided more and more support for the state elite the primary mode of production became commercial enterprise.

According to J.B. Webster, the primary mode differed from the dominant mode in that the former provided the "larger part of its [elite] maintenance."¹⁶ The latter mode provided for, and occupied the majority of the population. This distinction is significant because it served to separate the capital enclave from the hinterland economic system. Development of European overseas trade, under the auspices of the palace, and the domination of the hinterland trading routes as avenues for the distribution of imports and the accumulation of exports, served to distinguish the capital enclave from the periphery. The relative isolation of the hinterland regions of the empire from any significant benefits from coastal commerce and overland trade served to maintain the growth of the enclave economy and promote the underdevelopment of the hinterland. The only possible source of expanded hinterland involvement in the commercial system was along major trading arteries; and even this limited potential was restricted to peripheral enclaves like Akure, Owo and Idah.

European trade was organized directly through the palace, and the Olokun cult system.¹⁷ The Oba as the head of the palace and the Olokun priesthood became even more significant in the economic order. With the increase in elite wealth, however, demands on subordinate segments of the society were not diminished. In fact, the converse may have been true; as trade increased appropriation of village Otu production increased. Thus the growing demands for tribute contributed further to the distinction between the central enclave and hinterland.

Continued domination of the hinterland trading routes and the increased appropriation of production from various peripheral centres became a vital aspect of the economic and commercial system in the imperial trading formation. Oba Esigie's personal influence as paramount in the political and economic order, his ability to speak and read Portuguese, his acceptance of Christian missions, and the significance of Bini exports, all served to encourage European commercial endeavours in the empire. In the hinterland, however, Bini domination of commercial production and major trading routes was maintained by the military outposts in Akure, Owo, Ekiti and Ikere to name but a few.¹⁸ Also, royal peripheral enclaves in Idoani, Idah, Warri and Ijebu further contributed to the regional domination by the capital elite, and reinforced the capacity of the centre to exploit the hinterland. This basic administrative infrastructure created an efficient political and commercial management of state resources, and provided for the mobilization of production from "three hundred or more miles inland."¹⁹

As an example of the state domination of trade and the development of commercial enterprise under the auspices of the state elite it is possible to cite the embargo on the export of male slaves imposed by Oba Esigie. The requirements of internal production generated by an expanded non-commercial and commercial demand, apparently provided adequate opportunities to absorb all available males in the production system. Esigie perceived that little benefit could be derived from the sale of slave labour to the Europeans.²⁰ The embargo on the export of male slaves remained in effect until the early eighteenth century when a combination of economic factors

forced the Benin monarchy to rescind the ban. The incorporation of slave labour in the productive capacity of the imperial formation, therefore, served to increase commercial and non-commercial production and increase the accumulation of elite wealth. It may be argued that up until the early eighteenth century, European commerce was as beneficial to Benin as any other form of commercial exchange. The development of Benin's underdevelopment begins with the decline of her cloth manufacturing and export of legitimate trade goods and their replacement by slaves. This process, therefore, must be related to the removal of the export embargo in c. 1725 and an almost total realignment of Benin's commercial activities in the mid-eighteenth century.²¹

The utilization of slave labour in the non-commercial production process served to depress the prices of food products and hinder their commercialization. The possibility of development in the hinterland of the empire, would have been therefore restricted as vassal villages were primarily non-commercial producers. Since non-commercial tribute could only be extracted efficiently from the core or suburban regions of the capital enclave the supported segment of the population eventually grew beyond the capacity or willingness of the suburban village Otu to supply support. Instead of developing food production as a commercial venture, as was apparently the case in the seventeenth century Gold Coast,²² and using the profits from trade to buy non-commercial production and thereby promoting trickle-down development in the vassal villages, slaves were utilized to produce food and prevent the commercialization of hinterland production. The increasing utilization of slave labour emphasized the

distinction between enclave and rural economies, and contributed to the development of the former and the underdevelopment of the latter.

One of the more significant economic developments during the reign of Oba Esigie was the formal adoption of cowries as a specific currency form controlled by the palace.²³ The formalization of cowrie currency provided the opportunity for the establishment of wider palace controls over commercial exchange, and eventually contributed to the expansion of stringent elite supervision of all standards of exchange. In the words of Marion Johnson cowries were in "no sense a 'primitive' money, but a sophisticated form of currency capable of adaptation to the particular needs of West African trade."²⁴ A typical Portuguese trading voyage to Benin in the early part of the sixteenth century introduced large numbers of manillas and cowries to the enclave economy. A trading voyage in 1526, for example, reveals certain details about the exchange system and provides clear evidence of the commercialization (or monetization) of the enclave economy.

Porters brought up [from Ughoton] 110 loads of manillas (each load containing 100 manillas) [or 11,000 manillas], 70 loads of cowries weighing altogether 20 quintals [2,000 pounds], and 10 loads of linen and red cloth. The head loads thus amounted to approximately 30 pounds ... [this cargo] was expended on 170 female slaves ... 80 of these slaves were bought with manillas ... cowries were used to pay for another 60 slaves ... the remaining 30 slaves were bought from the Oba in exchange for all the cloth in the cargo ... the pilot bought yams to the value of 1,600 manillas, as against 828 in 1522 when there were only half the number of slaves [to feed] but the yams paid for with cowries cost 89,000 cowries compared with the 8,000 expended [in 1522]. Another 55,000 had to be given for yams, wood and water.²⁵

This example indicates that a substantial importation of currency forms occurred during the early part of the sixteenth century, and thus set an exchange pattern that was to persist for the next two hundred years. The voyage of 1526 introduced 11,000 manillas and approximately 800,000 cowries.²⁶ It is also possible to see a fairly dramatic change in the value of these imported items since the voyage of 1522. For example, in 1522 one female slave had cost 50 manillas, and by 1526 the price had risen to 57; representing a 14% increase. Cowries, on the other hand, had undergone an even more dramatic change. In 1522, 8,000 cowries purchased sufficient yams for 80 slaves, by 1526 it cost 89,000 to provide subsistence for 170 female slaves. This represents an apparent devaluation of the cowrie, and a corresponding increase in the actual number of cowries in circulation. In this situation the development of a formalized strung-cowrie currency form, controlled directly by the palace, established absolute domination of all available currency forms by the state elite. The increased number of cowries in circulation apparently demanded a centralized control mechanism through which the elite could organize distribution, maintain standards of value, and control currency circulation. This is not a suggestion, however, that manillas and cowries penetrated the hinterland economy, but there may have been some restricted circulation within the peripheral centres of the empire, and some exchange of cowries into the long-distance trade system through Nupe.²⁷

The introduction of a system of currency administration by Oba Esigie, and controlled by the senior palace Otu, represented an important development in the economics of the imperial trading

formation: The formal stringing of cowries established a new basic monetary standard which marked an important phase in the improvement of state commercial controls. Previously, it would appear, that cloth had been the medium by which exchange was measured, and the introduction of an 'artificial' medium, such as cowries, not only allowed for a better circulation within the commercial enclaves, but also undermined the cloth industry which had been so significant in the development of the imperial trading formation. Furthermore, the introduction of cowries in a coastal trading state would not necessarily translate into an immediate value attachment to this currency form in interior markets. In fact, the traditions from Kano indicate that cowries were not introduced as a currency form until the reign of Mohammed Sarefa in 1703-1731.²⁸ In Benin, however, Bernard Belasco summarized the significance of palace controlled strung cowries, and described it as a state-instituted mechanism of commercial control and "institutionalized exploitation."²⁹

Especially evident within this exploitative nexus was ... care of the Oba's reserves of cowrie shells, beads, cloth and other trade goods ... The Iwebo was in charge of stringing the royal coral beads bought by the Europeans. And it should also be stressed that the Iwebo was the senior palace society; its leading chiefs were in charge of European trade, and the interpreters in that trade also belonged to the Iwebo ... Furthermore, all European traders were counted as Iwebo members ... The close ties and shared interests of the Iwebo and Portuguese suggest the probability that at this time, the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, there emerged a reinterpretation of cowries as a standard of exchange superimposed on, and concurrent with, the continued use of cowries as a petty barter, or nonmonetary, medium in local [enclave] marketplaces. The Portuguese desire for the economic integration of the West African trade and the Benin

state's need for political consolidation of a dynasty scarcely 200 years old found a common focus in monetizing the loose cowries in the form of a palace-controlled stringing system ... formalization of string cowries served as state-instituted mechanism (a) for trade good standardization, and thereby a means of channeling production to state-defined ends, (b) for administering exchange rates and terms of trade, (c) for draining wealth out of the social and ritual cycle, (d) for enabling trade transactions of ever increasing volume and variety, and (e) by its circulation, for introduction of local, autonomous markets to translocal, state run trade channels. 30

It is interesting that Paul Einzig, in his extensive analysis of currency forms, suggested that the formal institutionalization of any currency could have a "role in the evolution of civilization."³¹ In Benin the development of palace control of cowrie currency meant that the Oba could establish unified value systems, and exercise direct authority over exchange patterns. The Oba's role in the development of commerce and the expansion of state-run trade was limited by design to the enclave economy. The de-monetization of cloth would, therefore, contribute to the centralization of palace authority, and reduce the possibility of cloth currency circulation in the hinterland. Development in the hinterland was thereby further restricted and limited to production to satisfy higher tribute demands rather than the production of cloth currency for circulation outside the enclave economy. This means, in effect, that the 'social theory of money' as expressed by Einzig would have been a contributing factor in the development of the enclave economy and to a much lesser extent the expansion of hinterland production and monetization.

... a social theory of money, endeavouring to present money as a social institution which in primitive as well as modern communities provides the incentive to produce goods beyond the immediate requirements ... in the final results primitive money as modern money had been the driving force making for better utilization of economic resources and producing capacity.³²

In a situation where more than 18% of an imported cargo was expended on yams, lodgings, wood and water it is relatively easy to see the contribution to the monetization of the enclave economy.³³

Also, when 83% of an imported cargo in 1526 consisted of currency forms (manillas and cowries) the incentives to produce goods beyond the immediate requirements of the society seems clearly evident.³⁴

In Benin this would presumably translate into higher tribute demands imposed upon the subordinate segment of the population, and an increase in commercial production to meet commercial demands. However, we should reiterate that this incentive was provided for the enclave economy and elite accumulation, and thereby prompted the development of a more despotic and exploitative relationship between the capital elite and hinterland subjects. The disadvantage of losing control of currency production, and allowing Portuguese traders to become the main supplier of this currency form were apparently outweighed by the advantages of palace control of all money forms, and the direct impact upon commercial management. As cowries developed as the primary standard of exchange the value of palace control over strung-cowries became clearly evident as part of the Oba's exploitative nexus.

In terms of the development of palace controls, and the expansion of central authority in commercial matters, the reign of Oba Esigie witnessed a rapid acculturation to European trade demands. The imperial formation underwent a major geographic change during the period c. 1482-1536; an expansion that corresponded to the increased concern over the primary mode of accumulating elite wealth. In the eight years between 1498 and 1506, for example, Benin became a major supplier of European pepper. The main market in Europe for pepper was Venice, and a shortfall in pepper supplies in 1505 seems to have invigorated Bini production. In this period "the Portuguese factor at Antwerp received 75 quintals [7500 pounds] of Benin pepper annually."³⁵ However, when Indian production returned to the Venice market after 1506 the Benin export trade declined drastically.³⁶ It would appear, therefore, that Bini exports were effected by European market circumstances, but that European fluctuations in a particular commodity did not permanently effect Bini commerce. The major concern of the Bini elite, however, would have been the maintenance of their accumulated wealth, and the creation of a formalized currency standard would have contributed to market stability despite fluctuations in commodity prices and demands.

Benin commercial activities in the early part of the sixteenth century were a reflection of the growing European overseas trade demands. By c. 1550 it would appear that the north-south overland route linked to the trans-Saharan trade system was reduced to second place in Benin commercial priorities. European traders quickly discovered that Benin cloth and beads were highly prized trade goods

elsewhere on the Guinea coast. The production, exchange and distribution of beads, for example, had been a significant part of Benin commercial activities long before the advent of European commerce on the coast.³⁷ Beads, therefore, continued as an important export commodity, and presumably increased in value as European demands increased. For example, in 1522-23,

... stone beads available in Benin ... could be exchanged for gold ... so they [the Portuguese] began to buy them in large quantities ... in 20 months ... at Ughoton ... [the Portuguese factor] bought 33,382 coris [blue stones veined with red], 900 yellow beads and 162 of the grey.³⁸

During a 1526 trading voyage the Portuguese bought 9,200 coris in the Benin market.³⁹ Of this total 3,200 beads were purchased at the "price of five for one manilla",⁴⁰ while the remaining 6,000 beads cost four for one. Calculated at the rate in 1526 of 57 manillas for one female slave, an equivalent number of manillas could have purchased approximately 38 slaves. The fact that European commerce had been developed through existing commercial patterns suggests that the increased demands in the overseas trade expanded existing productive forces. The expansion of the bead industry, for example, where stones had to be found, shaped, polished and drilled suggested that Benin was able to generate increased production in this local industry and develop sufficient artisan production to meet increased demands. Therefore, by 1526 the existing bead industry had probably developed considerably as Portuguese traders sought Benin produce for commercial exchange elsewhere on the Guinea

coast.

The development of the cloth industry met similar success as the European, overseas trade continued to expand during the first half of the sixteenth century. The cloth industry, in fact, emerged as the economic mainstay of Benin's export production, and thereby contributed to the expansion of cotton production, weaving and dying skills. These apparent multiplier effects in the cloth trade provided additional incentive for the increases in the cloth industry. Towards the end of the sixteenth century Benin had emerged as the major West African supplier of European cloth needs. The expansion of Dutch shipping in particular contributed to the economic boom in the Benin cloth industry, and eventually established Benin as the major supplier to Portuguese, Dutch, French and English merchants.

Dutch ships began to appear in West African waters in the last decade of the sixteenth century ... they made more than 2,000 voyages in the years between 1593 and 1607, and later maintained an average of at least twenty voyages a year.⁴¹

Although beyond the general scope of this discussion it is important to note that the development of the Benin cloth industry and export market represented another example where European trade demands were grafted on to an existing exchange system.⁴² The main cloth exports provided an opportunity for Europeans to exchange Benin cloth along the Guinea coast and acquire slaves and gold. R. Kea noted in his study of the seventeenth century Gold Coast, for example, that Benin cloth could be exchanged for local gold.⁴³ The

expansion of Benin cloth production, therefore, represented another example where the existing commercial system accommodated itself to European trade demands, and expanded to profit the local producers. In one year, at one coastal port, the Dutch factor, in competition with other European traders, accumulated 16,000 Benin cloths for export.⁴⁴ The expansion of cloth production and the cloth trade, therefore, represented a major commodity in the development of Benin commerce and, in fact, became the major export after c. 1563.

The reign of Oba Esigie can be described as "the golden age"⁴⁵ in the commercial expansion, economic development, and political consolidation of the imperial trading formation. The monarchy had emerged as the paramount authority in a highly coercive, exploitative and efficient social, political and economic system. The empire had been organized to reflect the dominant concern for regional and long-distance trade, and the development of the capital enclave, and elite wealth based upon accumulated tribute, exploitation of slave labour and revenues derived from commercial taxation consolidated the political hierarchy in the social formation. The administration of the extensive domains also reflected the organization of political and economic relations within the state. The capital enclave was the centre of political authority and economic development. Peripheral centres had been established to consolidate Benin domination of commerce, trade routes and hinterland production. The golden age, therefore, was a period when the organization and administration of the state served both the political and economic elite in the capital enclave and utilized peripheral centres as part of the infrastructure of the imperial formation.

The peripheral centres were of two types, first those under royal administrators, and second those under commoners. The former included Warri, Idoani, Ijebu, Lagos,⁴⁶ and Idah, while the latter included the Isha chiefdoms, Ondo, Akure, Ekiti, Ikere and Agbor to name only a few. The system of imperial administration established a relatively large and complex bureaucracy and nobility, which was organized to foster the development of commerce and protect imperial trade. However, the golden age was not necessarily a period of peaceful growth and unopposed expansion and consolidation. The rebellion of Udo early in Esigie's reign had been an expression of open hostility to the policies of the central administration, and represented, in fact, the last attempt by Udo to seize a portion of the commercial wealth. The rebellion of Idah in 1515-1516,⁴⁷ indicated that there was a shift in the balance of power within the empire, and that the organization of the imperial administration had not prevented the development of political and economic aspirations in the royal peripheral enclaves. While the Atlantic trade was booming, so was the north bound hinterland trade. Benin under Oba Esigie may have given too much attention to the former and neglected the latter. The preference of the central authority for the European overseas trade, a commercial system that they were in a better position to control and influence directly, allowed northern peripheral centres a certain measure of freedom to enjoy the fruits of north-south commercial transactions.

The Idah rebellion threatened to disrupt the economic and political status quo in the empire, and could have led to a fundamental reorganization of the administration of the imperial

formation. The genealogically related dynasty in Idah was apparently chafing under the exploitative authority of the central administration. The Bini dynasty had been established by Aji-Attah, a son of Oba Ozoluwa, when he conquered the Okpoto monarchy in Idah.⁴⁸ In the initial period of Bini rule along the Niger the monarchy had been concerned with the expansion of imperial controls and the establishment of Benin authority, albeit indirectly, along the major natural commercial transportation system in the region. Domination of the Niger, therefore, became a prominent contribution to the expansion of Bini commercial and political hegemony on the north-eastern frontier of the empire. However, the importance of riverain commerce and the aspirations of the Bini peripheral administration in Idah ultimately led to an internal conflict between rival brothers competing not only for paramount status, but also for supreme authority in the capital enclave of the empire. The invasion of Benin by Aji-Attah's forces was not designed to break-up the empire, but was initiated to replace Oba Esigie as ruler of the imperial formation.

The multi-ethnic population on both sides of the River Niger above the confluence with the Anambra River included two major segments - the Okpoto and the Igbo.⁴⁹ The population also included a number of smaller ethnic groups, including Aro, and Bini refugees. The political organization of this multi-ethnic mix fell to a number of small segmentary redistributive chiefdoms under Okpoto rulers. Although the smaller ethnic groups did not contribute much to the overall demographic pressure on land and resources, they did contribute considerably to the economic patterns of the region. The Aro

and Bini provided specialized crafts, artisan and ritual services and production, including iron, weaving and dying. Into this situation a major influx of Bini settlers and military personnel, under the leadership of Aji-Attah, caused a shift in the population balance in the Idah area. In fact, the Bini conquest introduced the third major ethnic element in the middle belt population and accounted for a fundamental change in the administrative, political, social and economic structures.⁵⁰

The conquest of Idah by Aji-Attah was accomplished through an alliance of the Bini invaders with an important, although numerically small, riverain community. In fact, the conquest of Idah was delayed while the Bini army endeavoured to find a way across the Niger barrier. The lack of canoes made the final assault on the Okpoto capital difficult, and only the assistance of the riverain people made the invasion possible.

When the Bini invaded Idah a long time ago they could not cross the Niger because they had no canoes. Aji-Attah offered prayers and consulted the Ifa priests who were with him to find an answer to his problems. And luckily his prayers were answered by the manatee. Out of respect and gratitude, and in memory of their assistance the manatee have been remembered in Idah. The manatee cannot be eaten by some, and their canoes are always welcome in the river markets.⁵¹

The manatee referred to in the Idah tradition were apparently an Aro riverain specialist community on the Niger. The Aro aligned with the Bini invaders and thereby materially contributed to the overthrow of the Okpoto monarchy. This political and military

involvement may have been brought about by economic considerations on the part of the Aro. The expansion of the Benin imperial formation, coupled with the fairly obvious lack of waterborn skills - i.e. canoe making, paddling, swimming, and navigation - provided an opportunity for the Aro to increase their direct involvement in the development of commerce. Furthermore, the riverain specialists were already involved in a widespread commercial network, and any expansion of commercial activity on the Niger under a Bini administration would have fairly positive effects on Aro trade, security and profits. The Aro, therefore, aligned with the Bini invaders in the hope that increased commercial activity would benefit the riverain specialists. This alliance between the Aro (manatee totem) and the Bini (leopard totem) proved too much for the Okpoto monarchy (civet cat) under Eggarah Eri.⁵²

In the face of the combined opposition Eggarah Eri migrated inland away from the Niger, and eventually resettled south of the Benue Valley.⁵³ Tradition recalls that the Okpoto monarchy actually fled before a powerful Bini military force.

Followers of Eggarah left Idah because Aji-Attah had more influence and could command the support of an important part of the population, [the Aro riverain community] and was more powerful. Aji-Attah was a great military-minded and determined conqueror like his father Oba Ozolua of Benin, and he was determined to conquer Idah and establish his authority like his father had ordered. He possessed great regalia which was superior to anything owned by Eggarah Eri. This regalia and his military might forced the people to recognize his right to rule.⁵⁴

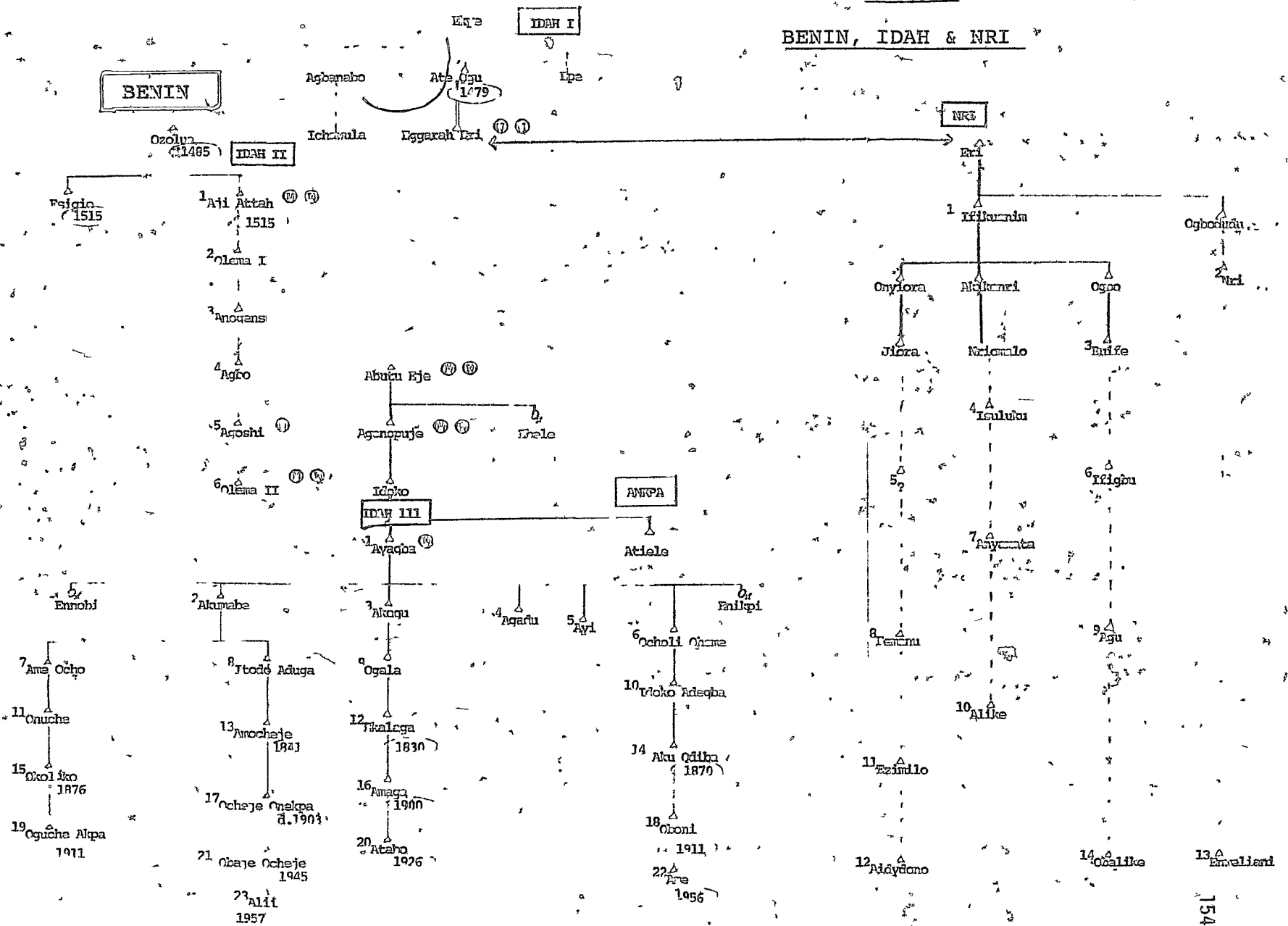
The conquest of the Okpoto also appeared in a tradition collected by T.J. Hutchinson during a Niger expedition in 1854. This account has been repeated here not only because it confirms the Bini conquest of the Okpoto capital, but also because it clearly reveals just how little some orally preserved records can change over long intervals. This tradition is also significant because it provided a chronological reference which verifies the Idah dating progression.

Eggarah was the name of the King who was regnant over the Appotto [Akpoto or Okpoto] people - the aborigines of the country - before their subjugation to the first Attah. The latter ... impelled perhaps by ambitions or urged by some imaginary insult, and strengthened by the accession of more of the natives of Adoh (Benin) he attacked the Appotto and drove them away ... and constituted himself the Attah or 'father' of Eggarah. From him twenty Attah's have descended.⁵⁵

Eggarah Eri and his followers relocated at Nri and founded a relatively influential religious and political dynasty in northern Igboland. His own impressive array of royal regalia, coupled with his connections to the Awka iron cult manufacturing centre on the Udi plateau,⁵⁶ contributed to the success of Nri as a ritual and political centre. M.D.W. Jeffries pointed out in his study of Nri that "all their traditions and culture point to Igala origins."⁵⁷ Elisabeth Isichei also stated that when Eri came down the Anambra [River] he set out to unify the surrounding country;⁵⁸ indicative that Eggarah originated in the Idah area. The results of the Bini conquest, therefore, could be summarized as the foundation of a powerful Benin royalist administration in the former Okpoto capital,

CHART IX
 BENIN, IDAH & NRI

- c. 1455-1479
- c. 1482-1509
- c. 1509-1536
- c. 1536-1563
- c. 1563-1590
- c. 1590, 1617
- c. 1617-1644
- c. 1644-1671
- c. 1671-1701
- c. 1701-1749
- c. 1749-1797
- c. 1797-1845
- c. 1845-1893
- c. 1893-1945
- c. 1945-



and the creation of an important ritual and political chiefdom in the Anambra Valley.

The success of the Bini invasion and conquest of the confluence region must be measured against the contribution of the Aro-manatee riverain community. Without the co-operation of the Aro along the Niger the conquest of Idah might never had taken place. Furthermore, the impressive Bini regalia displayed by Aji-Attah as he marched into Idah provided the new monarchy with at least quasi-legitimate royal powers, and served to identify the ruler in the eyes of the vanquished. The utilization of royal regalia, as an expression of paramount authority, and the overt symbol of royal legitimacy, made the monarch at least recognizable in the eyes of his own subjects. The royal mask called Ejube-'auilo (the eye which brings fear to all other eyes)⁵⁹ became symbolic of Bini political and military domination. This most impressive brass pectoral mask has also subsequently become the symbol of Idah royalty and the ideological representation of the Igala Kingdom.⁶⁰

Ejube-'auilo has been described by Miles Clifford as the "most sensational of all" the items in the Idah royal regalia.⁶¹

K.C. Murray, more of an expert in the field of art and artifacts, described the royal mask of Idah as "the most sacred of the regalia of the Ata [Attah] ... a very beautiful example of Benin work of a fairly early period."⁶² A picture of this important item of royal regalia has been included here.

The description of the mask as the "eye which brings fear to all other eyes" was perhaps an accurate account of how the Okpoto population viewed the Bini invaders. Clearly the Bini dynasty, army and



EJUBE - Vauilo

settler population imposed a new and unwelcome political, economic and social order upon the Idah area. The conquest of the Okpoto monarchy, in fact, established a major political power in the confluence region, and economic, political, demographic and religious developments, were to be directly controlled by this dynasty for the next one hundred and eighty years. The creation of a Bini royal enclave, initially administering part of the Niger waterway for the imperial power in Benin, initiated a new era in the development of the middle belt and confluence region.

To commemorate the alliance with the Aro, Aji-Attah introduced a royal headdress called Onunu-Ehre (tail of the manatee) to the Bini regalia. This headdress has subsequently become an important part of the Idah royal regalia, and served symbolically to identify the relationship between the Bini elite and their Aro supporters. It is interesting to note that ivory and cowries appear in the creation of the Onunu Ehre headdress. Ivory was one of the important exports from Benin into the Atlantic overseas trade, and some of this ivory probably came from Idah. Also, as previously discussed, cowries were making a major impact upon the organization of commerce and currency in the imperial formation at this time. Two symbols which seem to link the Bini dynasty at Idah quite clearly into the peripheral administration of the imperial formation under Oba Esigae, Onunu Ehre has been described in the following terms,

... it is formed in two parts, first a chaplet made of small red feathers of the loloki bird ... which is worn low down on the forehead, and next - which covers it - a red cap which is covered with cowries

and has a flap or tail (hence the name) at the back which hangs down on the neck. On the front of the cap is a small ivory disk which is surrounded by rows of amber beads to suggest the moon's rays.⁶³

It is significant that all the materials in the construction of Onunu-Ehre were important in Benin. Cowries and ivory, for example, were important commercial items in Benin's overseas trade. Also, amber beads formed part of the export produce from the imperial formation, and Benin was clearly emerging as a major producer of beads along the West African coast. Finally, red cloth had been one of the earlier Portuguese imports to Benin, and red caps were utilized by the Oba as a symbol of royal appointment and enhanced stature.⁶⁴ The introduction of Onunu-Ehre, therefore, not only commemorated the alliance with the Aro, but also symbolically reflected the relationship between the peripheral administration in Idah and the imperial authority in Benin.

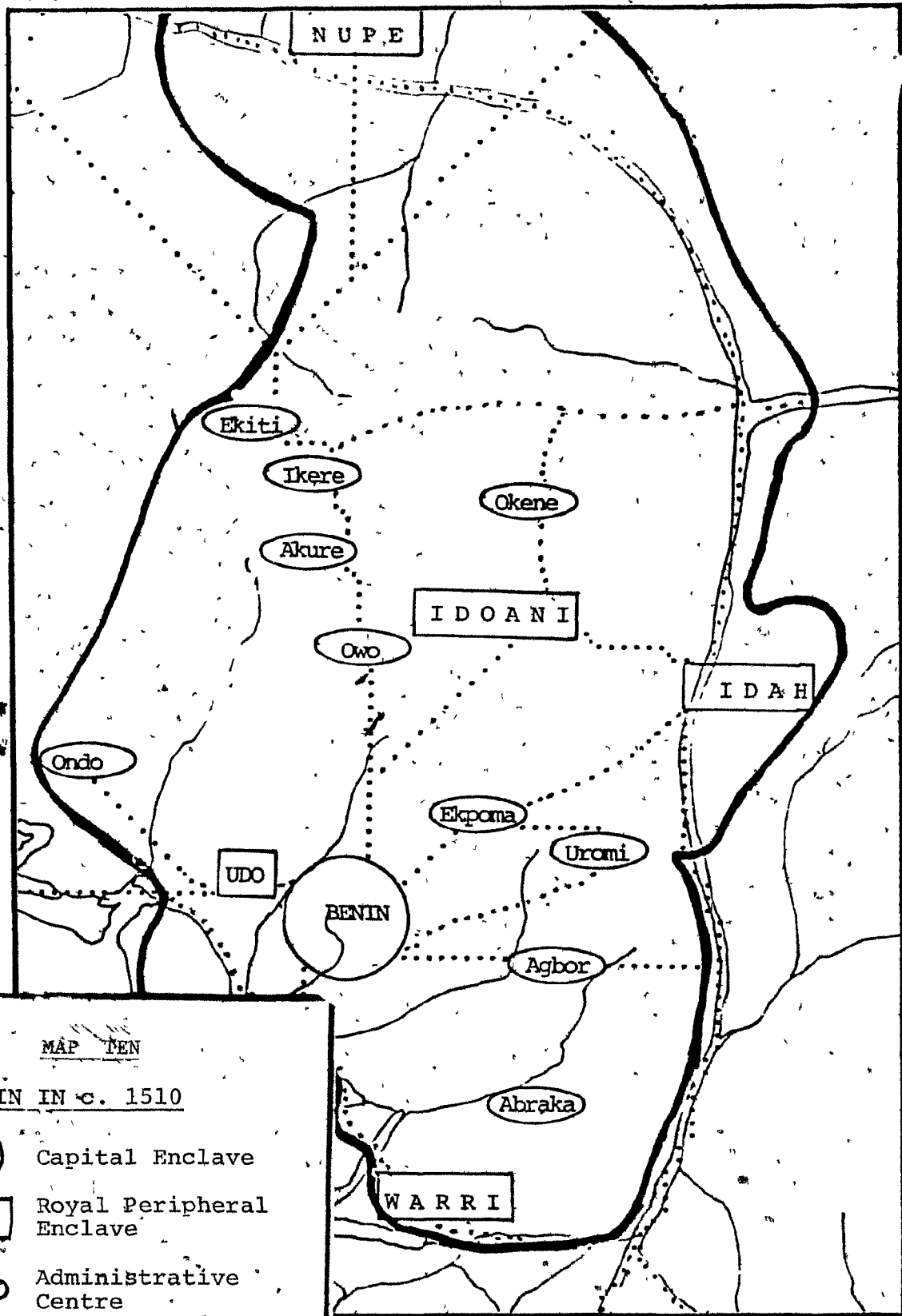
Aji-Attah, although cognizant of his subordinate position in the imperial administration, aspired to expand his authority through further conquests in the confluence region. The new monarch would have been familiar with the success of territorial aggrandizement through military conquest, and advocated military, political and economic domination of the Niger as the representative of the Benin empire. It is also evident that the creation of a new polity seemed to invite a return to previously practiced political forms. This would clearly be the case in the foundation of the Bini dynasty in Idah, as Aji-Attah reverted to the conquest state that he had

witnessed under his father Obà Ozolua of Benin.⁶⁵ Aji-Attah, therefore, pursued the expansion of the peripheral enclave at Idah by marching northward against the riverain states of the middle Niger.

During an expedition against Nku (Nupe) Aji-Attah is said to have fathered a child by the daughter of the Nku chief. Before his return to Idah, he left a special ring and charm for this offspring. Nupe traditions indicate that some years later, after the death of the vassal chief of Nku, the male child was sent to Idah as part of the annual tribute payments. It would seem, therefore, that the successor to the Nku throne objected to his inheritance of vassal stature within the enlarged Idah sphere.


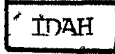



At the time the Nupe people were tributary to the Atta (king) of Gara, at Eda (Idah) far down the Niger. The tribute was paid in slaves, and every family head had annually to contribute one male member of his house. These slaves, as tradition has it, were always sisters' sons ... The Atta Gara ... fell in love and lived with her [a daughter of the old chief of Nku] for some time ... He left her a charm and a ring to give to their child when it was born. This child was Tsoede. Then the old chief of Nku died, his son became chief, and ... sent him [Tsoede] as his sister's son, as a slave to Eda. The Atta Gara recognized his son ... by the charm and ring ... and kept him near his person, treating him almost like his legitimate sons.⁶⁶

Although this Nupe tradition may appear fanciful the fact remains that Aji-Attah eventually dispatched "an illegitimate son by a Nku woman to avenge himself on the Nku chief,"⁶⁷ Tsoede was equipped with significant Bini style royal regalia, an adequate military force, and his father's support and blessing, and ordered



MAP BEN

BENIN IN c. 1510

-  Capital Enclave
-  Royal Peripheral Enclave
-  Administrative Centre
-  Major Trade Routes
-  State Boundary

to return to Nku and kill his maternal uncle who had sent him into slavery. Tsoede conquered Nku and established a powerful state which eventually emerged as a dominant force on the middle Niger.⁶⁸ Tsoede attacked and defeated Oyo, for example, and started a period in Oyo history that Robert Smith has referred to as "the Alafin in exile."⁶⁹ Nupe ultimately emerged as a major economic, political and military power under the Tsoede dynasty, and represented a significant sub-peripheral adjunct to the Benin imperial formation. However, as the power and influence of Nupe grew, partially through the military success of the Tsoede dynasty, and partially through the control of north-south trade, the direct links between the peripheral centres weakened. Eventually by c. 1567-1597,⁷⁰ Nupe had emerged as a prominent national trading formation with autonomous commercial links into the north-south trading system, and with subordinate political ties to the Idah administration.

It would seem that Aji-Attah had unleashed a potent political and economic force against the middle Niger, and created a genealogically related vassal state. The dominant position of the Benin monarchy in Idah ensured that political and commercial developments along the Niger from Raba to Onitsha would remain in Benin hands. As long as Idah remained a vassal peripheral enclave of Benin, however, the net results of her military exploits and the greater economic benefits would accrue to the paramount imperial authority in the capital enclave (Benin). The development of a powerful peripheral state, with imperial ambitions of its own, represented, in effect, an unusual balance of power in the imperial structure. The hegemonic authority of the Oba was, however, not to last much longer, and

Aji-Attah was to realize that autonomy and economic independence would be preferred to vassal tributary status. If Aji-Attah could not "rule Benin as the Oba, then he would rule Idah as if he were."⁷¹

Aji-Attah recruited mercenaries and re-equipped his own army in order to launch an assault against Oba Esigie, his brother. When Aji-Attah marched on Benin he "planned to go in the grandest style befitting an Oba."⁷² Aji-Attah, therefore, continued to send his regular tribute, but also continued to plot the overthrow of the Bini paramount. Eventually, "fearing that he would soon be too old to enjoy the victory over his brother, and suspecting that Esigie would soon discover the plot" Aji-Attah called his warriors and had them prepare for the invasion of Benin.⁷³

The conflict between Benin and Idah represented, on the one hand, a desire of the peripheral leadership for political and economic independence. The invasion of Benin, however, also suggested that Aji-Attah may have had even larger political ambitions. Aji-Attah seemed intent upon becoming the Oba and replacing his brother as paramount ruler of the whole empire. He was apparently convinced that he would have popular support in Benin, and fully expected a general uprising against the exploitations of Oba Esigie.⁷⁴ It seems likely that Aji-Attah had carried on negotiations with the Oliha in Benin which probably included Aji's agreement to grant greater authority for the Uzama in return for its support for his candidacy for the throne.

From the Benin perspective, on the other hand, the war with Idah was rationalized from the imperial point of view. In fact, Benin tradition indicates that this war was caused by the machinations of

the Oliha. Perhaps, given the reduced status experienced by the Oliha and the Uzama Nihinron during recent generations the expectations of a revolt against the Oba might not have been beyond the realm of possibility. Certainly the Oliha and Uzama might have chosen to align their fortunes with the invaders in the hope of re-establishing their waning authority. The following Benin tradition provides the imperial explanation for the outbreak of the Benin-Idah war in 1515-1516.⁷⁵

This war was caused by the then Oliha, who had a beautiful wife named Imaguero. The Oliha one day said to the Oba and other people that his wife was the most beautiful and faithful woman in the whole world. The Oba told him that women were not trustworthy, and to prove that Imaguero was not an exception the Oba asked one of his porters (Uke) to go with some coral and agate beads, and entice her. On receiving the beads the woman not only committed adultery but also obtained leave of her husband to reside in her father's house where the porter had free and easy access to her. This continued for several weeks. At length the Oba summoned a meeting, and asked the Oliha to again repeat what he had said about his wife. Oliha again said without the slightest suspicion that his wife Imaguero was the most faithful woman in the whole kingdom. The porter was presented before the assembly and told to confess what had transpired between him and Imaguero. He related how he had been able to win her with only a few beads. Imaguero was then called and she confessed the statement of Uke. This annoyed the Oliha so much that he instantly ordered her strangled. The Oliha did not stop there; in order to bring disaster on the Oba for the trick he had played, he sent his servant named Aigbonuleghe to tell the Attah of Idah that the Oba of Benin was preparing to invade his country, and that he should prepare to defend himself ... Aigbonuleghe also said that the Oliha would assist the Idah troops as far as possible. The Attah mobilized his troops without delay and marched against the Benin's. Then again through his servant Aigbonuleghe the Oliha reported to the Oba that the Idahs (sic) were coming to invade Benin and that no time should be lost in attacking the invaders hoping that Esigie would be taken captive. But his plan failed, and the Idahs (sic) were completely defeated. The Attah sued for peace through Emisenmuen and was forced to pay indemnity.⁷⁶

A.F.C. Ryder discussed the Benin-Idah war in terms of a major victory for Benin and related the confrontation to control of the Niger.

Esigie is remembered for his defeat of the invading forces of Idah - a victory of great significance for Idah was a powerful state with a system of kingship which in many ways resembled that of Benin. Furthermore, since both Benin and Idah acknowledge relationships between their ruling dynasties it is possible that the war had a deeper significance than is common in Benin traditions. It may, for example, have arisen from a general disturbance of the pattern of power along the middle Niger.⁷⁷

Thurstan Shaw was more specific about the relationship to commercial opportunities and maintained that the "conflict with Idah [occurred] for control of the Niger waterway,"⁷⁸ Benin and Idah, therefore, viewed the Niger as an important economic and commercial resource, and as trading formations fought to retain control of the most important natural highway in the entire Benue Basin.

R.E. Bradbury pointed out that the Idah invaders virtually breached the gates of Benin City before being driven back.⁷⁹

Finally, J.U. Egharevba and C.G. Okojie provided more details about the course of the Benin-Idah war. Okojie wrote for example, that,

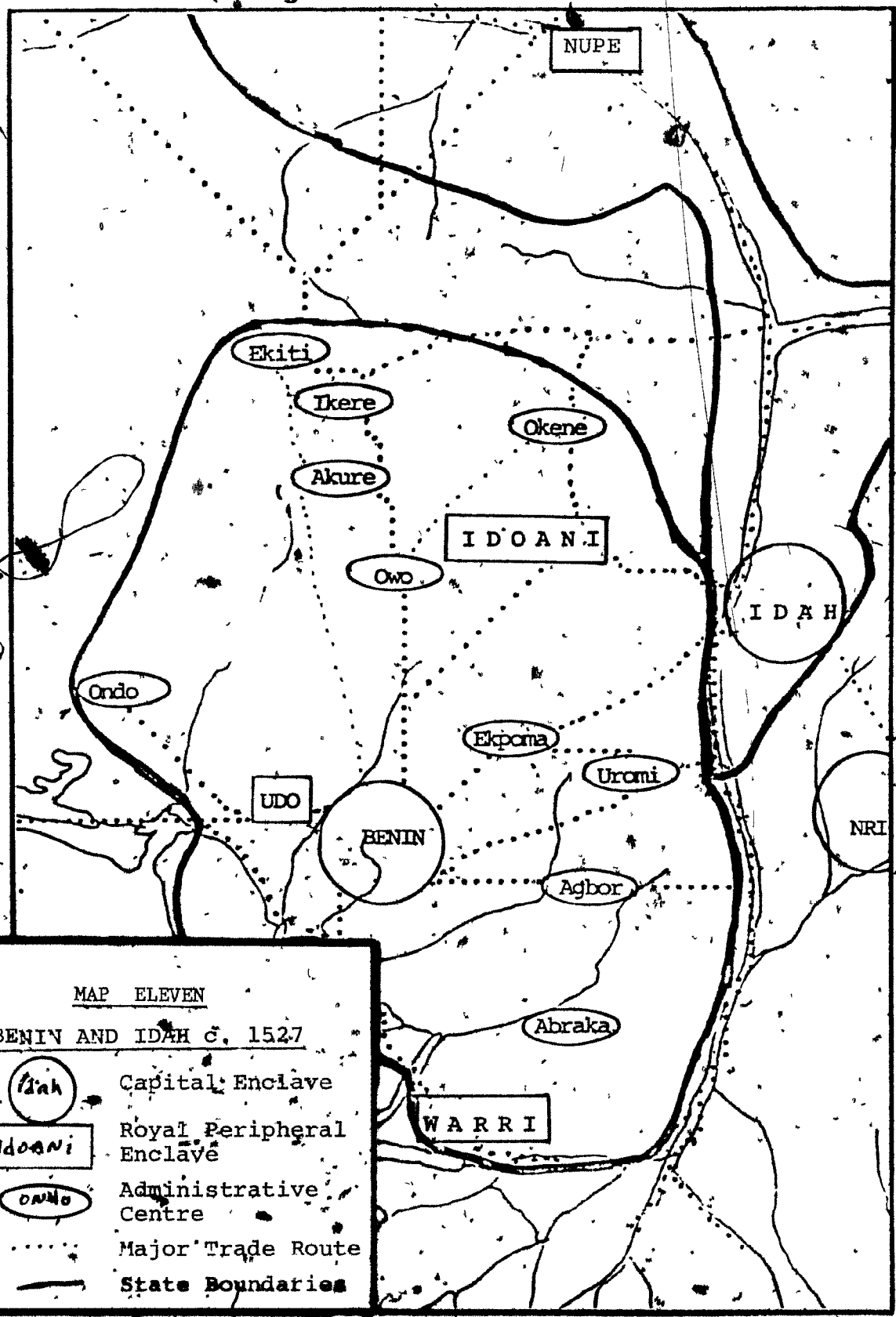
At first the audacious Attah marched on Benin where he was tricked and defeated. During his (Aji Attah's) flight home Oba Esigie like the son of Oba Ozolua he was, led his army personally and chased the fleeing Idah warriors whom he wanted to liquidate. Reaching the Niger the warriors crossed in their own canoes (Aro canoes), but the Binis who had no canoes fumed up and down the wrong side of the lordly Niger. Although no physical contact was possible the nearness

of the Bini caused the inhabitants of Idah so much insomnia that waves of them fled into the neighbouring countryside. At last peace was made and the Bini's made the long trek back...80-


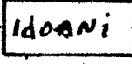



In the words of Egharèvba this conflict represented a rebellion against Bini authority, and an attempt to overthrow an unpopular regime.

At first, the Bini's refused to take part in the fight, because the then Oba, Esigie, was very selfish. But when news of the marching of the Idah troops was echoing in the City of Benin daily, an aged man from the ... Avbiogbe (The Commissioners of Land) took a bell, and began to ring the same around the city, in the streets, squares and market places, and in the gates of the higher ranked titled chiefs saying ... "Edo, Udo, Urelu and Uzebu you must rise to defend your father's land and not listen to the saying of the selfish party [Esigie]. With these expressions, the Bini's rallied together. Each man began by saying, "Truly this is my father's land and it does not belong to the Oba alone; then I must do my utmost to defend my father's land".81

The final outcome of the war was a paradox; a political and economic victory for Idah but a military victory for Benin. Exploitation and commercial development of the Niger would hereafter proceed under the direct control of the Bini monarchy in Idah. The vassal tributary link to Benin had been severed. Aji-Attah and his successors became the dominant merchant princes in an expanding complex of trade and trade routes. The Bini-Idah elite, concerned with the movement of commerce along the Niger established a highly centralized administration devoted to the control of regional and long-distance trade. The transformation of Idah from the segmentary

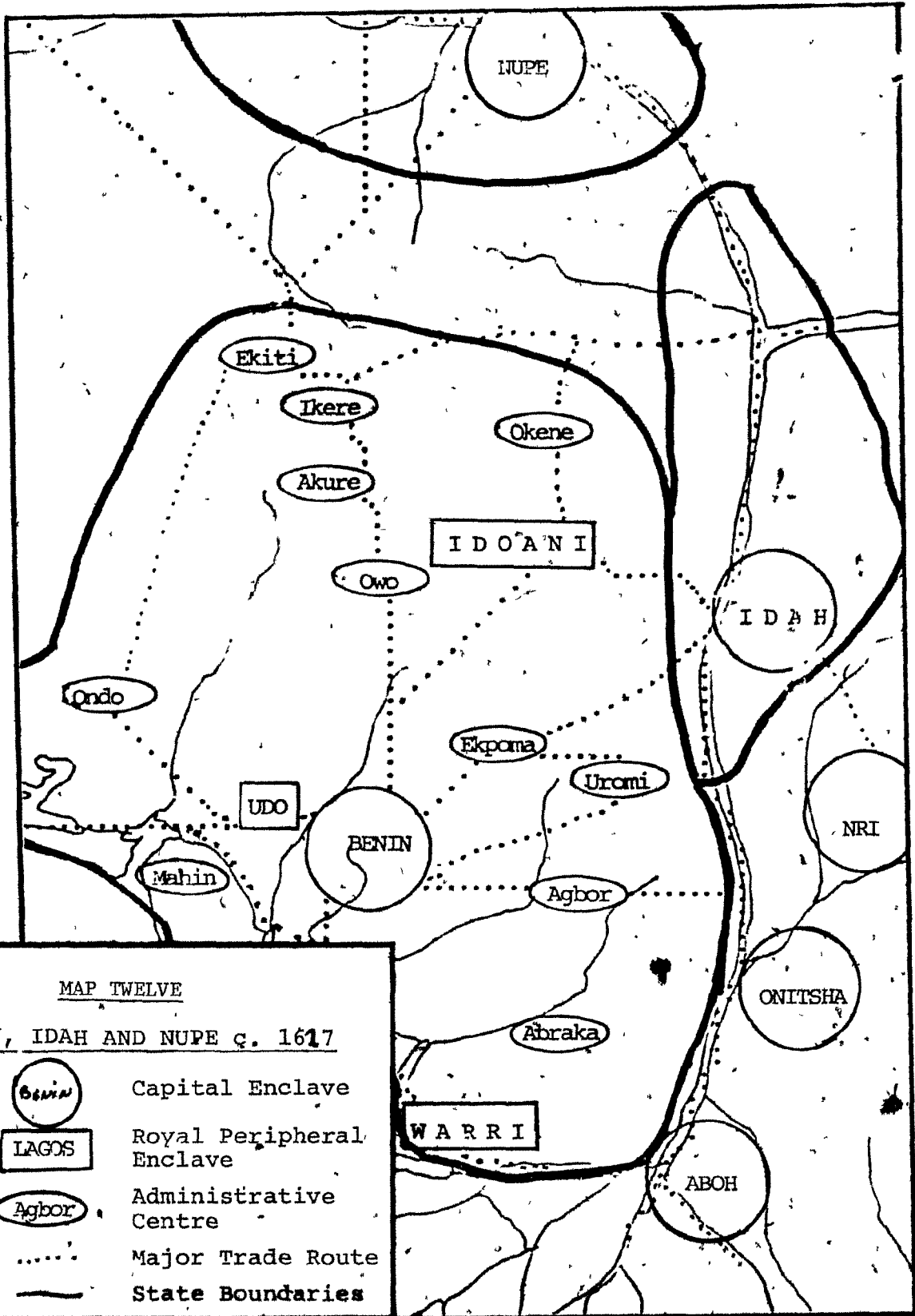


MAP ELEVEN
BENIN AND IDAH c. 1527






-  Capital Enclave
-  Royal Peripheral Enclave
-  Administrative Centre
-  Major Trade Route
-  State Boundaries

redistributive chiefdom of the Okpoto to the tributary state of the second dynasty started with the struggle for independence from Benin. The paradox in this situation was that the loss of the war established a new economic and political age in the confluence region.

The reign of Oba Ozoluwa's sons, particularly Esigie in Benin and Ají-Attah in Idah, was a dramatic period in the evolution of the Benin empire. It was also an important phase in the transformation of political authority and commercial patterns in this imperial trading formation. Oba Esigie had consolidated the monarchy and removed the opposition from Udo. His reign also saw the expansion of European overseas trade as the prominent commercial activity in the capital enclave. Despite the political and economic consolidation, however, the peripheral royal administrative centre at Idah, under the leadership of a related dynasty, gained political autonomy and economic freedom. The Benin-Idah war of 1515-1516 created a substantially altered political geography in the forest zone and middle belt. The independent Bini dynasty in Idah controlled the Niger commercial traffic, while the Ewaka regime in Benin retained paramount authority and dominated the north-south overland trade. Although the imperial formation was reduced in size, the loss of a peripheral enclave on the north-eastern frontier was more than compensated by the seizure of Lagos and Mahin in c. 1536-1563.⁸¹ The expansion along the coastal belt suggests that the economic priorities of imperial Benin were directed toward the European overseas trade on the coast. However, the north-south trade connecting Benin with the trans-Saharan commercial system was not completely ignored. In Idah, on the other hand, the Bini dynasty was firmly entrenched



MAP TWELVE
BENIN, IDAH AND NUPE c. 1617

	Capital Enclave
	Royal Peripheral Enclave
	Administrative Centre
	Major Trade Route
	State Boundaries

politically and committed to north-south trade through the riverian commercial patterns along the Niger and the overland route through Loko. In the aftermath of the Benin-Idah war, a new trading formation had been established in the middle belt, and Benin remained the dominant political and economic force in the forest zone of the Benue Basin. The following discussion examines the development of the Bini dynasty at Idah and documents the evolution of this trading formation within the Niger alliance which controlled commerce on the river. The foundation of the Bini dynastic era in the middle belt launched a new period in commercial activity and effectively altered the political and economic history of the confluence region.

Endnotes to Chapter Four

1. Refer to the following chart to see a graphic representation of the relative values of Benin export trade during the reign of Oba Esigie. It is important to note the increasing export into the overseas trading system through Portuguese commercial connections on the coast.
2. Refer to the following map for the political geography of the imperial formation, and the location of the various - royal and non-royal - peripheral enclaves in the empire.
3. B.I. Belasco, The Entrepreneur as Culture Hero, New York, 1980, p. 81. The 'statist' cult systems in Benin had been implemented by various rulers to expand state domination over commercial exchange, markets and market activity. Oba Ohen (refer to chapter one), for example, was credited with the introduction of the Olokun cult, while Ifa emerged as a prominent state ritual device during the reign of Oba Ozolua (refer to chapter two).
4. I. Wallerstein, "Three Stages of African Involvement in the World Economy", in The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa, edited by P.C.W. Gutkind and I. Wallerstein, Beverly Hills, 1976.
5. The missionaries had been asked to leave Benin during the reign of Oba Ozolua (c. 1482-1509) because they were suspected of intriguing against the throne. J.U. Egharevba, A Short History of Benin, (fourth edition), Ibadan, 1968, p. 27, and R.E. Bradbury, Benin Studies, London, 1973, p. 35.
6. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 26.
7. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 26. It is interesting to note that according to the Igbo Dictionary organized by N.W. Thomas, Emwa n'Udō could be translated "sūting (fitting) peace". Refer to N.W. Thomas, Anthropological Report on the Ibo-Speaking Peoples of Nigeria, Part II, London, 1913.
8. C.G. Okojie, Ishan Native Laws and Customs, Yaba, 1960, pp. 252-267. Also refer to J. Miller, 'Ishan-Benin Relations, c. 1455-1509', Dalhousie University, Department of History, Honours Thesis, April, 1983.
9. A.F.C. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, London, 1968, and also refer to E. Sanceau, The Reign of the Fortunate King, 1495-1521, New York, 1969, p. 72.

10. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 27. The cross reference between Oba Esigie, dated by the generation method to c. 1509-1536, and the King of Portugal, Dom Manuel, dated by documentary evidence to 1495-1521, provides an interesting and relatively significant chronological reference point.
11. E.J. Alagoa, "Long Distance Trade and States in the Niger Delta", Journal of African History, XI, 3, 1970, p. 319.
12. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, p. 53.
13. The tribute-paying subordinate segment of the population in the imperial formation provided non-commercial production for the immediate support of the state elite and, therefore, provided the redistributive tribute which the elite utilized to support specialized service groups and the various state officials.
14. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 35. Also refer to Belasco, The Entrepreneur, p. 83, and J.U. Egharevba, Concise Lives of the Famous Iyase of Benin, Benin City, 1956, p. 13 where he states that Iyase Oda "was the first Iyase to use guns in warfare".
15. Belasco, The Entrepreneur, p. 83.
16. J.B. Webster, 'A Typology of Social Formations in Pre-Colonial Africa', paper presented to the Canadian Association of African Studies Conference, Quebec City, May 1983, p. 2.
17. Belasco, The Entrepreneur, p. 80, argues that Oba Esigie brought the Olokun cult directly into the palace in order to establish direct control over coastal and overseas trade, and thus limit the development of Ughoton as a rival trading state.
18. S.A. Akintoye, "The North-eastern Yoruba Districts and the Benin Kingdom", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, IV, 4, 1969, pp. 548-550.
19. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, p. 94, and also in Belasco, The Entrepreneur, p. 62. It is interesting that the extent of the Benin commercial enterprise was influential as far as three hundred miles from the coast. This would mean, in effect, that Benin commerce effected production and exchange patterns as far as Nupe. Also, it is possible that European coastal demands dominated by the imperial administration in Benin were influential in Kano, Bornu and other sudanic centres.
20. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, p. 45. Particularly note where he states "the restrictions on the export of male slaves developed within a few years into a total embargo... striking evidence of Benin's general indifference to the demands and opportunities of the European slave trade".

21. The removal of the ban signified economic problems in the imperial formation. Legitimate commerce was undermined by European development of competing products, particularly Dutch cloth. The north-south trading system had virtually collapsed after the defeat of Songhai in 1591, and Bini trade into the overland system had thus been negated. The removal of the embargo against the export of male slaves in c. 1725 did not; however, solve the mounting economic problems. European slave trading has been developed through other ports, and adequate collaborators elsewhere apparently provided sufficient exports to satisfy European demands.
22. R. Kea, Settlement, Trade and Politics in the Seventeenth Century Gola Coast, Baltimore, 1982, pp. 25.
23. Belasco, The Entrepreneur, pp. 81-82.
24. Marion Johnson, "The Cowrie Currency of West-Africa", Journal of African History, XI, 1, 1970, p. 17.
25. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, p. 63.
26. According to Johnson, "Cowrie Currency", cowries can be calculated from anywhere between 166 to 400 per pound. However, she also notes that the former approximation would probably apply to cowries introduced at a later date, and 400 per pound provides a reasonable basis for the calculation of the total weight of cowries introduced during the trading voyage of 1526.
27. Johnson, "Cowrie Currency", Part I, p. 27, and also refer to M. Hiskett, "Materials Relating to the Cowry Currency of the Western Sudan", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, XXIX, Part 2, 1966, p. 355.
28. The Kano Chronicle, translated by H.R. Palmer, and reproduced in J.A. Burdon, Northern Nigeria, London, 1909, p. 41.
29. Belasco, The Entrepreneur, p. 81.
30. Ibid., pp. 81-82.
31. Paul Einzig, Primitive Money, Oxford, 1946, (second edition published in 1966), p. 25.
32. Ibid.; p. 139.
33. Refer to Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, p. 63 for the details of the 1526 Portuguese trading voyage to Benin.
34. The remaining 17% of this cargo consisted of linen and red cloth. The red cloth was, in fact, one of the Oba's monopolies, and became symbolic of elevated status in the Benin social and political hierarchy.

35. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, p. 38.
36. It is possible that India provided black pepper, and that Benin alligator or red pepper was only a temporary substitute to cover the shortfalls in the Venice marketplace.
37. J.D. Page, "Some Remarks on Beads and Trade in Lower Guinea in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", Journal of African History, III, 2, 1967, pp. 343-344.
38. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, p. 37.
39. Milan Kalous, "Akoriite", Journal of African History, 2, 1979, pp. 203-217 suggests that 'akori beads' were "made of silicate glass slag from local iron ore smelting". The metal-working industry in Benin could have, therefore, developed an interesting and extremely profitable by-product.
40. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, p. 63.
41. A.F.C. Ryder, "Portuguese and Dutch in West Africa Before 1800", in A Thousand Years of West African History, edited by J.F.A. Ajayi and I. Espie, Ibadan, 1965, p. 227.
42. Refer to Page, "Some Remarks on Beads and Trade", and also see Alagoa, "Long Distance Trade and States".
43. Kea, Settlement, Trade and Politics, p. 2-24.
44. A.F.C. Ryder, "Dutch Trade on the Nigerian Coast during the Seventeenth Century", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 3, 2, 1965, p. 203. Ryder also points out that "the English were at the same time buying at least as many".
45. Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 29.
46. Lagos was actually added as a royalist outpost by Oba Orhugbua in c. 1536-1563. Refer to Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 29.
47. The fixed date for the Benin-Idah war has been provided by a letter from a Portuguese missionary in the Benin court reporting back to King Dom Manuel of Portugal: This letter from Duarte Pires was dated 1516, after the missionaries had accompanied the Oba to war.
48. Refer to the chart showing the genealogical relationship between Benin and the Bini dynasty in Idah.
49. Igala Historical Text (hereafter cited as I.H.T.) No. 122, Igala Mela Group Interview, July 30, 1977.

50. Webster, 'A Typology', suggests that three ethnic groups; in competition for political paramountcy provide the necessary ingredients for the creation of a state. Also refer to R.A. Sargent, Conjunction, Conflict and Class, forthcoming.
51. I.H.T. No. 36, Ahinu Ade, Ayagba village, of the Ikili Ukweya clan, February 18, 1977.
52. The Aro have not as yet been the subject of any detailed historical reconstruction, except to the extent that their economic and commercial activities in the nineteenth century have been relatively well documented. In some respects, however, their past is still clouded in mystery, and the limited attention to their past has seriously effected the ability of other historians to place them in a proper regional perspective. Hopefully this situation will soon be rectified, and given the work of K.O. Dike and F.I. Ekejiuba more detailed information may be forthcoming. Refer to K.O. Dike and F.I. Ekejiuba, "The Aro States: A Case Study of State Formation in Southeastern Nigeria", Journal of African Studies, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1978. Also refer to A.E. Afigbo, "Trade and Trade Routes in Nineteenth Century Nsukka", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, VII, 3, 1973, and A.E. Afigbo, 'Pre-Colonial Links Between South-eastern Nigeria and the Benue Valley', paper presented to the Ahmadu Bello University, Niger-Benu Seminar, Jos, 1974. Also, D. Northrup, "The Growth of Trade Among the Igbo before 1800", Journal of African History, 2, 1973, and Trade Without Rulers, London, 1980, do provide some insights into earlier Aro activities. Other major sources that consider the problem of Aro history and their economic impact include; R.F. Stevenson, Population and Political Systems in Tropical Africa, New York, 1968, pp. 188-225; S. Ottenberg, "Ibo Oracles and Intergroup Relations", Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, 14, 1958, pp. 205-217. The riverain Aro may in fact, be similar in organization and ethnic origins as the Kede and Banu. The former group is, theoretically at least, included in the Nupe sub-group, while the latter are now considered Jukun. The Banu may be directly related to the riverain Aro-manatee community, as the manatee is a primary totem among the Jukun. This suggestion, at this stage at least, is supposition. However, more evidence can be accumulated and correlated which could support this contention for a relationship between the riverain Kede, Aro and Banu.
53. Eggarah Eri migrated down the Anambra River and eventually established a dynasty in the chiefdom of Nri in northern Igboland.
54. I.H.T. No. 117, Igala Mela clan heads, group interview, Achanyuwo clan primary informants, July 22, 1977. The Igala Mela clans are the descendants of the Okpoto population in the middle belt region.

55. Refer to T.J. Hutchinson, Narrative of the Niger, Tshadda and Benue Exploration, London, 1855, pp. 54-55. The fact that Hutchinson recorded that "twenty Attah's have descended" from the Bini invader suggests that the Idah regnal list is accurate; at least to the extent that the number of monarchs is correct. Hutchinson visited Idah during the reign of the fourteenth monarch in the third dynasty, and the second dynasty founded by Aji-Attah had six monarchs.
56. Afigbo, "Trade and Trade Routes", p.79. Afigbo states that "Aro and Nri ritual specialists and diviners were said to have played a great part in the distribution of these metals".
57. M.D.W. Jeffries, "The Divine Umundri Kings", Africa, Vol. 8, 1935, also refer to M.D.W. Jeffries, "The Umundri Traditions of Origins", African Studies, III, 3, 1956, and M.D.W. Jeffries, 'The Divine Umundri Kings of Iboland', University of London, Ph.D., 1934.
58. E. Isichei, The Ibo People and the Europeans, London, 1973, p. 30, and also refer to M.A. Omwuejeogwu, 'The Political Organization of Nri, Southeastern Nigeria', University of London, M.Phil., 1974.
59. I.H.T. No. 7, P. Okwoli, in Idah, January 9, 1977.
60. I.H.T. No. 5, The Attah of Idah, in Idah, January 9, 1977.
61. M. Clifford, "A Nigerian Chiefdom", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, LXVI, 1936, p. 421.
62. K.C. Murray, "Idah Masks", Nigerian Field, No. 86, 1948, pp. 85-92. Also refer to W.B. Fagg, "The Seligma Mask from Benin", Man, No. 144, 1957. A remarkable similarity exists between the Seligma mask and Ejube-'auilo.
63. Clifford, "A Nigerian Chiefdom", p. 421.
64. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, p. 63. Ryder clearly indicates that red cloth was imported to Benin in 1526, and that the entire cloth cargo was taken up by the Oba. Ryder also makes it quite clear, however, that Benin was a net exporter of cloth throughout the sixteenth century (p. 92). Also refer to J. Voight, "Notes on the Portuguese Cloth Trade in West Africa, 1480-1540", International Journal of African Historical Studies, VII, 4, 1975, p. 648.
65. Refer to the previous chapter for a full discussion of the military exploits of Oba Ozolua.

66. S.F. Nadel, A Black Byzantium, London, 1942, p. 73. Also repeated in a very similar form in I.H.T. No. 204, Ogha, Ahitu and Epoma of Abata village, October 2, 1977. The Nupe tradition has been attacked by M. Mason, "The Tsoede Myth and the Nupe Kinglist: More Political Propaganda", History in Africa, Vol. 2, 1975. Mason's criticisms, however, are seriously flawed by errors and miscalculation which detracted from the essence of his negative viewpoint. For example, Mason utilizes a kinglist recorded by Scortino, but has completely ignored or left out at least two monarchs named in this regnal list.
67. I.H.T. No. 230, Atama Alhaji, Adoru village, Achadu clan, January 8, 1978.
68. The term 'middle Niger' has been utilized here to define that stretch of river from the confluence of the Niger and Benue to Raba. In actual terms the middle Niger would stretch through modern Niger. However, for simplicity's sake, the definition of the middle Niger includes that area of the river dominated by Nupe, while the lower Niger covers that area from the confluence to the delta.
69. R. Smith, "The Alafin in Exile: A Study of the Igboho Period in Oyo History", Journal of African History, VI, I, 1965. Also refer to Nadel, A Black Byzantium, p. 74, where he states that "Tsoede carried out big and victorious wars against many tribes and kingdoms, conquering in the south the countries of Yagba and Bunu (two sections of the Yoruba), Kakanda, as far as Akoko, and in the north the countries of Ebe, Kamberi and Kamuku".
70. Refer to the Idah and Nupe regnal lists enclosed in this chapter.
71. I.H.T. No. 203, Idu Atama, Odiba, Ocheke and Ala Ogone of Idah, Ohiju clan, October 2, 1977.
72. I.H.T. No. 106, OIema of Otakpa village, Ohuiga clan, July 20, 1977.
73. I.H.T. No. 232, Alada Ejume of Anaga village, an unsolicited interview, January 10, 1978, confirmed by I.H.T. No. 233, Idu Atama, Odiba, Ocheke and Ala Ogone of Idah, Ohiju clan, January 11, 1978.
74. I.H.T. No. 232.
75. This fixed date was established by Duarte Pires in a letter to King Dom Manuel of Portugal. Refer to Egharevba, History of Benin, p. 28, for a translation of the text of Duarte Pires's letter dated 20 October, 1516, after the Benin-Idah war.

76. Egharevba, History of Benin, pp. 27-28. Also refer to Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 36.
77. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, pp. 13-14.
78. T. Shaw, Nigeria, Ibadan, 1973, p. 172.
79. Bradbury, Benin Studies, p. 36.
80. Okojie, Ishaf Native Laws and Customs, p. 325.
81. J.U. Egharevba, The Murder of Iraguro and Tragedy of the Ijoh War, (first edition). Benin City, 1948. Also contained in a Kraus Reprint, Nendeln, 1973, pp. 23-24.
82. Egharevba, History of Benin, pp. 29-30.

CHAPTER FIVE

Idah Politics and an Informal Niger Commercial Alliance

The foundation of an autonomous Bini dynasty at Idah established a powerful political force near the confluence of the Niger and Benue. Through one hundred and eighty years of its domination the Bini monarchy (c. 1507-1687) pursued an economic policy designed to extend Bini control over riverain and hinterland commercial traffic. The contacts with Warri, Aboh, Onitsha and Nupe established Idah as a major partner in riverain commerce. Extension of Bini political authority in the hinterland eventually added domination of the Igbo overland routes. The following discussion examines the internal developments under the Bini regime, and correlates the political administration of this coercive and exploitative dynasty with regional politics and economics. Relationships with the riverain states, for example, were based, in part, upon previous connections in the Benin imperial formation. The extension of Idah's political influence beyond the confluence region, however, developed on the foundations of an existing riverain commercial network. The Bini monarchy utilized close relations with the riverain manatee, the power of its military, and the influence of its leadership to establish an informal riverain alliance that dominated commercial exchange from Raba to the sea. The success of this economic exploitation grew from the fact that Aji-Attah of Idah and Iginua of Warri were cousins in the Benin royal house; both were also part of the Benin diaspora in

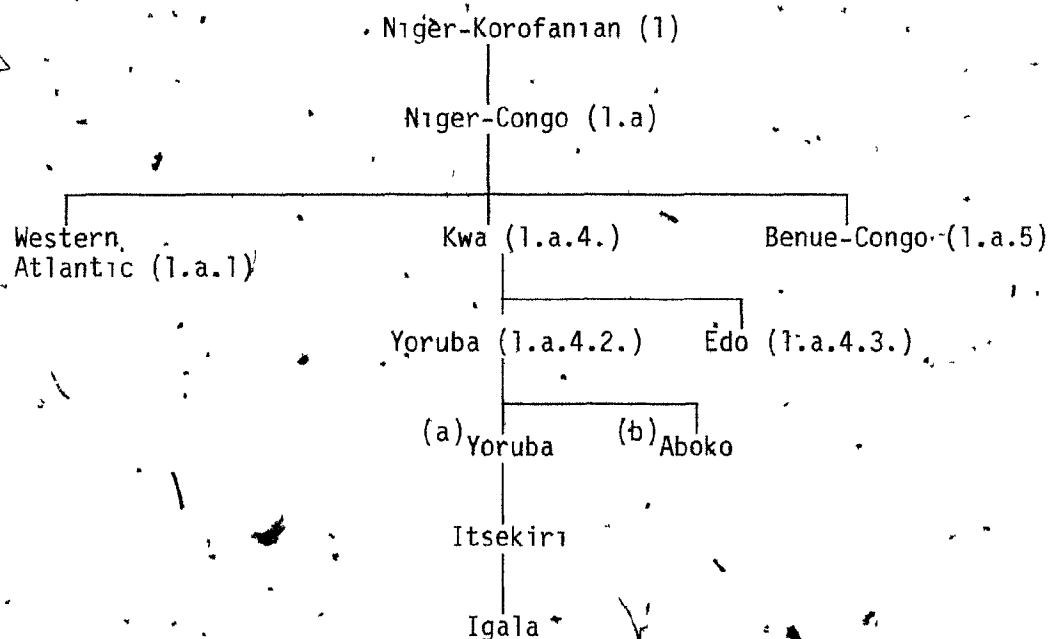
the early sixteenth century. Aji-Attah's relationship with Nupe extended Idah's influence north of the confluence. The relatively close genealogical links between Idah, Warri and Nupe led to a linguistic and cultural association that facilitated commercial relations. Connections between Idah and the riverain states of Aboh and Onitsha were based on economic considerations, particularly control of the lower Niger. These commercial ties were encouraged by the common relationship with the riverain manatee community. All three states, Idah, Aboh and Onitsha, were, in fact, founded through the manatee alliance, and established common political ground upon which the development of riverain trade could take place. The establishment of Aji-Attah as the ruling monarch in Idah, therefore, provided impetus to the political and economic development of riverain commerce.

The foundations of the informal Niger alliance grew from the genealogical association of the Idah and Warri rulers.¹ The affinity between Aji-Attah and Iginua, and their common roots in the Yoruba-speaking dynasty of Benin, contributed to the classification of Yoruba, Itsekiri and Igala in a single sub-group of the Kwa language family in the Niger-Kordofan segment of Nigerian languages.² The common linguistic affinities probably contributed to the development of commercial exchange, as Niger traders operated within a single language system. The following extract of linguistic relationships reveals quite clearly the connections between Yoruba, Itsekiri and Igala. It is important to emphasize that the Ewaka dynasty in Benin was Yoruba-speaking and did not acculturate to the Edo language until long after the sixteenth-century Benin diaspora that included Iginua.

and Ajl-Attah. The fact that the ruling dynasties in Idah, Warri and Benin were all Yoruba-speaking at one point in time provided the basis for the development of regional and long-distance exchange, and contributed to the development of the Niger commercial alliance.³

CHART XI
NIGERIAN LANGUAGES BY LANGUAGE FAMILY⁴

(partial reconstruction)



Mutual intelligibility in language relations provides a basis for political, cultural and commercial interaction. In this respect the relationships between the western delta, confluence and middle Niger provided the basis for extended commercial interactions. The

linguistic affinities between Warri and Idah, and between Idah and Nupe, established an extensive network in which commercial exchange could take place between individuals or groups all speaking the same or related languages, and all related culturally, politically and economically.

The criteria established to calculate chronological separation of specific languages, according to K. Williamson, indicates that Itsekiri and Igala are divided by as much as "nineteen centuries,"⁵ This length of separation has been postulated from the relative distance and isolation of each group, and a general absence of intervening linguistic factors in the separate development of Itsekiri and Igala. It is not clear whether these calculations considered the common origins of the two populations, or if the interactions over time with different language elements since the time of separation (c. 1507-1537) have been included. The evidence clearly shows that both groups developed interactive relations with other language families, and presumably experienced an accelerated linguistic shift according to the time and rate of this assimilative process. For example, since the emigration from Benin in c. 1507-1537, the Bini population at Idah interacted with Okpoto (Delta-Cross River language - 1.a.5.3.), Igbo (Lower Niger language - 1.a.4.7.), and Idoma (Idoma language - 1.a.4.6.).⁶ By the time of Williamson's study, the Igala language had experienced a considerable shift toward Idoma due to the large scale influx of Greater Doma speakers in c. 1657-1717.⁷ Also, a number of Bini Yoruba-speaking clans emigrated from the confluence region after c. 1687, and thus substantially reduced the Yoruba sector of the linguistic association in Idah. The Bini migrants in Warri,

on the other hand, developed relations with the Ijo (Ijo language - 1.a.4.8.) and the Urhobo (1.a.4.3). The difference in associations contributed to the process of linguistic separation, and would accelerate the process of differentiation. It would seem, therefore, that the calculations of time separation suggested from glotto-chronology must be carefully reconsidered. If the factors previously discussed were not included in the analysis, and it seems doubtful that they were, Williamson's suggested time of separation would have been much longer than the actual time of separation. Clearly the important factor, and one which Williamson may not have known, was the common association of the Itsekiri and Bini-Idah populations in the Yoruba-speaking diaspora from Benin in c. 1507-1537. This actual date of separation established two related populations in positions to contribute politically and economically to the development of riverain commerce and the administration of Niger commercial traffic.

Another intriguing aspect of the association between Idah and the western delta was suggested by E.J. Alagoa. Alagoa identified a particular section of the western delta as part of the "Itsekiri-Igala [language] group".⁸ As previously noted, the evidence from Idah and Warri indicates a genealogical relationship to the Eweka dynasty; and this seems to have been the basis of the Itsekiri-Igala linguistic relationship. It is distinctly possible that Idah traders established commercial settlements in the western delta and thus contributed to the development of close cultural and linguistic ties between the confluence and the delta trading ports. Clearly, the development of exchange patterns and the expansion of riverain commerce between

similar populations would have been easier than exchange between linguistically dissimilar populations. In this respect at least, the development of Niger commercial activity would have been facilitated by the similarities evident between Warri and Idah.

To further emphasize the political, cultural and economic links between the confluence and the delta, it is important to note the significant religious link established during the Benin diaspora. The Yoruba-speaking dynasty in Benin had adopted Ifa as the state ritual system prior to the emigration of Aji-Attah and Iginnua in c. 1507-1537. The fact that Ifa was introduced into the delta and confluence regions during the Benin diaspora established a common religious institution in both commercial enclaves on the Niger.⁹ As previously discussed, Ifa was an important mechanism in the development and control of regional exchange, market systems and trade. Commercial exchange between two populations who apparently spoke the same root language, and who both supported the Ifa system of ritual management, indicated a potential for the development and extension of long distance trade. Linguistic and cultural similarities, therefore, contributed to the commercial alliance on the Niger.

The relationship between the Bini dynasty in Idah and the ruling houses in Onitsha and Aboh are less easily explained in linguistic, cultural or genealogical terms. Both Onitsha and Aboh emerged from the Benin empire in c. 1563-1590, at a time when Benin was at the peak of political and economic power.¹⁰ As the Yoruba-speaking dynasty in the imperial capital extended its influence, Igbo aspirations were suppressed by Bini hegemonic authority. In fact, by c. 1617-1644, Igbo power in Agbor, an Igbo enclave within the

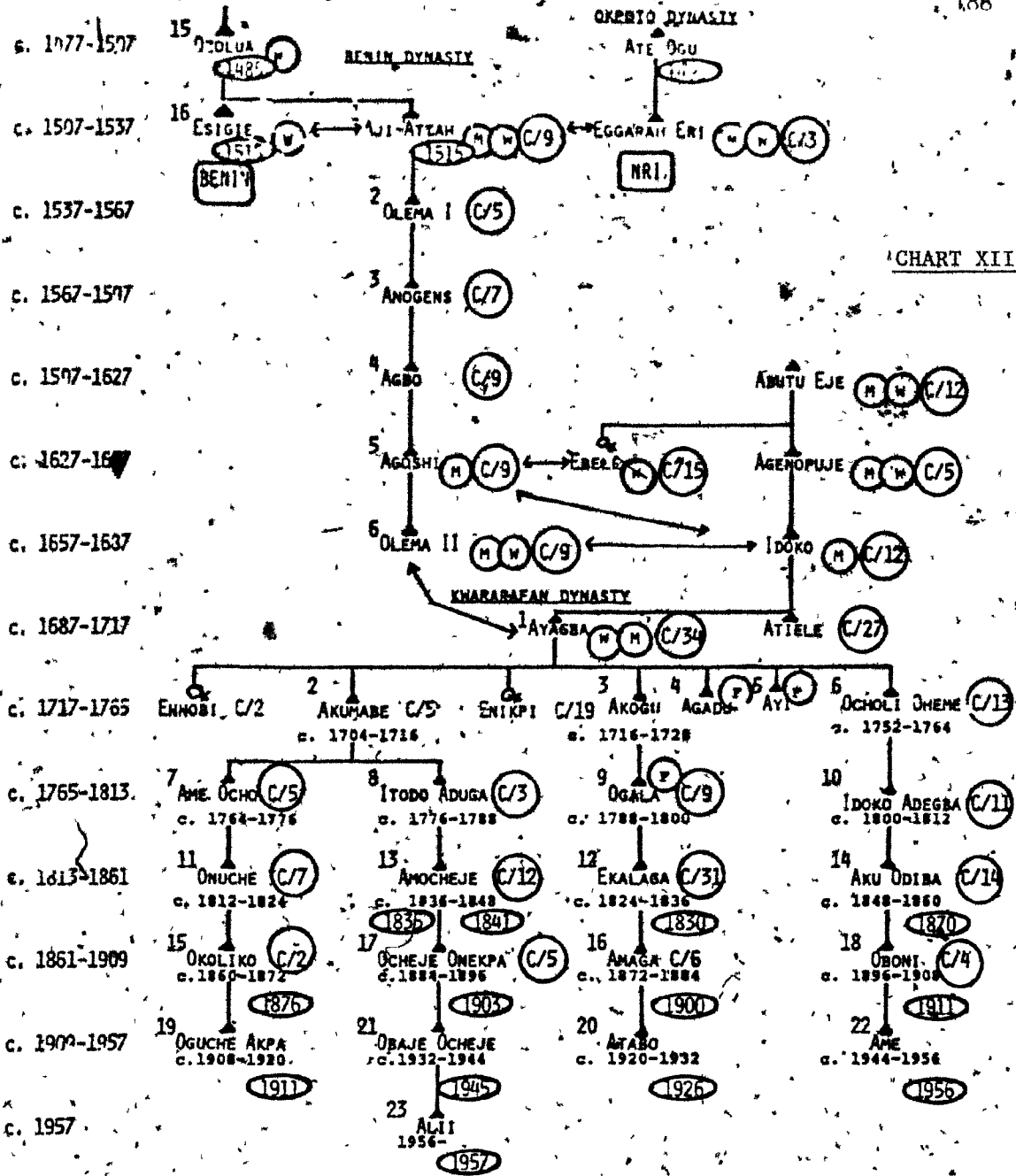
Benin empire, had been completely subordinated by the Ewéka dynasty.¹¹ The emigration from Agbor in c. 1563-1590, therefore, seems to have been an Igbo reaction against the extension of Yoruba-speaking power and authority. As an expression of resistance to and disassociation from increasing imperial authority in the last Igbo stronghold in the empire, the foundation of Onitsha and Aboh represented another aspect of the Benin diaspora. On one hand, the Idah dynasty reflected the central Yoruba-speaking segment of the Benin empire. On the other hand, Onitsha and Aboh reflected the Igbo response to imperial authority. Esumai Ukwu, therefore, led a substantial Igbo-speaking group away from Benin imperialism and thus contributed to the foundation of new dynasties in Onitsha and Aboh. Both Igbo monarchies entered the Niger commercial alliance and established relations with Idah and Warri.

The emigration to Aboh has been described as an exodus of Aro leaving Benin.¹² The Aro had been religious specialists and commercial agents in the Benin empire, and apparently controlled an extensive eastern overland trade system. The development of imperial authority in Benin undermined Aro economic and religious authority, and contributed to the decision to disassociate from the Yoruba-speaking empire. The emigration to Aboh, located at the apex of the Niger Delta, established the disenfranchised Aro population in a position to maintain trading traditions through the eastern overland routes. The location of Aboh also provided the opportunity to exploit the Niger commercial system. Onitsha, on the other hand, was apparently founded by an Igbo-speaking component in the c. 1563-1590 exodus.¹³ The Igbo monarchy established a relatively powerful

enclave at the confluence of the Niger and Anambra rivers. These late sixteenth century migrations from Benin substantially altered the political geography of the Niger valley, and contributed to the administration of long distance riverain commerce.¹⁴

Relations with Idah were initially developed through a common alliance with the riverain manatee community along the Niger. The manatee community had become influential allies of the Bini dynasty in Idah, and acted as both political and economic agents in the extension of Idah's influence on the river. Both Aboh and Onitsha traditions emphasize the significance of the manatee in their political foundations. Also, the manatee seemed to have operated a flourishing riverain commercial system which was integrated with the Nupe-Idah-Warri alliance. The foundations of Aboh and Onitsha, therefore, added two other commercial enclaves to this extensive network and subsequently contributed to the development of an integrated long distance trading system dominated by Bini political authority and manatee commercial expertise.

The co-operation between Aboh leadership under Esumai Ukwu and the manatee community along the Niger was not necessarily an unusual development. Both groups were Aro and had similar cultural, linguistic and political interests. The alliance between these two communities has been perpetuated in Aboh traditions through the maintenance of ritual prohibitions and taboos.¹⁵ Just as the Bini monarchy in Idah had implemented similar ritual prohibitions and adopted the royal headdress called Onunu Ehre (tail of the manatee), the leaders of Aboh sought to preserve the memory of manatee assistance during their flight from Benin. The following tradition



also provides a number of significant parallels with the traditions from Idah and Onitsha.

The Aboh King journeyed with his people to the bank of a certain creek, where they had no chance to cross over. Standing there the king saw Ewelie people, who knew how to pull canoe, so he begged them to cross him [sic] and his people ... The king started to send his people ... but contrary to this the people [Ewelie] pulled to a corner of the creek and capsized the king's people to death [sic] ... The people repeated this cruel deed several times ... He again sent into the canoe very powerful warriors ... Through this they were safely crossed to the land, in which they saw no one, and they entered the canoe, and crossed to tell the king what had happened. So the king with those that remained with him were helpless. Thinking what to do, a certain man took a pole to measure the depth of the creek. Then he found the creek shallow, so they started to wade across the creek. After they all had gone on land, they saw a number of manatees emerging from the very line they waded across ... the manatees, which merely formed a bridge-like line for them to pass over. The king having seen the kindness of the animals showed to them ... passed a decree to all his people that no one should either kill or eat manatee. 16

In Onitsha, the tradition is fundamentally the same. The following was recorded by R.N. Henderson, and clearly establishes the relationship between the Onitsha Igbo and the riverain manatee. The incorporation of the manatee totemic symbol established the basis of a riverain alliance which linked the manatee community with Idah, Onitsha and Aboh. The traditions associated with the manatee serve to maintain within these communities an implicit form of remembrance, and the story seems to add a certain glamour and excitement to political evidence. In the Onitsha example the relationships have been perpetuated through the implementation of ritual prohibitions

similar to those instituted in Idah and Aboh. The common relations between the various riverain enclaves, including the Bini at Idah, the Igbo at Onitsha and the Aro at Aboh, provided the basis for the informal Niger commercial and political alliance.

Miraculously, it is said, a group of manatee formed themselves together into a mass and ferried the people of Chima [the leader of the Onitsha wing of the exodus from Agbor] to safety near a site along the Niger.¹⁷

The connections between Aboh and Onitsha have been discussed by a number of historians. E. Isichei, for example summarized this relationship in terms of a common migration tradition, and stated that "one section, led by Oreze [Orese Chima] crossed the Niger and founded the state of Onitsha . . . The other section, led by Esumai [Esumai Ukwu] went south."¹⁸ C.K. Meek suggested that Chima, one of the original leaders of this emigration, was a rebel leader in Udo when Oba Esigie destroyed that Igbo enclave.¹⁹ The fact that Agbor traditions establish the Chima emigration in the period c. 1563-1590 suggests a major discrepancy in the information offered by Meek.

Oba Esigie ruled in Benin in c. 1509-1536, two generations before the Chima emigration to Onitsha. However, if 'Chima' has been utilized as a general reference to an Igbo rebel in both traditions, then variations would not be significant. It is clear, for example, that the exodus of Igbo from the Benin empire occurred in two distinct stages: firstly, the movement out of Udo to Agbor after Esigie's destruction of the former, and, secondly, the emigration from Agbor to the Niger

River almost one hundred years later. In fact, all four accounts - Isichei and Meek, the Agbor and Benin traditions - are referring to the eastward migration of Igbo throughout the period between c. 1509-1617.

The sixteenth century in Benin's history correlated with an energetic imperial expansion and an increase in the Ewaka dynasty's power and authority. The reorganization of central administrative structures, royal monopolies on trade, and the introduction of Ifa as the state religion, all contributed to the decline of Igbo fortunes in the state. Trade and religion had been areas where both Igbo and Aro had actively participated. Onitsha traditions are very clear that the migration was a disassociation response to the expansion of Bini coercive exploitation. The manatee assistance on the Niger rescued the Igbo and Aro refugees from an impending onslaught by the Bini army: reason enough to perpetuate the alliance with this riverain community through the incorporation of ritual prohibitions honouring the manatee totem. It is not coincidental that Benin traditions recall a military expedition against Eka (Agbor) in c. 1563-1590 when the emigrants fled the empire, and when Oba Ohengbuda discovered that they "had neglected to pay their usual tribute."²⁰ The foundations of both Aboh and Onitsha occurred, therefore, in the face of external aggression and under the duress of potential Bini hostility.

The ritual prohibitions adopted by Idah, Aboh and Onitsha reflected their association with the riverain manatee population, and clearly commemorated the manatee contribution to the foundations of all three states. In Onitsha, for example, the people are

forbidden to "kill or eat the manatee,"²¹ In Aboh the manatee cannot be referred to by its name, amei. They utilized instead such terms as anuse umudei (animal that is taboo to the princess), or di wenyi (he who shows us).²² In Idah the Bini monarchy adopted the royal headdress called Qnunu Ehre (tail of the manatee)²³ and instituted similar taboos to reflect their close association with the riverain community. It would seem, therefore, that the Aro were instrumental in not only changing the political administration of the lower Niger, but also contributed to the development of the Niger commercial alliance that linked Idah, Onitsha, Aboh and Warri.

The foundations of strong trading states and commercial enclaves on the Niger River presumably served manatee interests. Clearly, an expansion of commercial activity and the peaceful development of riverain trade would have contributed to manatee economic ambitions. In fact, as riverain trade grew the manatee group became one of the major transportation specialists, and reaped significant economic rewards from the expanded commerce on the Niger. Contributing to the foundations of Idah, Onitsha and Aboh, therefore, developed riverain commerce and expanded rewards from trading activities.

The problem remains, however, to set the manatee community on the Niger in a proper perspective vis-à-vis the regional political and demographic spectrum. It would appear, for example, that this manatee community was not particularly large in any one settlement or region. However, it also appears that a riverain community stretched from the delta beyond the confluence to Raba on the middle Niger. Also, numerous manatee settlements were located along the Benue, perhaps as far as Ibi. This riverain population was certainly

expert at riverain trade, canoeing, and probably did not occupy much territory on either bank. As the political geography of the Niger and Benue system changed, the manatee population seems to have been assimilated by larger land-based populations. Thus the riverain Kede became associated with Nupe.²⁴ The Banu along the Benue became Jukun, and the population below the confluence were assimilated as Igbo.²⁵ In most cases, therefore, the riverain manatee seem to have been absorbed by larger populations, although they have maintained their river transport specialization and may be identified by their primary manatee totems.

Secondly, it should be noted that the manatee were influential along the middle and upper Benue systems; and the manatee totem was part of the Jukun-Kwararafa totemic system.²⁶ In fact, as the manatee influence was spreading along the lower Niger, and manatee assistance was being recognized in both Onitsha and Aboh. (c. 1563-1590), a manatee king was emerging in Kwararafa. J.B. Webster argues that Adigba Kenjo of Kwararafa was a Jukun-speaking manatee.²⁷ T.M. MacLeod also argues that the Aro in the Cross River Basin were originally Jukun, who subsequently became Igbo-speakers.²⁸ This contention has been disputed by A.E. Afigbo, but his counter-arguments are not convincing.²⁹ The MacLeod argument, and the evidence from totems, migrations and linguistic patterns suggest that there was a connection between the Jukun who originated in the Cross River Basin and the development of the Aro state.

... the Ibo stand for the aborigine ... extending down on both sides of the Niger; that the old Ibo ... is cognate with the Dama of the upper river; ... 150 years ago [c. 1775] the semi-Bantu Munshi Tiv came over Sankwala range, attacked Wukari [Wukari was founded in c. 1830, therefore read Kwararafa] the influence of which extended to the Cross River. The result was that the Jukun of Msimbila went south and became Ibo-speaking under the name of Aro Chuku; they became the dominant caste among the Ibo and the Ibo religion is the Aro (Jukun).³⁰

While MacLeod's dating is inaccurate, his suggested reconstruction may provide some insights into the relationships between the manatee, Jukun and the Aro. K.O. Dike and F.I. Ekejiuba claim that "the Akpa, who are acknowledged founders of the Aro state, also claim that they are derived from a rather shadowy kingdom in the region of Ekoi to the east of the Cross River."³¹ This would place the Akpa in the same approximate location as the Jukun who moved northward into the Benue Valley in the sixteenth century.³² It would also establish a geographic relationship with the Okpoto group, whose language has been referred to as Oring and has been classified in the Cross River language family (1.a.5.3.).³³ Initial indications suggest that there was a relationship between the Akpa (Jukun), Okpoto and Aro.

The totemic evidence supports the contention that the manatee along the Niger were related to Benue Valley, Jukun and Cross River populations. The manatee totem appears as a secondary totem among a number of peoples, including the A'ago, the Ijaw of the Niger Delta, and in Calabar.³⁴ The available data; therefore, indicates a fairly close totemic relationship between the manatee along the Niger - that group which was so instrumental in the emergence of Idah, Aboh and

Onitsha - and the manatee along the Cross and Benue rivers. The significance of this suggestion will become clearer in the subsequent discussions relating the ascendancy of the third Idah dynasty and the emergence of Jukun power and authority in the upper Benue Valley. It is possible to argue, however, that a connection may have existed between the Jukun on the Benue and the manatee along the Niger. It is also possible to conclude that the political and economic relations between the diverse states on the River Niger, forged through the common link with the riverain manatee community, reflected the growth of a regional commercial hegemony. In the seventeenth century the manatee played a vital role in the expansion of regional commerce.

The confluence region of the Benue Basin contained at least two major ethno-linguistic components prior to the Yoruba-speaking conquest in c. 1507-1537. The population included substantial numbers of Okpoto and Igbo. There were also a number of smaller ethno-linguistic groups, including the Awka, manatee and some Bini refugees. The introduction of a third major population as the dominant political authority contributed to a social, political and economic transformation of this entire region. The establishment of a Bini-dominated tributary social formation superceded the redistributive formation of the previous Okpoto monarchy. For the Bini political elite in the Idah enclave the development of the manatee alliance provided access to an existing commercial network which stretched from Raba to the sea. Also, the domination of hinterland commerce linked the Bini monarchy with the flow of commerce along overland routes which stretched from the forest zone to the south into the

booming trans-Saharan commercial network. The foundations of the Bini dynasty at Idah, therefore, correlated with a regional economic boom, particularly between c. 1490 and 1591.³⁵ The subsequent history of the confluence region reflected the evolution of the Bini monarchy and the transformation of the tributary state into a major long-distance imperial trading formation. The various non-Bini populations were forcibly coerced into contributing to the development of the imperial designs of the Bini.

The emergence of an independent Bini dynasty had a tremendous impact on the confluence region, and the political authority of the Bini monarchy eventually stretched far beyond the confines of the Idah enclave. As the political power of the Bini dynasty increased, interest in riverain and hinterland production and trade became the crucial issue in the development of the imperial formation. Initially, at least, the Bini elite were concerned with the manatee alliance and the development of riverain traffic. The dynasty paid little attention to Okpoto segmentary chiefdoms in the hinterland and viewed the Igbo-dominated overland trade as a minor commercial endeavour.³⁶ However, as Igbo trade continued to flourish and commercial exchange demands created enlarged production needs, the Bini administration began to view the interior as a fertile place for political and economic exploitation. As the Bini dynasty sought to extend regional domination, the Okpoto and Igbo were increasingly affected, and were ultimately forced into a vassal tributary relationship.³⁷ The coercive power of the Bini administration, therefore, altered both the political and economic development of the cosmopolitan population.

In Idah the political institutions resembled the structures inherited from the metropolitan power. There was a strong centralized authority based upon the recognized power of the king. The administration was made up of appointed Bini officials. The Idah system also did not provide avenues for social, political and cultural integration of the various populations. In Benin, the monarchy had remained Yoruba-speaking for almost two hundred years (c. 1320-1507) because it did not integrate or associate with the Edo-speaking or Igbo-speaking commoner populations. In Idah the Bini monarchy adopted the same policy of social isolation, remaining aloof and withdrawn from both the Okpoto and Igbo. The Bini monarchy did not provide any avenues for upward social, political or economic mobility, except for its Bini supporters. The monarch was, therefore, considered by the Bini settlers as a paramount authority and a recognized and legitimate administration. Judicial, military, social, cultural, economic and political affairs were dominated by the Bini elite.³⁸ Restrictions imposed on Bini military commanders prohibited their entry into the capital except at the direct behest of the king. The bulk of the Bini army was settled south of the capital in Ibaji. This specialized settlement pattern was designed to protect Idah from a possible military encroachment from Benin. The king also feared the power of the military - his own father had been assassinated in a military revolt during the Benin-Uromi war³⁹ - but he was also clearly dependent upon the military for support. The monarchy, therefore, decided to keep the political centre and military headquarters physically separated, one of the few institutional changes that distinguished the Idah form of government from that of Benin.

Representatives of the Bini settler community were appointed to the state bureaucracy as non-hereditary military officers, commercial agents, officials and administrators.⁴⁰ These appointees provided a connection between the commoner Bini population and the central administration. On the other hand, the lower stratum in the tributary social formation,⁴¹ including primarily the Okpoto and Igbo, provided the majority of material support while deriving little benefit. The Okpoto and Igbo, as the agricultural community and the principal overland traders, were coerced into providing subsistence tribute in order to feed the Bini elite. Some Bini settlers did join the agricultural sector, but also derived additional benefit from their closer association with the Bini monarchy. The rent-tax tribute demands on the Okpoto and Igbo established usufructary rights but did not confirm possession or ownership of the land.⁴² This policy left the agriculturally productive stratum without guaranteed rights over the basic means of production. Ownership, as a state policy, was vested in the Bini monarchy and was dispensed as patronage to loyal supporters. Fundamental ownerships rights, therefore, were violated by the superior might of the conquerors; and Okpoto and Igbo either had to accept vassal status or disassociate from the exploitative social formation. The prospect of dispossession at the whim of an alien monarchy and the possibility of co-option into occupations removed from the land as slaves, or in commercial services as porters, hunters or labourers established a clear distinction between the Bini and the Okpoto-Igbo subordinate populations.⁴³ The government, therefore, reflected Bini nationalism through the Bini bureaucracy and nobility.

The lower stratum in the Idah social formation became ideologically opposed to the Bini administration, and by c. 1537-1567 expressed their opposition through emigration or open hostility. The Okpoto and Igbo political and economic structures had, for the most part, been swept away and replaced with a highly exploitative and coercive central authority to which they had little or no attachment or loyalty. They clearly had no effective voice in the governing of the state. Even Okpoto chiefs who remained in the Idah enclave exercised little influence with the Bini administration.⁴⁴ The chiefs were utilized as agents to collect the royal appropriation and impose the royal will. Their status, privilege and authority had been severely undermined, while their power over the people had been increased. The emergence of a centralized coercive government, with an expanded Bini bureaucracy supported from accumulated tribute, forced the vassal Okpoto chiefs to demand and receive much larger tribute payments from their subjects. The Okpoto chiefs and Bini administrators replaced the Onojie of the Benin administrative system, with two major exceptions.⁴⁵ Firstly, the localized bureaucracy was unable to prevent the increased exploitation which imposed additional burdens upon the lower stratum. Secondly, having been invited into Benin, the Eweka dynasty had aligned with the indigenous nobility (Uzama Nihinron) and appointed them as hereditary king-makers. Having imposed itself by force, the Bini-Idah dynasty were under no such obligation, and retained integral power and authority rather than integrate Okpoto and Igbo in the process of administration. In fact, the connections between the conquerors and the indigenous population were characterized by clear-cut paramount-

vassal relations; and no Kingmakers' Council was established. The ideological opposition of the lower stratum, therefore, reflected the separation of Bini from the Okpoto and Igbo. The class system as it emerged in Idah between 1500 and 1680 was based upon ethnic origins. The social structure was basically a hierarchy of ethnicities with the Bini at the top.

Okpoto communities beyond the actual borders of the Idah enclave were eventually forced into vassal relations with the Bini monarchy, and this extended the geographic control of the state. Okpoto leaders in Ankpa and Dekina, who had retained their political and economic autonomy during the initial conquest of Idah, were eventually subjugated and coerced into a tributary relationship.⁴⁶ The appeasement tribute provided by the peripheral Okpoto and Igbo communities increased material support for the Bini elite, and extended Bini political influence into the hinterland regions.⁴⁷ Territorial expansion, however, did not establish the legitimacy of the Bini monarchy, and rural producers aligned with the urban vassal subjects in opposition against the coercive state administration. Although the peripheral Okpoto chiefdoms succumbed to the superior might of the Bini administration, they were able to retain a greater degree of social and political organization than the metropolitan clans in the Idah enclave. Exploitation of the Okpoto and Igbo beyond the bounds of the Idah enclave, therefore, was less oppressive than the impositions on the urban population. Idah was ruled directly, while the hinterland was governed indirectly through recognized vassal Okpoto chiefs. The indirect authorities owed their legitimacy to their non-Bini subjects but paid tribute to the Bini monarchy.

One of the major impositions of the conquest state was the development of an external slave trade. The organization of a slave exchange system, although very much in its infancy, represented a drastic change in the commercial patterns evident in the middle belt prior to the Bini conquest. In Benin there had been an embargo on the export of male slaves imposed by Oba Esigie in c. 1509-1536.⁴⁸ Slaves had been demanded as tribute from distant regions of the empire in order to provide labour in elite dominated economic sectors, such as cloth production and agriculture. In Idah, the connections to the northern trade system provided an outlet for slave exports, and the Bini administration developed the slave-exchange system as part of the regional and long distance trading pattern. The distinctions between Benin and Idah were based, in part, in the internal developments of the Benin capital enclave and the primary production for export of ivory, cloth, camwood and pepper. In Idah internal production was limited to a developing cloth industry and metal production. The internal demand for slaves in Idah, therefore, was much reduced and the prospects of profit from external exchange enhanced.

The demand for slaves, either as captives of the Idah military or as tribute payments from vassal chiefdoms, created an important new variable in the relations between the Bini coercive elite and the lower class in the state. The conquest of Nupe, for example, established a vassal-paramount relationship with the Bini-Idah monarchy. One of the conditions of this tributary association was the payment of slaves to the Bini elite. Peripheral areas not directly incorporated in the imperial formation became regions where supplies of

slaves might be forcefully acquired. Through both mechanisms Idah eventually emerged as a major entrepôt for the northern slave trading system, and exported increasing numbers of slaves into the northern commercial nexus.⁴⁹

The ascendancy of the Bini dynasty also contributed to the development of craft industries and an extension of the Idah economy. The Bini settler community imported weaving and dyeing skills reminiscent of the cloth industry in Benin. Idah emerged thereafter as an important cloth producing centre, and exported production into the middle belt and northern exchange systems. Idah cloth became highly prized in the Igbo markets to the south, and contributed to the importance of the north-south over-land trade routes. In this respect the Bini dynastic era fostered an expansion of craft production and provided the impetus for the development of commercial production of cloth and metal products. Eventually, Bini craftsmen began to explore the commercial viability of exporting not only the production but the technology itself. Just as Benin had become famous in the forest zone for weaving and dyeing skills, Idah emerged with a similar reputation in the middle belt.⁵⁰ Idah weavers and dyers moved out of the capital enclave in the wake of the expanding political influence of the Bini dynasty and entered the regional economic superstructure beyond the borders of the state.⁵¹ The concentration of weaving and dyeing crafts did not require massive slave labour input, and this opened the way to the development of the slave trade system emanating from the Idah entrepôt. On the other hand, Bini weavers and dyers became prominent in the northern Igbo area, in Nupe, and expanded well to the east of Idah along the Benue. The economic development

of the Bini dynasty, therefore, had ramifications throughout the confluence region, and established a major commercial and political capital on the Niger. Despite the problems of political, ethnic and socio-economic polarization, developments in Idah reflected the commercial orientation of the Bini administration and accounted for the increased profits from mercantile activity that subsidized, and perhaps supported, the Bini elite.

Control of the Niger, at least in the earlier phase of the Bini dynastic period (c. 1507-1597), provided an avenue for the extension of the northbound trade and commerce. The significance of the political links with Nupe during these three generations seems to emphasize the importance of northern trade. Nupe certainly emerged as a major north-south trading point, with well defined riverain links to Idah and the southern forest zone. To the south the Niger alliance, although in its formative stages, was still an effective mechanism for the development of riverain commerce. Furthermore, the demands of coastal trade from the Europeans had not as yet penetrated significantly beyond the coastal belt. The trans-Saharan trade, on the other hand, was highly developed and the impact of long distance commerce affected Idah's commercial organization. The Bini administration's push into the hinterland regions of the confluence area established direct control of the main north-south overland route by c. 1567-1597. The route between Igboland and the north through the Loko cross river point on the Benue, remained primarily in Igbo hands, with a Bini commercial management system imposed from above. In c. 1567-1597, King Anogens endeavoured to extend Idah's authority even further and sought to establish stronger commercial links with,

the sudanic zone trading formations. Anogens established a military outpost at Loko, and thus took direct control of the main overland route to the north.⁵² Anogens also expanded the Ejule market and developed this commercial entrepôt into an internationally recognized market place. One of the major justifications for this expansionist policy was control of the horse trade. Horses thereafter were "brought overland from Loko in greater numbers and sold in the Ejule market."⁵⁴ By c. 1597-1627, the Bini administration had expanded the commercial network centred on Idah, and contributed to the development of an imperial trading formation. The riverain traffic on the Niger remained the crucial commercial activity, but overland trade was rapidly rising in importance.

The expansion of overland trade and the ultimate success of this commercial enterprise was contingent upon a number of policy decisions by the Bini elite. The overland trading system had been in operation for some time, and Igbo commerce had persisted long before the advent of the conquest state. However, Bini rule undermined Igbo control of the trading system while utilizing Igbo commercial expertise. The expansion of the Ejule market through Bini administrative policy ensured that trade remained in Bini hands. Salt, horses, cloth and cattle were imported and exported on an increasing scale. The overland route to the north flourished and profits accrued to the Bini elite. Markets were secured and established as legitimate places where business transactions could proceed according to clearly defined and acceptable rules. The military ensured, for example, that Ejule was free from the disruptions engendered by slave raiding activities. Threats, real or imagined, could become a serious

impediment to the development of a successful long distance trading system and could have negated any positive impact from policies pursued by the Bini monarchy.

Anogens became the main patron of commercial development, and established particular policies designed to foster and encourage trade through Ejule and Adoru. Firstly, Anogens established a second military outpost at Ejule charged with market peace and stability.⁵⁵ The military contingent also policed the trade routes leading into this major market town. The constabulary was directed to report back to the palace, but derived support from the market tax imposed by monarchy.⁵⁶ Secondly, Anogens encouraged Bini traders to expand sudanic zone commerce and fostered the salt trade with the northern producers.⁵⁷ Salt became a major item in the Idah controlled markets. Thirdly, special duties were established for the importation of horses which encouraged the horse traders to expand their own imports. While horse traders were exempt from certain market taxes they were obliged to provide one horse annually to the monarchy. Finally, the general market tax provided revenue for the central treasury, and established a stable situation in the international markets which allowed for an expansion of commercial exchange. The traders had no qualms about arbitrary commercial taxes at Ejule or Adoru because they were "free of fear, and knew how the market operated,"⁵⁸ In this respect Anogens organized the commercial activities of state enterprise and expanded commercial activities along the main overland routes controlled by the Bini monarchy.

The development of trading centres, and the organization of central management, wrought a dramatic change in the economy of the Bini-dominated state. The commoner populations near Idah, Ejule, Adoru and Loko turned more and more toward support services for long distance traders. Transportation networks, rest stations, food production, and ancillary services all increased.⁵⁹ Profits also increased dramatically as efficient support services developed. The exchange of northern horses for yams, kola nuts, fish, oils, and slaves created a number of wealthy families.⁶⁰ This wealth was accumulated without any negative impact upon the lower Okpoto and Igbo agrarian stratum in the society because profits from long distance exchange were generated from the surplus production of two widely separated societies transferred through Idah middlemen. The most dramatic change, therefore, was the consolidation of wealth in the hands of a few elite merchants and administrators.

The development of commerce and commercial production in the imperial trading formation imposed other constraints upon the subordinate Okpoto and Igbo population. Tribute as an appropriation of agrarian production, or a demand on labour services to the state, seriously affected the productive capacity of the lower stratum. Time spent in service to the state, for example, reduced the effective capacity of an Okpoto farmer to provide subsistence and tribute. The coercive power of the state ensured compliance with exploitative demands. However, the response to the impositions of the conquest state, and to the fact that the Okpoto and Igbo did not generally accept the legitimate authority of the Bini administration, was a slow but steady drift away from the Idah enclave. The area currently

recognized as Idomaland became a major Okpoto re-settlement area as this dissatisfied population protested with its feet and moved further and further away from Bini coercive pressure.⁶¹ The administration responded to this emigration through increased use of superior might, which in effect quickened the pace of emigration. While the economy of the trading formation had changed dramatically, its benefits accrued primarily to the Bini elite and a few of its supporters, the impositions on the subordinate Okpoto and Igbo becoming more oppressive as time passed.

The exodus of Okpoto and Igbo did not initially jeopardize the productive capacity of the imperial trading formation. Additional support for the state could be derived from an expansion of the slave labour input, an extension of the tribute base, or an increase in tribute demands. The risk of enslavement by Bini raiders was apparently not enough to keep the Okpoto and Igbo within the confines of the state. Furthermore, as commerce developed, the monarchy derived additional revenue from commercial levies, which could replace lost income from the shrinking tribute base in the society. Cloth, ivory, horses, salt, metal products, yams, kola nuts, fish, oils and an increasing number of slaves continued to be exchanged in markets dominated by Idah. Localized or regional exchange of commodities produced in the ecologically differentiated zones provided additional impetus to the expansion of commercial activity. Forest zone products from the south were becoming important commodities in the sudanic zone to the north, and Idah middlemen were ideally situated to exploit this specialized demand. Maize, millet, and cattle, for example, were exchanged in increasing volume. The slow

exodus of Okpoto and Igbo had little bearing on the overall commercial development, and Idah based entrepreneurs continued to expand the volume and variety of trade goods evident in the market place.

Traders based at Idah or Ejule transported goods northward along the main overland route to Loko, or along the riverain system to Nupe, and purchased cloth, salt, cattle, hides, horses and agricultural products for the return journey. The exchange rates on horses were particularly high. Although the total volume of livestock did not develop beyond the level of luxury commodity exchange, there was a persistent demand for horses throughout northern Igbo-land. Northern products were brought into the international markets and exchanged for slaves, kola nuts, ivory, cloth, and an increasing volume of European goods penetrating from the coast. These goods were taken northward to repeat the cycle. Each exchange cycle brought increased accumulation of profits and benefitted the commercial, political and administrative elite in the state. The expansion of trade also supported the Bini dynasty in its efforts to develop the commercial nexus and extend commercial links. By c. 1597-1627, Idah had emerged as the capital of a relatively wealthy imperial trading formation with commercial links through a flourishing overland and riverain exchange network. The contribution of Idah, Ejule and Adorù merchants solidified the trading basis of the social formation.

The establishment of the Bini-dominated social formation with imperial designs on the confluence area and the commercial network emanating from this riverain crossroad, provided the impetus for the foundation of a number of trading outposts. Bini commercial concerns accounted for the foundations of the military post at Loko.⁶² Other

mercantile settlements appear to have been established even further up the River Bénue in an effort to control that aspect of middle belt riverain trade. The expansion of the Bini royal leopard totem as far to the east as Ibi on the Benue River suggests quite clearly that Bini merchants could exploit this riverain commercial network.⁶³

As subsequent developments reveal, the expansion of Bini settlement along the Benue ultimately faced intense and often violent competition from other imperial trading formations. However, in the sixteenth century, when trans-Saharan trade flourished, the Bini merchants and entrepreneurs from Idah found the Benue system fertile ground for their commercial activities. The extension of commerce on the Benue was clearly supported by the Bini administration in Idah.

The decline of the trans-Saharan trading system after the conquest by Morocco in 1591, was felt with increasing effect in the Idah trading sphere. During the reign of King Aqbo (c. 1597-1627), the organized north-south commerce experienced a severe depression. However, the impact of the declining fortunes in northern trade was somewhat mitigated by the increasing revenues from European goods from the coast. The collapse of the Portuguese monopoly expanded commercial prospects in the coastal states, and the increased volume of goods exchanged altered the focus of the Idah merchant class. Slaves which had once been exported north were now exported south, and the Bini administration adopted specific policies to maintain slave supplies for this new form of export market. The decline of trans-Saharan commerce, therefore, contributed to the redefinition of Idah's commercial activity.

Certain aspects of the northern trade were not seriously affected by the conquest of Songhai and the dramatic shift of trans-Saharan trade routes. For example, the horse trade remained a relatively profitable concern throughout the depression. Also, salt retained its market value and continued to be a principal component of overland and riverain traffic. However, the market for slaves in the north had dwindled; and other goods were demanded instead. King Agoshi (c. 1627-1657) endeavoured to reinforce northern trade links, and encouraged the export of cowries, European cloth and metal products to acquire horses, salt and other northern produce. Agoshi was apparently concerned with the economic status quo, and sought to protect the flow of wealth, based primarily upon northern long distance trade. In the face of changing economic patterns throughout the Benue Basin, however, Agoshi's struggle to maintain northern commerce was doomed to failure; and Idah turned more and more to the south.

Commercial activity on the Niger, and the expansion of downriver trading demands introduced a new phase in the commercial development of the Bini imperial trading formation. Agoshi witnessed, in fact, a dramatic increase in the export of slaves to the south. Canoes loaded with slaves moved progressively downriver and utilized the Niger alliance to exchange their goods for European imports.⁶⁴ The organization of Niger commercial traffic became, therefore, increasingly important and the relations with Warri, Aboh and Onitsha instrumental in the development of riverain exports from Idah. The volume of this trade eventually surpassed the northern system.

Despite the fairly obvious importance of trade to the Bini elite and entrepreneurs, the dominant mode of production in the imperial formation remained the village-lineage system within the subordinate Okpoto and Igbo communities. Few Bini had become engaged in agriculture.⁶⁵ The non-commercial requirements of the state - particularly food - had to be met primarily by Okpoto and Igbo farmers or more rarely by the exploitation of slave labour. Slaves were more profitable as exports rather than as coerced labour. Profits from the sale of slaves, therefore, attracted the Bini elite more than their ability to produce either commercial or non-commercial exports. Therefore, unlike Benin where the dominant mode of production had been village-lineage articulated with a secondary slave mode, Idah rested on the Okpoto and Igbo lineage productivity and depended upon this agrarian community for both commercial and non-commercial support. Trade was a preserve of the elite dominated by Bini and Bini supporters.

It is important to emphasize that neither the military power nor the economic development of the imperial trading formation could prevent the mounting opposition of the subordinate population. As commerce continued to be the economic mainstay of the dominant class, the vassal Okpoto and Igbo were economically depressed. The subordinate population had little access to regional or long distance commerce, and few consumer goods penetrated the local market. Surplus production was accumulated by the ruling elite and subsidized the mercantile strata and the military sector. The opposition of the dominated population developed into a distinct polarization of the imperial social formation. On one side the Bini elite and Bini

supporters sought to maintain the trading formation; on the other, the Okpoto and Igbo sought to topple it.

The predominance of exchange in the Idah imperial trading formation was the trade in luxury goods, which represented not real "transfer of surplus" from the state.⁶⁶ The impact of luxury trade in the confluence region, therefore, benefitted a few. Also, this exchange system reflected the ability of these few to develop a socio-economic mechanism whereby they could effectively participate as either entrepreneurs or administrators in the commercial system. In both the Benin and Idah imperial formations the government was able to devise and implement sophisticated policy and develop sufficient management skills to not only participate in, but to dominate commercial exchange across a broad regional base. Developments in Idah prior to c. 1627-1657, therefore, founded an organized system of commercial administration which utilized coercive force to encourage production and foster exchange. Despite this development, however, both the Okpoto and Igbo in the imperial formation were exposed to the despotic and often rapacious demands of the Bini monarchy. The subordinate agrarian population was compelled to provide increasing supplies of basic commodities to support the growing specialized elite stratum. The retention of usufructary rights depended upon the whim of an unsympathetic monarch, and the prospects of disassociation from the basic means of production remained an ominous spectre. In this situation the Bini elite might view slave exports as an exchange of a social surplus, but for the Okpoto and Igbo the expanded slave trade represented a real threat to their lives and security. To the Bini elite, therefore, slaves were part-

and parcel of the luxury trade.

On the other hand, the Okpoto and Igbo found their village-lineage economic, political and social structures undermined by Bini policy. Increasing economic deprivation added fuel to the mounting opposition. Increasing tribute demands may have provided commercially viable products which the elite could funnel into the international trade, but it was clearly a major hardship for the agrarian population. While the administrative and commercial centres continued to grow and became increasingly wealthy, the hinterland vassal areas of the imperial formation declined in both economic and social terms. Polarization was, therefore, not only a political factor, but reflected the distinctions of class, economics and culture.

It is only after 1650 that the impact of the Bini commercial and administrative policy can be examined in relation to regional developments in general and middle belt commerce in particular. The Bini elite in Idah depended upon commercial revenues and were able to utilize the state's coercive power to exploit production. Okpoto and Igbo agrarian goods, therefore, subsidized the consumption of the Bini elite and mercantile class. One of the major distinctions that set Idah apart from Benin, however, was that the former was much more of a commercial middleman in regional and long distance trade, whereas Benin was directly involved in commercial production (beads, cloth, metal products, camwood and pepper). Idah was the middle belt jobber, buying and selling production from widely separated societies and was, therefore, much more susceptible to the variations in exchange patterns, environmental conditions, and external influences. Idah could experience economic hardship if trade routes

were closed or trading partners revolted. After 1650, the European commercial demands on the coast shifted more toward the slave trade. In Idah, however, external conditions and internal factors combined to restrict the response of the Bini merchant and administrative elite. In fact, the monarchy itself was less able to exploit exchange relations, utilize the military power to coerce slave tribute payments, and enforce production demands on the subordinate population. In regional terms the Bini military and organized slave raiding parties often faced superior force and after, c. 1627-1657, continued to suffer serious defeats.⁶⁷ The political balance of power in the confluence region was clearly shifting, and with it the economic circumstances of the Bini dynasty suffered a marked decline.

By c. 1627-1657, an immigrant group from Kwararafa had settled in Agatu, and came to dominate a major north-south overland route.⁶⁸ Furthermore, this immigrant group attracted a number of Okpoto and Igbo followers through a concerted policy of integration, inter-marriage and co-operation. The option to disassociate from the Bini enclave and associate with the Kwararafan political institutions in Agatu contributed to the polarization in Idah. Okpoto, Igbo and Kwararafan's united against the oppressive Bini government, and actively sought ways in which to weaken the economic stranglehold on riverain commerce and some overland routes. This struggle for power and authority contributed to the decline in the fortunes of Bini administrators, royalty and merchants alike. In this respect, the immigration of a Kwararafan royalist population into the confluence region not only altered the demography, but substantially altered political and economic relations.

In the struggle to redefine commercial relations in the wake of decline of trans-Saharan trade after 1591, the Bini elite also faced a changing political world. Up to c. 1650, the state could ruthlessly suppress opposition and benefitted from windfall profits which ensured their reproduction. It was also clear that changes in peripheral relations with the Okpoto and Igbo and the violent appropriation of surplus production contributed to the disequilibrium and potential for opposition. The option to associate with an alternative state became more and more attractive. The Okpoto and Igbo were able to enter the exchange economy in Agatu, and found avenues for upward economic, social, and political mobility in that Kwararafan enclave. The elite in Agatu had not been imposed by force, and did not, therefore, establish a coercive and exploitative relationship with those that they wished to represent. Politics in the confluence region had become a competition, and the Bini dynasty in Idah was clearly losing.

As the competition between Agatu and Idah increased, the Bini dynasty sought to increase its economic prospects in the expansion of the southern riverain slave trade. This expansion of the slave trade demanded even more coercive efforts to accumulate slave exports, and the decision to seize and sell a number of riverain manatee proved fatal for the Bini administration.⁶⁹ From that moment onward, the political, economic and social relations in the Idah enclave became increasingly hostile. Okpoto, Igbo, Kwararafans and riverain manatee began to openly express their opposition. The decision, by King Agoshi, to alienate the riverain-manatee allies in c. 1627-1657, exposed the inherent weakness in the highly centralized

and polarized social formation. For an administration that had not sought to develop legitimacy, or even provide a rudimentary excuse for the subordinate population to provide support, the antagonism of the one remaining ally was a critical mistake. The dependency upon the Aro on the Niger had contributed to the development of riverain commerce. Presumably, the Bini elite felt secure in their riverain relations and the efficiency of the Niger alliance. However, the alienation of riverain manatees seems to have driven the final nail in the Bini dynasty's coffin.

Contributing to the declining fortunes of the Bini dynasty in Idah and the increase in overt opposition was the reduction in coercive forces exercised by the central government. During the two generations between c. 1597 and 1657, the military forces had been slowly disbanded and incorporated into the economic infrastructures as traders and transportation specialists. The inability to exercise and maintain coercive pressure, and protect trade and trade routes, provided a measure of political and economic freedom for the Igbo, Okpoto and Aro communities on the periphery of the state. By c. 1657-1687, Okpoto chiefs to the east were refusing to make tribute payments, and felt reasonably secure that there would be no violent retributions.⁷⁰ Igbo traders preferred the Agatu markets, where they were free of Bini coercive domination; and Aro traders actively sought to expand their mercantile activities along the Benue under the auspices of the Kwararafa government. The power of the imperial trading formation at Idah was apparently waning, and the Bini elite were unable to maintain the central controls previously enjoyed. Part of this internal weakness can be attributed to the changes in

the regional trading system. However, the political, economic and social polarization of the society also contributed to the growing weakness. Finally, the demobilization of the army, during a period of relative prosperity, created a conquest state based upon forced coercion without the means to exercise force. Without a strong military arm the Bini elite could not follow the warrior policy of Dahomey. It found its power restricted and its authority ignored.

It is certainly indicative of the failure of the Bini administration in Idah that the subordinate population did not adopt any overt symbols to establish their support for the ruling dynasty. In fact, the Okpoto, Igbo and riverain manatee all retained their own totemic systems, and did not adopt the Bini royal leopard totem.⁷¹ There was, in fact, no advantage - politically or economically - to be gained by expression of even temporary or symbolic allegiance. Recognition as a member of the lower class was apparently inescapable. The specialized settlement patterns evident in this social formation, with Bini, Okpoto and Igbo occupying distinct linguistic and cultural areas,⁷² provided little means for social or cultural integration. The policy of the Bini administration certainly did not encourage any interaction, and this contributed to the polarization and basic lack of overt or covert support. The state provided no incentive to integrate subordinate vassal subjects and suffered the consequences of this insularity.

The rule of the Bini dynasty can be seen as a fairly dramatic and apparently traumatic period in the history of the middle belt and confluence region. The six generations between c. 1507 and 1687 witnessed drastic changes in the political structures, economic

focus, social organization, and administrative policy. There were also significant changes in the linguistic patterns, demography and ethnic composition of the confluence region. Two of the major causes were the development of international relations and the emergence of the Niger commercial alliance. As the power and authority of the Bini dynasty in Idah weakened, its role in the Niger alliance also weakened. Aboh, Onitsha and Nupe all benefitted from Idah's decline. By c. 1627-1657, Nupe claimed political and economic autonomy and withheld tribute.⁷² In the same generation Aboh was demanding a larger share of the Niger trade.

The major changes on the Idah enclave, and regional political development, occurred fairly rapidly, particularly in the initial flush of success after the conquest of Idah. The polarization of the society, however, also began rapidly; but it was not until c. 1627-1657 that the full impact of the non-integrative policy was felt in the capital. The Bini-dominated society was, in fact, divided on political, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, religious and social grounds; a deeper rift would be hard to find. The state elite had carefully retained all privileged positions for Bini settlers. The Okpoto and Igbo, therefore, could find no avenue for social, political or economic integration and were reduced to subordinate status. The idea that a distinct ethno-class consciousness emerged from this polarization may be difficult to quantify, but it seems a logical development from the differences of language, culture and the opposition of one defined segment of the population to the actions of another.

The emergence of dominant and dominated relations between the two distinct classes in Idah society was especially evident in the response of the subordinated, to the exploitation by the Bini elite. The Okpoto and Igbo endeavoured to remove or avoid the imposition of state demands by emigration. Others, less inclined to move, sullenly accepted Bini demands, particularly when alternatives were not open to them. When an alternative political option did emerge, in the form of the Kwararafan polity at Agatu, both emigration and opposition accelerated. The rapid development of the Okpoto, Igbo, Aro and Kwararafan alliance, cemented through co-operation, interaction and intermarriage, was indicative of the level of alienation and dissatisfaction with the Bini administration. In this respect the Okpoto and Igbo seemed to have had a basic awareness of their oppressed status, and were willing to actively seek alternative political options to mitigate their exploitation. The alignment of Okpoto, Igbo, Aro and Kwararafans against the Bini regime presented further evidence of the polarity of the imperial formation.⁷⁴

The success or failure of the Bini dynasty should not be solely measured in terms of its political or social policy. If this criterion were used, the Bini administration would appear to have been a resounding failure. The dynasty was successful, however, in the development of limited commercial production, establishment of long distance trade, and the opening of major markets and trade routes. The economic success and the expansion of commercial enterprise did not mitigate the opposition of the subordinate population in the social formation because it did not participate in it. In fact, as the Bini elite increased in size and as commercial and non-commercial

levies were appropriated on an extended scale, opposition mounted. The trading formation, therefore, represented Bini settler nationalism and served to alienate the majority Okpoto and Igbo population. The continuity of the state was apparently dependent upon the ability of the state elite to expand and maintain coercive force. The demobilization of the army reduced the state's coercive capacity to force tribute payments, raid for slaves, protect territorial integrity, and ensure elite revenues vital to the status quo. In some respects, therefore, the Bini dynasty established a viable mercantile structure, but failed to provide general access to this commercial economy.

In the last generations of the Bini dynasty in Idah pressures on the administration escalated dramatically. The encroachment of the Apa refugees from Kwararafa and the foundation of the Agatu enclave opened direct competition with the Idah commercial system. The combination of a powerful Kwararafan royalist leadership with dissatisfied Okpoto, Igbo and Aro effectively redefined social, political and economic relations in the confluence region. The inherent weakness of Bini divisive policy provided the opportunity for a union of opposing forces to effectively change the balance of power, and ultimately seriously threaten Bini power and authority. The generation before the eventual collapse of the Bini dynasty found King Agoshi as a besieged and bewildered leader endeavouring to control a small fragment of a once expansive imperial trading formation.

Agoshi sought to rebuild the trading formation through commercial relations with the north. However, access to the Loko cross river point had been cut off, and Bini outposts on the Benue were destroyed by the continuing influx of Apa refugees. The dynasty's coercive power had dissipated, and Agoshi's commercial base severely weakened. The efforts to re-establish the tributary base for economic support and thus recreate a tributary social formation, were faced by mounting and violent opposition. In the forlorn hope that his son might resuscitate Bini fortunes in Idah, Agoshi abdicated the throne, aligned with a few loyal subjects, and fled northward across the Benue.⁷⁵ King Olema II was unable to prevent the process of decline, and found that Agoshi's flight added impetus to his own opponents.⁷⁶ Olema eventually joined his father in exile, leaving Idah to the opposition, the rebuilding process a dismal failure.

By c. 1687-1717, the middle belt was on the verge of another major political, economic and social transformation, a change that would, in fact, reunite the segmentary social formation that Olema had left behind, and launch a new age of economic prosperity and political unity. The emergence of the Kwararafan, Okpoto and Igbo alliance as the dominant power in Idah provided the basis of a reformed imperial social formation, and established the basis for an extension of the imperial trading system. The following chapter endeavours to trace the roots of the Kwararafan penetration of the Idah enclave and briefly examines the history of the multi-ethnic confederacy that gave rise to a number of successor states in the sudanic zone and middle belt of the Benue Basin. After 1600, in fact, a large number

of independent polities arose in the ruins of a once mighty empire,
including the foundations of the third Idah dynasty in c. 1687-
1717.

Endnotes to Chapter Five

1. Refer to the Benin regnal list which shows that Agi-Attah was the son of Oba Ozolua, and Iginua was the son of Oba Olua. Olua and Ozolua were, in fact, brothers.
2. C. Hoffman, "The Languages of Nigeria by Language Family", in Studies in Nigerian Language, 5, 1976, Zaria Institute of Linguistics.
3. In the two hundred years since the inauguration of the Ewaka dynasty in Benin (c. 1320-1509), the central monarchy remained relatively aloof and withdrawn from the commoner population. Benin, therefore, could be characterized as an imperial formation dominated by a Yoruba-speaking hierarchy, which governed an Edo and Igbo-speaking commoner population.
4. This chart has been adapted from Hoffman, "The Languages of Nigeria", op. cit., and represents only a small portion of all Nigerian language groups. A more complete chart has been reproduced in Appendix One. For more linguistic data refer to K. Williamson, 'Lexicostatistical Comparison of Itsekiri, Standard Yoruba and Igala', Department of Linguistics, University of Ibadan, 1972; R. Armstrong, "Glottochronology and African Linguistics", Journal of African History, III, 2, 1962; R. Armstrong, "Comparative Word List of Two Dialects of Yoruba with Igala", Journal of West African Languages, 2, 2, 1965; and R. Silverstein, 'Igala-Historical Phonology', University of California, Ph.D., 1973.
 The process of assimilation and acculturation, especially when concerned with a language shift, can be facilitated through intermarriage. In fact, language learnt at the mother's knee usually represents the most common element in a particular language change. The Yoruba-speaking dynasty in Benin intermarried primarily with the Yoruba-speaking elite, and only occasionally married with the indigenous population. Marriage relations, in fact, were more often through the linkage of a Yoruba-speaking princess with a non-Yoruba official. This kind of marriage relationship served to establish political ties, but did not acculturate the ruling dynasty. Thus the process of assimilation and language shift toward Edo was slow, and only preliminary steps had been undertaken by the sixteenth century.
5. Williamson, 'Lexicostatistical Comparison', op. cit.
6. The numbering system was designed to identify relations between various languages and sub-groups within language families. The chart of Nigerian languages also utilizes vertical affinities between language groups which supercede associations on the horizontal plane.

7. This demographic shift and the influx of Greater Doma-speakers have been more fully discussed later in this chapter, and also in subsequent chapters.
8. E.J. Alagoa, History of the Niger Delta, Ibadan, 1972, p. 10. Also refer to R. Armstrong, "The Igala", in Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence, in the Ethnographic Survey of Africa, edited by D. Forde, London, 1955; R. Armstrong, "The Use of Linguistic and Ethnographic Data in the Study of Idoma and Yoruba History", in J. Vansina, R. Mauny and L. Thomas (eds.), The Historian in Tropical Africa.
9. J.S. Boston, "Ifa Divination in Igala", Africa, XIV, 4, 1974; and M. Kalous, "Ifa Divination", New Orient, VI, 4, 1967. For even more information of Ifa divination and the spread of this ritual system refer to B.I. Belasco, The Entrepreneur as Culture Hero, New York, 1980, and W. Bascom, Ifa Divination, Bloomington, 1969.
10. The evolution of the Benin empire was discussed in previous chapters. Also refer to R.A. Sargent, "Evolution of an Empire: From a Redistributive to an Imperial Social Formation, Benin c. 1320-1509", in Papers of the Canadian Association of African Studies Conference, edited by B. Jewsiewicki, Québec, 1984.
11. For information on Agbor refer to J. Ijomah, "The Evolution of Kingship Among the West Niger Igbo Chiefdoms", unpublished paper included in the Benue Valley History Collection, Dalhousie University as a related paper, 1983. Also refer to J.O. Ijomah, "A Pre-Colonial History of Agbor", University of Birmingham, M.A., 1976; and J.B. Webster, J. Bucher, et al., "A Critical Analysis of the Royal Chronicle of Agbor", Benue Valley Project Paper No. 13, 1972. After the subjugation of Agbor, the evidence clearly suggests that the monarchy was not re-established on the throne until c. 1806-1833.
12. J.W. Hubbard, The Sobo of the Niger Delta, Zaria, 1948, p. 198.
13. R.N. Henderson, The King in Every Man, New Haven, 1972; C.K. Meek, Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe, London, 1937, p. 11; and Webster, "A Critical Analysis", op. cit.
14. Refer to the following map.
15. Ritual prohibitions act somewhat like secondary totems and are generally adopted for political reasons to establish a connection between a non-aligned population and the political power and authority. For more detail on totems, totemism and the utility of totemic data refer to F.B. Ataba, "Recent Developments in the Use of Non-Documentary Evidence, with Special Reference to Totemism and Regional Chronology", Dalhousie University, M.A., 1976.

16. K.O. Ogendengbe, 'The Aboh Kingdom of the Lower Niger, c. 1650-1900', University of Wisconsin, Ph.D., 1971.
17. Henderson, The King in Every Man, p. 47.
18. E. Isichei, The Ibo People and the Europeans, London, 1973, pp. 39-40.
19. Meek, Law and Authority, p. 11. Also refer to E. Isichei, A History of Nigeria, London, 1983, p. 137.
20. J.U. Egharevba, A Short History of Benin, Ibadan, 1968, p. 32.
21. Henderson, The King in Every Man, p. 32. Also refer to I. Nzimiro, Studies in Igbo Political Systems, London, 1972.
22. Ogendengbe, 'The Aboh Kingdom', op. cit.
23. I.H.T. No. 117, Igala Mela group interview, Achahyuwo clan principal informants, July 22, 1977.
24. S.F. Nadel, "The Kede: A Riverian State in Northern Nigeria", in African Political Systems, edited by M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, London, 1940, pp. 165-196.
25. Refer to T.M. MacLeod, 'Ethnological Report on the Okpoto, Egedde of Idoma Land', Kaduna National Archives, K.2003, 1925.
26. J.B. Webster, 'Animals of the Kingdom', Benue Valley Project Paper No. 6, 1975.
27. J.B. Webster, 'The Three Phases of Kwararafa: A Peripatetic State', in Central Nigerian Perspectives, edited by E. Isichei, forthcoming.
28. MacLeod, 'Ethnological Report', op. cit.
29. A.E. Afigbo, "The Aro of Southern Nigeria: A Socio-History Analysis of Legends of Their Origin - Part I", African Notes, VI, 2, 1971, pp. 31-46.
30. MacLeod, 'Ethnological Report', op. cit.
31. K.O. Dike and F.I. Ekejiuba, "The Aro State: A Case Study of State Formation in Southeastern Nigeria", Journal of African Studies, 5, 3, 1978, p. 269.
32. Webster, "The Three Phases of Kwararafa", op. cit., where it is noted that Akpa may refer to Abakwariga specifically or more generally to all the peoples of Kwararafa.
33. Hoffman, "The Languages of Nigeria", op. cit., p. 177

34. P.A. Talbot, The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, (4 volumes), London, 1926, Volume 2, p. 257.
35. A.A. Boahen, "The Caravans Trade in the Nineteenth Century", Journal of African History, III, 2, 1962, pp. 349-350.
36. I.H.T. No. 112, Igala Mela group interview, July 27, 1977.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. G.C. Okojie, Ishan Native Laws and Customs, Yaba, 1960; Egharevba, A Short History of Benin, p. 25; and J.E. Miller, 'Ishan-Benin Relations, c. 1455-1509', Dalhousie University, Honours Essay, 1983.
40. I.H.T. No. 115, Igala Mela group interview, Unana-clan principal informants, July 27, 1977.
41. J.B. Webster, 'Typology of Pre-Colonial Social Formations in Africa', paper presented to the Canadian Association of African Studies Conference, Laval, 1983. Webster developed a relatively new and utilitarian descriptive typology for various social formations in pre-colonial Africa. This typology has been utilized throughout.
42. I.H.T. No. 115.
43. I.H.T. No. 119, Igala Mela group interview, July 28, 1977.
44. Ibid.
45. In the early stages of the evolution of the Benin Empire under the Ewéka dynasty the Onojie had an effective political voice in the administration of the state and could mitigate exploitative impositions by the central monarchy.
46. I.H.T. No. 115.
47. Appeasement tribute can be defined as payments to prevent the imposition of force as a method of defining relations between dominant and subordinate.
48. A.F.C. Ryder, "Dutch Trade on the Nigerian Coast During the 17th Century," J.H.S.N., Vol. 3, No. 2, 1905, p. 203.
49. I.H.T. No. 119, and I.H.T. No. 78, Okpuchu, in Dekina, Abokko Ocheje clan, June 27, 1977.
50. I.H.T. No. 78.

51. I.H.T. No. 177, Akpa Ali, Arwa, September 15, 1977. Also refer to A.E. Afigbo, "Trade and Trade Routes in Nineteenth Century Nsukka"; Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, VII, 1, 1973.
52. I.H.T. No. 115.
53. I.H.T. No. 69, Abaji of Ayangba, June 19, 1977, and I.H.T. No. 26, Aluta of Ejule, February 17, 1977.
54. I.H.T. No. 26.
55. I.H.T. No. 15, Aradu Odu, Ateme and Orgungu, Ejule, January 16, 1977.
56. Ibid.
57. I.H.T. No. 26.
58. Ibid.
59. Ancillary services might include the production of fodder for the horses, making of bridles and ropes, providing food for the traders, and baskets for the transportation of salt.
60. I.H.T. No. 249, the Attah of Idah, January 16, 1978.
61. I.H.T. No. 78, and also I.H.T. No. 54, Onu Ankpa, March 19, 1977.
62. I.H.T. No. 61, Okwoli, Idah, June 3, 1977.
63. The royal totem of Dampar, for example, is the leopard, and may be a Bini related group which established a trading outpost on the Benue.
64. I.H.T. No. 115.
65. As previously noted some Bini clans did become involved in the agricultural sector of the economy but the numbers involved were apparently not enough to substantially alter the basic Okpoto-Igbo predomination in this particular area.
66. I. Wallerstein, "The Three Stages of African Involvement in The World Economy", in The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa, edited by P.C.W. Gutkind and I. Wallerstein, Beverly Hills, 1976, pp. 30-32..
67. I.H.T. No. 112.

68. This immigration has been more fully discussed in a later chapter. However, the penetration of the confluence region by the Kwararafa refugees clearly overlaps the Bini period and contributed to the declining fortunes of the Bini dynasty.
69. I.H.T. No. 118. Igala Mela group interview; Obajadaka clan principal informants, July 28, 1977.
70. I.H.T. No. 117.
71. Refer to R.A. Sargent, 'Inexplicit Data: Totems, Spatial Distribution and Linguistic Data and Igala Historical Reconstruction', paper presented to The African and Imperial History Seminar, Dalhousie University, February 1984.
72. Ibid.
73. I.H.T. No. 15.
74. Refer to R.A. Sargent, "Igala Masks: Dynastic History and the Face of the Nation", in Tricksters, Transvestites and Warriors: African Masks and Cultural Systems, edited by S.L. Kasfir, forthcoming. Also refer to R.A. Sargent, "The Rise and Decline of the Igala Kingdom, 1700-1900", in Central Nigerian Perspectives, edited by E. Isichei, forthcoming.
75. I.H.T. No. 112.
76. I.H.T. No. 115. Agoshi migrated out of Idah and settled north of the River Benue where he established a short lived Bini dynasty in Keana. The Bini influence in the Alago Obasadoma was quickly undermined by changing political fortunes. One of the few remaining indications of Bini north of the Benue is in leopard totem. Refer to J. Power, 'Lafia: Layers of Settlement', Johns Hopkins University Conference in Pre-Colonial History, Baltimore, February, 1984.

CHAPTER SIX

Politics and Economic Change in the Sudanic Zone and Middle Belt, Kwararafa, c. 1300 - 1600

The discussion which follows seeks to trace the historical outlines of Kwararafa's political and economic development between c. 1300 and 1600. This analysis cannot be developed in the same depth as that of Benin and Idah because there is a paucity of direct evidence. Until a specific and comprehensive research program has been completed in the upper Benue and Gongola River Valleys conclusions based upon existing evidence must be postulated cautiously. The data for this discussion, however, does provide some insight into the relationship of this multi-ethnic confederacy to sudanic zone economics and politics. Furthermore, the evidence from the successor states which emerged after the collapse of the confederacy provides fairly detailed information about Kwararafa in the middle belt. The evidence, therefore, has been accumulated from sources in the successor and neighbouring states, and provides a perspective on Kwararafan history during the three hundred years of southward retrenchment. The analysis endeavours to correlate the impressions from the successor states with regional events, secondary source information, and the patterns of political and economic change elsewhere in the Benue Basin. This reconstruction seeks to relate the changes evident in Kwararafa to events, politics, personalities and economics in both the sudanic zone and middle belt. It includes consideration of wars,

commercial patterns, migrations, droughts, famines, demographics, and the impact on regional developments from Kwararafa's shift southward from Santolo to Tagara to Biēpi. Kwararafa was a significant political and economic force in both the sudanic zone (pre-1500) and the middle belt (post-1500) and provides a crucial link in the development of Benue Basin history.

The following discussion examines the causal relationship between the defeat of Kwararafa in various military encounters and the progressive shift of the capital southward. This consideration provides a brief background to Kwararafa's involvement in the Benue Valley and the emergence of the successor states as the confederacy crumbled and eventually collapsed. The transformation of Kwararafa from a sudanic zone polity competing with Kano and Bornu for a share in the trans-Saharan and regional trade systems,³ to a troubled middle belt polity competing for Benue commerce or overland trade to Calabar reflected the struggle for survival. Details of Kwararafa's peripatetic nature have been documented by J.B. Webster and will not be repeated here. However, the relocation of the Kwararafan capital at Biēpi in c. 1520-1550, and the ensuing internal struggles for power are a necessary prelude to the analysis of the Kwararafa diaspora in c. 1567-1627.⁴

Shifting capitals can be related to demographic changes, and demographics can be related to the changing commercial priorities.

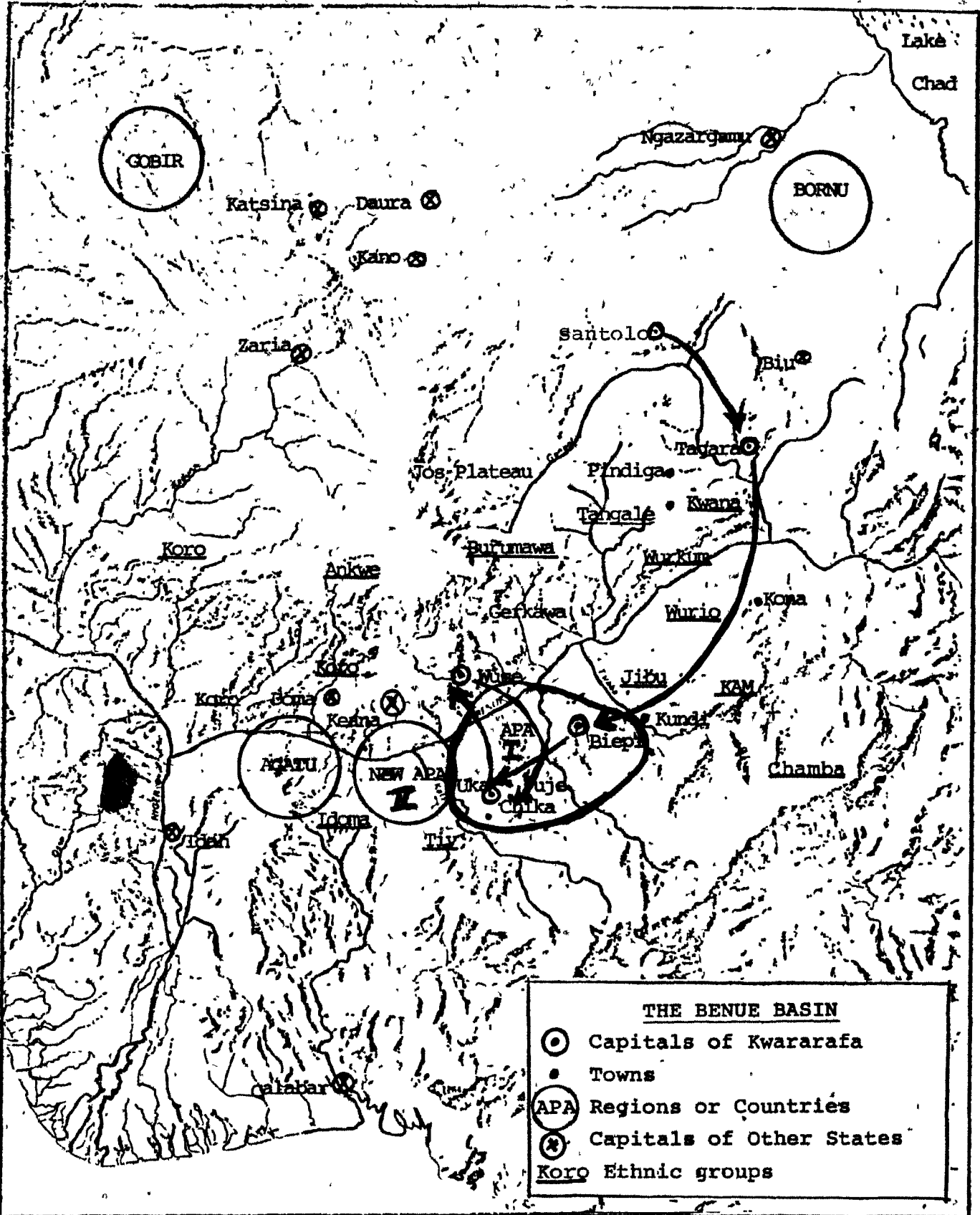
Finally, this particular reconstruction of Kwararafa history lays to rest the persistent although erroneous assumption that Kwararafa and Jukun authority were synonymous throughout the history of this multi-ethnic state.⁵ The Jukun Kingdom was, in fact, one of the successor states which emerged during the declining years of

Kwararafa (c. 1597-1717); and Jukun authority was not firmly established until the eighteenth century. The Jukun claim to continuity with Kwararafa traditions extends back in time no further than c. 1597-1627.⁶ The Kingdom of Wukari might be considered the main successor state since it sought to absorb and perpetuate the central Kwararafa traditions. However, Wukari was not established as a Jukun stronghold and capital until c. 1820-1850. The other successor states tended to move out of the confederacy, to disassociate themselves from Kwararafa traditions, to claim specific founding-heros for their independent political administrations in the middle belt. The long process of the Jukun take-over through the declining years is one of the continuing 'mysteries' in the regional history of the upper Benue Basin. The perception that Kwararafa was a Jukun-dominated entity from as "far back as the thirteenth century" must, therefore, be abandoned.⁷ The following discussion makes a preliminary contribution to the re-evaluation of Kwararafa and Jukun history.⁸

Kwararafa traditions indicate origins for part of the cosmopolitan population in the Eastern Sudan. Jukun evidence, on the other hand, clearly establishes a point of origin in the Cross River Basin far to the south.⁹ The Jukun apparently expanded progressively northward from the Cross River and eventually crossed the River Benue in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. The relationship between the Jukun and Kwararafa could not pre-date the arrival of the Kwararafan capital at Biere in c. 1520-1550. Certainly the Jukun did not establish contact with Kwararafa when the capital of the multi-ethnic confederacy was at Tagara. It was only after the fall of Tagara in c. 1463-1493 and the retrenchment of the Kwararafan monarchy

south that a point of conjunction between these two populations could have occurred. Therefore, at some point during the northward expansion of the Jukun and the southward retrenchment of Kwararafa there was a conjunction which eventually integrated the former as part of the population of the latter. Where exactly this conjunction occurred is merely speculation; but it clearly took place south of the Gongola River Basin, and probably occurred south of the River Benue. This conjunction, it should be noted, also occurred after Kwararafa had been in existence for over three hundred years, hardly indicative of the perceived relationship between the Jukun and Kwararafa which claims that Kwararafa was a Jukun state throughout its history.

A major contribution to the re-evaluation of the Jukun-Kwararafa relationship can be found in the linguistic evidence which identifies Jukunoid as a Cross River language.¹⁰ In fact, the linguistic data indicates that Jukunoid (1.a.5.2.) on the language classification system developed by C. Hoffman, including Dshunu, Nama, Jukun, Chomo, Jiru, Kuteb, Yakuben, Kpan and others, was a sub-division of the Benue-Congo group (1.a.5.). Other sub-divisions in the Benue-Congo classification included the Plateau (1.a.5.1.), the Cross River (1.a.5.3.) and the Bantoid (1.a.5.4.).¹¹ The linguistic affinity between Jukunoid and the Cross River sub-division, defined through the basic internal coherence of the Niger-Congo family of languages, supports the contention that the Jukun probably originated in the Cross River Basin and subsequently expanded northward.¹² This expansion from the Cross River resulted in the conjunction with Kwararafa when the capital was at Biere. The expansion of the Jukun



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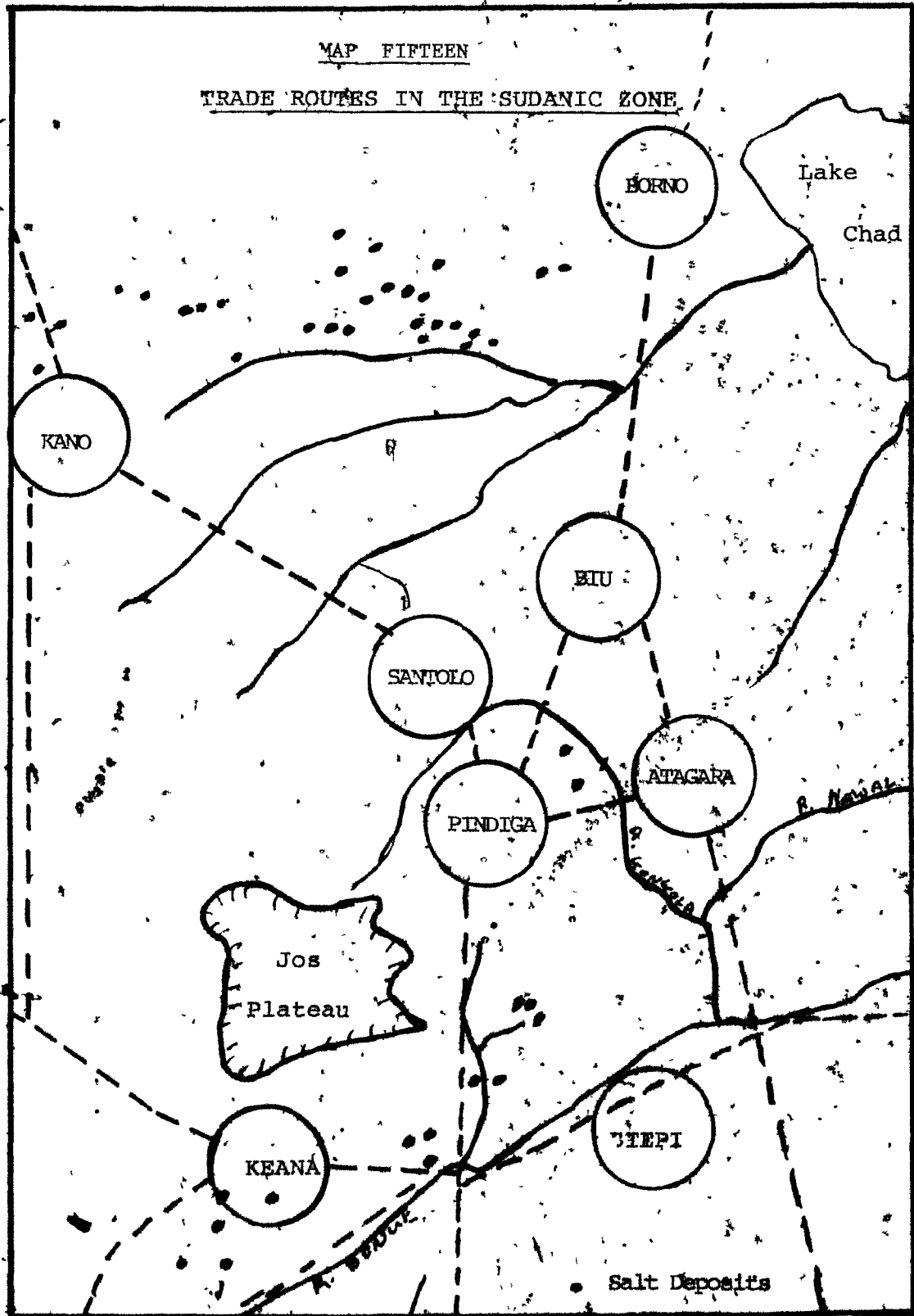
probably correlated with a search for commercial advantage and the expansion of the distribution system emanating from the coast. Also, the Jukun seemed to be in search of territorial security, particularly in their violent relations with the Iy, ¹³ and in the extension of control over agricultural and natural resources. The Jukun rapidly developed a symbiotic attachment based upon the economic imperative, and became the main producers and distributors of salt in the Benue Valley. The Jukun settlements north of the Benue show a remarkable degree of consistence with the salt deposits in the region. This conclusion would not be inconsistent with the linguistic data, demographic patterns, migration traditions, and the ideas expressed elsewhere that the Jukun were related to the Aro, Calabar, Ekor and Nama in the Cross River, ¹⁴ and became attached to Kwararafa at a very late point in the history of that state.

Early Kwararafan history shows no evidence of Jukun involvement, particularly when the capital was at Santolo, north of the Gongola River. ¹⁵ One of the earliest references to Kwararafa, in fact, comes from the Kano Chronicle, during the reign of Sarkin Yaji when Kano attacked Santolo. ¹⁶ The Islamization that had started in the Habe city states and which proceeded under Sarkin Yaji apparently contributed to this conflict. Large numbers of urban, pagan Hausa-speakers fled the city states and reinforced the pagan strongholds, including Kwararafa. The conquest of Santolo in 1349-1385, therefore, coincided with the flowering of the city states under Islamic trade, and the efforts of Kano to extend political and commercial hegemony across the Central Sudan. While Santolo was the "key to the south" ¹⁷ and a major competitor for control of the trade, it was also a bastion of

paganism against the rise and propagation of Islam. The conquest set in motion a southward migration of Abakwariga that established a new capital at Tagara, north of the Gongola-Hawal confluence. The rocky outcropping at "Atagora"¹⁸ provided a strong defensible capital in which the Abakwariga could hold out against the military imposition of Kano. It also provided the opportunity to re-vitalize Kwararafa's economic, political and military strength through the association with Koro-Gwari and Pabir. The multi-ethnic nature of Kwararafa, thereafter, became even more complex as the various alliances within the population changed the political power, authority and status of the ruling elite.

In Tagara the Kwararafan population included Abakwariga, Koro-Gwari and Bura-Pabir.¹⁹ Relations with Kano from this re-vitalized base took a turn for the better, and emphasized commercial exchange and reciprocal trade rather than violent confrontation. In fact, the relationships with Kano suggested that what was considered tribute in Kano traditions was an exchange of equivalent numbers of horses for slaves. Presumably, Kwararafa traditions might argue that the horses were tribute from Kano. What seems clear is that the functional commercial nexus provided the basis of regional and long distance exchange which contributed to the flowering of the Habe city states and to the revitalization of Tagara as the Kwararafan capital. The Abakwariga commercial system flourished, and the Kwararafan military was remounted on horses acquired through the reciprocal trade agreement.

MAP FIFTEEN
TRADE ROUTES IN THE SUDANIC ZONE



By 1463-1493 the commercial pattern, relative peace and political associations in the Central Sudan experienced a major upheaval when Mai Ali Gajideni relocated the capital of Bornu west of Lake Chad.²⁰ This encroachment occurred when Kano "was probably at the height of its power," and when Kwararafa had recovered fully from its military encounters.²¹ It is also instructive that the foundation of Ngazargamu coincided with the economic boom under the Songhai pax, a period when the trans-Saharan trade was at its peak.²² The relocation of Bornu, therefore, brought direct competition not only for trans-Saharan commerce, but for control of the salt deposits in the Hadejia River Valley.²³ Kwararafa, it seems, represented one of the major obstacles to the development of Ngazargamu as a regional political and economic force. Therefore, Mai Ali Gajideni launched a major offensive against both Kano and Kwararafa, and thereby established Bornu's hegemony west of Lake Chad. This campaign resulted in a profound defeat of Kwararafa. The king was captured and 17,000 people enslaved.²⁴ Tagara was abandoned, and the southward retrenchment of Kwararafa continued after a period of approximately one hundred years on the rocky outcroppings of Tagara.

The population that migrated southward after the crushing of Tagara included a large contingent of Abakwariga-Pa'ar.²⁵ Other ethnic-linguistic factions evident in this emigration south included the Koro and Gwari. Major segments of the Koro-Gwari migrated to the west and eventually crossed the Jos Plateau and settled in southern Zaria.²⁶ The movement south concerns us the most since this migration accounted for the establishment of the third capital at Birni in c. 1520-1550.²⁷ The resettlement in the Benue Valley

altered the demographics of the multi-ethnic confederacy and introduced major, new, ethno-linguistic groups into the population. The shifting alliances which were the basis of central power in the confederacy had to be revamped under the mounting pressure from these new groups.

The retrenchment south also allowed Kwararafa to revitalize once again after a crushing defeat; and by c. 1550-1580, the recovery was sufficient to allow for a military intervention in sudanic zone affairs. Kwararafa attacked and defeated Bornu, but drought and famine prevented any permanent solution to the relationship with the sudanic zone trading formations. The military advantage gained by the victory over Bornu did not, therefore, translate into permanent economic advantage. J.B. Webster indicated quite clearly that climate was a major factor in inter-state relations, and argued that a continent-wide, "climatic deterioration occurred between the 1560's and 1620's."²⁸ P.E. Lovejoy argued that "famines of these magnitudes must have seriously affected large parts, if not all, of the southern Sahara in the Central Sudan and set in motion major population shifts."²⁹ One of the results of the climatic degradation was that Kwararafa's military stayed south of the Benue. At least in Biepi, rainfall would have been more consistent.

The period following the "Sima Azadu" drought,³⁰ when Sarkin Mohammed Zaki ruled Kano and Mai Idris Alooma governed Bornu, was a particularly dramatic time in Benue Basin history. The eastern section of the trans-Saharan trade collapsed with the conquest of Songhai (25 August, 1591),³¹ and trade shifted toward Bornu and the Central Sudan. Mai Idris Alooma capitalized on this opportunity and

extended Bornu authority far to the north on the major northern trade routes.³² Kwararafa, on the other hand, faced an economic decline. The last resort for its traders interested in northern commerce seemed to be a major military incursion into the north in an effort to resuscitate commercial exchange. In c. 1582-1616, Kwararafa invaded Kano, despite the droughts, and "ate up the whole country."³³ This military success, however, did not solve the economic problems, and Abakwariga commercial influence continued to decline within the confederacy. The major beneficiaries of this economic transformation were the small numbers of Bini and Jukun traders who were engaged in riverain and southern overland trade, respectively.

The shift to Biēpi necessitated by the fall of Tagara brought the mixed Abakwariga, Koro and Gwari into the Idoma Nokwu area of the Benue Valley. This region was linked to the south through the Bini-dominated riverain trade on the Benue, and the Jukun-Aro overland route. The accumulated evidence suggests that Kwararafa contained three major and two minor populations. The Abakwariga, Koro-Gwari, and Greater Doma were numerically significant, while the Bini and Jukun were numerically small, politically weak, but economically important. The major demographic change was the introduction of the Idoma Nokwu - the progenitures of the Idoma linguistic group which includes the Idoma, Alago, Etulo, part of the Igalā and Igbirra, and the Awka.³⁴ This demographic shift and disproportional economic balance in favour of the Bini and Jukun imposed a realignment of internal alliances within the Biēpi political structures. The Bini, who had been in contact and intermarried with the Idoma Nokwu for some generations,³⁵ aligned with this population in the political

polarization. The Jukun newcomers aligned with the Abakwariga-Pabir (also newcomers), while the Koro-Gwari apparently remained disaffected but interested observers. The Koro, in fact, found their political ambitions ignored in the polarization of political and economic forces and soon opted for disassociation and emigration.

The Abakwariga-Pabir-Jukun alliance appears to have been, initially at least, the dominant political force in the re-formation of Kwararafa at Biepi.³⁶ The Jukun began to establish female-side links to facilitate direct involvement in state administration, and became an increasingly potent voice despite their small numbers. The Idoma-Nokwu and Bini alliance was established in opposition to the Abakwariga-Pabir-Jukun, and sought to develop a viable political base from their strong economic position. It is important to emphasize that though the Bini and Jukun were numerically small, they were probably the economic leaders in the community. The Abakwariga, who previously had been the main merchant class in the trading formation, had to explore alternatives in the new commercial nexus. Riverain trade required special skills and was virtually closed to Abakwariga overland traders.³⁷ The southern routes became the preferred option. Abakwariga and Jukun merchants eventually settled as far south as Calabar. The political alliance between Abakwariga and Jukun apparently included an economic alliance along the southern overland routes.

It would seem that by c. 1580-1610, Bini and Idoma Nokwu were excluded from the political administration of the multi-ethnic state. The Abakwariga were still concerned about their own northern connections; but, increasingly, southern overland trade was taking economic precedence. The riverain trade retained its significance and

maintained Bini-Idoma Nokwu pressure for political power. Inter-marriage and the female-side relationships, over time, provided the sense of political legitimacy that could be exploited as a basis for political power. The Bini-Idoma Nokwu appear to have been influential enough to compete for political status, but the Abakwariga-Pabir-Jukun alliance maintained dominance.

The Kwararafa diaspora that had begun with the migration of disaffected Koro-red monkey in c. 1550-1580 eventually continued with the emigration of Bini-leopard and Idoma Nokwu-owuna bird in c. 1580-1640.³⁸ In c. 1580-1610 the Bini-Idoma Nokwu alliance endeavoured but failed to promote Abutu Eje as the paramount in Biapi. The Bini-Idoma Nokwu responded to this disappointing development by disassociating from Kwararafa and migrating down the River Benue. The Idoma Nokwu abandoned, for the most part, their homelands in Apa and re-settled temporarily in Apa II. Abutu Eje was the leader of this emigration, and finally led the combined population to Agatu. This emigration, according to Igala sources, included the Alago, Idoma, Igala, Igbirra, and some Hausa and Jukun.³⁹ Apparently, therefore, the alliances established in Biapi were not mutually exclusive; and while some Jukun and Abakwariga left during the Kwararafa diaspora some Bini and Idoma Nokwu stayed in the Apa area. The Kwararafa diaspora, incorporating such a diverse ethnic mix, and involving a substantial number of people, contributed to the foundation of a number of successor states and to the continued decline of the parent social formation.

In the political confrontation of c. 1600 Abutu Eje clearly appears to have represented the Bini-Idoma Nokwu alliance. He was of the leopard totem of Bini origins, yet presumably Idoma Nokwu in language. His major competition was Adi Agba Kenjo, a Jukun of the female-side to the Abakwariga-Pabir royal house of Biere. If Abutu Eje was a serious competitor, he must also have had some claim to female-side kinship relations to the royal house. Actually, it would appear that by 1600 there were probably two royal houses, one Abakwariga representing the ancient Tagara establishment, and the other, the new Pabir royal house, which possibly had been instrumental in the founding of Biere. There is no evidence (but one suspects) that Kenjo was female-side to one royal house, possibly the Pabir, and Abutu Eje to the other or Abakwariga royal house. Kenjo won and became the first remembered monarch in Jukun traditions.⁴⁰ The major significance of this succession dispute lay in the fact that it represented elements of northern origin allying with two distinct commercial competitors; the Bini dominating the Benue trade and the Jukun controlling the Cross River commerce. The Jukun and the Cross River commercial system were the winners.

However, despite this fame, Kenjo was hardly the founder of the Jukun successor state. His reign ended in a revolt of the Abakwariga from their major settlement at Uka. The Abakwariga planned a rebellion to overthrow the Jukun king; and Adi Agba Kenjo was, "murdered and his descendants excluded from the throne."⁴¹ The power of the central government was thus seized by Adashu Katakpa, and the capital was shifted from Biere to Uka. As a martyr to Jukun political ambitions, Adi Agba Kenjo was deified as the god of war and became an important

spirit in the Jukun collection of cults and ancestor worship.⁴² Adashu Katakpa, as a representative of Abakwariga political ambitions, decided that Uka, with its substantial Abakwariga population, would be a more secure and suitable settlement for the Kwararafa palace. It is also possible that Katakpa also favoured Uka because it was closer to the emigrating Idoma Nokwu who had been female-side relatives and allies of his royal house. It would appear, therefore, that the short-lived Jukun monarchy, under Adi Agba Kenjo, was not able to consolidate political authority and effectively utilize Jukun domination of southern trade to reinforce power through economic support. Clearly, Adashu Katakpa represented a resurgence of northern influence in Kwararafa and was probably recognized as Abakwariga and, therefore, more acceptable to the majority of northern peoples in the state. Political compromise in the multi-ethnic situation prior to c. 1610-1640 failed to provide the necessary continuity of government and did not satisfy the various claims to political power. The fragmentation during the Kwararafa diaspora reflected, quite clearly, the divisions in the cosmopolitan population. The emigration of the Koro, Bini and Idoma Nokwu certainly contributed to the fragile political accommodation and left two opposing factions to resolve the internal problems of the state. The Abakwariga emerged, at least temporarily, as victorious.

Uka was better located vis-à-vis Cross River commerce. It was probably the northern terminus of the Cross River trade route; and, as a consequence, from c. 1600 Jukun migration into the region accelerated. The Jukun migrants were no longer merely traders. They came in large numbers and settled as farmers until the entire Apa region once

dominated by the Idoma Nokwu became the major centre of concentration of the Jukun; the region later became known as their homeland. It seems, however, that Uka remained an Abakwariga urban enclave in the Jukun homeland. Upon the assassination of Kenjo and Katakpa's relocation at Uka, a Bini-leopard group founded the trading centre of Dampar on the Benue River. Dampar later became Jukun, but one suspects that in c. 1640 it was primarily Idoma Nokwu under a Bini-related royal house. By the end of the century the Dampar royal house had submitted to Uka and accepted their regalia. This might be interpreted as a sign that Benue commerce had lost out to the overland-route to the Cross River and that Jukun settlers were swamping Dampar. In the generation c. 1680-1710, Jukun were crossing and settling north of the Benue. Despite the struggles in Uka between Abakwariga and Jukun for control of the throne, the Jukun would, in the eighteenth century, come to look upon Kwararafa as their unique state. It would also seem that it was in the eighteenth century that the Jukun language came to be spoken by all other peoples including the Abakwariga. Pressure to Jukunize caused migrations out of Kwararafa, including some Abakwariga in the eighteenth century, at the close of which the Jukun had achieved exclusive political power. The Abakwariga clans had become king makers, a complete reversal of the hierarchy evident a century before.

The reign of Adashu Katakpa in Uka reflected the resurgence of northern influences in Kwararafa political and commercial affairs. To assure the longevity of Abakwariga political hegemony in the confederacy, Abakwariga commercial strength had to be reasserted in the northern trading patterns. Therefore, it was only natural that

Adashu Katakpa should strike at Kano with the aim of developing a share in the commerce of the north. After all, Kwararafa military strength had been founded upon a strong cavalry and Kano had been the main supplier of horses for this military arm of the Kwararafan government. Adashu Katakpa's invasion of the north and his defeat of Kano during the reign of Sarkin Mohammed Kukuna (1651-1660)⁴³ emphasized the destructive capacity of the Kwararafan army, even though the capital was now far removed from the northern sudanic zone.

... Sarkin Kwararafa Adashu came to attack Kano. Sarkin Kano went to Yan Magada where he stayed for seven days, and then to Auyo and Abewa, where he remained forty days. On his return he found that the Kwararafa had battered down the Kofan Kawayi [Kawayi Gate].⁴⁴

It does not seem coincidental that the ascendancy of Adashu Katakpa in c. 1640-1670 corresponded with a brief period of economic recovery after the deprivations of drought and famine. This modest recovery allowed for a resurgence in Saharan commercial activity. It is also interesting that while traders capitalized on this brief period of economic growth, drought and famine returned to plague the sudanic region. In fact, the reign of Sarkin Mohammed Kukuna was a time of severe drought in Kano itself;⁴⁵ and the Senegambia region suffered; "the great famine of the seventeenth century."⁴⁶ Bornu traditions indicate that a massive drought and wide spread famine ravaged the Lake Chad region, and that from the reign of Mai Haj Ali (1649-1689) to that of Mai Dunama Gana (1756-1758), drought remained

a serious problem. With the northern states weakened by drought and persistent famine, Adashu Katakpa seem determined to establish Kwararafan influences in the sudanic zone. These efforts to reassert Kwararafan power and authority might be considered an act of political opportunism. On the other hand, they can be seen as the actions of a political realist who perceived the weakness of the enemy and strikes. Given the facts that the Abakwariga were relatively secure in Uka, and Abakwariga mercantile opportunities were in need of resuscitation, the invasion of the north should also be considered a logical alternative. Furthermore, being located south of the River Benue it seems unlikely that predominantly Sahelian droughts, even of the magnitude of the climatic decline of the mid-seventeenth century, seriously imposed upon Kwararafa. The invasion of the northern zone, therefore, reflected Adashu Katakpa's determination to re-open northern trade.

The invasion of Bornu by Adashu Katakpa seems to provide further evidence of the determination to re-establish northern commercial links. This invasion coincided with a Tuareg attack on Mai Haj Ali's stronghold at Ngazargamu.⁴⁷ The conflict between the Kanuri and the Tuareg was probably exacerbated by the conditions on the desert-side of the Bornu empire.⁴⁸ Whatever the situation in the Tuareg camps, Mai Haj Ali was forced to confront two potent aggressors. To resolve the siege of Ngazargamu, Mai Haj Ali temporarily negotiated with the Tuareg and allied his forces to concentrate upon the defeat of Adashu Katakpa. Bornu won a resounding victory, and Mai Haj Ali gained fame throughout the Hausa states for his defeat of the powerful pagan invaders. Dan Marina, a Katsina poet and contemporary of

Mai Haj Ali, expressed the euphoria that swept through Bornu and the Hausa states after the defeat of Kwararafa.⁴⁹ This song, in fact, represented the Islamic ideals and the respect the Islamic community felt for Mai Haj Ali and his success against pagan influences in the sudanic zone.

The Sa'id Muhammad ibn Sabaghi (may God pardon him) in praise of Amir ul Muminin 'Ali Sultan of Bornu, and in censure of Kwararafa.

Ali has triumphed over the heathen, a matchless triumph in the path of God.
 No Sultan like him: A Laith among Laiths; ever stout of heart.
 Has he not brought us succour? Verily but for him
 Our hearts had never ceased from dread of the unbelievers.
 Narrow had become to us the earth pressed by the foe,
 Til-Ali saved our children and their children yet unborn.
 O people! Say with one accord 'May God grant him recompense for our deliverance.
 He drove back to their furthest borders the army of the Jukun;⁵⁰
 And scattered their host disheartened.
 I heard that Ali, the Amir ul Muminin,
 Went to the land of the heathen and there lay in wait for them.
 O God help him and give him a good reward.
 Strengthen us and give us sustenance.
 Luwefaru worked iniquity in the Sudan, in his over-weening pride,
 Striding forth with the stride of a tyrant; and setting his promises at naught,
 As though he weened that ne'er would a peer subdue him.
 He and his people spared not rivers nor cities;
 The Kwararafa followed the track of his doom, and their hour too,
 Passed to the grasping palm of the fortunate Prince,
 The pious Hajj to the Holy Cities, who in this world and the next has
 Earned the pilgrim's highest reward.
 Always fasting and waging war, winning thereby to God's face and safe mercy.
 Give thanks again for what our Mai Ali has wrought;
 For he has ransomed the whole Sudan from strife.
 This is the need of praise of the servant of God,
 The Sheikh the Sa'id Hamid,
 Upon Ali, King of the two rivers, who stayed war.
 I, Dan Marina, fear no one save the savages, whose law is greed.
 Praise be to God and thanks for His deliverance from the pride of the rebellious
 And thanksgiving and peace upon the Prophet, the guide to God, our refuge.⁵¹

After the defeat by Bornu, Adashu Katakpa's son, the successor to the Kwararafan throne, endeavoured once again to secure a 'place in the northern sun' by renewing the attack on Kano.⁵² This invasion in c. 1670-1700 represented, in effect, the last effort on the part of the Abakwariga to secure a place in the northern trade-network. The success of the campaign, as the following evidence clearly shows, did not establish the economic security sought by the northern trading community in Kwararafa. The failure to establish lasting political and economic relations and to exercise any degree of political control must be seen as a repetitive flaw in Kwararafan foreign policy. Victory in a single battle might temporarily weaken the vanquished and generate some commercial activity; but it did not establish stability, peace and recognition of Kwararafa as a valuable trading partner. The invasion of Kano by King Agwabi in c. 1670-1700, therefore, provided little economic advantage, failed to reassure Abakwariga merchants, and did not affirm Abakwariga domination in Kwararafa. The following tradition, taken from The Kano Chronicle, for the reign of Sarkin Dadi (1670-1703) seems to provide another clue as to a possible explanation for this attack. Certainly, with the failure of his father in the preceding generation it is surprising that Agwabi pursued the northern connections. However, as Kano traditions reveal, and Bornu traditions confirm, there was another rationale for the military invasion of Kano in 1671.⁵³

The Sarkin wished to go out and fight him [Agwabi] but the chiefs of Kano demurred and he remained in his house. The Kwararafai entered Kano by the Kofan Gadon Kaia, slaughtered the men of Kano and reached Bakinrui.

The Galadima Kofankani said to the Sarkin Kano, who was in the Pugachin Kishi with his Jarumai: "Establish 'Tchibiri' at Toji and 'Bundu' at Rimi Bundu." The Galadima said to the Sarki, "Rise up! the Kworarafa have destroyed the best part of your town and have killed many men! They have penetrated to the Kurmi, and will attack the 'palace'." The Sarki mounted his horse and went out, and came to the Kofan Fada with the Galadima He went to Rimi Bundu, took the "Bundu" and gave it to Dan Durma Mazza Mazza, and thence hastened to Kofa Bai. He found the Kworarafa had come near the "Tchibiri" but everyone of them who came close died at once. The Sarkin Kworarafa told his people to take away the "Tchibiri". The Kworarafa tried to charge, but they failed to seize it. The Sarki Kano came to the "Tchibiri", and took it. On his right hand he had a hundred warriors, in front of him ninety-five chiefs, all of them mallams, and on his left hand a hundred warriors. They were all slaughtered by the Kworarafa; only a few were left alive. Sarkin Kano fled to Daura. The Kworarafa followed him to Jelli and then returned.⁵⁴

The indications in the Kano traditions are quite clear that the invasion under Agwabi was related to the presence of the cult objects of "Bundu" and "Tchibiri". It would seem, therefore, that as the prominent representative of pagan Hausa in the Benue Basin, the leadership in Kwararafa was determined to control these pagan cult objects. Apparently, pagan ritual and spiritual pride were offended by the fact that Bundu and Tchibiri were in the hands of an Islamized polity like Kano. The invasion by Agwabi was, therefore, an attempt to liberate the pagan cults and to return them to Abakwariga control.

The "Tchibiri" cult had been first practised in Kano during the reign of Sarkin Tsamia in c. 1307-1343.⁵⁵ Although the monarchy originally endeavoured to suppress the practice of this pagan cult, the Sarkin was eventually convinced to allow it to continue.

The Sarki returned to the tree, and destroyed the wall together with all else connected with Tchibiri which was beneath the tree. All the pagans had in the meantime fled, except Makare, Dan Samaji, and Danguzu Dan Dorini. The Sarki said to them, "Why do you not run away?" They said, "Where were we to run to?" "Praise be to God", said the Sarki. "Tell me the secret of your God." They told him. When he had heard, the Sarki said to Danguzu, "I make you Sarki Tchibiri." 56

The traditions about the invasion of Kano in 1670-1703 establish a relationship between Kwararafa ambitions and the Bundu and Tchibiri cults. Further research in Kano might clarify this connection. However, it is possible to suggest that tolerance of pagans in Kano, and the acceptance of their cults, reduced the exodus of alienated Abakwariga and thus reduced the flow into pagan states, such as Kwararafa. King Agwabi saw that Abakwariga domination in Kwararafa was jeopardized by the increasingly vocal Jukun and by a decreasing flow of northern pagan supporters. The Tchibiri cult, with headquarters in Kwararafa, might have strengthened this state as a place of refuge, and would certainly have established an important pagan spiritual centre outside of the Islamic Hausa states. The migration of Jukun into Kwararafa, the exodus of Greater Doma, and the decreasing influx of Abakwariga had been a continuing demographic shift in which the Abakwariga seemed to lose while the Jukun stood to gain. The attack on Kano may have been prompted, therefore, not only by a perceived economic motive, but by a spiritual motive as well.

Kwararafa's ability to invade Kano in c. 1670-1700 would have been possible only if the supply of horses had been maintained. The tsetse fly south of the River Benue, especially in the Uka region,

probably made the continued supply of horses more difficult and emphasized the need to secure supply lines to the north. In addition, Abakwariga political authority in Kwararafa had traditionally been based upon the dominance of northern trade and on the prominence of the Kwararafan cavalry. In this respect the invasion of Kano by King Agwabi seemed to reflect the general conditions in Kwararafa during the latter half of the seventeenth century. Conditions in which Abakwariga political and commercial, religious, military authority and statute were severely weakened. Given the depression of the trans-Saharan trade it seems unlikely that Kano had excess or surplus horses for exchange. It is perhaps equally unlikely that Kano could dispose of any accumulated southern products. It would seem, therefore, that the invasion of Kano was an act of a fairly desperate monarchy suffering the accumulated turmoil of a century of economic and political degradation, and seeking once and for all to reassert its declining influence in the sudanic zone. It is significant that upon his return from the attempted conquest of Kano, and the failure to seize the Tchibirri cult, Agwabi provided the impetus for the foundation of a dynasty at Awe. Awe traditions claim that Agwabi arrived riding a roan antelope. Possibly this is a subtle indication that Kwararafa's military strength relied less on horse-mounted cavalry - possibly only officers and titled officials were equipped with horses - and more upon foot soldiers with bows and arrows. This change in the military organization of Kwararafa would presumably have favoured the Jukun since their experience in warfare would have been with this type of equipment. Agwabi's was the last invasion of Kano or any other

northern Islamic city state, not only because the distance was too great for foot soldiers, but also because the economic and commercial concerns had shifted conclusively to the south.

The eventual collapse of Kwararafa as an imperial trading formation, and its reconstitution as an eighteenth century Jukun national state were rooted in the partial but growing abandonment of the shared principles of central administration. This fundamental change in the organization of Kwararafa was also conditional upon the transformation of economic orientation, altered demographic balance, and the shift from cavalry to footmen. The replacement of the relatively egalitarian, multi-ethnic, confederal central administration through the process of inter-ethnic struggle for domination, particularly between Abakwari, Ioma Nokwu, Bini, Jukun, and Korogwari, represented a final, crushing blow to the confederation. The Kwararafa polity evident in the Benue Valley at the end of the seventeenth century bore little resemblance to the once powerful state that dominated the Gongola Basin two centuries previously. Clearly the organization of the state, and the slow retrenchment into the Benue Valley, had not provided sufficient social, political and economic cohesion to establish the basis of a new social formation under the drastically altered conditions of the seventeenth century.

The ability of the various segments in the confederation to retain their distinct ethnic identity - symbolized by crocodile, leopard, mandee and owua bird - after a number of generations in Kwararafa, suggests that there was only a weak attempt at centralized assimilation or acculturation. The development of a common ideology or state structure which minimized ethnic identity might have

engendered a solid basis for the recognition of the state administration. The war to regain Tchibiri, however, represented Abakwariga ambitions that had apparently survived almost three hundred years of association with Kwararafa. With this tenacity in ethnic identification, the principles of shared succession in the central monarchy enabled the diverse groups in the state to maintain their relationship within the confederation. Abandonment of this founding principle served to minimize the attachment of each group to the state and prompted further fragmentation.

Kwararafa had a brief period of glory when it had emerged as the dominant military, and perhaps economic and political, power in the sudanic zone. It was during this period that stronger attachments to the confederal structure might have been enhanced. However, generations of violent competition with aggressive neighbours, droughts, famines and internal disputes undermined the central institutions and prompted a retrenchment of the capital into the Benue Valley. The moment of supreme glory, which interestingly enough corresponded with the era described in the regional chronological structure as a period of 'prosperity', quickly passed;⁵⁷ and Kwararafa was forced into the struggle in which the economic and political order was redefined. Throughout the seventeenth century, states in the middle belt and southern sudanic zone were forced to recognize a changing economic balance of power which emphasized southern exchange patterns and minimized the old northern oriented economic order. The advent of Jukun paramount authority, in the abortive attempt to concentrate central power in Jukun hands under Agba Kenjo, represented only the initial phase in this transformation of

the Kwararafa confederacy. The emergence of Aku Dawi, first in a fairly long line of Jukun monarchs, in c. 1700-1730,⁵⁸ seems to support the conclusion offered by Sa'ad Abubakar when he argued that

...if the Jukun were ... from the south, as linguistic evidence strongly suggests, one has to agree that Kwararafa was a middle Benue phenomenon ... I maintain ... that the ancient Jukun polity [read Kwararafa] whose achievements are so well known in Borno and Hausaland was centred north of present day Jukunland.⁵⁹

It is also evident, however, that the Jukun were not, as Sa'ad Abubakar believed, synonymous with Kwararafa; and it was only in the decline of Abakwariga fortunes that the Jukun achieved the paramount position in the state. In fact, it was only after the fragmentation of the Kwararafa confederacy into its component parts that the Jukun achieved primacy in their successor state.

The collapse of Kwararafa, therefore, gave rise to a number of successor states in the middle belt, not the least of which were the Jukun colonies and the development of Jukun authority in the main remnant of Kwararafa. After Agwapi, the monarchy in Bieri reverted to the Jukun. The Abakwariga provided the female side and the king-makers along with considerable Abakwariga-Jukun intermarriage, but the Jukun language became the lingua franca of the successor state. It is also interesting that during this process of revitalization under Jukun paramount authority, Jukun deities dominated the pantheon of state gods. Kwararafa had disintegrated, but one of its remnants became a Jukun nation state and inherited the mantle of

Kwararafa history. The capital of this new entity was moved from the Abakwari town of Uka to the Jukun community of Wuse located north of the Benue, and finally in the early nineteenth century to Wukari.

The name "Wukari" goes back in time and apparently relates to Jukun settlement in Kwararafa which developed close to the town of Uka. Wukari may have been in existence during the time of Agba Kenjo, but it was just another Jukun community in an expansive multi-ethnic confederation. It is also evident, however, that the region in which both Uka and Wukari were located was called Apa; and probably the rural areas of Apa were populated primarily by Greater Doma. After the migration of the Greater Doma, during the turmoil of the early seventeenth century,⁶⁰ they called their new region of settlement Apa, in remembrance of their homelands in Kwararafa.⁶¹ To distinguish between the two 'Apa' regions E.O. Erim referred to them as Apa I and Apa II.⁶² The Kwararafa diaspora of the seventeenth century from Apa I gave rise to a number of distinct successor states, and each cluster reflected the ethnic origins of the founders which they had retained throughout their association with Kwararafa.⁶³

Jukun colonies were established throughout the Benue Valley and seem to differ substantially in time of settlement. A few of the earlier colonies remain in the southern Gongola Basin, and Jukun are evident in the demographic mixture in Pindiga. Other successor states in the Benue Basin which clearly indicate Jukun connections, and in some cases have retained Jukun as the dominant language, include Awe, Wuse, Azara, Akiri and Wukari. The main Bini settlement was Dampar, while in Rugwagu, Shabu, Giza and Kanje the Jukun and

Abakwariga shared the throne. The Bini-Greater Doma population founded successor states in Idah, Ankpa, Doma, Keana, Adoka, Ugboju, Oturkpo and Etulo, to name but a few. The history of Kwararafa, therefore, seems to come to a fairly abrupt end during the seventeenth century dispersal. The dispersal of the various components in the multi-ethnic confederacy accounted for the creation of a number of national states representing single ethnicities or occasionally a combination of two diverse segments.

This discussion has endeavoured to examine briefly the developments in Kwararafa as the changing fortunes of this sudanic state were reflected in the relations of the polity to the northern Benue Basin region. The combination of events that led to the decline and eventual collapse of this once major trading formation included internal dissension and external pressures. Not the least of these contributing factors was the inter-ethnic competition for paramount political and economic status in a state with no constitutional foundation for single-ethnic domination. Furthermore, the economic transformation wrought by the collapse of Songhai and the expansion of Atlantic overseas trade created, in effect, a new commercial pattern which directly affected political development in many Benue Basin states. Particular to this discussion were the dramatic change in the sudanic economic infra-structure, the rise of Bornu, and the decline of the northern trade links of the Abakwariga. These purely political and economic factors must also be correlated with the major climatic fluctuations which seriously affected political or economic decisions. The expansion and development of southern trade and the vagaries of the sudanic zone environment can, therefore, be

directly related to the decline of Kwararafa, the Kwararafa diaspora of the seventeenth century and the emergence of the successor states in the middle belt. The following discussion endeavours to pursue the events in the Kwararafa diaspora and the aftermath of the collapse of the once important state. This discussion concentrates on developments at Idah as representative of the diaspora of Bini-Greater Doma, and considers the revitalization of middle belt politics and economics to the end of the eighteenth century.

Endnotes to Chapter Six

1. During the initial planning stages of the Benue Valley History Project in 1974 the importance of Kwararafa was clearly recognized; and a researcher was assigned the responsibility for collecting, recording and subsequently analysing oral and documentary records for this state. Unfortunately this research was prematurely curtailed after the production of only a preliminary paper, based upon archival and published sources. Refer to J. Sterkin, 'Some Reflections on Kwararafa', A.B.U. Seminar, Jos, 1974. This paper added very little to the general knowledge about Kwararafa, but it did emphasize the Abakwariya domination of the state during the early period. The mantle of Kwararafan historical research subsequently shifted to D. Makuluni at Dalhousie University, who has yet to provide anything of substance on the sudanic zone let alone Kwararafa. It has also fallen to R. Shain at the University of Jos, and the Johns Hopkins University; and his results are anxiously awaited. Other major contributions to the sudanic zone are also in progress, sections of which have been made available for this study. Thanks are, therefore, due to J.E. Miller, 'The Barbur Dynasty of Bui', Dalhousie University, M.A., expected 1984, and J. Power, 'Lafia: Layers of Settlement', Dalhousie University Honours Essay, expected 1984. Another major contribution to the historiography of the sudanic zone and Kwararafa, in particular has been J.B. Webster; 'The Three Phases of Kwararafa: A Peripetatic State', Dalhousie University History Seminar, January, 1984. This paper will be forthcoming in Central Nigerian Perspectives, edited by E. Isichei, Jos, in press.
2. Refer to the enclosed map which documents the shifting capitals of Kwararafa. Also refer to Webster, 'The Three Phases of Kwararafa', op. cit., for the details behind the shifting capitals.
3. Relations between Kwararafa, Kano and Bornu were particularly close - physically, economically and culturally - prior to the sixteenth century. As the Kwararafan capital retrenched southward the physically relationships were weakened, and the economic and cultural attachments severed. Refer to the enclosed map which documents the shifting capitals and reveals quite clearly the changing nature of Kwararafa's relationship to the sudanic zone and middle belt.
4. Webster, 'The Three Phases of Kwararafa', op. cit.

5. Refer for example to C.K. Meek, A Sudanese Kingdom, New York, 1969 (reprint); and Sa'ad Abubakar, 'The Middle Benue Region Up to c. 1850', A.B.U. Seminar, Jos, 1974. Also refer to H.R. Palmer, The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan, London, 1936 (reprinted in 1970 by Negro Universities Press, New York); and H.R. Palmer, Sudanese Memoirs, 3 Vols., Lagos, 1928.
6. The chronology for this discussion was established in J.B. Webster, "To the Palace Gates", History in Africa, Vol. 11, 1984. Also refer to the Kwararafa regnal list in this chapter.
7. Abubakar, 'The Middle Benue Region', p. 2.
8. A much more detailed contribution can be found in Webster, 'The Three Phases of Kwararafa', op. cit. which deals with a different period of Kwararafa history.
9. H.R. Palmer's introduction to Meek, A Sudanese Kingdom, op. cit., suggests that the Jukup came from east of the Benue Basin and migrated southward into the Lake Chad region. The southern origins, which completely oppose Palmer's view, have been expressed by Webster, 'The Three Phases of Kwararafa', op. cit., and J.B. Webster, 'Animals of the Kingdom', Benue Valley Project Paper No. 6, 1975, pp. 3-4. A great deal of supporting evidence also leads to this conclusion, including linguistics, material culture, migration traditions, and settlement patterns.
10. C. Hoffman, "The Languages of Nigeria by Language Family", in Studies in Nigerian Languages, Vol. 5, 1976, original appearing as C. Hoffman, 'The Languages of Nigeria by Language Families', Department of Linguistics, University of Ibadan, 1976. A reconstruction from this information has been included in the appendix to this whole study. The linguistic information that follows has been extracted from Hoffman's larger study.
11. The Bantoid sub-division represents southern Nigerian languages.
12. Webster, 'Animals of the Kingdom', op. cit., and Webster, 'The Three Phases of Kwararafa', op. cit.
13. J.N. Orkar, 'A Pre-Colonial History of the Tiv of Central Nigeria, c. 1500-1850', Dalhousie University Ph.D., 1979; also refer to T.M. Macleod, 'Ethnological Report on Okpoto, Egede etc. of Idomaland', Kaduna National Archives, 1925.
14. Refer to A.E. Afigbo, 'The Aro of South-eastern Nigeria: A Socio-Historical Analysis of Their Origins', Part II, African Notes, VI, 2, (1971), pp. 91-106; G.I. Jones, "Who are the Aro?", Nigerian Field, No. 3, 1939, pp. 100-103; Macleod, 'Ethnological Report', op. cit.; and F.I. Ekejiuba, 'The Aro System of Trade

In the Nineteenth Century", Ikenga, 1972.

* Macleod argued, in fact, that "the Jukuns ... when the semi-Bantu Munshi [Tiv] came over the Sinkwala range, attacked Wukari [Kwararafa?], the influence of which extended to the Cross River. The result was that the Jukun of Masimbila went south and became the dominant caste among the Ibo and the Ibo religion is the Aro (Jukun)." Orkar, 'A Pre-Colonial History of the Tiv', op. cit., provides an interesting chronological correlation with Macleod's assessment and establishes a date of c. 1500-1530 for the Tiv encroachment into Msimbila and Jukun territory.

15. Webster, 'The Three Phases of Kwararafa', op. cit., Santolo represented the first phase.
16. The Kano Chronicle, translated by H.R. Palmer, and reprinted in J.A. Burdon, Northern Nigeria, London, 1909, pp. 27-29.
17. Ibid., p. 28. The description of the attack on Santolo suggests certain important characteristics about the "key to the south." When the Kanawa entered Santolo, they attacked the main religious centre and found "a bell, and two horns, a battle axe and leg irons," which they plundered. "Yaji stayed seven days ... and destroyed the place of sacrifice, and after dismantling its walls and tree an important religious shrine returned to Kano." This description leaves no doubt Santolo was a pagan stronghold. The evidence also suggests that a connection between Santolo and the Koro Migili who have been described as the "people of the horns;" refer to Power, 'Lafia', op. cit. The Koro claim to have left Kwararafa, at a very early date, and probably came out in three distinct waves, the first from Santolo, the second from Tagara and the third from Biépi. The largest wave probably left Tagara in c. 1463-1493, after the crushing defeat by Bornu.
18. Abubakar, 'The Middle Benue Region', op. cit. Refer to the enclosed maps which locate Tagara north of the Gongola-Hawal confluence.
19. Miller, 'The Babur Dynasty of Biu', op. cit.
20. Palmer, The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan, p. 222.
21. Gazetteers of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria, Vol. 1, The Hausa Emirates, London, 1972. The Gazetteer of Kano Province, originally compiled by W.F. Gowers, published in London, 1921, p. 2.
22. A.W. Pardo, "The Songhay Empire Under Sonni 'Alī and Askia Mohammed: A Study in Comparison and Contrasts"; Boston University Papers on Africa, Vol. V, 1971, p. 55.

23. Refer to the enclosed map which shows the trade routes in the northern Benue Basin and the second map which shows the salt deposits in the Chad Basin.
24. Palmer, The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan, p. 223.
25. Webster, 'The Three Phases of Kwararafa', op. cit., and Miller, 'The Babur Dynasty of Biu', op. cit.
26. Power, 'Lafia: Layers of Settlement', op. cit.
27. Webster, 'The Three Phases of Kwararafa', op. cit.
28. J.B. Webster, 'Periodization in African History, c. 1050-1850', Dalhousie University Pre-Colonial Workshop, June 1983, p. 7.
29. P.E. Lovejoy and Stephen Baier, "The Desert-Side Economy of the Central Sudan," The International Journal of African Historical Studies, VIII, 4, (1975), p. 572.
30. D.J. Schove, "African Droughts and the Spectrum of Time", in D. Dalby and R.J.H. Church, (eds.), Droughts in Africa, London, 1973. Also refer to S. Nicholson,
31. Palmer, The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan, p. 228.
32. Ibn Fartua, History of the First Twelve Years of the Reign of Mai Idris Alooma, translated by H.R. Palmer, Lagos, 1926.
33. The Kano Chronicle, p. 35.
34. Hoffman, "The Languages of Nigeria", op. cit.
35. It would appear that the Bini expansion up the Benue River began in the major expansion of the Benin empire c. 1482-1537. The establishment of the Bini dynasty at Idah in c. 1507-1537 added impetus to the Bini trading colonies on the Benue and established a major organizational point for riverain trade that stretched from Raba on the Niger, and Ibi on the Benue to the delta trading ports.
36. Economic strength and political power seemed to go hand in hand. The evidence throughout the Benue Basin supports this contention, and the Bini riverain traders on the Benue and the Jukun overland merchants were no exception.
37. The riverain route passed through Idah, Onitsha and Aboh before it reached the coast. Each state exacted taxes on the trade, thus making this system more expensive and less profitable than the overland route.

38. The Koro-Gwari component had been greatly weakened by the migration from Tagara of a large segment of this population. Refer to the Kwararafa regional list which has been enclosed with this chapter. This chart also shows the related dynasties in Wuse and Azara.
39. Igala Historical Text No. 5 (hereafter cited as I.H.T.), the Attah of Idah, January 8, 1977.
40. J.B. Webster, 'Spirits of the Kingdom', Benue Valley Project Paper No. 7, 1975.
41. Ibid., and repeated in a similar form in Meek, Sudanese Kingdom, p. 266.
42. Meek, Sudanese Kingdom, p. 266. Refer to the statement that "Kenjo is also the patron of war," and "the cult of Kenjo is ... a very ancient Jukun cult."
43. The Kano Chronicle, p. 38.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. P.D. Curtin, Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Supplementary Evidence, Madison, 1975, p. 5.
47. Palmer, The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan, p. 248.
48. Lovejoy and Baier, "The Desert-Side Economy", p. 572. This argument states that the "Tuareg trade network and commercial infrastructure not only formed a link between the economies of desert and savanna, but also provided a safety valve for the desert during drought."
49. Palmer, The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan, p. 246.
50. This seems to be the first reference in any of the Kano or Bornu sources which actually refers to the Jukun. This may be a reflection of the fact that prior to the reign of Mai Haj Ali in Bornu, c. 1649-1689 the Jukun were not strongly associated with Kwararafa. The evidence suggests, in fact, that the Jukun presence in Kwararafa was felt politically for the first time in c. 1610-1640, and even then only in a single reign that ended in assassination.
51. Palmer, The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan, pp. 246-247.
52. The Kano Chronicle, p. 38.

53. In the Bornu chronicle the conflict between Kano and Kwararafa was related to religious differences and the presence in Kano of the pagan Tchibiru cult. Refer to Palmer, The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan, p. 246.
54. The Kano Chronicle, pp. 38-39. Also refer to S.J. Hogben and A. Kirk-Greene, The Emirates of Northern Nigeria, London, 1966, p. 195.
55. The Kano Chronicle, p. 27.
56. Ibid., p. 28.
57. Particularly refer to the regional chronology presented in Chapter One and repeated in the conclusions.
58. Refer to the Kwararafa, Wuse and Azara regnal list enclosed in this chapter.
59. Abubakar, 'The Middle Benue Region', op. cit.
60. The following chapter examines the exodus of the Greater Doma in more detail. This discussion also considers the foundation of the third Idah dynasty as one of the major effects of the decline and fragmentation of Kwararafa.
61. I.H.T. No. 5.
62. E.O. Erim, 'The Pre-Colonial History of The Idoma of Central Nigeria', Dalhousie University, Ph.D., 1976. Also refer to E.O. Erim, Idoma Nationality 1600-1900, Problems in Studying The Origins and Development of Ethnicity, Enugu, 1981, pp. 14-20.
63. The question of language and culture may be too large an issue to raise here. However, it would seem that the three ethnic segments evident in the Kwararafa population retained both linguistic and cultural distinctions. The facts that the Jukun, for example, were classified under the Jukunoid sub-group in the Benue-Congo family, and the Idoma sub-group was classified in the Kwa family indicate a relatively deep division between the two sub-groups. Refer to the language chart presented as an appendix to this work which was reconstructed from Hoffman, "Languages of Nigeria by Language Family", op. cit.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Kwararafa Diaspora and the Third Idah Dynasty

c. 1600-1700

The decline of Kwararafa and the slow retrenchment southward into the Benue Valley contributed to a number of emigrations from the confederacy. These migrations gave rise to a number of successor states in the middle belt and sudanic zone. When the Koro Migi 11 left Tagara at the end of the fifteenth century they were the forerunners of a much larger migratory movement down the River Benue in the seventeenth century.¹ The following discussion endeavours to examine the Bini-Greater Doma diaspora from Kwararafa during the period between c. 1597-1657.² This emigration can be related to the political, demographic, social and economic transformation of the upper Benue after the conjunction of Jukun from the south and Kwararafa from the north.³ The second half of this discussion concentrates upon events, personalities and politics in the confluence region, the subsequent development of the Agatu diaspora, and the foundations of the third Idah dynasty. This analysis examines the relationship between the Kwararafa refugees with the oppressed Okpoto and Igbo under the Bini dynasty in Idah, and identifies the factors in the union of Greater Doma, Okpoto and Igbo against the Bini monarchy. This discussion also considers the various connections within the Kwararafa refugee community, and the causal factors in the diaspora from Agatu in c. 1657-1717, which ultimately contributed to the redefinition of middle belt political geography.

While the background to the Kwararafa diaspora (c. 1597-1657) has been discussed elsewhere, it is worth noting that the Greater Doma population disassociated from the multi-ethnic confederacy because of a decline in both political and economic influence. By c. 1567-1597, the Greater Doma population began to experience a negative transformation of their political power and economic fortunes in Kwararafan affairs. The changing demography contributed to this decline, with a corresponding increase in Jukun power, influence and economic domination. The Bini-leopard community on the upper Benue also suffered a similar fate, and aligned with the Greater Doma in the expression of opposition to Kwararafan political organization. The seizure of political power by Adi Agba Kenjo in c. 1610-1640,⁴ not only further elevated Jukun authority over that of the Greater Doma, but supported Jukun commercial and economic development at the expense of other ethnic components. Webster argues, in fact, that the take over by Kenjo reflected the internal power struggle in the state.

One suspects a three way struggle in which the two powerful candidates - representing the Kanuri and Greater Doma - were ignored in favour of a compromise candidate Kenjo ... Among the Jukun, Kenjo has been deified as the spirit of war ... His reign was notable for having turned war (kê) into sport (jo).⁵

The eventual overthrow of Kenjo in c. 1610-1640 returned Kanuri or Abakwariga to the throne, but did little to reassure Greater Doma political and economic concerns. The majority of Greater Doma apparently opted to disassociate completely from Kwararafa, and chose migration down the river as the logical alternative to continued

conjunction in a state which little catered to their ambitions. The first wave in this diaspora began in c. 1597-1627, and the emigration continued unabated for the next two generations.⁶ The dominant element in Kwararafa, particularly the Kanuri monarch Adashu Katakpa in c. 1640-1670 and his successor King Agwabi in c. 1670-1700, endeavoured to retain some measure of solidarity in the multi-ethnic confederacy. Both monarchs, in fact, sought to force the Bini and Greater Doma emigrants to accept Kwararafa authority and force the refugees to pay tribute to Uka.⁷ Katakpa and Agwabi dispatched the military for the express purpose of coercing the refugees to remain within the state. However, as the following clearly shows, the emigration eventually allowed the refugees to divorce themselves from Kwararafa, and their violent opposition severed the final links between the refugees and the parent state. Their hard won autonomy was vigorously defended, and the right of protest and disassociation through emigration established new settlements throughout the lower and middle Benue Valley. This political reorganization and demographic shift can be directly related to the political and economic confusion in Kwararafa.

The discussion in the previous chapter introduced the concept that the monarchy in Kwararafa was shared between various royal components. Further evidence of this administrative system can be found in the traditions from the successor states, particularly among the Igala, Alago and Idoma. The genealogies and royal traditions confirm that these groups in the Kwararafa diaspora transported the political culture of the parent state during the emigration down the Benue. The chronologies of these three communities, calculated by three different

pre-colonial researchers,⁸ also confirm the association of Greater Doma and their participation in the diaspora. The Alago, for example, claim that they left Kwararafa with the Idoma and Igala.⁹ Alago traditions are supported by the Igala who claim that they, in part at least, had a previous affinity with Kwararafa, and settled in Agatu with the groups that joined them in the disassociation emigration.¹⁰ Idoma, Etulo, Koro and Abakwanga traditions corroborate the date of departure for the political refugees, and confirm that the system of government in Kwararafa was a constitutional rotation between participating royal houses.¹¹ These sources generally agree that the Kwararafa diaspora occurred because the constitution was violated and power and authority seized by one component in the succession system.

It is interesting to note that the political culture of this now defunct confederacy has been reproduced even in polities that were not directly involved in the constitutional system. The Bini settlement at Dampar, for example, retained the rotating system in the administration of this chiefdom, and a number of other smaller communities still share the monarchy between various ethnic groups. Dampar was not involved in the migration down the Benue, and yet developed a rotating monarchy. The same is certainly true of the Etulo.¹² Secondly, it should be noted that the exodus by the alienated Bini-Greater Doma was not a peaceful excursion in search of new and more stable homelands. Troops loyal to Adashu Katakpa and Agwabi repeatedly tried to force the refugees to remain in the state.¹³ It was only after a decisive encounter in Agatu that these migrants achieved relative security from the militarism of Kwararafan politics. The circumstances of the Kwararafa diaspora, therefore, were hardly

conducive to experimentation with new political forms or methods of administration. The situation in Agatu, where an immigrant refugee population was seriously threatened not only by the Kwararafan military, but also by the violent opposition of the local ruling dynasty,¹⁴ demanded a strong, recognized and effective government which could provide legitimate, stable power and authority and organize the refugees against their Kwararafan and Bini opponents. This argument suggests that the rotational principles recreated in Agatu were part of the Kwararafan political culture carried down the River Benue during the c. 1597-1627 exodus. The rotational principle in the central administration, reflecting the political culture of the multi-ethnic confederacy, was not the only common custom or cultural trait inherited by the refugees in the diaspora.

One of the main unifying features evident in the Greater Doma population that left Kwararafa during the diaspora was a linguistic affinity which linked the various sub-groups in a common language family. The Greater Doma, in fact, formed a sub-division of the Kwa language family, and included within this linguistic classification (1.a.4.6.) the Aïago, Idoma, Yala, Awka, Igede and Etulo.¹⁵ As Kress and Hodges argued "language ... is a key instrument in socialization, and the means whereby society forms [and] ... permeates the individual's consciousness."¹⁶ In this respect, the mutually intelligible Idoma sub-group of Kwa languages indicates that the Greater Doma population not only had a similar background (historically or genetically),¹⁷ but that this cultural ideology was carried outward and maintained long after the diaspora. Linguistic affinity, therefore, represented one of the dominant cultural features of the Kwararafa.

diaspora, particularly in the Greater Doma population. The Greater Doma were also linked to the Binji expatriot community on the Benue, and reflected this association in their language, culture and social formations.

Another of the important examples of common cultural heritage evident in the Kwararafa diaspora was a strong taboo against menstrual blood.¹⁸ This taboo, directed primarily against food prepared by menstruating women, was part of Igala, Idoma, Alago and Jukun culture.¹⁹ It seems to have been a commonly held cultural mechanism which enabled people from different communities within the same cultural complex to interact -- socially and politically -- according to a clearly defined set of rules. Inter-marriage between groups who held the menstrual taboo was recognized and accepted, whereas groups outside the taboo system were not acceptable. Also, this taboo was related to the royal custom among the Greater Doma, of eating in relative seclusion, and the general avoidance of discussion of food and drink.²⁰ It would seem, therefore, that this cultural symbol probably originated in Kwararafa and developed relatively early in the history of that multi-ethnic confederacy. The menstrual taboo has become a symbol of early associations in Kwararafa and defines the outer limits of social interaction and inter-marriage for ethnic groups which adhere to it today.

A third common cultural trait, not only displayed by the Greater Doma, but popular among the other ethnic elements that originated in Kwararafa, was the piercing of the ear. As early as c. 1539-1559, the Mai of Bornu had noted that Kwararafans had "holes in their ears."²¹ Igala royal traditions under the third dynasty perpetuated

this custom, and the ear piercing ritual is an important part of the coronation ceremony.²² The Osana (chief) of Keana, one of the important Alago polities in the Obasadoma (Alago homeland), also has his ear pierced during the installation ceremony.²³ Finally, a great many Jukun in the Benue Basin still practice this custom and wear the earring associated with Kwararafa. The ear decoration, therefore, is one of the important cultural traits evident among the various successor states and serves to overtly identify the individual as a former member of this extensive confederacy.

Finally, and perhaps one of the most significant cultural symbols of the common origins of the various segments in the Benue Basin that had been associated with Kwararafa are the totemic beliefs. The degree of similarity and consistence throughout the middle belt and in all the successor states suggests that these diverse populations were indeed connected through common affiliation within the Kwararafa confederacy. This is not to suggest, however, that every population sports exactly the same totemic holdings. On the contrary there are some important distinctions between Igala, Idoma, Alago, Jukun and Abakwariga totems. However, considering the fact that every population currently distinguished by a unique ethnic identity, such as Igala, Idoma, Alago or Iyala - contained elements of Greater Doma, Abakwariga, Bini, Koro and Jukun, the dissemination of common totemic belief systems is not unusual. Totemic relationships might, in fact, prove to be one of the more concrete or positive determinants which identify disparate populations who may have had a common past.

As members of a large clan, a man is related to common and distant ancestors symbolized by sacred animals [totems and taboos], as a member of a lineage, to closer ancestors symbolized by totems.²⁴

It should be established that primary totems usually signify, symbolically at least, the relationship between an individual or group and his or its families and clan. Similarities in totemic belief systems facilitated social intercourse and inter-marriage relations among various ethnic groups and clans. Furthermore, similar totemic systems can reveal common (genetic) relationships among what might appear to be widely separated and distant groups. The various components in the Kwararafa diaspora reveal a degree of totemic similarity which indicates past cultural, political and perhaps ethnic relations. The fact that these various groups in the Benue Basin have similar totemic beliefs suggests that they may have had a common cultural, political, social and historical relationship. When this potential is examined against the supporting evidence from migration traditions, chronology, linguistics and other cultural traits, as well as the claims of oral traditions, the conclusion seems quite clear. Totemic relationships in the Benue Valley can be confirmed through various corroborative data as links between related groups.

The following map endeavours to correlate totemic data for the Benue Valley and relate individual totems to particular populations. This data seems to indicate that the successor states, and the various Kwararafa refuge colonies in the middle belt that recreated Kwararafan political and social structures, were related to the Greater Doma,

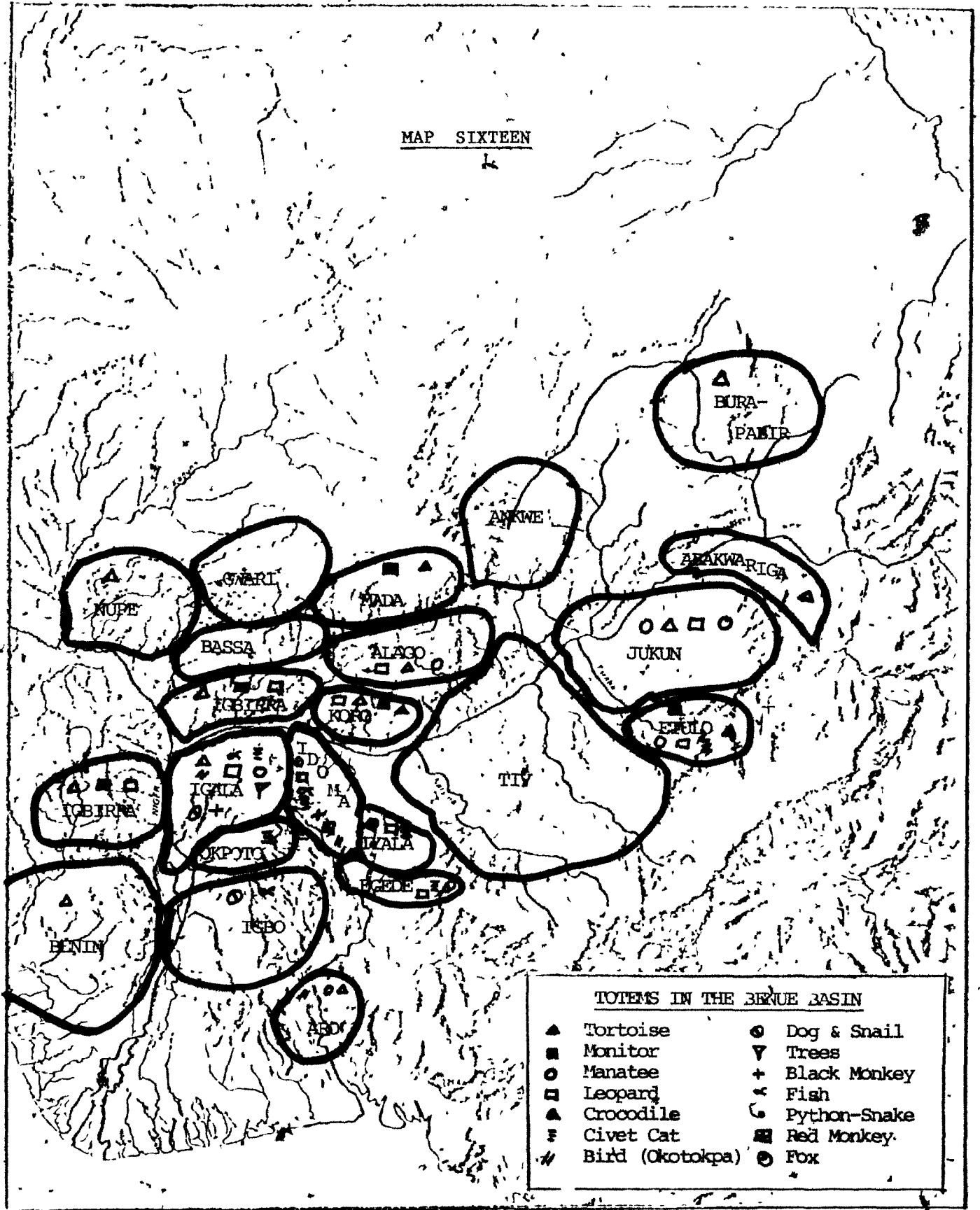
Bini, Koro, Abakwariga or Jukun before the diaspora. This cultural similarity, therefore, indicates that the diaspora in c. 1597-1657 may have distributed the Kwararafan ethnically mixed population throughout the middle belt, but it did not destroy those symbols which served to identify the various components. The distribution of the manatee totem, for example, indicates that there was an affinity between this particular community and the major riverain transportation systems in the Benue Basin. Crocodile and leopard totems also appear throughout the Benue Basin, and are identified as the royal symbols in a number of successor states. Commoner totems in the diaspora included black monkey, agba fish, ground squirrel and others. This information has been summarized on the following map and chart.

The Kwararafa diaspora can be held accountable for the distribution of a number of totemically related groups in the Benue Valley after c. 1600-1630. The migration of leopard, crocodile, manatee, as well as red monkey and other royal and commoner groups drastically altered the demographic and political balance in the middle belt. The introduction of ambitious royal elements alone served to substantially alter the balance of power, and the backing of large commoner groups served to further shift political, cultural and social factors in favour of the Kwararafan refugees. It would seem, therefore, that cultural evidence, linguistic data, oral tradition, and the totemic distribution indicates the extent of the Kwararafa diaspora, and defines the relationship between the various populations in the Benue Valley. Also, the totemic data suggests that while the exodus to the Agatu enclave may have been dominated by Bini and Greater Doma groups,

TOTEMS IN THE BENUE BASIN

<u>TOTEM</u>	<u>DISTRIBUTION</u>	<u>POSSIBLE ORIGINS</u>
Leopard	Iyala Alago Igala Benin Koro Nupe Idoma Etulo Egede	Benin
Manatee	Etulo Jukun Igala Ijaw Koro Calabar	Jukun (Cross River)
Crocodile	Bura Pabir Igala Alago Etulo Jukun Idoma Abakwariga Koro	Bura-Pabir
Civet Cat	Okpoto Igala Idoma Etulo Iyala Egede Koro	Okpoto
Monitor Lizard	Igbirra Mada Eggon Koro	Eggon
Dog & Snail	Koro Idoma Igala Igbo	Igbo
Snake/Python	Abakwariga Koro	Abakwariga

MAP SIXTEEN



this migration also included remnants of the Koro, Abakwariga and Jukun.

As the pressures mounted on Kwararafa from both internal and external sources the most displaced or alienated population had been the Bini-Greater Doma alliance. In fact, one of the leaders in the exodus, Abutu Eje, was apparently a legitimate contender for the Kwararafa throne.²⁵ Abutu Eje (c. 1597-1627) the leader of the leopard community saw his candidacy swept aside in the Jukun seizure of power under Adi Agba Kenjo.²⁶ Abutu Eje and Adoga Oje,²⁶ the leader of the Idoma segment in the migration responded to this alteration in the status quo by leaving Apa. The Greater Doma leaders carried an array of royal regalia, and sought alternative settlement outside the Kwararafa sphere of influence. Abutu Eje and Adoga Oje led their supporters to Agatu, where this refugee population endeavoured to establish political order in which Kwararafan constitutional principles of a shared monarchy were recreated.

In Agatu the Kwararafan military endeavoured to force the refugees to accept the paramount authority of the parent state. After the assassination of Adi Agba Kenjo, Adashu Katakpa tried to consolidate Kwararafa and solidify the marcher regions of his state. The attack on Agatu resulted in the death of Abutu Eje and the rise of Adoga Oje as the successor in the rotating system. The battle of Agatu, however, did not encourage the refugees to accept Kwararafan authority, and Abutu Eje became the "martyr of Agatu" and a symbol of the struggle for independence.²⁸ Abutu Eje was buried in a sacred grove at Amagedde along the banks of the River Benue. This spot is still considered an important shrine to the Igala, Idoma and Alago.

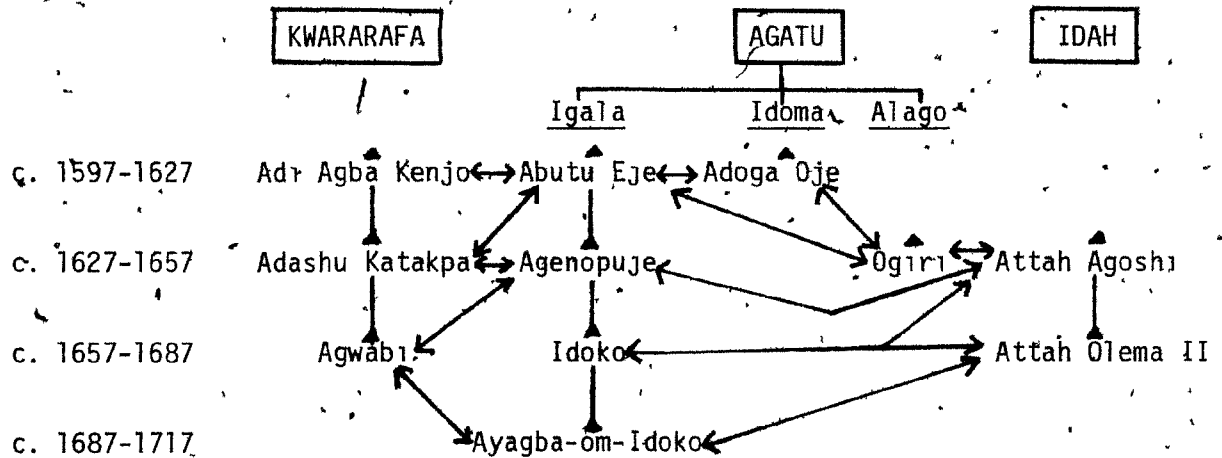
The following tradition not only establishes the pattern of succession in the Agatu enclave, but also indicates the failure of the constitutional process in the refugee population. The tradition also rationalizes the failure of Agatu and the Agatu diaspora in terms of political differences, but does not rationalize or include the severe pressures exerted by Adashu Katakpa. In this respect the failure of the constitutional process, as described in this tradition, must be correlated with the aggressive stance of the parent state. The subsequent Agatu diaspora can therefore be related to a combination of factors, including internal dissension and external aggression.

The rule of succession was that it went between several ruling houses. Thus ... the chieftaincy stool alternated between the Alago, Idoma and Igala families ... The rotational principle was strictly adhered to by all. Soon trouble started to brew ... After Igala and Idoma [Abutu Eje and Adoga Oje] had served their turn the Alago put forward Ogiri as the next King ... It was at this time that the Igala raised a constitutional objection ... The Alago left ... and moved eastward ... In fact, they left at nightfall after refusing peace initiatives by the Igala and Idoma.²⁹

The following schematic chart endeavours to show the relationship between the three parties in the Agatu dispute. This chart also shows the connection between the Alago component and the Bini monarchy in Idah. This alliance, where the Bini monarchy endeavoured to back the Alago claims, contributed to the divisions within the Agatu population,³⁰ and clearly contributed to the Agatu diaspora. The Bini-Greater Doma alliance had apparently become a leopard-led Idoma Nokwu group, that disguised the Bini component in Agatu:

CHART XV

Schematic Chart of Agatu Politics



The Igalá and Idoma raised their constitutional objection because "Attah Ogiri died before he was fully installed as king, and this represented an official turn."³¹ When the Alago tried to offer another candidate the Igalá argued that after the death of Ogiri it was their turn in the rotation.³² According to normal succession patterns, therefore, the rotation went Igalá, Idoma and Alago, and the Igalá had the right to select the next candidate for the throne.³³ The Alago maintained that Ogiri had not been a ruler and that they were entitled to name his successor. Attah Agoshi endeavoured to influence this decision in favour of the Alago,³⁴ but Igalá and Idoma objections prevailed. The debate provided additional impetus for the diaspora of Greater Doma from Agatu, and coupled with the threat of renewed Kwararafan violence the population dispersed throughout the middle Benue region.

When the Alago component in Agatu opted to emigrate rather than see their political power and authority overturned in a constitutional debate, they moved north to join Agoshi in Doma. Agoshi, the ruling Bini monarch in Idah, had been under severe and mounting pressure from the combined Okpoto, Igbo and Greater Doma alliance in Agatu. He apparently "assumed that the reign of his son would be more acceptable" and the King Olema II would salvage Bini authority in the riverain enclave.³⁶ Agoshi, therefore, became a prominent figure in the political development north of the River Benue and in the founding of new dynasties in Keana and Doma. The dynasty in Doma emerged as a particularly significant political institution as it was intended to control the major salt deposits in the region;³⁷ the economic incentive that had apparently attracted Agoshi in the first place.

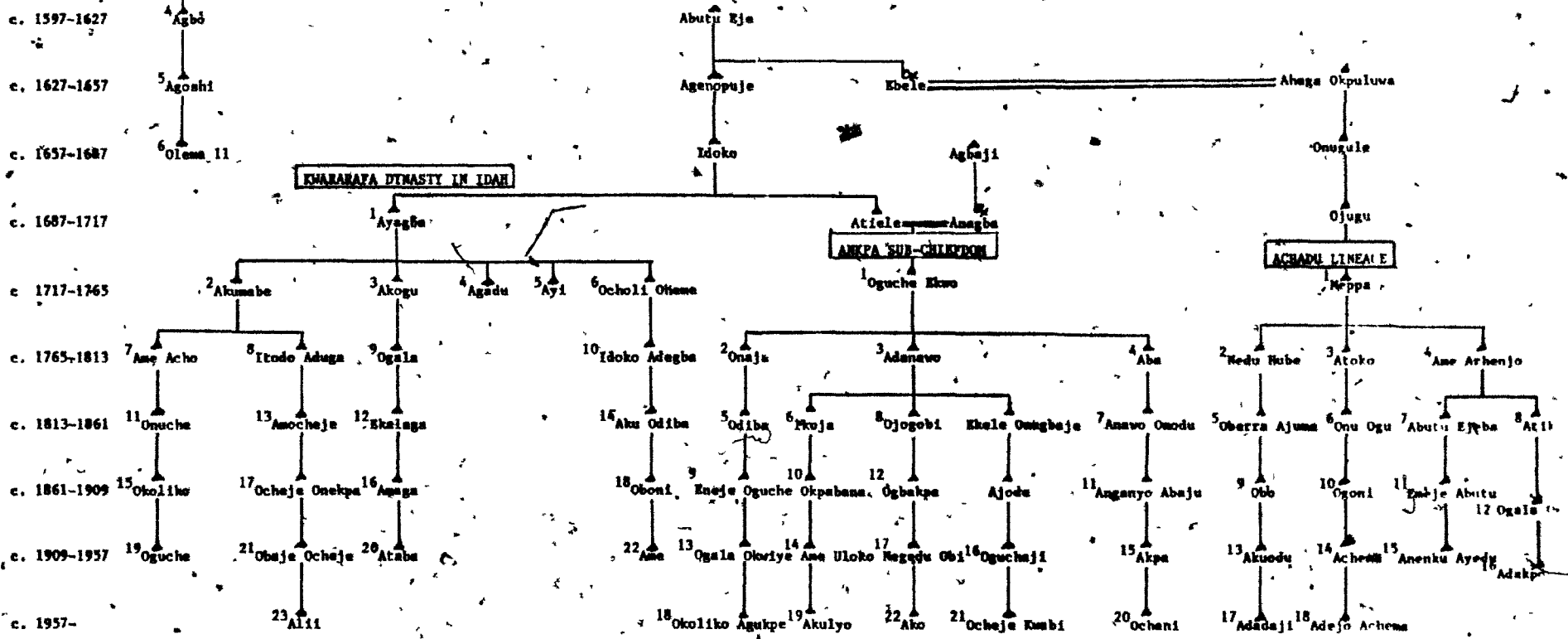
The Idoma, Iyala and Egede segment of the Greater Doma expanded southward and established a large number of independent polities in what can be classified as greater Idomaland.³⁸ The Igala component in Agatu began to expand to the southwest, and aligned through inter-marriage with the Okpoto and Igbo near the confluence. Both Idoma and Igala expansions were facilitated through their interactions with the Okpoto and Igbo,³⁹ and subsequent assimilation resulted in the cultural and linguistic domination of the Greater Doma over the 'indigenous' population. The Kwararafa diaspora, and the developments in Agatu leading toward the further diaspora of Greater Doma throughout the middle belt, provided the impetus for the creation of a new political geography and the emergence of a number of states in the middle belt.⁴⁰ The political, social and demographic factors all moved in favour of the Kwararafa refugees as more and more Greater Doma

BENIN DYNASTY IN IDAH

- c. 1507-1537 1 Ajl-Attah
- c. 1537-1567 2 Olama I
- c. 1567-1597 3 Anogens
- c. 1597-1627 4 Agbo
- c. 1627-1657 5 Agoshi
- c. 1657-1687 6 Olama II

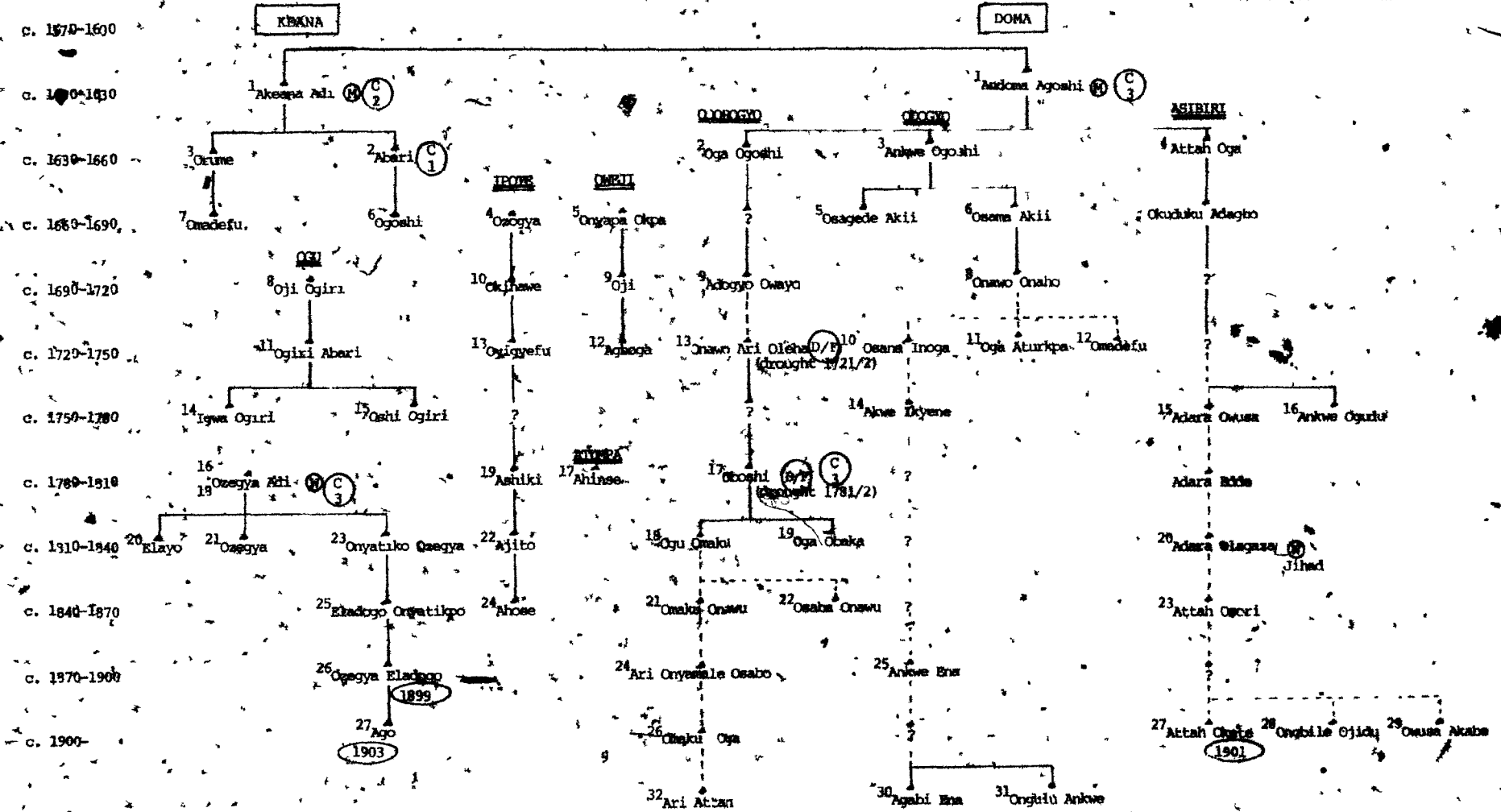
CHART XVI

IGALA INTRA-SOCIETAL CROSS REFERENCES FROM TITLED OFFICIALS



Sources: Boston, Clifford, and Igala Historical Text

CHART XVIII
THE ALAGO CHIEFDOMS

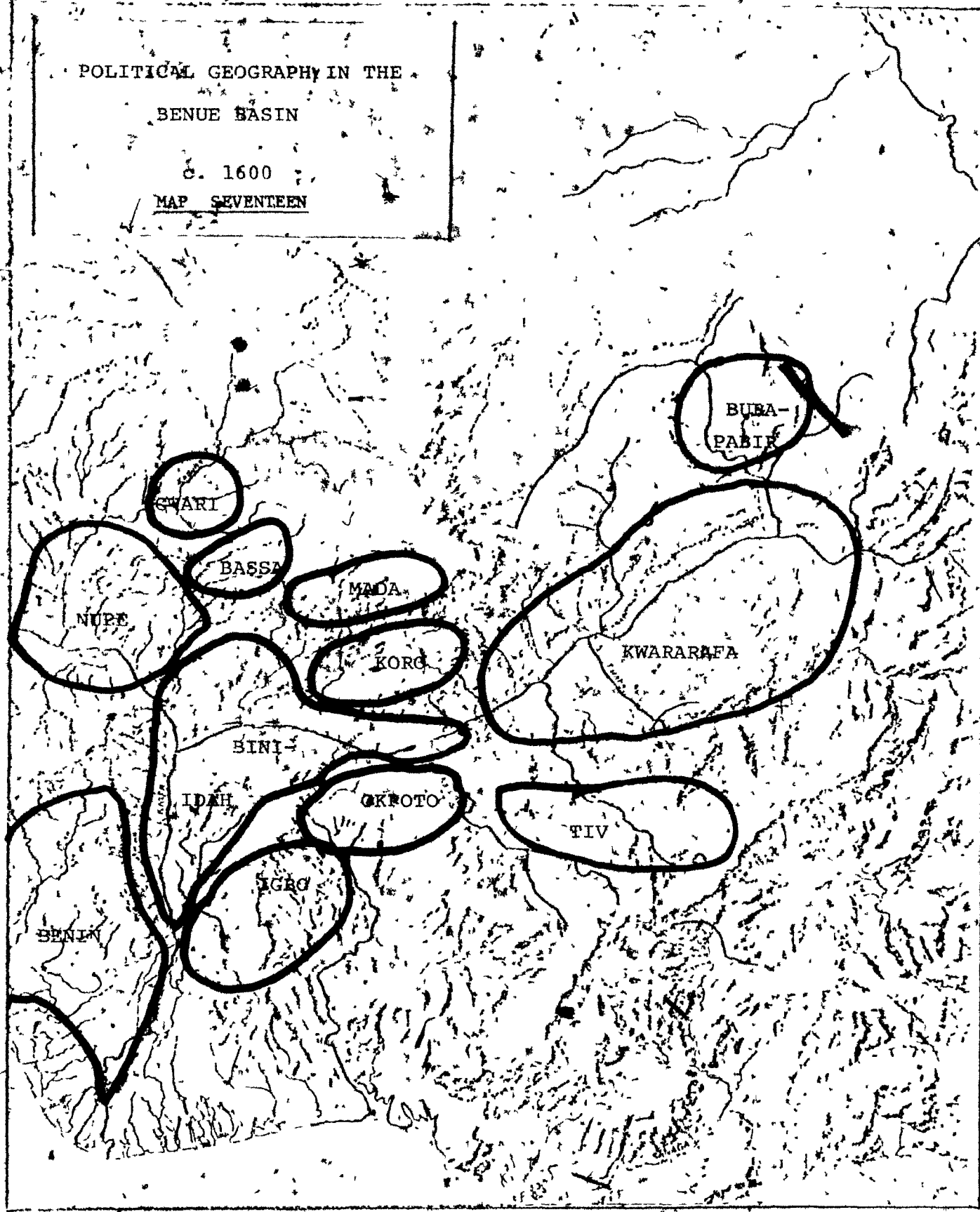


Source: A. I. Adafuye

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY IN THE
BENUE BASIN

c. 1600

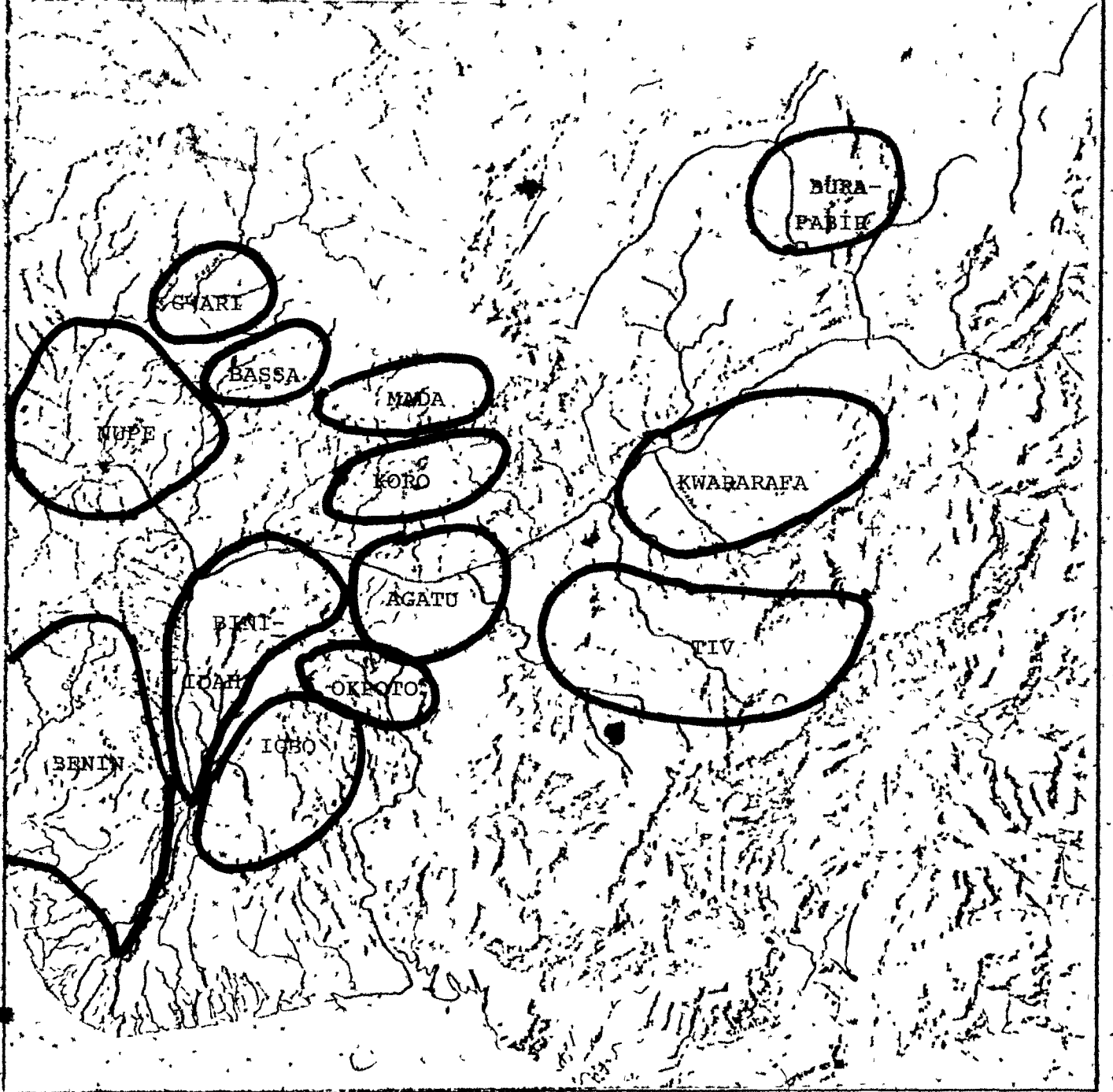
MAP SEVENTEEN



POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY IN THE
BENUE BASIN

c. 1650

MAP EIGHTEEN

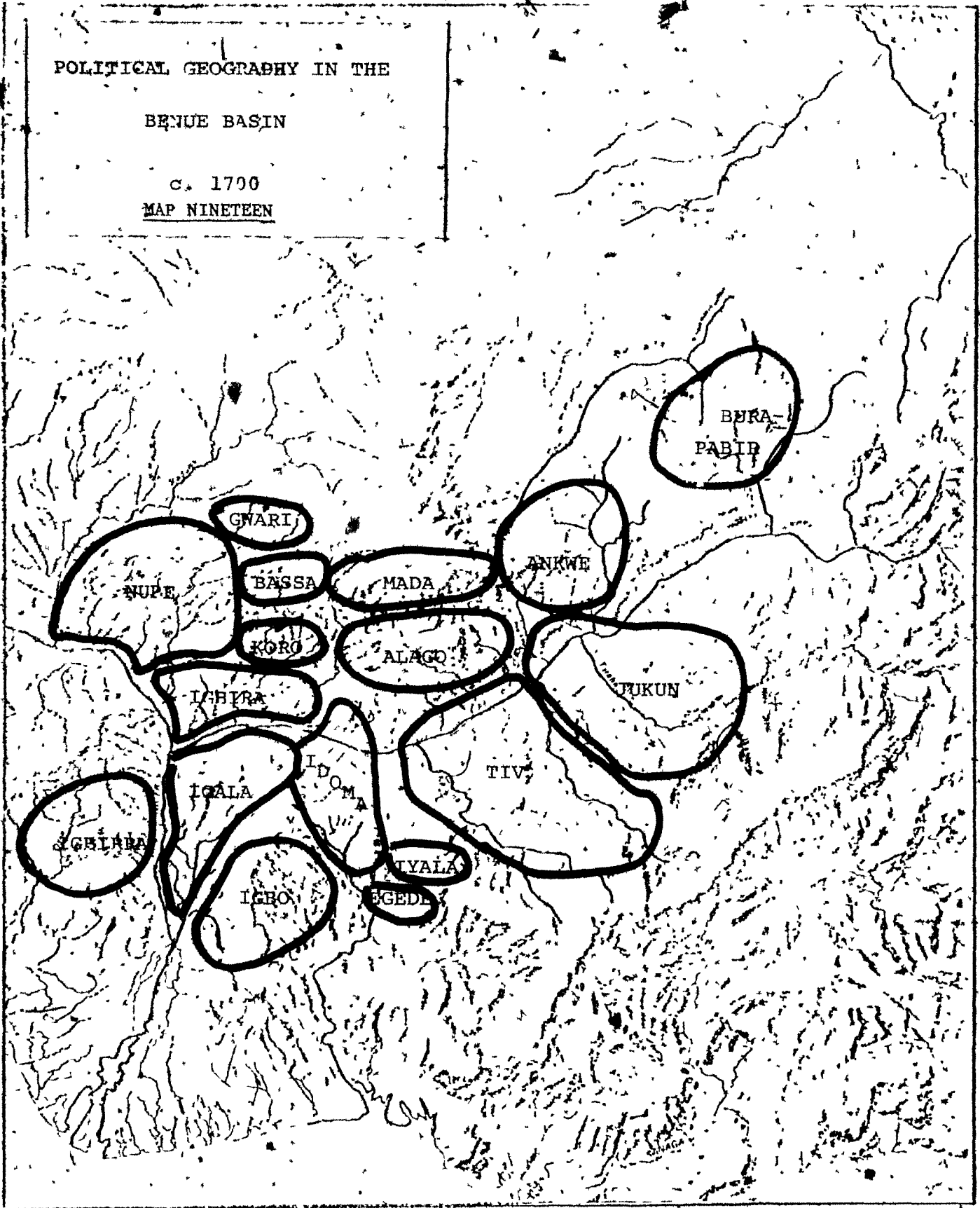


POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY IN THE

BENUE BASIN

c. 1790

MAP NINETEEN



migrated down the River Benue between c. 1597 and 1687.

The expansion of the Igala component of the Greater Doma eventually isolated the Bini dynasty in Idah from a number of its vassal-tributary peripheral chiefdoms. Also, the alignment of Okpoto and Igbo in the Idah hinterland with the Kwararafan royalist-leopard group served to reduce the economic support of the Idah enclave. The highly polarized social formation created by Bini administrative policy provided the opportunity for the Igala-Kwararafan royalists to interact, associate and eventually align with the subordinate Okpoto and Igbo. Furthermore, this alliance on the northern and western borders of the Idah enclave insulated the Bini capital from important commercial contacts. The trade route through Loko, for example, fell under Igala-Kwararafa control in c. 1657-1687.⁴¹ This expansion from Agatu also severed Idah from contacts with Keana and Doma where the Bini were playing an influential role in the foundation of the salt industry.⁴² Finally, the encroachment of the Kwararafan population and their policy of association served to accelerate the process of polarization in the Idah enclave and hinterland. By c. 1657-1687, the combination of Okpoto, Igbo and Igala-Kwararafans had become a potent force intent upon political (dynastic) change at Idah. The Kwararafan refugees openly advocated inter-marriage with the indigenous population, something that the Bini dynasty in Idah had never encouraged. The leaders of the Kwararafan royalists suggested to the Okpoto and Igbo that a formal alliance would result in their "involvement in decisions of state and governmental affairs."⁴³ The choice apparently was not a difficult one for the suppressed and exploited Okpoto and Igbo in and around the Idah enclave. The depredation of the Bini

dynasty for the past one hundred and fifty years had alienated the vassal subjects; and the potential of the Kwararafan alliance "was plain for all to see."⁴⁴

The first official act to cement the relationship between the indigenous population and the Kwararafan refugees was marriage between a Kwararafan princess and a prominent Igbo. Inter-marriage, in general terms, was an effective mechanism whereby political and social alliances could be established, and assimilation and acculturation might begin. The liaison between a daughter of the "martyr of Agatu" (Abutu Eje) and an Igbo representative called Ahaga Okpoluwa established an official connection between Kwararafan and Igbo aspirations.⁴⁵ The tradition recalling this inter-marriage between Princess Ebele and Ahaga Okpoluwa are detailed.

Ebele Jauna was a woman of the royal family of Wukari [Kwararafa], she was the daughter of Abutu Eje, and her brother was the great leader Agenopuje. She came with a great number of followers after the battle at Agatu in which her father was killed. One day a young man was captured by one of her hunting parties and brought to her as a slave. His name was Ahaga Okpoluwa, an Igbo. In the morning all the men went out hunting and the women said they wanted Ahaga to help them. He was called and put to work. The women observed his good looks and splendid figure and told Ebele about him, saying it was a pity he was a slave as he would make a fine husband. Ebele said for them to be quiet because he was a free person before being enslaved. She used words like ushadu (slave) and oma (son). Ebele ordered water to be brought so that Ahaga might wash, and she presented him with a very fine black robe to dress in. That night when Ebele retired she sent for Ahaga and he spent the night with her. In the morning Ebele told him not to go back among the other people, and then she called her people and announced that they should salute Ahaga as her husband.⁴⁶

A second version of this tradition provides an interesting variation on the major theme of inter-marriage and cross-cultural alliance between a Kwararafan female-side royalist and Igbo. This particular variation came from the Achadu lineage, which was the title created for the offspring of the marriage between Ebele and Ahaga after the Kwararafan royalists assumed power in Idah. In this respect the following tradition reveals the Igbo bias toward this association, and indicates the relationship between Ahaga and Ebele from the Igbo perspective. It should be noted that the Achadu or Prime Minister became the second most powerful position in the Idah administrative hierarchy after c. 1687-1717 when Attah Ayagba-om-Idoko founded the third Idah dynasty.

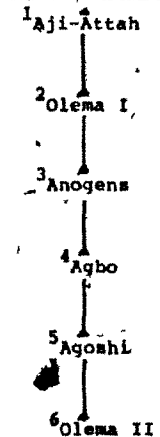
Ahaga, who had the title Ashadu among the Igbo, came on a hunting expedition to the Idah area, and settled near what is now called Igalogwu. Ebele Jaunu arrived with her followers and because of her power and beauty Ahaga wanted to marry this princess. They were married and because of his respect for his wife he ordered all his followers to become her subjects, and he himself offered to act as her slave.

As Ahaga had arrived in the area before Ebele and had a previous claim to the land, she asked him to give her a title. He enquired what she wished to be called. Ebele responded by saying call me "Attah Ita", that is, "Attah" (father) and "Ita" (ends), meaning, "a father is the greatest title of all and ends the power of all others". He bargained with her as to what price such a title should cost. They agreed upon the sum of nine slaves. These were given on the condition that the next Ashadu would have to pay the reigning "Attah Ita" nine slaves when the Ashadu received confirmation of his title.⁴⁷

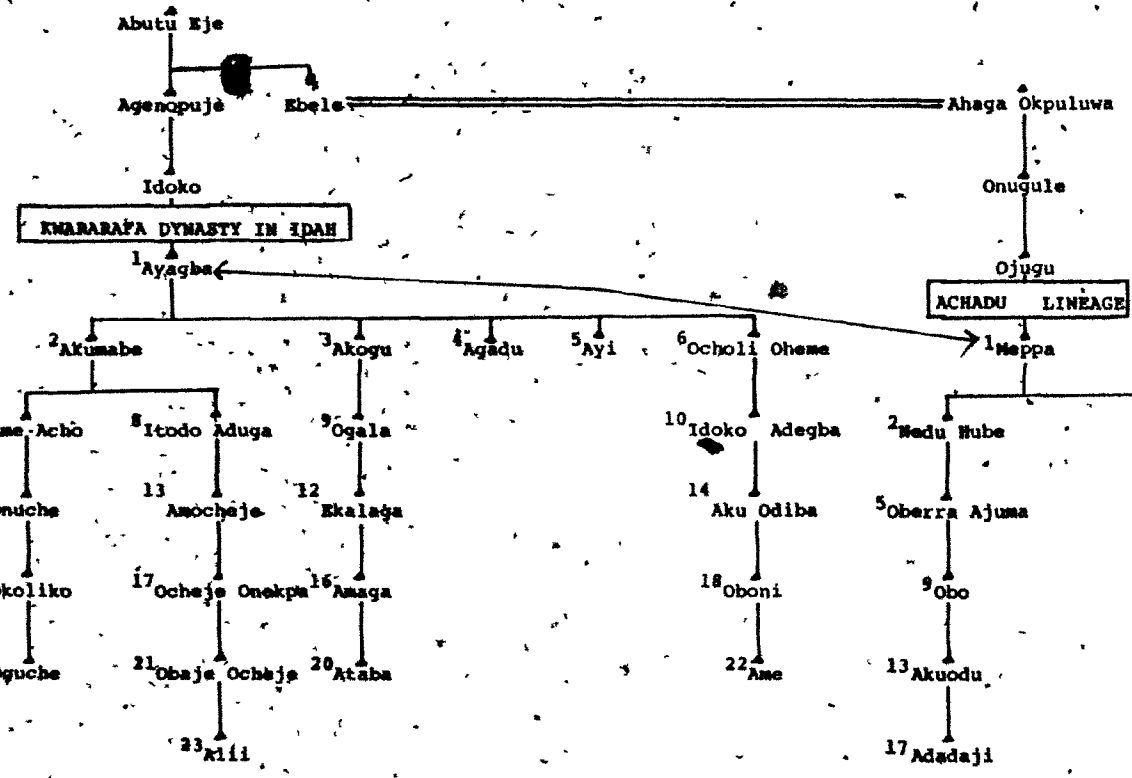
CHART XIX

KWARARAFAN DYNASTY & THE ACHADU LINEAGE

BINI DYNASTY IN IDAH



- c. 1507-1537
- c. 1537-1567
- c. 1567-1597
- c. 1597-1627
- c. 1627-1657
- c. 1657-1687
- c. 1687-1717
- c. 1717-1765
- c. 1765-1813
- c. 1813-1861
- c. 1861-1909
- c. 1909-1957
- c. 1957-



Source: J.S. Boston, I.H.T. No. 5

The relationship between Ahaga and Ebele established a female-side title system, and promoted the descendants of this union as the politically prominent and powerful Achadu.⁴⁸ The concept of female-side titled holders was imported from Kwararafa where female-side lineage heads were members of the Kingmakers Council. As female-side these lineages had no overt or legitimate claim to the throne, but were, nevertheless, extremely important titled officials who controlled access to the highest office in the state. Also, as female-side title holders they were less able to directly disrupt normal succession. The re-creation of this Kwararafan system of central administration by the refugees clearly suggests that they were importing their political culture into Idah.

Ahaga's descendants became the female-side Achadu lineage in association with the Kwararafan political hierarchy. In the same way the Igala Mela clan heads - the leaders of the Okpoto clans in the Idah enclave - became the Kingmakers Council. The Igala Mela leaders were also connected to the Kwararafan royalists through inter-marriage and thus became part of the female-side administrative body in the emerging alliance. The eventual recognition of the Achadu as the head of the Kingmakers Council, with the leading representatives of the nine Igala Mela clans as councillors - established a positive relationship between the male-side dynastic group and a major segment of the indigenous population. This relationship served to isolate the Bini dynasty from the subordinate vassal population. The changing balance of power, and the redirection of tribute and allegiance toward the Kwararafan royalist clearly weakened Bini domination in the Idah enclave. It would seem, therefore, that the politically astute inter-

marrriages with the Okpoto and Igbo and the promise of increased participation in the administration of government, provided the basis for the Kwararafan claim to political prominence. The shifting balance of power in favour of Idoko and Ayagba was further accelerated by the abdication of Attah Agoshi and the inherent weakness and unpopularity of his son, OIema II.

Contributing further to the foundation of Kwararafan political ambitions was the royalist tradition imported from the Kwararafan confederacy. The leaders in the Agatu enclave had a fairly impressive array of royal regalia which might be summarized as a means whereby historic rights to rule and the expression of legitimate authority are embodied in symbolic objects. The use of the mask Ejube-aulo by the Bini dynasty, for example, is a classic case where a symbol of central administrative authority becomes a physical representation of the monarchy.⁵⁰ This kind of regalia is a silent but no less eloquent testimony about the majesty of the past, the power of the present and the potential for the future. The fact that Ejube aulo became the symbol for the antagonism and hatred that characterized Bini rule over Okpoto and Igbo subordinates, suggest that symbolism must be supported by policy. In this respect the Kwararafan royalists managed not only to present an impressive monarch in full regalia, but coupled this imagery with policy designed to cement the relationships between central royal authority and commoner vassal subjects.

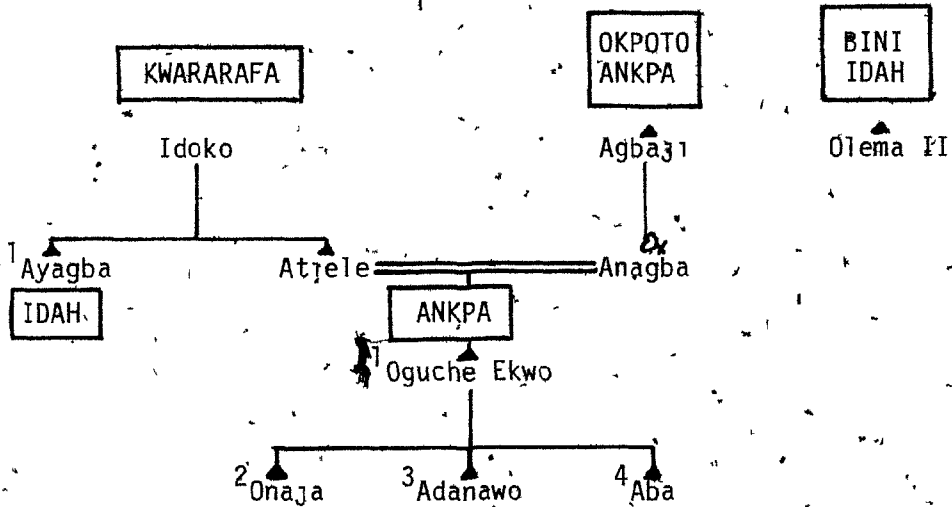
In economic terms the relationship between the Kwararafan royalist and the commoner Okpoto and Igbo populations also stimulated positive interaction. The Kwararafans allowed free access to their markets, encouraged Igbo traders to pursue their profession and

utilized lower taxes and tribute payments as recognized signs of loyalty and support. In this way the relationships developed between the Kwararāfan royal and commoner segments and the indigenous Okpoto and Igbo were multi-dimensional, and included virtually every relevant aspect of social, political and economic affairs. In this situation of an active policy of integration and association it was not surprising that the Kwararāfans became popular, and found a large support base for their political ambitions.

The policy of association and the process of interaction through marriage not only included the distribution of Kwararāfan wives to the indigenous population. The Kwararāfan royalist also accepted wives from the Okpoto and Igbo, thereby establishing a reciprocal relationship that strengthened the Kwararāfan, Okpoto and Igbo alliance. One of the most famous liaisons resulted in the Kwararāfan monarchy at Ankpa, a prominent sub-chiefdom under the third Idah dynasty. Ayagba-om-Idoko's brother married an Okpoto woman in Ankpa and established this lineage as a legitimate candidate for the Onu title in Ankpa. Apparently the Okpoto were willing to "accept the Kwararāfans as rulers", and saw their own female-side as legitimate successors.⁵¹ The following schema establishes the relationship between the Kwararāfan royalists, represented by Atiele, and the Okpoto ruler of Ankpa, Agbaji.⁵²

The foundation of a Kwararāfan regime at Ankpa was only the first step in the development of the third dynastic era in Idah history. The marriage of Atiele and Anagba contributed to the isolation of the Bini dynasty at Idah, and may have been the final blow to Bini political aspirations in the confluence region. Ayagba-om-Idoko, the

CHART XX
Schematic Chart of Kwararafan-Okpoto Alliance



heir to the central leadership position in the Kwararafan royal line; and, the holder of the Kwararafan royal regalia, continued to press for the removal of the Bini monarch in Idah. Ayagba's claim to this title was supported by the Achadu Igbo, and the Igala Mela'Okpoto, who recognized him as the "legitimate power in the region."⁵³ This public recognition was enhanced by Ayagba's royal image, the success of the Ankpa regime, and the receptivity of the Okpoto and Igbo.

One of the significant symbols of office brought from Kwararafa, and still held in high esteem in Idah, was a small brass bowl called Ane. The importance of this bowl is not its beauty or workmanship but revolves around the symbolic attachment and ritualized habits of the Kwararafan monarch. As previously noted one of the cultural traits brought out of Kwararafa was the manner in which the monarch might eat and drink, and the strict taboos surrounding most of his

daily habits. These types of cultural symbols are common among the successor states, and can be seen quite clearly in the customs of the Attah of Idah. The Attah, for example, must eat alone and can only consume food prepared by virgins.⁵⁴ The Ane is part of this ritualized custom, and is associated with the spiritual reflection of the Kwararafa leadership. Furthermore, the Ane can be related to the paradox in Idah social and political association, where the Attah is the recognized spiritual owner of the land (ane), while the Okpoto and Igbo are its physical owners. In this respect the "land bowl" serves to identify this relationship, and remind the central monarchy that the Okpoto and Igbo hold prior claim to Igalaland.⁵⁵ The Ane has been described as follows, a description which also indicates the dual symbolism associated with this piece of royal regalia.

Ane is ... a small brass pot covered with cowries ... it is believed to have been brought to Idah by the first Attah [Ayagba-om-Idoko]. A minute portion of whatever the Attah eats or drinks is placed in this. It is kept by the Okpoto ... a eunuch takes charge of it on the death of the Attah. It is part of his duty to see that there is always water in it.⁵⁶

Another significant item of Kwararafa royal regalia were the royal spurs. "These spurs came from Wukari, [sic, Bepi] and were brought to Idah by Abutu Eje."⁵⁷ According to M. Clifford these royal spurs are very similar to those worn by the Jukun.⁵⁸ They are certainly reminiscent of the cavalry tradition of Kwararafa, and not associated with either Okpoto or Bini rule. The shrine of Adi Agba Kenjo, the famous warrior king of Kwararafa in c. 1610-1640, contains

a small carved wooden horse as a sacred relic.⁵⁹ The association of Kwararafa with horses and a cavalry tradition is fairly evident throughout history. Horses were mentioned in the evidence concerning Kwararafa as early as the fifteenth century. The royal spurs in Idah, therefore, clearly link the leopard population in the confluence region with the Kwararafa military and political establishment. In this respect the royal spurs are a symbol of Kwararafan political ideology, and clearly make the distinction between the third dynasty and the previous Bini rulers.

There are two other major items of royal regalia that were introduced by Ayagba-om-Idoko in c. 1687-1717.⁶⁰ The first was a brass stool decorated with bells and relief figures. Only the Attah of Idah was allowed to sit on this stool. The second item was the ear decoration which was used to signify that the heir apparent was ready to mount the throne during his installation ceremony. The piercing of the ear, as previously noted, was an important cultural symbol associated with Kwararafan origins, and was recreated in many of the successor states. In Idah, the ceremony of piercing the ear was performed at a special ritual during the installation of each monarch, during the third dynastic era.

The Adu Kainya (Attah elect) must have his ear pierced like a woman. The actual ceremony of ear-piercing is carried out by the Achadu's chief wife, to whom is granted the title Achainya Anuku (piercer of the ear) in commemoration of this service. Whilst performing the operation she is required to wear sandals and to sit on a mat least through contact with her, the dynamism of the king-elect be dissipated.⁶¹

The impressive regalia and the complex rituals associated with the Kwararafan monarchy served to instill a sense of legitimacy and acceptance in the Okpoto and Igbo populations in the Idah enclave. The mystery of kingship and the presence of the Attah in all his regalia clearly enhanced the image of royalty. Furthermore, Okpoto and Igbo segments were involved in this ritual process, and appointed to a variety of positions in the central hierarchy and bureaucracy. The development of the administrative process, the delegation of responsibility, and the potent image of a semi-divine and mysterious king all contributed to the perceived legitimacy of the Kwararafan monarchy.

The increasing popularity of the Kwararafan leadership and the abdication of Attah Agoshi in c. 1627-1657 served to weaken the Bini hold on the riverain capital. Certainly, by c. 1627-1657 the Bini authority in the hinterland had been undermined, and by c. 1657-1687 the pressures on the Bini dynasty were severe. Attah Ojema II (c. 1657-1687) clearly felt the economic pressures, as tribute was redirected to the Kwararafan leaders, and he was powerless to halt it. Furthermore, production in the hinterland, formerly directed into the Idah controlled commercial nexus, no longer arrived in the capital. The ability of the Bini commercial agents, traders and administrators was severely restricted, and commercial levies normally associated with the support of the central elite in the trading complex were curtailed. Ojema, in fact, experienced an almost total reduction in economic support, and found his administration without resources. Ojema endeavoured, however, to institute policies designed to restore the power of his throne. He attempted to increase tribute from the

few peripheral areas still under his authority, ordered compulsory military service, and established stringent control over the remaining trade routes.⁶² However, a major exodus of Bini settlers from the Idah enclave in c. 1657-1687 negated any positive results that may have been achieved by these decisions, and further undermined the remaining tributary base of the central monarchy.

The emigration of Bini settlers down the River Niger in c. 1657-1687 was caused by the oppressive policies and increased taxation ordered by the Attah. The migrants eventually established a number of colonies south of Onitsha, which became significant outposts of the riverain trading network. Apparently the conditions in the capital had deteriorated to such an extent that these groups preferred to seek their fortune elsewhere. It is significant, however, that they did not disassociate from the riverain trading network, and maintained the tradition that they were outposts of the commercial network emanating from Idah.

According to tradition the eight groups that left Idah of Ika, Iteku, Inyaman, Iroma, Uje, Odekpe, Oko and Osomari originally lived in part of Idah, the capital of the Igala kingdom... Each group, headed by its leader stopped in the course of their downward journey along the Niger and founded a community which today bears his name... Osomari was considered the most important and most powerful of the Igala colonies and traded not only with the Isuama Ibo of the hinterland but with the Igala to the north.⁶³

This exodus seems to have provided the final blow to Bini political ambitions in the Idah enclave. Olema II had seen a large segment of his last remaining supporters emigrate beyond his control. Furthermore, other segments of the Bini population, particularly the Agaidoko clan, chose to support the Okpoto, Igbo and Kwararafan alliance, and openly opposed the implementation of increased tribute. The Agaidoko clan, in fact, was one of the few Bini groups to develop any relationship with Okpoto and Igbo prior to c. 1657-1687. Their decision to align with the opposition may have alienated them from their Bini brethren, but it was nevertheless an astute political and economic decision. In this situation, therefore, the weakened Bini monarchy and the increasingly powerful Kwararafan royalists seemed ready to exchange positions, and thereby create the third Idah 'dynasty' under Ayagba-om-Idoko.

The authority of the Bini dynasty had been rapidly undermined while the influence of the Kwararafan royalists had increased accordingly. The generation of Ayagba-om-Idoko and his brother Atiele witnessed the virtual decimation of Olema's political and economic base. This generation, c. 1687-1717, was, therefore, an important step in the political evolution of central authority in the Idah enclave. The Igbo, represented by the Achadu lineage, the Okpoto, under the Igala Mela clan heads, and a small segment of the Bini population, such as the Agaidoko clan, severed their tributary relations with the Bini monarchy and offered their allegiance to Ayagba. At the death of Olema II, therefore, presented with a fait accompli, and found himself ruler of a restricted area, a tiny population, and with few resources to back his claim to paramount

authority. Achadu Omeppa approached this besieged monarch and offered him his life in exchange for the throne.⁶⁴ Olemu II agreed and fled across the River Benue to join his father in exile.⁶⁵ The relatively peaceful coup⁶⁶ provided the opportunity for Ayagba-om-Idoko to enter Idah as the first monarch in the third dynasty, and supported by the Igbo (Achadu), Okpoto (Igala Mela) and Bini (AgaIdoko), founded a popular and relatively egalitarian regime.

The efforts to popularize the Kwararafa monarchy, including the period after the ascendancy of Attah Ayagba-om-Idoko, can be examined in various stages of development. Initially, between c. 1627-1657, there had been a concerted effort to develop relations with the indigenous population through inter-marriage. This process established the female-side supporters and officials who became influential in the eventual seizure of power. The connections between the royal aspirants and the Igbo and Okpoto were, in fact, cemented not only through inter-marriage, but also through the development of an administration with a hereditary central bureaucracy. Positions and rewards were widely distributed, and even before the ascendancy of the first monarch in the third dynasty almost every prominent Igbo or Okpoto had been appointed to an important position, or promised official status under the new regime. Thirdly, the Kwararafan leadership was able to legitimize its claim to authority. This was not an autocratic process, nor was it a unilateral decision to impose paramountcy. On the contrary, Kwararafa legitimacy was established as the alternative to continued existence under an increasingly exploitative and coercive Bini dynasty.

The seizure of the actual reins of office was only the first step in the creation of an effective, and popular central administration. In this regard the third Kwararafan dynasty was distinct from the previous Bini rulers. The Bini monarchy had, in effect, failed to establish permanent links with the indigenous population, and provided no avenue through which support and allegiance to the government could be fostered. Popular participation was, however, a prominent feature of Kwararafan political structures, especially through the female-side title holders. Also, succession in Kwararafa had been an extremely effective mechanism for involving large numbers in the actual administration of the state. The new monarchy in Idah sought to recreate much of the Kwararafan system, and established a bond between the royal house and the commoner population. The bonding system involved patronage titles, appointments, marriage gifts to prominent individuals, and the incorporation of almost every segment of the society in the political, cultural, social and economic well-being of the state. Ayagba-om-Idoko made a large number of appointments, and installed a number of clan heads as leaders of specific craft, specialized services, ritual leaders, and officials.⁶⁷

The concept of political and economic patronage, for example, as a mechanism for the promotion of loyalty and devotion to the state, and for encouraging legitimization of the administration apparently served the Kwararafa monarchy well. Within a very short period Ayagba-om-Idoko appointed a large number of bureaucrats, and established a number of hereditary positions. The Attah also established a number of clans as purveyors to the royal house, including the Eguola and Adokpulu clans, who were responsible for the royal burial

grounds,⁶⁸ and the Adenyi who supplied the royal shoes.⁶⁹ The Atebo clan were made guardians of the royal staff, called Otutubatu, while the Idokoliko were appointed as custodians of the shrine dedicated to the nature spirits.⁷⁰ Finally, the Ohina clan provided the royal diviners. Many other appointments, and patronage positions were established by Ayagba-om-Idoko which served to distinguish Kwáraráfa administration from the previous Bini government.

Three of the most important positions established by Ayagba-om-Idoko were the waterside chieftaincies. These positions were primarily economic appointments designed to provide direction and organization to riverain commercial traffic. The duties of the three economic chiefs were basically the same, and slightly overlapped in jurisdiction. The Agaidoko clan head was appointed as the Downstream Chief to oversee matters on the Niger from Idah downriver.⁷¹ Another clan head - Abokko - was made Upstream Chief and controlled matters upriver from the capital, including the Benue.⁷² The third clan head from Omogbaje controlled the waterside area in the capital enclave, and was known as the Waterside Chief.⁷³ The responsibilities of these appointed hereditary officials can be summarized as follows: (1) The control and taxation of all movements of goods on the river and remittance of revenues to the Attah; (2) The safeguarding of peace along the Niger and Benue to ensure the safe passage of commerce; (3) The provision of canoes for the Attah's own commercial transactions, and to transport the Attah's produce to suitable markets on the Niger; (4) To act as intermediaries between the central monarchy and foreigners on the river desiring an audience; (5) The provision of economic support for the palace, organization of

markets, and the general good conduct of commerce and commercial agents.

The success of the third Idah dynasty can be measured not only in the policy of social, cultural and political integration which linked nearly every major segment of the diverse population into a centralized structure, but also in the development of the social formation as a unified whole. The fragmentation and decline of the Bini dynasty had reduced the Idah enclave to the status of a redistributive social formation dominated by a highly coercive and exploitative central administration. The third dynasty, on the other hand, re-established a national trading formation, and managed to incorporate tribute payments as part of the economic support for the central elite without seeming to employ coercive and exploitative tactics. Apparently the resurgence of long distance trade, organized through the riverain chiefs, and a number of hinterland commercial agents, provided the primary support for the state elite. The ascendancy of the third Idah dynasty, therefore, coincided with the development of riverain trade and an economic expansion that has been described as the 'golden age' of the Igala.⁷⁴ The expansion of coastal trade, and European commercial demands, clearly affected the political and economic status of the hinterland trading states. Just as the economic boom of the trans-Saharan trade between 1490-1590 had contributed to the development of Zaria, Oyo, Nupe and Kwararafa as major trading formations, the expansion of overseas trade through the coastal ports made the eighteenth century an important period in the economic development of Idah under the third dynasty. The organization of Idah as the capital of a national trading formation, which included,

the sub-chiefdoms of Ankpa and Dekina, which were under Kwararafa chiefs established the Kwararafa monarchy as the most important commercial managers on the Niger.

The foundation of the third dynasty was accomplished, as we have seen, through the formal alliance with the indigenous population. This alliance, perpetuated through the creation of hereditary titles, including the Achadu and Igala Mele Kingmakers Council established the central administrative structures of the national trading formation. The egalitarian principles of Kwararafa politics apparently served the central administration of the Igala Kingdom, after c. 1687-1717, in good stead, and created a stable and efficient intercursive power relationship which was acceptable to the majority of the population.

The balance of power between the major segments of the royal clan is maintained ultimately by the group that control the succession to their principle corporate offices. The king exercises this control over appointments to the headship of the provincial royal subclans, but his own office is subject in this respect to the authority of the kingmakers at Idah, who control the election of the new king and umpire the rotation of authority amongst the four maximal lineages of the ruling house ...

Igala oral tradition explains the role of the kingmakers in the state system by postulating a transfer of political sovereignty from the original landowners at Idah to the immigrant founder of the royal clan [Ayagba-om-Idoko]... this transfer creates a contractual relationship between the one group of clans and the royal descent group. 75

The distinction that might be made between the political organization of Idah under the third dynasty and other centralized political structures in other states - Benin, Idah under the second dynasty, and Kwararafa - lies in the relationship of the monarchy to the indigenous population. In Benin the palace had established a centralized *Otu* system which provided an avenue for upward social and economic mobility although clearly controlled by the palace hierarchy. The Kingmakers Council (Uzama Nihinron) had been appointed from the indigenous nobility when the Ewaka dynasty achieved paramount authority in c. 1320-1347. The Bini dynasty in Idah, on the other hand, failed to establish any form of relationship with the indigenous population, except to the extent of exploiting production and viewing their subjects as subordinate vassals. In Kwararafa the central administration provided for a wide range of social and political connections through the creation of the female-side title holders. This system was adopted and adapted by the third Idah dynasty and provided for the development of close reciprocal relations between various segments of the population. The Kingmakers Council was appointed from the existing lineage or clan leadership, and cemented through intermarriage with the royal house - female-side relations. The establishment of the Achadu - the leading representative of the Igbo population - as a female-side hereditary noble added a new dimension to central political structures under the third dynasty. Neither Benin, Idah under the Bini dynasty, nor the Kwararafa administration seems to have had a Prime Minister, which makes the Achadu relatively unique in the political systems of the middle belt. In fact, neither the Achadu title nor his position is evident in any

of the other successor states to Kwararafa. It may, therefore, have been the creation of political expediency adopted to reinforce Kwararafan claims to paramount authority in the confluence region.

On another level the political changes introduced by Ayagba-om-Idoko wrought significant social changes in the Idah population. The subordinate role which had been endured by the Okpoto and Igbo under the Bini dynasty was, theoretically at least, abolished. In fact, the class structures evident under the Bini administration that distinguished a citizen of the enclave by his ethnic origins, and dominated the economic and political life of the exploited subordinate vassal stratum was severely modified if not totally abolished. There was, in fact, a much more equitable social system recognized by the central administration and fostered by the positive policy of the third dynasty. Some of the changes can be attributed to the experience in Kwararafa where interaction, and inter-marriage with other ethnic groups created a powerful political structure.⁷⁶ Unlike Kwararafa, however, where ethnic identities remained a factor of social and political life, and eventually defined the divisions into which the social formation would fragment after c. 1600-1630, the Kwararafa monarchy in Idah advocated acculturation and assimilation to minimize ethnic cleavages. Henceforth social, political and economic development and the internal relations in the national trading formation served to generate the Igala language and culture. The emergence of the Igala Kingdom, therefore, after the ascendancy of Ayagba-om-Idoko, created a powerful force in middle belt political and economic affairs, and launched the golden age of commercial activity under a sophisticated and popular administration. The collapse and

- c. 1477-1517
- c. 1517-1537
- c. 1537-1567
- c. 1567-1597
- c. 1597-1627
- c. 1627-1657
- c. 1657-1687
- c. 1687-1717
- c. 1717-1765
- c. 1765-1813
- c. 1813-1861
- c. 1861-1909
- c. 1909-1957
- c. 1957-

OKPOTO DYNASTY IN IDAH



BI II DYNASTY IN IDAH

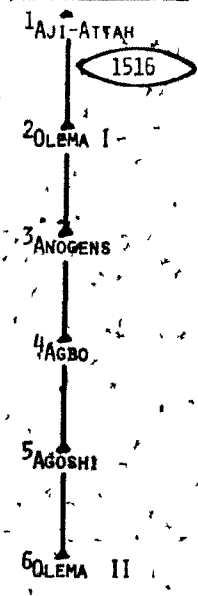
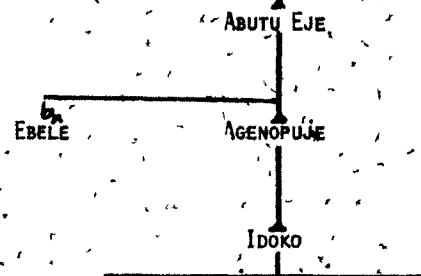
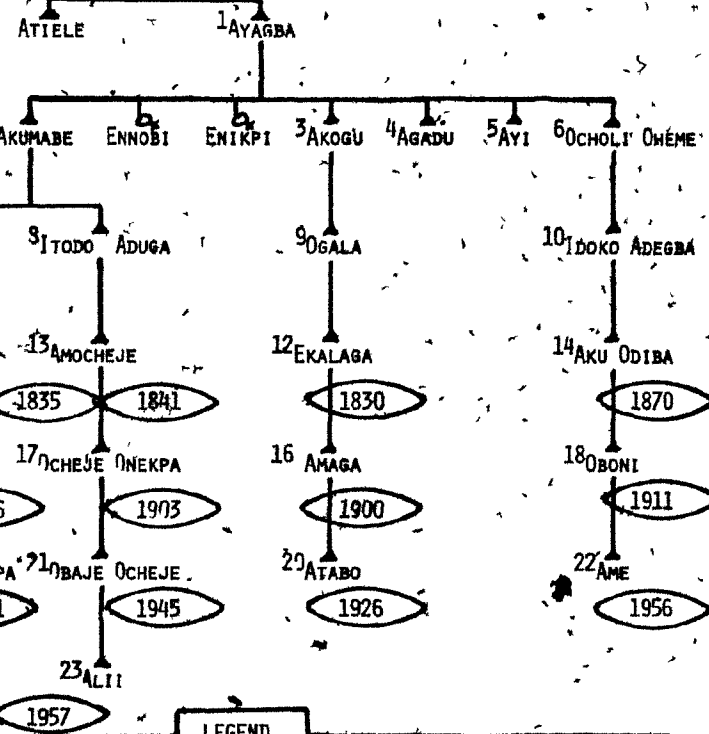


CHART XXI



K'ARARAFAN DYNASTY IN IDAH

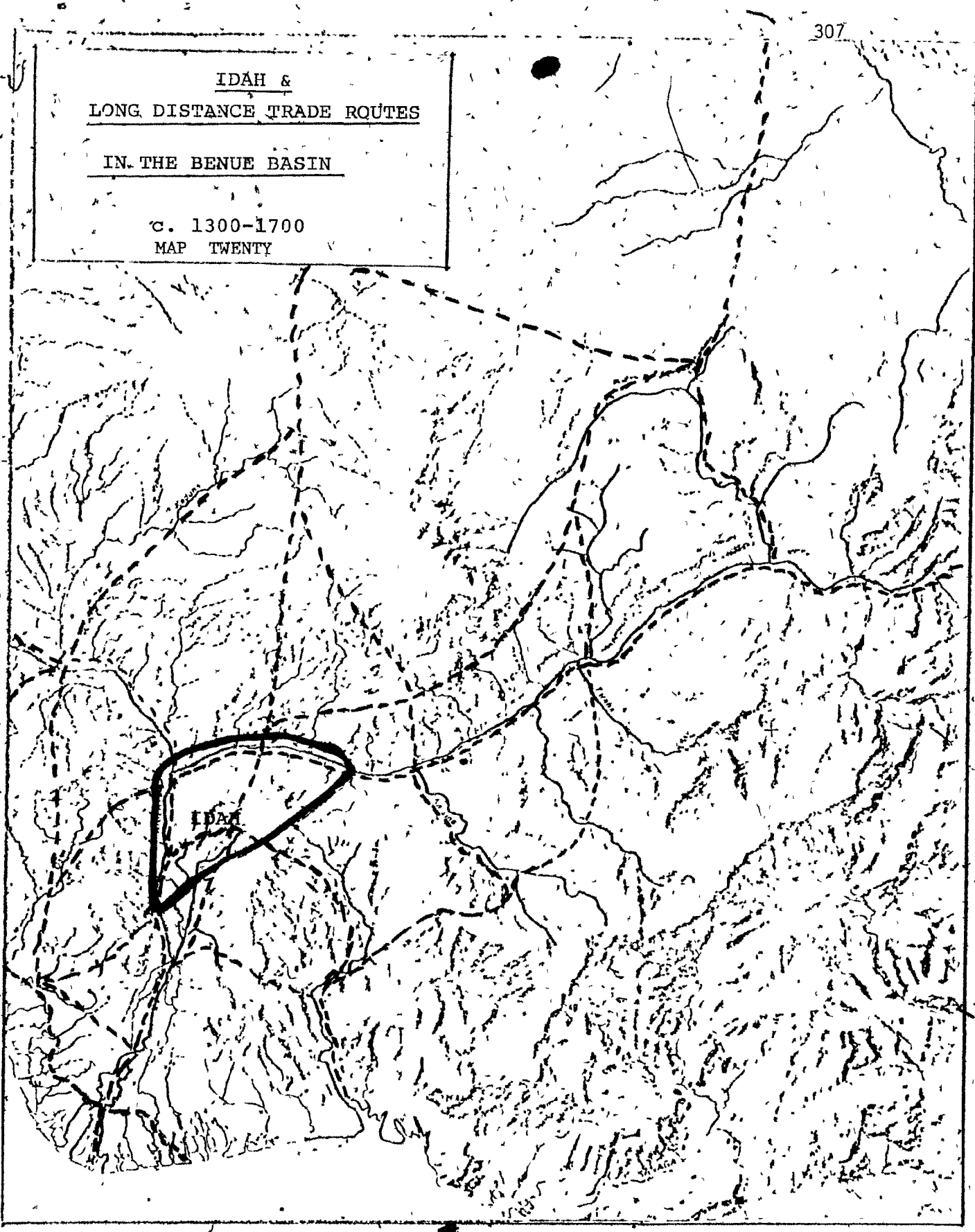


LEGEND		
23	SUCCESSION NUMBER	K'ARARAFAN DYNASTIC NAME
1957	FIXED DATE	KNOWN RELATIONSHIP
♂	MALE	CHIEFDOM NAME
♀	FEMALE	APPROXIMATE DATES
		c. 1909-1957

IDAHA &
LONG DISTANCE TRADE ROUTES

IN THE BENUE BASIN

c. 1300-1700
MAP TWENTY



fragmentation of Kwararafa had given rise to a number of independent polities, not the least of which was the Igala Kingdom under the third Idah dynasty founded by Ayagba-om-Idoko in c. 1687-1717.⁷⁷

Endnotes to Chapter Seven

1. J.B. Webster, "The Three Phases of Kwararafa: A Peripetatic State", in Central Nigerian Perspectives, edited by E. Isichei, forthcoming.
2. The chronology of this discussion has been developed in R.A. Sargent, "A Benue Basin Regional Chronology", Journal of African History, forthcoming, and R.A. Sargent, "A Methodology of Chronology: The Igala Core Dating Progression", History in Africa, Vol. 11, 1984.
3. Igala Historical Text (hereafter cited as I.H.T.) No. 24, Asukako of Idah, February 16, 1977.
4. Webster, "The Three Phases of Kwararafa", op. cit.
5. Ibid.
6. Refer to E.O. Erim, Idoma Nationality, 1600-1900: Problems in Studying the Origins and Development of Ethnicity, Enugu, 1981, pp. 52-77. Erim, in fact, refers to three phases of emigration from Kwararafa starting in c. 1625 and continuing until c. 1745.
7. The Kwararafa capital established in c. 1640-1670.
8. The Benue Valley Research Project brought together a number of pre-colonial historians in a team concept for the collection and analysis of oral history records in this particular region of Nigeria. The original team included E.O. Erim on the Idoma, A.I. Adefuye among the Alago, J.B. Webster among the Jukun, A.C. Unomah with the Gwandara and Kamberi, and R.A. Sargent on the northern Tiv. This writer subsequently shifted to the Igala, while J.N. Orkar expanded the Tiv research. A comparison of the independently established dating structures from these researchers reveals a remarkably high degree of correlation.
9. Keana Historical Text No. 100, June 24, Alhaji Audu, Alhaji Adamu, and Egwu in Keana, collected by E.O. Erim. Also refer to Agwatashi Historical Text No. 101, June 27, 1974, Osho's palace, Agwatashi; collected by E.O. Erim.
10. I.H.T. No. 24.
11. For example, refer to Erim, Idoma Nationality, op. cit., and J. Power, "Lafia: Layers of Settlement", paper presented to the Johns Hopkins University Pre-Colonial History Seminar, Baltimore, February, 1984. The principles of a rotating monarchy also appear in Wukari, Dampar, Keana, Doma, and the Etulo chiefdoms. Refer to K.M. Torbema, In Search of Etulo History, no date, no

publisher. Also, a personal communication from G. Barkow after his field work among the Koro Migili of Lafia Division, Plateau State, Nigeria, in 1977.

12. C.K. Meek, A Sudanese Kingdom, London, 1931, (reprinted in New York, Negro Universities Press, 1969), pp. 46-48, and Tortema, In Search of Etulo History, op. cit.
13. I.H.T. No. 24.
14. The Bini dynasty in Idah found that the refugee enclave in Agatu effectively sealed off the Benue for Bini merchants and traders.
15. C. Hoffman, 'The Languages of Nigeria by Language Families', Department of Linguistics, University of Ibadan, 1976.
16. G. Kress and R. Hodges, Language as Ideology, London, 1979, p. 1.
17. E.O. Erim, one of the researchers in the Benue Valley History Project, considered Iyala his mother tongue, but was able to communicate effectively without interpreters in Idoma and Alago.
18. Although this particular taboo holds extremely wide social currency and appears in a number of pre-colonial social formations the unique aspects of the Kwararafan taboo serves to identify the proponents of this convention and link them in a recognised and acceptable social system with common taboo structures. It is clearly part of the cultural identification associated with Kwararafa, and the various successor states of this now defunct polity.
19. I.H.T. No. 143, Angwa of Okaku, August 20, 1977, and I.H.T. No. 186, Agramé Aheme of Ojadola, September 21, 1977. J.B. Webster provided information about the Jukun custom in the colonies of Lafia Division, Plateau State from his research in this area in 1974 and 1976.
20. I.H.T. No. 143. The Igala have a number of other associated rituals dealing with the observances about food and drink. One of the most common in the Benue Valley is that the monarch's food must be served either by a male or by a young girl. Both rituals avoid the problem of menstrual blood, and minimize the likelihood of assassination.
21. H.R. Palmer, The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan, London, 1979, p. 246.
22. I.H.T. No. 24, and R.S. Seton, "Installation of the Attah of Idah", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, LVIII, 1928, p. 261.

23. Personal observation in Keana July 1974, and confirmed in a private conversation with the Osañá.
24. Refer to F.B. Ataba, 'Recent Developments in the Use of Non-Documentary Evidence in African Historiography, With Special Reference to Totemism and Regional Chronology', Dalhousie University, M.A., 1976. Ataba provides a complete discussion on primary, secondary and tertiary totemic systems. The Benue Basin totemic systems have been summarized on the following chart.
25. I.H.T. No. 89, Alhaji Mallam, Dekina, July 4, 1977.
26. J.B. Webster, 'Spirits of the Kingdom', Benue Valley Project Paper No. 7, May 1975, and I.H.T. No. 35, Onu Anka, Anka, February 28, 1977. Also refer to M. Clifford, "A Nigerian Chiefdom", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, LXVIII; 1936, p. 396.
27. Idoma Historical Text Agatu No. 6, and Idoma Historical Text No. 42, collected by E.O. Erim.
28. I.H.T. No. 224, Aku and Ada Odoyu, Adoru, January 4, 1978.
29. Keana Historical Text No. 100, and also repeated in substantially the same context in I.H.T. No. 143.
30. I.H.T. No. 190, Umeta of Agwado, September 23, 1977. This was a variant tradition in the Igala collection of oral evidence, but it has been substantiated by Alago data. Refer, for example, to the Alago regnal lists reproduced in this chapter.
31. I.H.T. No. 161, Akoja of Idah, September 6, 1977, and I.H.T. No. 201, Ache Achebu of Aiyangba, September 30, 1977. Also refer to Agatu Historical Text No. 6.
32. I.H.T. No. 53, Ayaga of Anka, March 15, 1977.
33. I.H.T. No. 161.
34. I.H.T. No. 190.
35. I.H.T. No. 3, Anacho of Idah, January 8, 1977, the informant described the removal of Attah Agoshi from office and the ascendancy of his son Olema II but did not know what had happened to Attah Agoshi.

Unfortunately Alago traditions are still veiled in some mystery. However, O. Temple, Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria, C.L. Temple, (ed.), London, 1919, p. 516 states that "Agoshi, King of Ida" founded the Alago chiefdom of Keana; and Alago evidence suggests he was the founder of Dóma. This explains the leopard totem of Benin among the Alago.

36. I.H.T. No. 3.
37. Keana Historical Text No. 100, also refer to "Keana Salt Camps", Nigeria Magazine (anonymous), 1954.
38. Greater Idoma land would include the related groups settled south of Idoma land proper. These groups include the Iyala and Egede. Refer to the map of the political geography of the middle belt after the Agatu diaspora.
39. I.H.T. No. 3.
40. Refer to the attached maps which endeavour to show the political geography of the middle belt after the Agatu diaspora in c. 1627-1657.
41. I.H.T. No. 113, Igala Mela clan heads, group interview, July 27, 1977.
42. Keana and Doma, the two prominent polities established by the Alago contingent from Agatu, had a bitter dispute over the salt resources at Keana. Refer to A.I. Adefuye, 'Salt and War Festivals in Keana', Benue Valley Project Paper No. 22, p. 2.
43. I.H.T. No. 113, and I.H.T. No. 18, the Achadu, and the leaders of the Achadu clans, group interview, February 5, 1977. These two interviews included all the descendents of the Okpoto (Igala Mela) and Igbo (Achadu) clans.
44. I.H.T. No. 119, Igala Mela clan heads, group interview, July 28, 1977.
45. I.H.T. No. 101, Onu Ankpa, Ada, in Ankpa, July 16, 1977.
46. I.H.T. No. 3, and repeated in the same way in R.S. Seton, "Installation of the Attah of Idah", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, LVIII, 1928, pp. 269-270.
47. I.H.T. No. 18.
48. Refer to the following chart where the genealogical relationship between the Kwararafan royal house or third dynasty in Idah and the Achadu lineage has been schematically presented.
49. I.H.T. No. 5, The Attah of Idah, in Idah, January 9, 1977.
50. For a more complete discussion of the role of cultural artifacts and royal regalia in the development of Idah political history refer to R.A. Sargent, "Igala Masks and Masquerades: Dynastic History and the Face of the Nation", in Masks and Cultural Systems, edited by S.L. Kasfir, forthcoming.

51. I.H.T. No. 29, Onu Ankpa, in Ankpa, February 19, 1977.
52. The full Ankpa regnal list has been included in chart form, on The 'Igala Intra-Societal Cross References' chart. It is important to note that after the reign of Onu Oguche Ekwo the Ankpa royal line established a rotating principle common to most of the successor states in the Kwararafa diaspora.
53. I.H.T. No. 3.
54. I.H.T. No. 5.
55. I.H.T. No. 126, Igbacha or Ayangba, August 1, 1977.
56. I.H.T. No. 20, P. Okwoli, Idah, February 6, 1977; also refer to Clifford, "A Nigerian Chiefdom", p. 410.
57. I.H.T. No. 5, I.H.T. No. 20, and I.H.T. No. 113.
58. Clifford, "A Nigerian Chiefdom", p. 423. Clifford notes that "the Emir of Katsina has one or more of this pattern which are said to have been taken from the bodies of Jukun warriors in his territory in the 17th century".
59. Personal communication from J.B. Webster who had done the preliminary research on Adi Agha Kenjo. Also refer to Webster, 'Spirits of the Kingdom'.
60. I.H.T. No. 20.
61. Clifford, "A Nigerian Chiefdom", p. 421.
62. I.H.T. No. 115, Igala Mela clan heads, group interview, July 27, 1977.
63. I. Nzirimo, Studies in Ibo Political Systems, London, 1972, p. 17.
64. I.H.T. No. 18.
65. I.H.T. No. 19, the Attah of Idah, Achadu and council, in Idah, February 6, 1977.
66. There were occasional outbreaks of violence, and a number of people did die in the change of dynasty, however, this "number was quite small", I.H.T. No. 58, Imami of Ankpa, May 30, 1977.
67. Refer to R.A. Sargent, 'The Igala Ocho Festival: New Yams and Historical Reconstruction', paper presented to the Centre for African Studies, Seminar, October 1982.
68. I.H.T. No. 59, Ogala of Ankpa, in Ankpa, June 1, 1977.

69. I.H.T. No. 63, Agban of Onede, June 16, 1977.
70. I.H.T. No. 61, Okwoli of Idah, in Idah, June 3, 1977.
71. I.H.T. No. 185, Atembu of Biraidu, September 19, 1977.
72. I.H.T. No. 81, Gabi of Shintaku, June 28, 1977, and I.H.T. No. 83, Gabi, Omagba and Toki Ateme of Shintaku, June 29, 1977.
73. I.H.T. No. 107, Aguda of Idah, in Idah, June 24, 1977.
74. This 'golden age' was actually a second period of prosperity for the central monarchy. However, for the general population the first economic boom under the Bini dynasty was not reflected in widespread benefits for the subordinate segment of the Idah enclave. This second 'golden age' also correlates with the return of favourable climatic conditions, a factor which would prompt a fairly general economic recovery without considering the additional benefits of trade and commerce.
75. J.S. Boston, The Igala Kingdom, Ibadan, 1968, pp. 82-83.
76. For more information about Kwararafa refer to Chapter Six. It is interesting to note, however, that the process of inter-marriage as it took place in Kwararafa did not produce a unified ethnic, linguistic or cultural entity. The division within the Kwararafan population maintained, and were not apparently reduced by inter-action or inter-marriage.
77. Refer to the following Igala regnal list, which has been dated according to the principles and methodology defined in Sargent, "The Igala Core Dating Progression", op. cit.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Benue Basin in Retrospect:

A Conclusion

A major theme running through this analysis has been the correlation between political centralization and the expansion of commercial production and exchange on a regional scale. It would seem that the organization of centralized state institutions of administration, the imposition of coercive authority in an integral power relationship, and the development of state controls over commerce proceeded in tandem. It was also apparent that the expansion of commerce under state authority provided an incentive to extend geographic domination along the main trade routes.¹ This argument does not necessarily suggest that centralized administrative institutions could not have developed without the input from regional and long distance trade. In fact, tributary social formations, which reflected an increased degree of political centralization, probably emerged with the shift from hunting-gathering to sedentary agriculture, particularly if this economic shift occurred in a confined space.² In the Benue Basin, however, the correlation between centralized political authority in a national or imperial trading formation, the expansion of the machinery of government, and the growth of regional and long distance trade suggests a pattern in regional economic development. It seems conceivable, therefore, that political centralization of the order experienced in Benin, Idah and Kwararafa,

and the economic development required to effectively participate in commercial exchange, were part of the same process. In other words, the expansion of the state was inextricably linked to commercial growth.

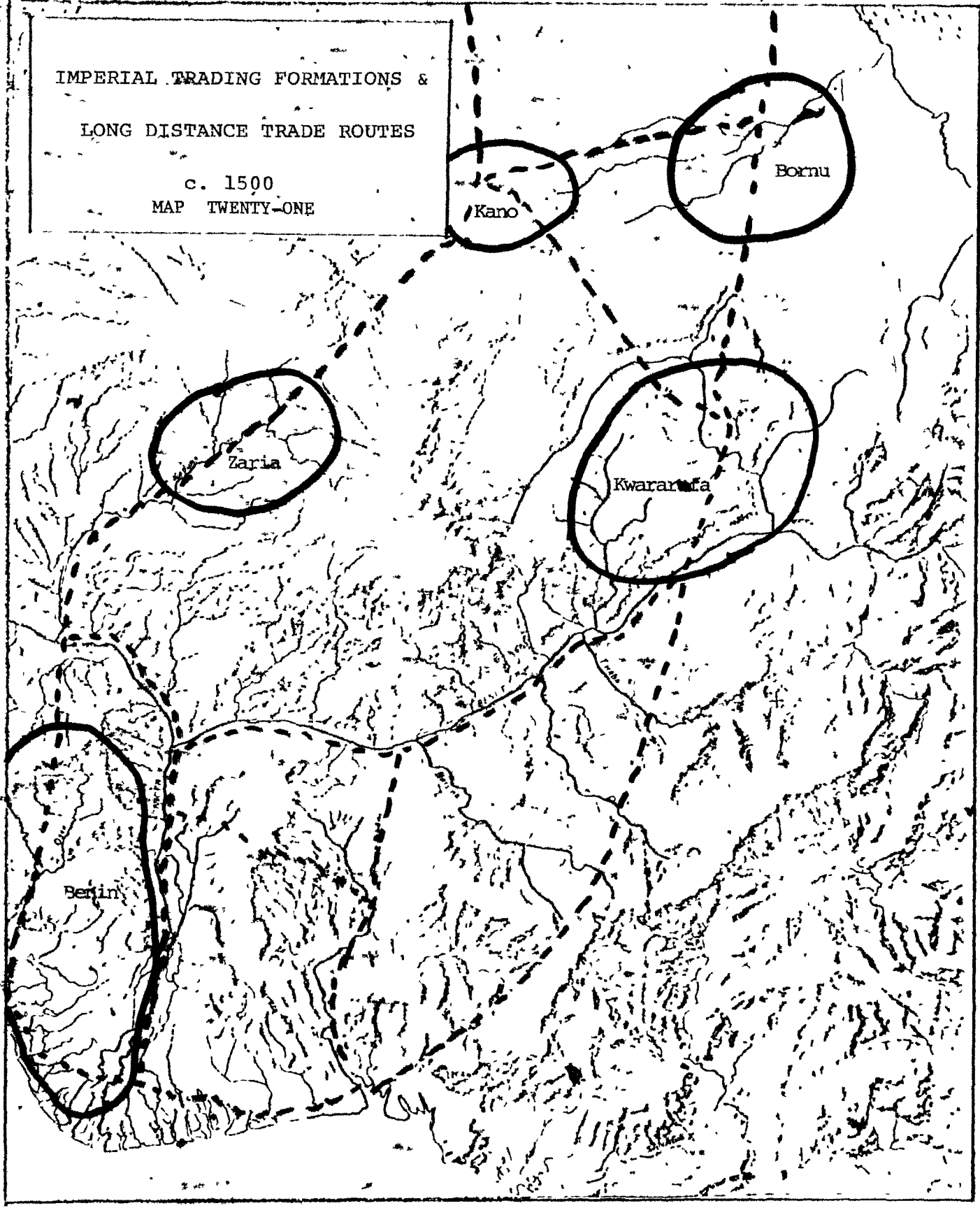
The development of individual states in the Benue Basin apparently reflected regional economic and political patterns in the period between c. 1300 and 1700. During this four hundred year period the transformation of a segmentary social formation - such as Benin in c. 1263-1293 - into a tributary, national or imperial trading formation may have been coupled with the expansion of local, regional and long distance trade. When the second Benin dynasty emerged as the integral power in the forest zone, the expansion of the state, the development of centralized institutions of government, and the increase in elite domination of economic affairs, corresponded with the growth of external commercial exchange. This association between administrative change, decision-making and policy, and economic organization for commercial and non-commercial production was a reflection of the political and economic history of the larger region. Clearly events in Benin, Idah and Kwararafa can not be divorced from regional patterns. It is possible to argue, therefore, that the Benue Basin, although including a wide variety of political forms, administrative systems, ethnic and language groups, and social formations, was, in one respect, a definable geo-political region in which economic trends and political relations, climatic conditions and trade patterns contributed to a unified commercially-linked region.

In terms of economic relations the Benue Basin can be viewed as a single, although diversified, commercial zone in which reciprocal trade relations provided economic incentive for the specialized exchange of ecologically varied production. Benin metal crafts depended upon the commercial links with the sudanic zone trading states who forwarded trans-Saharan copper.³ Idah middle men also depended on the sudanic states for co-operation in regional and long distance trade, and exploited their relationship with the north to develop markets in the south. While the region was very dissimilar in terms of climatic conditions and productive capabilities, international commerce and the markets for ecologically specialized goods generated local, regional and long distance commercial relations. In other words, the very diversity which distinguished the forest zone from the savanna and sudanic region, including rainfall, soil types, susceptibility to drought, crops, culture, fashions, tastes,⁴ religion and language, all contributed to the development of long distance exchange which linked forest productivity to northern demands and vice versa. In many cases it was the middle belt entrepreneur in Nupe, Idah or the upper Benue, who exploited this ecological variation and derived the maximum benefit from long distance exchange. The movement and sale of horses, maize, cattle, millet, beans, cloth, metals, yams, beads, ivory, oils, kola nuts, camwood and a variety of other products provided increasing profits for long distance traders. An important factor, however, in this exchange system was that it did not develop exclusivity and Igbo traders penetrated far to the north, while Abakwari merchants apparently entered the Calabar market to the south. The reciprocal exchange, therefore, returned profits to the

IMPERIAL TRADING FORMATIONS &

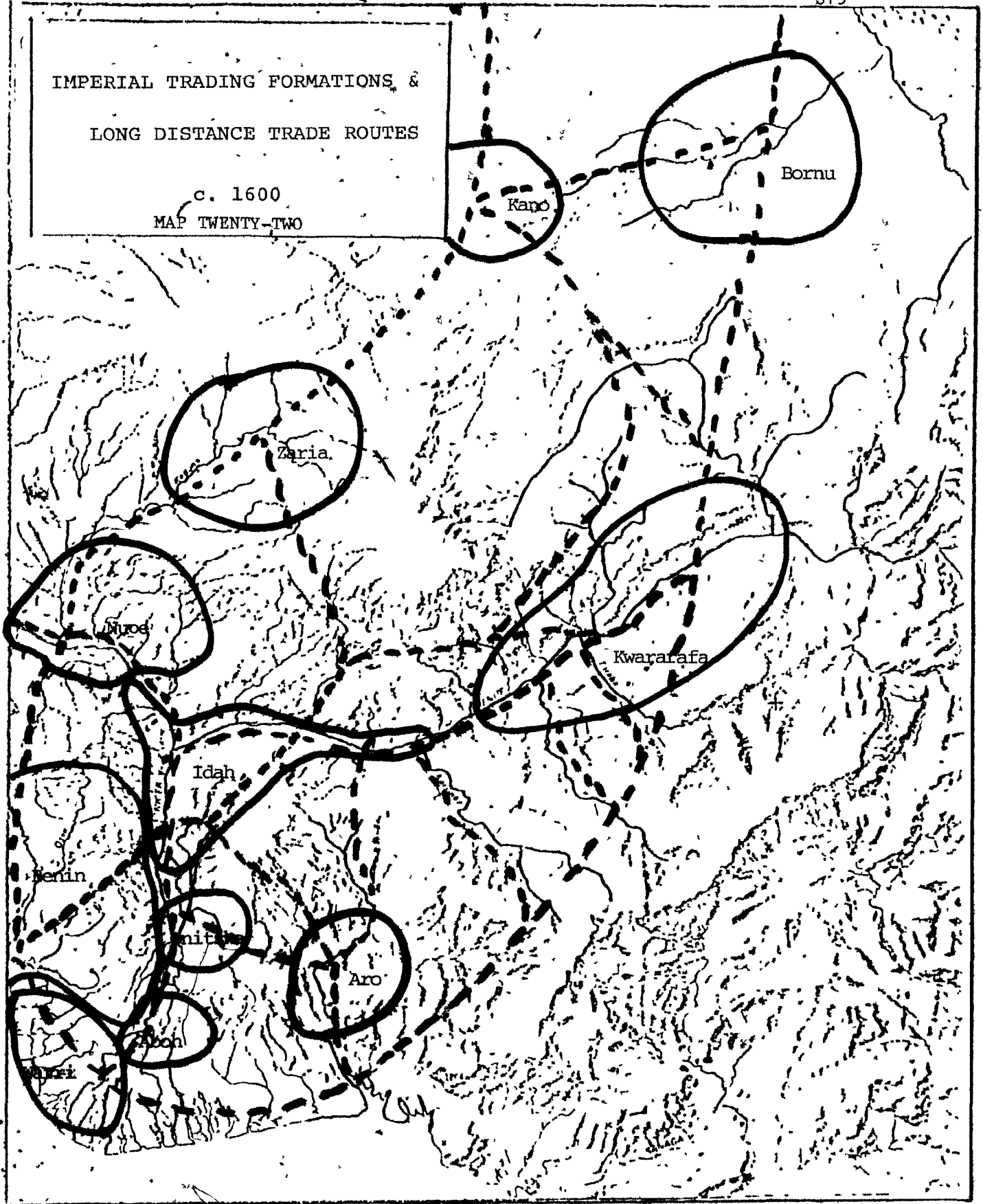
LONG DISTANCE TRADE ROUTES

c. 1500
MAP TWENTY-ONE



IMPERIAL TRADING FORMATIONS &
LONG DISTANCE TRADE ROUTES

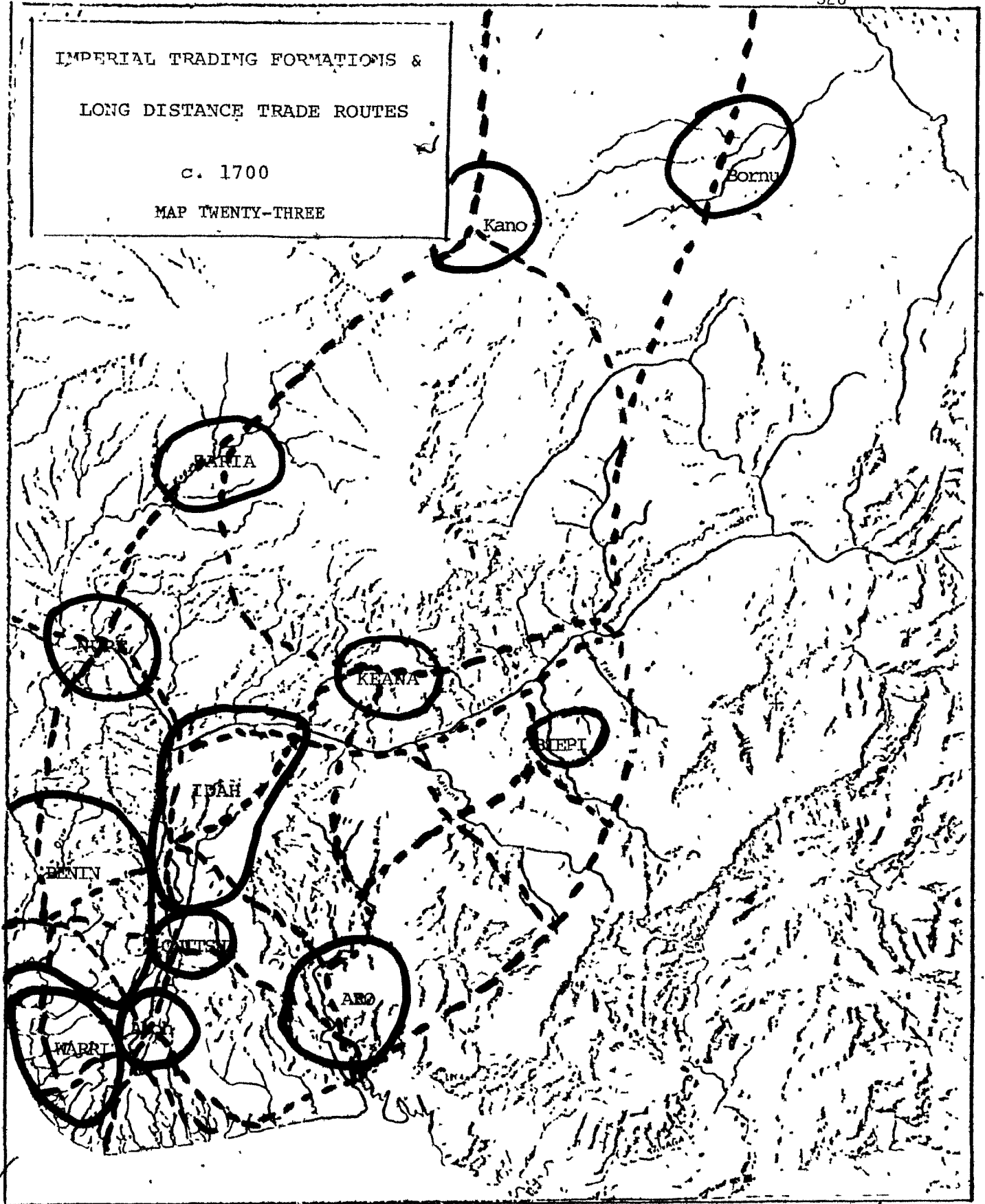
c. 1600
MAP TWENTY-TWO



IMPERIAL TRADING FORMATIONS &
LONG DISTANCE TRADE ROUTES

c. 1700

MAP TWENTY-THREE



north and south and the trade fed demands for northern (savanna and sudanic) products in the south and southern (forest) zone production in the north.

In political terms the relationships within the Benue Basin were no more evident than those revealed at Idah. The imposition of the Bini dynasty in c. 1507-1537 established an integral power in the riverain capital; and contributed to the development of riverian and overland commerce. This dynasty instituted policies designed specifically to facilitate Bini domination of regional and long distance trade while incorporating Okpoto and Igbo vassals in the production and exchange system. The eventual removal of the Bini dynasty in c. 1687-1717, and the ascendancy of the Kwararafa monarchy widened the cosmopolitan political, ethnic and commercial scope of the Idah enclave. Interestingly enough the sudanic zone monarchy in Idah was concerned with the southern flow of trade, whereas the forest zone dynasty was primarily concerned with northern commerce. The change in dynasty, reflected, therefore, the changing economic conditions and the primacy of international trade in the orientation of a particular political institution. Northern commercial decline coupled with persistent climatic degradation caused a major depression in the northern Benue Basin. To survive and flourish Idah turned to the south.

While it has been possible to emphasize the diversity in the extended region, it has also been possible to examine regional political and economic developments. The northern or sudanic zone, for example, was clearly more susceptible to frequent droughts and drought-related famines than the derived savanna or forest zones to

the south. However, rather than represent isolated environmental problems the droughts of the sixteenth century, for example, can be related to political, economic, demographic and social problems in those areas insulated from the direct ravages of low rainfall, pestilence and famine. Droughts and famines forced population shifts which resulted in major demographic changes well beyond the sudanic zone or affected area. The slow retrenchment of Kwararafa into the Benue Valley has been directly related to violence and environment in the Central Sudan.⁵ The droughts, famines and warfare of the fifteenth century created extreme pressure on the population and resources in the Gongola Valley. Kwararafa, in response, moved its capital southward. Furthermore, the sudanic zone was intimately involved in regional commercial development, and was the major intermediary link between the trans-Saharan trade and the southern Benue Basin. Events in the Sudan, including inter-state warfare between Kwararafa, Bornu, Kano, Zaria and Katsina, had an impact on middle belt and forest zone production and exchange. In this respect it has been possible to relate economic and political patterns, and link these patterns to demographic structures, local and regional commerce, and the growth of integral power centres throughout the Benue Basin. Benin, Idah and Kwararafa are only three examples in this process of central place formation, growth and development.

The middle belt was less susceptible to the environmental degradation that hindered northern commercial and political stability. However, the middle belt was more susceptible to the machinations of neighbouring societies and the economic impositions of areas to the north and south. The middle location, between the forest zone to the

south and the sudanic zone to the north, provided at least the opportunity for the entrepreneur to act as commercial agent in the exchange of ecologically distinct production. Middle belt traders, and the administration and organization of trading formations, linked the two distinct zones into one complementary sphere or economic system. Middle belt traders exchanged northern cattle, horses, cloth and specialized agricultural products for southern yams, cloth, oils and kola nuts. At the same time these entrepreneurs could exploit the flourishing commercial networks to export middle belt production of metal implements, ivory, cloth, beads and slaves. Therefore, while regional and long-distance trade prospered the middle belt trading communities derived increasing wealth from their participation in the exchange systems. As the middleman in inter-regional exchange, moreover, the profits of commercial activities were derived from two widely separate communities and did not impose, therefore, on the middle belt commoner population.

The median location in the regional and long-distance exchange network allowed trading enclaves such as Idah to develop certain unique features in terms of population, demography, political organization and economic relations. Many of these distinctive features were a reflection of changes occurring beyond the actual borders of the middle belt trading formations. The multi-ethnic population in the Idah enclave, for example, contained Okpoto, Igbo, Bini, Aro, and a large component of Kwararafa refugees after c. 1687.⁶ The relationships forged with Onitsha, Aboh and Nupe also reflected the unique organization of the Idah enclave in the middle belt, and suggests that contacts beyond the middle belt sub-region provided

access for Idah commerce far beyond the actual confines of the confluence region.

In the southern forest zone of the Benue Basin, an area located advantageously close to the Atlantic overseas trade system that developed after the fifteenth century, political and economic developments were relatively immune from climatic fluctuations. The forest region was linked, however, to a number of other profitable exchange systems, including the northern patterns tied in to the trans-Saharan trade through various intermediaries like Nupe. The forest zone also exploited commercial relations in the existing east-west lagoon trade, and an eastern overland route from Benin. In this complex network of exchange systems Benin emerged as a powerful, politically significant trading formation. Perhaps even more important was the development of Benin production to facilitate commercial exchange, and this forest zone imperial trading formation emerged as a major production centre of cloth, pepper, camwood, ivory, metals, yams, fish, oils and kola nuts for export. Therefore, while the forest zone was relatively immune from the direct impact of climatic degradation imposed by severe and prolonged drought, indirectly climatic conditions in the sudanic zone and middle belt could have a negative impact on Benin production and exchange. A severe drought to the north, for example, could slow down trade; dry up markets, and play havoc with commercial activities in general. Therefore, while it is possible to distinguish regional differences it is also possible to argue that the Benue Basin was linked in an extensive commercial network that combined Benin productivity with Kano markets, and coastal imports with northern exchange. The best example whereby

the Benue Basin was organized into a reciprocal commercial alliance was in the importation of copper through the trans-Saharan exchange system and its eventual resale in Benin as a royal monopoly.

It is possible to see that while this discussion has concentrated in the three focal states of Benin, Idah and Kwararafa each state represents, in fact, a distinct sub-region or climatic zone within the extended Benue Basin framework. Furthermore, while this discussion identifies the focal states it does not limit the analysis to these three representative institutions or polities. This discussion has considered the related states of Udo, Agbor, Aboh, Onitsha, Nupe, Kano, Bornu and a number of others. In this respect this reconstruction at least surveys the Benue Basin political development, and accounts for the foundation of a number of influential polities. The concentration on the three focal states reflected regional trends in political development and evolution, exchange patterns, internal productivity for local, regional and international consumption, and established the relationship between political change and economic development. In other words, the detailed examination of the representative focal states establishes a regional historical overview which utilized sub-regional divisions to organize and analyze the Benue Basin between 1300 and 1700.

Despite the obvious inclination to divide and sub-divide politics, economics, social and demographic developments in an extended regional analysis there is still an overriding pattern which seems to apply to the whole region.⁷ It is possible to identify, for example, a direct correlation between commercial expansion and the political evolution of the entire region. When the

STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

PERIODIZATION	POLITICAL EVENTS	ECONOMIC FORCES	GENERATIONAL DATES (approximation)	DEMOGRAPHIC MOVEMENTS	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS
			c. 1270-1300		
W E T R O S P E R I T Y	Dynastic Change Benin Foundation of Oyo		c. 1300-1330	Yoruba Diaspora Benin & Oyo	Yoruba Famine
			c. 1330-1360		
	Tributary State Benin		c. 1360-1390		
		Regional Trade Expansion	c. 1390-1420		
		Coastal Trade Expansion	c. 1420-1450	Ga Eboodus Benin	
	National Trading Formation, Benin		c. 1450-1480	Urhobo & Iken Eboodus	
	Dynastic Change Idah & Ibi		c. 1480-1510	Bornu Capital Shifts Nyasaguru Benin Expansion to Idah	
	Imperial Trading Formation, Benin		c. 1510-1540	Idah Colonizes Nupe Babur Settles Biu	
	Expansion of Nupe		c. 1540-1570	Tumult in Oyo	Drought & Famine Bornu
	Makruran Invasion of Songhai		c. 1570-1600	Agbor Diaspora Onitsha & Abok	Drought & Famine Bornu
D E R Y	Dynastic Change Rewarafa	Atlantic Trade Diversifies Trans-Saharan Trade Shifts	c. 1600-1630	Rwarafa Diaspora Begins	Drought & Famine Tibuctoo & Bornu
	Dynastic Change Idama		c. 1630-1660	Agatu Diaspora Begins	Drought & Famine Bornu
	Dynastic Change Keana Expansion of Oyo	Benue Salt Trade Expands	c. 1660-1690	Jukun Colonization Benue Valley	Drought & Famine Bornu & Kano
	Dynastic Change Idah		c. 1690-1720		
N O R T H E R N D E R Y		Atlantic Trade Expansion	c. 1720-1750	Emigration from Idah to Ilkwa	Drought & Famine General (Continental)
		Slave Trade Boom	c. 1750-1780		
			c. 1780-1810	Bassa & Refugee Migration Across Benue	Drought & Famine Severe & Widespread
		Expansion of Legitimate Trade	c. 1810-1840	Second Jukun Colonization Benue Valley	
			c. 1848-1870		Drought & Famine Kano
S O U T H E R N M O U N T A I N S T			c. 1870-1900		
			c. 1900-		

trans-Saharan trade was at its peak between 1490 and 1591 events throughout the Benue Basin suggest that this was a time of general prosperity, political stability and economic expansion. During the century of trade and commerce Benin embarked on a concerted program of regional and imperial expansion, and clearly emerged as the dominant forest zone trading formation. This expansion and conquest, coupled with the development of commerce, crafts and exchange, incorporated a number of peripheral administrative and commercial centres, including Idah. With the extension of commercial activity came an increase in wealth and an expansion of entrepreneurial activity. Eventually the ambition for regional authority in the peripheral enclave at Idah manifested itself in the declaration of independence and an extension of the Bini dynastic influence across the middle belt. The alliance with Nupe and the association through the informal Niger alliance with Warri, Aboh, and Onitsha related to the expanding economic potential in regional and long-distance trade engendered by the booming trans-Saharan system. By c. 1627-1657 Nupe became a major independent middle belt trading formation in its own right, and actively competed for control of the north-south trade above the confluence. In the sudanic zone Kano, Bornu, Katsina and Kwararafa all experienced a degree of economic prosperity and political consolidation during the era of pre-eminent trans-Saharan trade. Finally, this period of widespread economic prosperity encouraged the northward expansion of Jukun merchants from the Cross River Basin and established a number of significant Jukun trading centres and production enclaves in the eastern Benue Basin. Concurrent with Jukun expansion in the sixteenth century the Tiv also expanded from

the Cameroon Mountains, and Aro traders took an increasingly prominent role in riverain and overland commercial traffic.⁸ It would seem, therefore, that the sixteenth century was an important period in the development of political institutions and the expansion of economic activity throughout the Benue Basin.

The preceding maps endeavour to identify the major trade routes in the Benue Basin, and correlate these routes with imperial trading formations and commercial enclaves. It would appear that in terms of economic relations and commercial development the Benue Basin could be described as a unified trading region in which a number of diverse polities and ethnic groups participated in the development of regional and long-distance exchange. Furthermore, there seems to be a correlation between the expansion of urban centres with the organization of definable trade routes. This conjunction of trade, mercantile activity, and craft or production centres with major trade routes in the Benue Basin emphasizes the regional nature of economic links and economic development. The sixteenth century, as we have seen, was perhaps the peak period of international commerce. During this era regional exchange, political centralization and economic growth were related to the general climatic stability that predominated throughout the Krimson Tapa.⁹ The economic growth, population expansion and commercial prosperity dependent upon climatic stability suggests that the essence of Benue Basin economic development was beyond the control of the population. Clearly there were factors in the organization of regional and international commerce that could be directly influenced by the state elite in the various trading enclaves: However, if commerce depended in any degree upon

environmental conditions there were obviously occasions when control and influence slipped from the grasp of the state elite. Toward the end of the fifteenth century major changes in both economic focus and environmental conditions imposed upon the political and economic circumstances in the individual states in the Benue Basin. The conquest of Songhai by Judur Pasha in 1591, for example, put an end to the widespread Songhai pax which had provided relative stability for the peaceful pursuit of trade throughout the sixteenth century. This political change, therefore, had far reaching economic effects, and as Bornu emerged as the main beneficiary in the Central Sudan by becoming the major southern terminal of the trans-Saharan trade, conditions in the sudanic zone, middle belt and forest regions changed accordingly. The prominence of Bornu after 1591 is clearly reflected in the fact that the Sultan of Turkey ... sent a friendly mission to the Mai of Bornu, Idris Alooma.¹⁰ While Bornu expanded, both Kano and Kwararafa seemed to decline. Apparently other sudanic zone states were less able to reorganize their own political or administrative machinery and economic relations effectively to handle a new commercial order that emerged in the northern regions of the Benue Basin in the seventeenth century.

Coinciding with the Moroccan invasion of Songhai, although not related to that conquest, was the widespread environmental decline, including severe droughts and drought related famines. This period of climatic degradation contributed to the denigration of political and economic fortunes in both the sudanic and middle belt regions. In Kwararafa, for example, Abakwariga and Greater Doma leaders attempted to exert influence in the political relationships of the

sudanic region in order to re-establish commercial connections. In c. 1582-1618, Kwararafa attacked Kano. In 1649 Kwararafa invaded Bornu, attempting a military solution to the problems. In 1671 Kwararafa once again attacked Kano, but apparently failed to achieve any major or lasting results, and commerce continued to decline along the northern frontier. These military incursions against rival sudanic states failed to revive Kwararafa's status in northern affairs, and thereby contributed to the retrenchment of the Kwararafa capital to the south. It would seem, therefore, that there was a direct relationship between commercial development, climatic conditions and the political stability of the sudan and middle belt. This conclusion was clearly evident in the response of Kwararafa to the changing sudanic patterns and the relocation of this major trading formation at Biern in c. 1500.¹¹ The establishment of a commercially oriented polity on the upper Benue effectively altered not only sudanic political relations, but substantially affected commercial development on the Benue itself and commercial links to the south. It seems clear that the collapse of the Songhai pax contributed to the changing political geography in the Benue Basin.

In the forest zone of the Benue Basin the Songhai pax had been equally influential and contributed to the development of Benin as an imperial trading formation. The evidence presented demonstrates that Benin expanded into a major forest zone political and economic force during the fifteenth century (c. 1455-1507); a time when the trans-Saharan trade was expanding as never before. Benin utilized its indirect economic links to northern commercial patterns to extend its political and economic influence across a broad expanse

of the southern Benue Basin. This expansion during a period of widespread economic boom, therefore, must be considered as a development related to the general prosperity in the entire region. The extension of Bini influence into the middle belt, for example, not only accounted for the foundation of the Bini dynasty at Idah, but initially at least accounted for an expansion of Bini political authority and commercial management into a significant trading zone which controlled north-south commerce in the overland and riverian systems.

Naturally enough Benin, and to a lesser extent Idah, were insulated by their geographic location from the ravages of sudanic zone droughts and famines. These states were not, however, insulated from the economic depression engendered by the collapse of the Songhai pax. After 1591, therefore, Idah increasingly felt the economic pressure of the declining value in northern commercial transactions and endeavoured to turn her entrepreneurial skills to southern-bound trade. Benin, too, was able to shift her economic focus to the Atlantic overseas trade, and thus avoid the problems associated with the declining northern commerce. European contact with Benin began as early as 1485, and subsequent economic developments through the expansion of coastal trading relations served to reinforce the forest zone imperial trading formation. It is important to emphasize, however, that the emergence of Benin as a major political and economic power in the southern Benue Basin, the foundation of the Bini dynasty at Idah, and the expansion of the conquest state as a commercially oriented forest zone polity, occurred before the consolidation of the Atlantic overseas trade. However, by 1591, when

the northern commercial patterns were in decay, Benin was able to utilize and exploit the Atlantic trade connection to continue political and economic expansion. Therefore, while the sudanic states, particularly Kwararafa and Kano, suffered most severely in the seventeenth century depression, Benin clearly survived the commercial collapse in the trans-Saharan system and the ravages of climatic deprivation and continued to expand and develop as a major commercial entrepreneurial state.

It is interesting that the analysis and reconstruction of political and economic developments in the three focal states provides a perspective on other major regional issues. The preceding discussion clearly touches on population movements and demography, the effects of religious developments and relationships, and the changing intra-regional balance of power. For example, the Jukun expansion from the Cross River Basin correlated with the general economic boom of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This population movement, which can be correlated with economic development and the commercial skills of Jukun entrepreneurs, eventually influenced directly the political and economic development of Kwararafa. As more and more Jukun were absorbed within the shifting state during the slow retrenchment southward the political balance of power also shifted in favour of Jukun hegemonic authority. It would seem, therefore, that there was a correlation between economic conditions and demographic shifts, and between demographic changes and political transformation. During periods of reasonable prosperity, stable climatic conditions, and commercial expansion, especially over a number of generations, population and settlement patterns could change dramatically.

Individuals, small groups and even larger populations migrated in search of even more commercial and/or economic benefit. The Jukun expansion, when examined in the light of regional evidence and considered against their propensity for control of the salt production and exchange systems, provided this population with a new emphasis in regional economic relations. It is possible to conclude, therefore, that prosperity could encourage demographic changes of major migrations, and thus contribute to the economic, political and social transformation of a particular state or region.

Another example of demographic changes during times of economic and climatic prosperity which contributed to political change accompanied the Bini invasion of Idah. The conquest of the Okpoto confederal chiefdoms around the ritual enclave of Idah in c. 1507-1537 apparently occurred because of two basic complementary factors.

Firstly, the Benin imperial administration perceived a potential political and economic rival on a major river in commercial network; a perception which may have been inaccurate given the lack of centralization inherent in Okpoto political structures, but which provided sufficient incentive for Oba Ozolua to dispatch his son against Eggarah Eri. Secondly, the policy of the imperial formation was to exercise direct power and authority over all major trade routes and production centres through which Bini commerce could be developed. The invasion of Idah by Aji-Attah, therefore, represented an extension of the conquest state and, more to the point, a major demographic shift which occurred at a time of increasing regional prosperity and commercial expansion. The conquest of Idah not only altered the course of middle belt political and economic history, but was

influential in the development of regional commercial and political links in the entire Benue Basin. For example, the establishment of the Bini dynasty at Idah set in motion another major change in the socio-economic and political relationships in the Benue Basin. The conquest of Nupe represented, in fact, a demographic shift, and political transformation based upon economic prosperity and the desire to exercise domination of regional trade similar to that which prompted the conquest of Idah. Nupe emerged thereafter as a powerful trading complex in its own right with tributary relations to the imperial authority in Idah. It would seem, therefore, that population movements, political imposition, and expanded economic exploitation occurred with regularity during periods of region-wide economic prosperity, and the sixteenth century was no exception as major evolutionary and revolutionary changes occurred in the development of Benue Basin regional politics and economics.

More frequently population movements and demographic changes can be related to protest, and can be examined as the result of poor or declining political and economic factors. This would certainly seem to have been the case in the Benue Basin throughout the four centuries under discussion here. Clearly the vast majority of the demographic changes in the Benue Basin can be directly related to declining commercial conditions, drought and famine, or political and economic exploitation that sets in motion protest migrations. Furthermore, wars, power struggles, and a combination of any or all of these negative factors could force a major population or protest movement. The Kwararafa diaspora of c. 1597-1657 was a classic example of a migration response to mounting negative forces. The population in

Kwararafa had been under a variety of pressures for a number of generations, including the ravages of drought, famine, internecine warfare, and continuing struggles to define commercial relations and prospects in an evolving economic climate. Ultimately these pressures translated into constitutional problems and civil war. Each segment in the multi-ethnic confederacy sought to define its own relations to the political authority and economic sphere through the claim for hegemonic power in the embattled polity. The seizure of central power by Adi Agba Kenjo in c. 1610-1640 represented a Jukun thrust for paramount authority. This dramatic shift in centralized administration, where a Jukun monarchy exercised paramount authority for the first time in Kwararafan history, triggered a number of reactions in the multi-ethnic population. Not the least of these responses to the Jukun imposition was the migration of dissatisfied and alienated residents of Kwararafa who were unable to accommodate the changing central political institutions. The power struggle and the ensuing civil wars, therefore, contributed to the Kwararafa diaspora, and this population shift represented a clear example of protest. The demographic changes after the Kwararafa diaspora were most seriously felt in the middle and lower Benue Valley, and the political geography of this sub-region of the Benue Basin was substantially altered. New polities emerged from this diaspora in the Alago Obasadoma, Idomaland, and among the Igala. All these polities claimed connections with the declining sudanic state of Kwararafa, and all defended their rights to disassociate from this collapsing multi-ethnic confederacy and establish independent polities removed from Kwararafan hegemonic authority. The political geography of the

middle belt, therefore, changed quite dramatically after the Kwararafa diaspora in c. 1597-1657 and was further altered after the Agatu diaspora in c. 1627-1687.

In terms of middle belt political developments, economic focus and population patterns the Agatu diaspora was probably the most important demographic change in the history of the region. Clearly the Agatu diaspora fell within the category of protest movements as the various components in the settlement sought to redefine their political and economic relationships in a reconstituted polity on the River Benue. The failure to establish viable constitutional mechanisms for the central administration of this state was as much a factor of internal disputes and external aggressions, as it was a problem of economic development. The various components in Agatu had to define individual claims to economic resources, including land, and commercial activities. Political status and authority as the central institution in commercial management also emerged as a major point of contention, and the constitutional debates between the Igala, Alago and Idoma concentrated initially on this problem. The breakdown of recognized constitutional mechanisms and the failure of legal or judicial institutions has been used as the rationale for the failure of the Agatu settlement. However, this explanation, couched in terms of paramount authority, also relates to the economic struggle to define economic relations in the multi-ethnic settlement. Whatever the causal factors in the Agatu diaspora, and we must consider both political and economic conditions as instrumental in the collapse of this riverain state, it is possible to conclude that this was still the most influential demographic shift in the ultimate definition of

middle belt politics and economics. The foundation of new dynasties at Idah, Keana, Doma, and among the Idoma provided an entirely new political direction for the subsequent evolution of local, regional and long-distance trade. The following schematic map endeavours to document some of the major demographic shifts evident in the Benue Basin between c. 1300 and 1700, and attempts to classify each population change in terms of protest migration (negative response) or prosperity expansion (positive response).

It should be noted that while a particular period, such as the sixteenth century, can be defined as an era of relative prosperity, this definition must be tempered with a perspective on the whole population within a given polity, sub-region or region. For example, while commercial prosperity and climatic stability were widespread during particular periods this does not necessarily imply that the whole population benefitted. The particular relationships within a social formation, the style of administration, the exploitation of subordinate populations, and the relationships between elite demands and the ability of vassals to pay must all be considered. This qualification of relative prosperity suggests, in fact, that for certain segments of an exploited population there was no prosperity, and that appropriation of produced surplus undermined any economic advantage or benefit that might have accrued to the subordinate or dominated stratum. This observation indicates that there was a relationship between elite demands for tribute, taxes, ad hoc levies, and subordinate surplus production and the development of underdevelopment in the coerced segment of the population. While a particular trading formation in the Benue Basin, such as Benin, Idah

or Kwararafa, might seem to prosper and expand during periods of region wide economic prosperity clearly certain exploited segments of the vassal population derived little or no economic advantage. An example of such a relationship can be deduced from Benin where the appropriations of the Bini monarchy to develop elite dominated trading monopolies, and the increases in tribute to support an expanding state bureaucracy and hereditary hierarchy, generated extraordinary pressures on the principle although subordinate producers in the polity. In this respect, at least, it is possible to distinguish between the wealth accumulation by the dominant segment and the exploitation of the dominated, which suggests that while general prosperity persists specific prosperity was restricted in the vassal population. Furthermore, the foundations of an imperial trading formation with commercial links to expansive and prosperous international trade generated demands for increased productivity upon the hinterland vassal population which in turn was appropriated by the capital elite. This relationship between capital and hinterland could lead to expansion and development in the former and severe underdevelopment in the latter. As tribute, commercially viable produce, and non-commercial levies were exploited and appropriated to satisfy capital elite demands the peripheral vassal population found its own abilities to produce and reproduce increasingly undermined. There is a connection, therefore, between the oppressive and exploitative character of a particular administration and the perception of regional prosperity in times of commercial expansion and climatic stability. Also, the relationships between the state and the subordinate strata reflects the development of the capital

enclave in the social formation and the underdevelopment of the periphery.

A good example of the development of underdevelopment in the Benue Basin between 1300 and 1700 comes from the Bini dynastic period in Idah history. This imposed administration was considered by the Okpoto and Igbo subordinate sections of the population to be particularly oppressive and repressive. The Bini elite demanded increasing amounts of tribute, commercial and non-commercial levies, and imposed restrictions on hinterland production to service royal monopolies. The Bini regime also increasingly exploited slaves and slave labour to subsidize the commercial nexus dominated by the state elite. The policy of this coercive and highly centralized regime also encouraged separation of Bini from subordinate Okpoto and Igbo, and thus restricted, inhibited or totally prevented integration of the three ethnic elements in the population. As the Idah capital enclave expanded into a major riverain commercial centre, hinterland production became more and more of an economic necessity to maintain the capital elite. The gerontocracy in the hinterland regions, where Okpoto and Igbo farmers and commercial agents were becoming increasingly dominated by Bini political and coercive authority, was forced to increase productivity to service Bini demands. Eventually demands exceeded the ability of the tributary vassals to produce, and the Bini regime turned to the co-optation of slave labour, even to the extent of enslaving allies and tribute-paying vassals. In this situation, therefore, it is not surprising that the hinterland regions became increasingly underdeveloped vis-à-vis the capital, and that coerced and exploited populations sought to disassociate, protest

and oppose the central administration. In economic terms the net benefit from the development of long distance and regional trade accrued to the central elite in the capital enclave, while the burden of production fell upon the subordinate vassal population in the hinterland.

It would seem that the major conclusion of this Benue Basin regional study, and the detailed examination of the focal states of Benin, Idah and Kwararafa, can be summarized as a relationship between political change and the economics of the social formation. This relationship also requires consideration of the commercial climate, or in more simplistic terms the economic conditions in the region. As chapters two, three and four clearly show the evolution of Benin from a redistributive segmentary chiefdom - a relatively small undifferentiated geo-polity in the forest zone - to an imperial trading formation, depended upon the correlation of two basic factors. Firstly, the political hierarchy in the social formation had to provide strong centralized and decisive leadership, and establish a sound tributary basis for elite support from the subordinate gerontocracy. Secondly, this internal development had to be correlated with the expansion of external economic factors, such as international and regional commerce. This second factor was, to some extent, beyond the direct control of the Benin state elite. However, given the expansion of trade between the Niger delta and the Lagos Lagoon, and the general economic prosperity evident in the Kitmarson Tapa (1410-1580), the potential for the development of a trading formation was evident and subsequently exploited by the Benin administration. The expansion of the trans-Saharan trade under the Songhai pax provides a further

incentive to expand the Bini trading network. The commercial domination by the state elite provided the incentive for the development of political institutions. The correlation between economic opportunity and political centralization, therefore, remained consistent throughout the evolution of the Benin polity, and culminated in the emergence of the imperial trading formation.

The same kind of correlation between political change and economics on a regional scale can be observed in the history of the Idah enclave. The invasion and conquest of the Okpoto dynasty in c. 1507-1537 was, in fact, an expansion of the Bini imperial formation, and was prompted by commercial considerations. The Bini administration of Idah and the coercive relations with the Okpoto and Igbo populations in the confluence region might also be related to economics. Clearly the Bini dynasty at Idah was concerned with the development and expansion of Niger commerce, and exploited subordinate vassals in order to effectively dominate the long distance and regional trading complex centred on Idah. The subsequent development of underdevelopment in the hinterland of the Idah enclave might, therefore, be considered a net result of the Niger alliance, commercial aspirations, and the exploitative nature of the central administration. The development of Idah as a dominant partner in the Niger commercial system, and the emergence of Idah as a trading formation, occurred in correlation with A) the expansion of the trans-Saharan trade under the Songhai pax, and B) the growth of Atlantic overseas commerce through the Niger delta ports.

There is an interesting correlation between the ultimate decline and eventual removal of the Bini dynasty in Idah and significant changes in the commercial patterns in the Benue Basin. After the collapse of Songhai in 1591 northern trade patterns changed dramatically, and Idah was unable to pursue commercial exchange north of the Benue to the same extent as she had in the sixteenth century. However, the expansion of coastal trade in the Niger delta was emerging as an alternative, particularly in Benin. The penetration of coastal trade up the Niger and into the Idah commercial nexus, and as the principle support of the Bini elite, imposed a dramatic change on the economic patterns in the trading system. As the seventeenth century opened the European demands in the coast were still primarily met by coastal trading states. Later in the seventeenth century (1650) European demands were shifting away from legitimate commerce and toward trade in slaves. Idah, unable to respond initially to the altered economic circumstances, became an even more oppressive state as the Bini elite sought to supplement their support through demands for increased tribute. The apparent weakness in Idah, and the polarization of the population between Bini supporters and subordinate vassals paying increasing amounts of tribute, provided the opportunity for the Kwararafan refugees to impose a new political option in the confluence region. The Kwararafan royalists were able to align with the oppressed Okpoto and Igbo and remove the Bini dynasty from Idah. The correlation between regional economic developments and political change seems quite clear in this example.

The establishment of the Kwararafan dynasty in Idah in c. 1687-1717 founded a relatively egalitarian and populist administration. Support for this dynasty came, not only from the Kwararafan segment, but also from the Okpoto, Igbõ and some Bini clans. It is interesting, therefore, that the third Idah dynasty developed its commercial interests in terms of the slave trade, and became a major slave-trading state. This development in Idah after c. 1717-1747, coincided with the boom in the Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century. It is also interesting, and an important factor in the stability and popularity of the Kwararafan administration, that slave raiding was prohibited within the Igala Kingdom. This meant, in effect, that the third dynasty instituted policy designed to protect the broadest possible base of the state population and preserved its status as the legitimate, egalitarian and popular central administration. There is, however, direct correlation between political change, and the implementation of state policy, and the general economic patterns evident in the Benue Basin; a factor that seems to persist throughout the history of this region between 1300 and 1700.

The correlation between political change and economics in the sudanic zone is complicated by the fragile nature of this environment and the frequent deterioration in climatic conditions. However, if drought and drought related famines are considered economic factors, then the correlation between political change and economics becomes even more pronounced in the history of the sudanic zone states. Clearly changes in Kwararafa can be related to the various economic factors that impinged upon the administration of this trading formation. One of the more obvious changes occurred in the slow

retrenchment of this polity from the Gongola Basin into the Benue Valley. This alteration in the geo-polity occurred in the face of fluctuating economic conditions, including the outbreak of severe and prolonged drought and famine after 1580, and the decline of the trans-Saharan trade after 1591. The eventual alteration in the balance of power which brought Adı Agba Kenyo to the throne in 1610-1640 can be related to the increase in southern commerce and the decline of northern trade. The extension of Jukun authority in the political arena must be correlated with the expansion of Jukun economic influence. Furthermore, the decline of Abakwariga political power can be related to the minimization of Abakwariga commercial exchange. In this respect the history of Kwararafa, leading up to the Kwararafa diaspora of c. 1597-1627, was an economic history of political evolution.

It would seem, therefore, that an analysis of Benue Basin history between c. 1300 and 1700 provides a regional perspective on political change and economic development. The foregoing discussion has concentrated on some examples in the Benue Basin, but the conclusions seem to apply to other states, polities and ethnic groups in the region. In this respect the history of the Benue Basin, drawn from Benin, Idah and Kwararafa, is also a history of Akure, Aboh, Nupe, Keana, Oturkpo, Wukari, Wuse, Kano and Bornu. The politics and economics of these Benue Basin states are at least partially considered, especially as they all relate to the development of the focal states. Furthermore, this regional analysis considers the impact of Yoruba, Igbo, Okpoto, Jukun, Abakwariga, Bini, Hausa, Kanuri and Greater Doma as the ethnic divisions within the defined region. This

perspective, therefore, considers most of the major ethnic groups in the Benue Basin and endeavours to correlate politics, economics, demography and social history in a unified reconstruction of Benue Basin history.

End notes to Chapter Eight

1. Refer to the following series of maps which show the correlation between imperial trading formations and long distance trade routes in c. 1500, c. 1600 and c. 1700.
2. Restrictions on spatial distribution or territory confine a population and limit the natural resource which might be exploited to facilitate increased commercial and non-commercial production. Restricted territory also has a negative impact upon natural population growth.
3. The Benin copper, bronze and metal industries were all founded on imported raw materials. The copper was apparently brought south through the trans-Saharan system prior to 1591, thereafter increasing supplies were found in the Atlantic overseas trading system. Iron was mined in Oyo, and the Igbo areas to the east. Refer to O. Njoku, 'The Symbiosis of Agriculture and Iron-working in the Pre-Colonial Economy of Igboland', paper presented to the Dalhousie History Seminar Series, March, 1984, which details more specifically the production and distribution of iron products east of the Niger.
4. The consumption of Kano cloth, for example, and the desirability of Bini cloth were, in part a product of fashion and taste. Commerce, therefore, grew from the marketability of various products, not only as luxury items, but also because of their variations.
5. J.B. Webster, 'The Three Phases of Kwararafa: A Peripatetic State', in Central Nigerian Perspectives, edited by E. Isichei, forthcoming.
6. For a more detailed discussion on the cosmopolitan nature of Igala society refer to R.A. Sargent, 'Inexplicit Evidence: Totems, Linguistics and Spatial Distribution in the Igala Historical Reconstruction', paper presented to the Johns Hopkins University Pre-Colonial History Conference, February 1984.
7. One of the regional concerns has been chronology. The following chart endeavours to summarize the regional chronology of the Benue basin, and identifies some of the more events in the period between c. 1200 and 1700.

8. The following map endeavours to document the major population movements and demographic changes in the Benue Basin. The information has been sub-divided into two basic categories of population movements. Firstly, the 'prosperity expansion' where a particular group moves outward in search of greater economic advantage. Secondly, the 'protest migration', which has been described as a disassociation response.
9. J.B. Webster, 'Periodization in African History, 1050-1850', Benue Valley Project Paper No. 34, 1983.
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- " " " No. 236, Atom Jika in Idah, January 13, 1978.
- " " " No. 237, Attah of Idah and his court, January
14, 1978.
- " " " No. 238, Itodo, Ohuga clan, royal divination
priest, January 15, 1977.
- " " " No. 239, Okwoli in Idah, January 16, 1978.
- " " " No. 240, Attah Ajii of Idah, February 16, 1978.
- " " " No. 241, Attah Ajii of Idah, January 17, 1978.

Select Historical Texts from Independently Collected Sources

The following collection of sources, which were instructive and informative for the development of this work were either collected by this researcher in various trips outside Igalaland proper or were independently collected by other historical researchers. For example, the collection of Idoma historical texts recorded by E.O. Erin were made available to this writer. The following select listing records those Idoma historical texts that were specifically relevant for this study.

- Idoma Historical Text: Akpa Historical Text No. 1, 13-10-75, Ikana
Ejukwa, Chief Odepa Ekereke of Ikpari.
- " " : Oturkpo Historical Text No. 4, Akpachi, Onu
Agojey.
- " " : Oturkpo Historical Text No. 8, Ijauka Ochete
of Ai-Agboko.
- " " : Oturkpo Historical Text No. 15, Ai-Odeji
Kindred.

- Idoma Historical Text: Adoka Historical Text No. 12.
- " " " : Agatu Historical Text No. 6, Adogojioje Kindred.
- " " " : Agatu Historical Text No. 42, Atakpa-Ife Kindred.
- " " " : Agatu Historical Text No. 55, Akpeko Kindred.
- " " " : Ochekwu Historical Text No. 5, Oba Kindred.
- " " " : Ochekwu Historical Text No. 6, Adija Kindred.
- " " " : Ochekwu Historical Text No. 12, Edikwu Kindred.
- " " " : Ochekwu Historical Text No. 19, Ataganyi.
- " " " : Ochekwu Historical Text No. 21, Akpete.
- " " " : Ochekwu Historical Text No. 22, Akpete.
- " " " : Ochekwu Historical Text No. 34.
- " " " : Ochekwu Historical Text No. 40, Opaha, Iko group.
- " " " : Ochekwu Historical Text No. 26, Iko group.
- " " " : Ochekwu Historical Text No. 43, Ochekwu.
- " " " : Edumoga Historical Text No. 9.
- " " " : Adoka Historical Text No. 1.

The following texts were collected by J.M. Morrison, in 1974 and 1976:

- Alago Historical Text: Agwatashi Historical Text No. 101, 27-7-74, Osoho's palace Agwatashi.
- " " " : Agwatsashi Historical Text No. 103, 29-7-74, Osoho.
- " " " : Alosi Historical Text No. 101, 31-7-74, Osheshi's palace Alosi.

- Alago Historical Text: Alosi Historical Text No. 103, 3-8-74.
- " " " : Assakio Historical Text No. 6, 25-7-76,
Akushonye, Ogbede, Osusa and Osasa in the
chiefs house in Assakio.
- " " " : Assakio Historical Text No. 10, 26-7-76,
Oshuwayino Egwa the Osana of Assakio.
- " " " : Assakio Historical Text No. 17, 29-7-76,
Dagana Oqoh.
- " " " : Assakio Historical Text No. 18, 29-7-76,
Iyehum Adi the Osofono of Assakio.
- " " " : Assakio Historical Text No. 20, 30-7-76,
Ishaleku Akpa.

Eggon Historical Text: No. 1 (Assakio Historical Text No. 23),
31-7-77, Mala Akyango, Bako Gabi in Assakio.

Koro Historical Text: No. 1 (Assakio Historical Text No. 24),
Karara Doda Antu, Amangbo Mamo, and Agya
Adoga in Assakio.

The following Alago historical texts were collected by E.O. Erim in
1974.

- Alago Historical Text: Keana Historical Text No. 100, 24-6-74,
Alhaji Audu, Alhaji Adamu and Egwa of Keana.
- " " " : Keana Historical Text No. 101, 24-6-74,
Ugbaje Agbo, Alhaji Adamu, Alhaji Eladoga of
Keana.

The following texts were collected by R.A. Sargent in pursuit of the
cross-reference connections between surrounding groups and the Igaḷa.

- Bassa Historical Text No. 1, Alhaji Adengudu, Mozum, May 6, 1977.
- " " " No. 2, Alhaji Adengudu, and Gbardun Gwari in
Mozum, May 6, 1977.
- " " " No. 3, Arnold Abete, Morum, January 20, 1978.

- Bassa Historical Text No. 4, Oruna, Shintana, January 21, 1978.
 " " " No. 5, Oruna, Mbagboye Ali, January 22, 1978.
 Igbirra Historical Text No. 1, Koton Karifi, May 7, 1977.
 " " " No. 2, Koton Karifi, May 8, 1977.
 " " " No. 3, Koton Karifi, May 8, 1977.
 " " " No. 4, Panda, May 9, 1977.
 " " " No. 5, Panda, May 10, 1977.
 " " " No. 6, Panda, May 10, 1977.
 " " " No. 7, Akwanga, May 12, 1977.
 " " " No. 8, Akwanga, May 12, 1977.

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B III (12) Igala Vocabulary

B IV (1) Okpoto Vocabulary

B VIII (11) Ankpa Vocabulary

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LEGEND FOR CHARTS

ⓕ	Famine
ⓓ	Drought
Ⓦ	War
Ⓜ	Migration
♂	Male
♀	Female
==	Marriage
1856	Fixed Date
c. 1870-1900	Calculated/Approximate Date
⋮	Suspected Relationship
	Known Relationship
<u>Odorvo</u>	Lineage Name
IDAHA	Chiefdom Name
ⓐ 1	Number of Cross-references
↔	Contacts or cross-references
20	Succession number
ⓔ	Eclipse
Ⓟ	Plague

CHART I
ISHAN CHIEFDOMS

IDAHA WAR GROUP (1515-16)

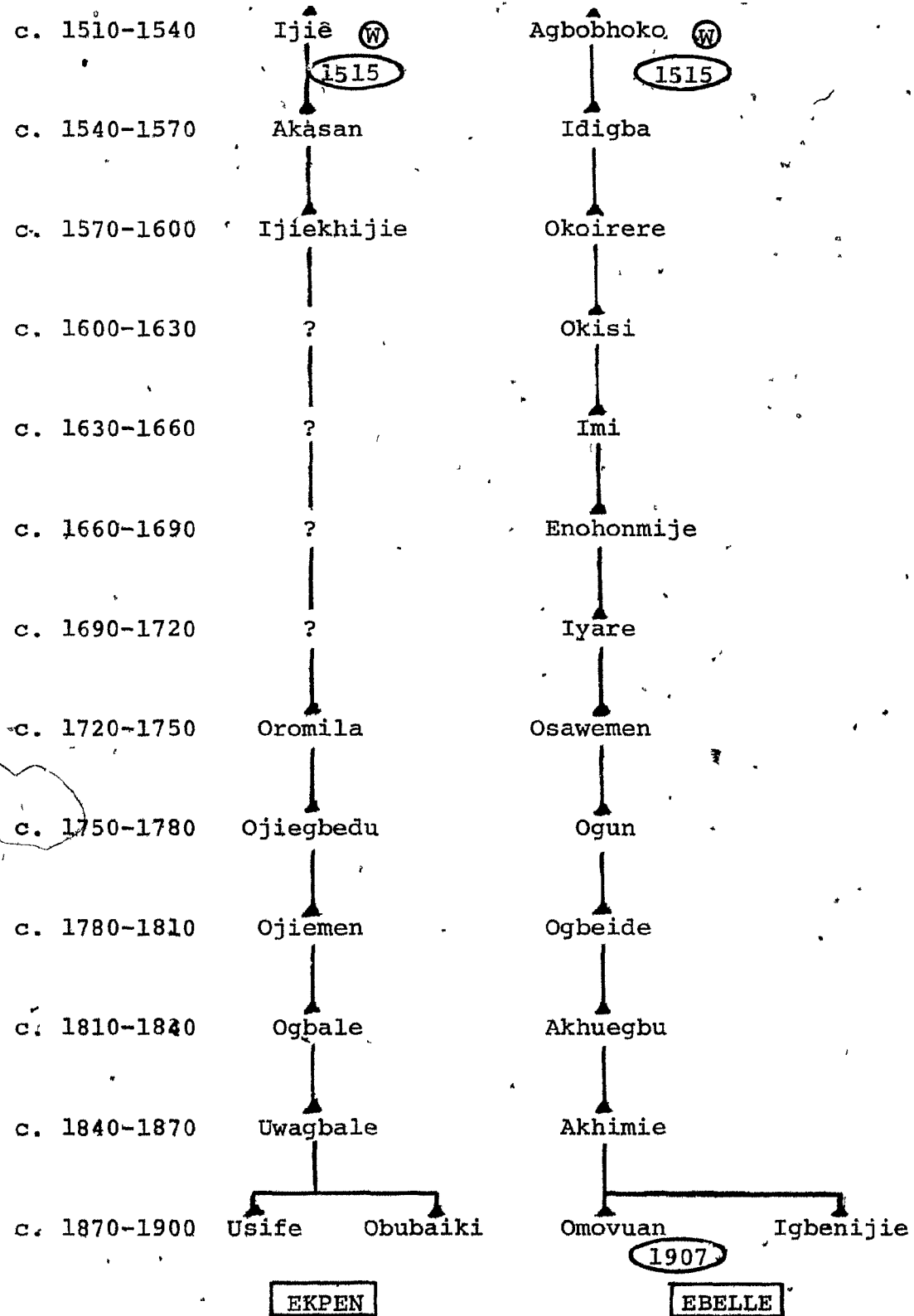
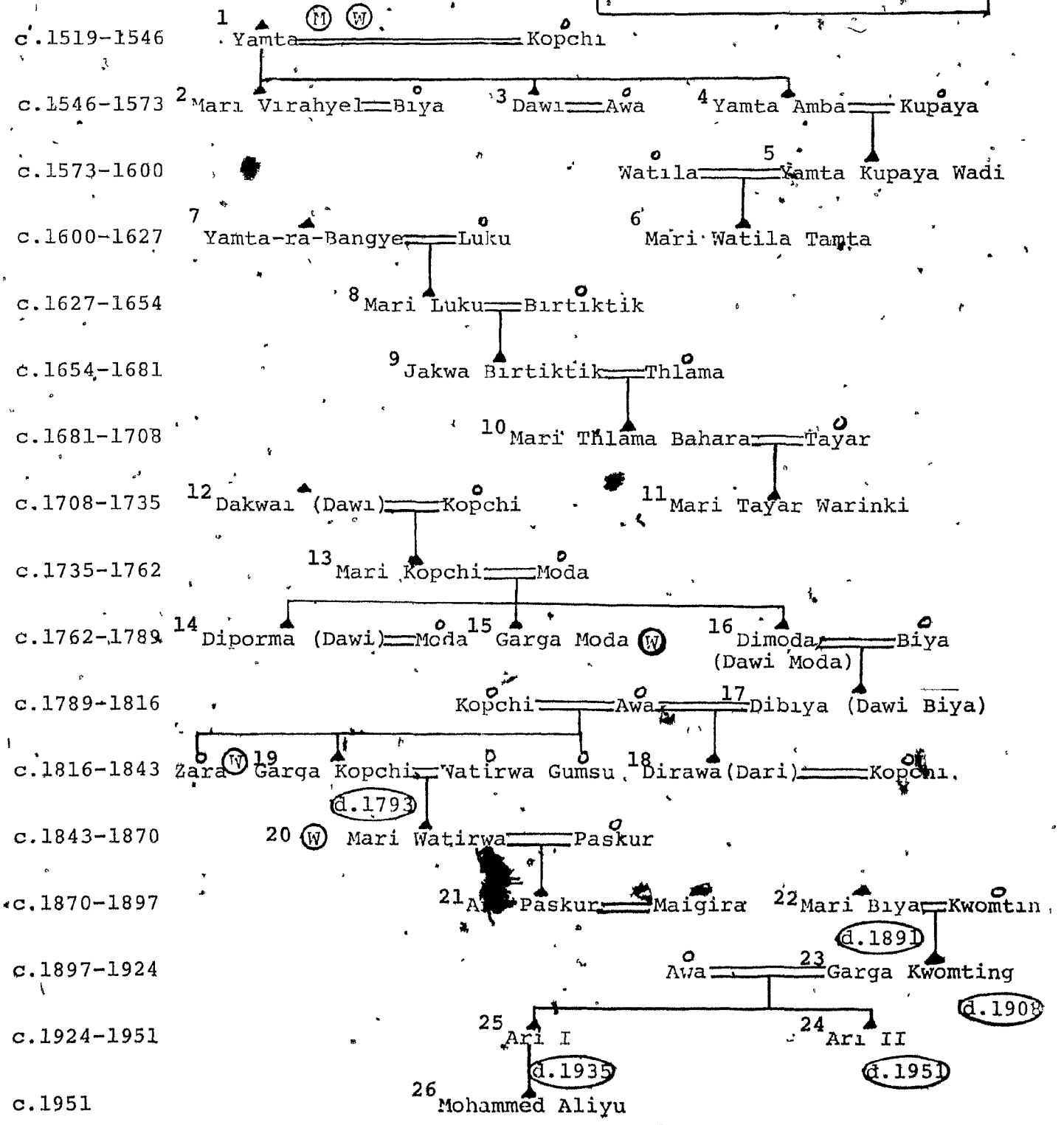


CHART II
THE BARBUR DYNASTY OF BIU



(Constructed by J.E. Miller, 1983)

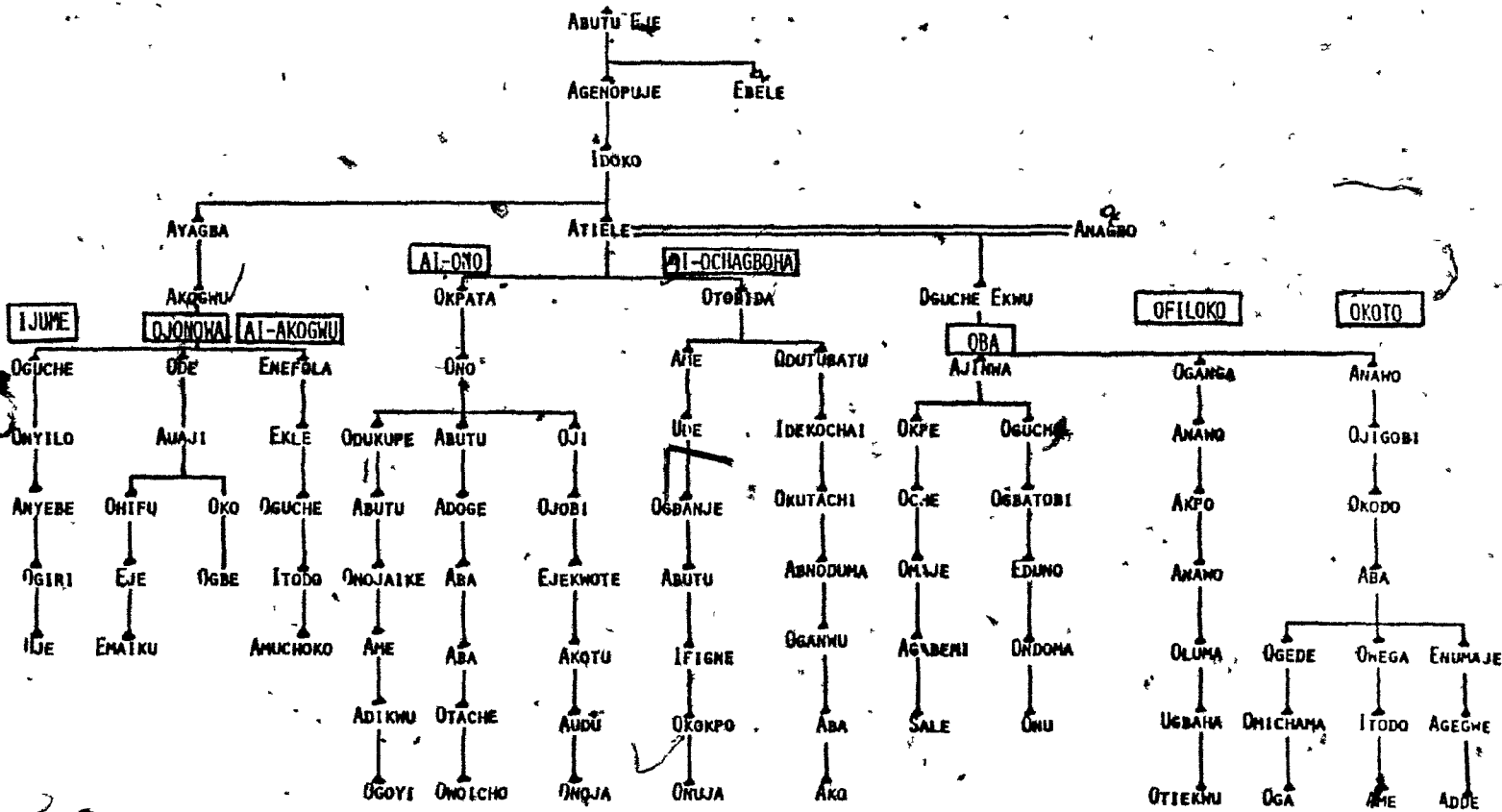
Legend

○ Female (W) War (M) Migration = Marriage ▲ Male

CHART IV

IGALA - IDOMA INTER-SOCIETAL SYNDICISMS

- c. 1565-1595
- c. 1595-1625
- c. 1625-1655
- c. 1655-1685
- c. 1685-1715
- c. 1715-1745
- c. 1745-1775
- c. 1775-1805
- c. 1805-1835
- c. 1835-1865
- c. 1865-1895
- c. 1895-1925
- c. 1925-



402

CHART V

IDOMA GENEALOGIES

c. 1565-1595

c. 1595-1625

c. 1625-1655

c. 1655-1685

c. 1685-1715

c. 1715-1745

c. 1745-1775

c. 1775-1805

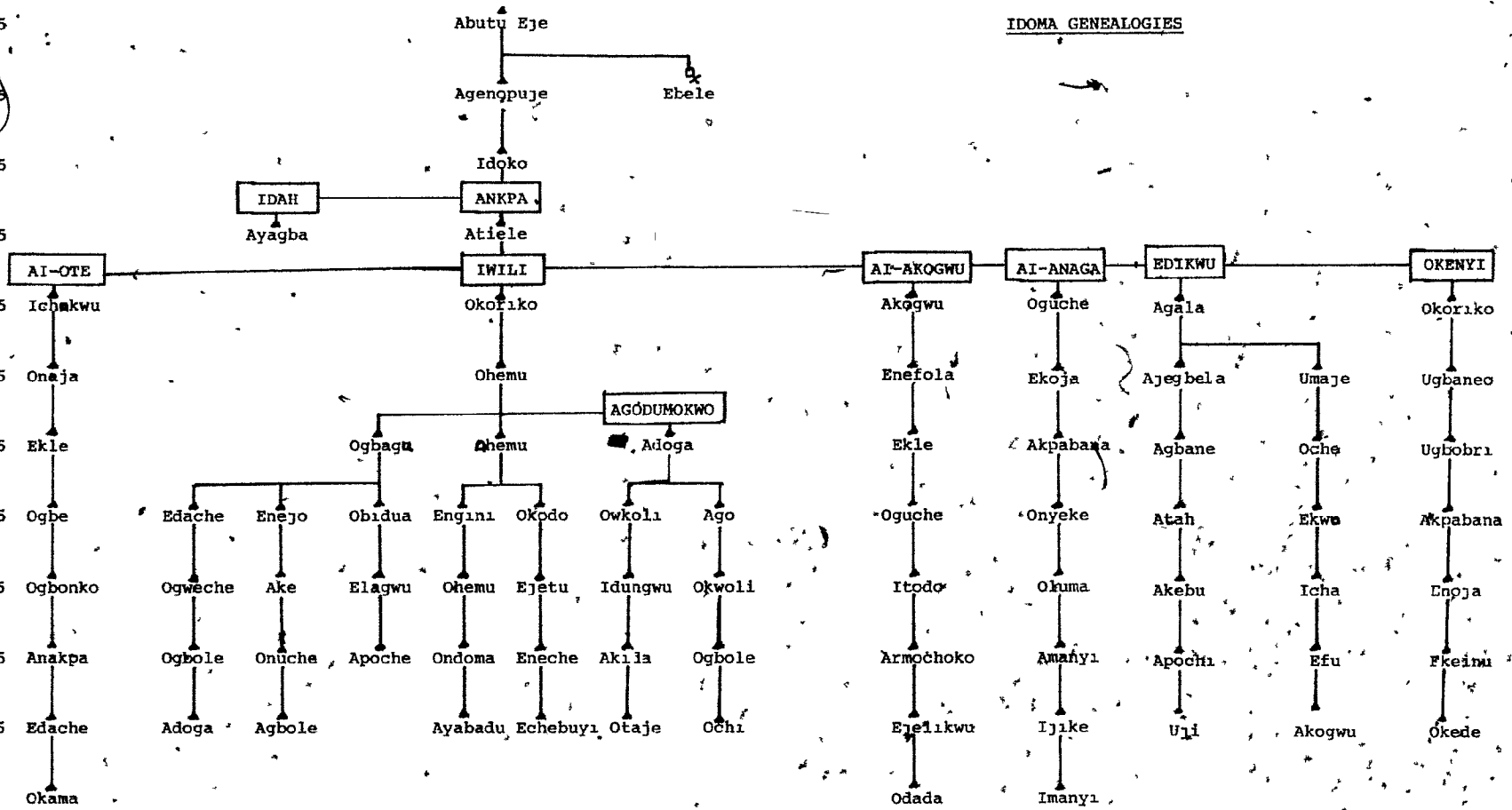
c. 1805-1835

c. 1835-1865

c. 1865-1895

c. 1895-1925

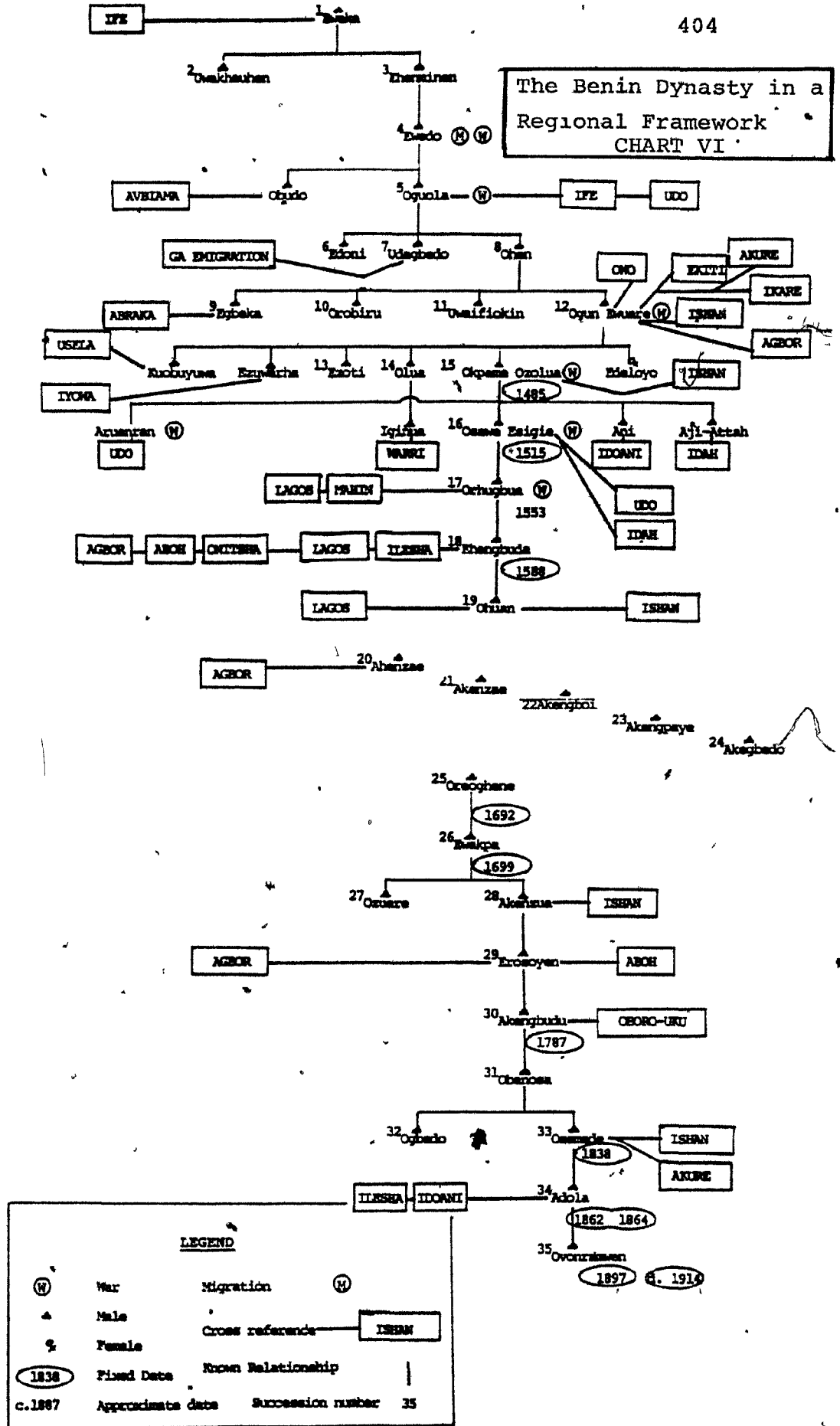
c. 1925-



Source: E.O.-Erim

The Benin Dynasty in a Regional Framework
CHART VI

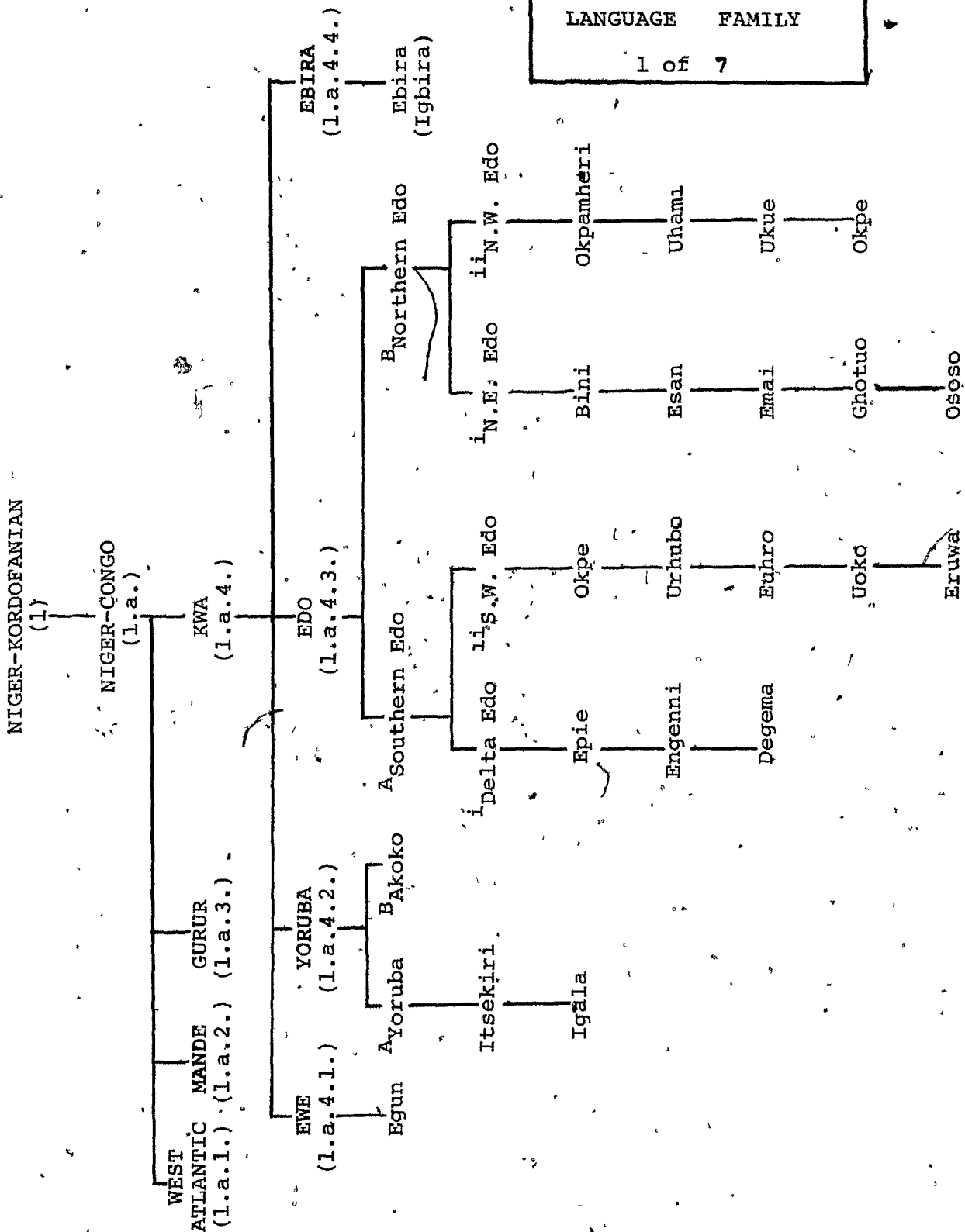
- c. 1320-1347
- c. 1347-1374
- c. 1374-1401
- c. 1401-1428
- c. 1428-1455
- c. 1455-1482
- c. 1482-1509
- c. 1509-1536
- c. 1536-1563
- c. 1563-1590
- c. 1590-1617
- c. 1617-1644
- c. 1644-1671
- c. 1671-1698
- c. 1698-1725
- c. 1725-1752
- c. 1752-1779
- c. 1779-1806
- c. 1806-1833
- c. 1833-1860
- c. 1860-1887
- c. 1887-1914

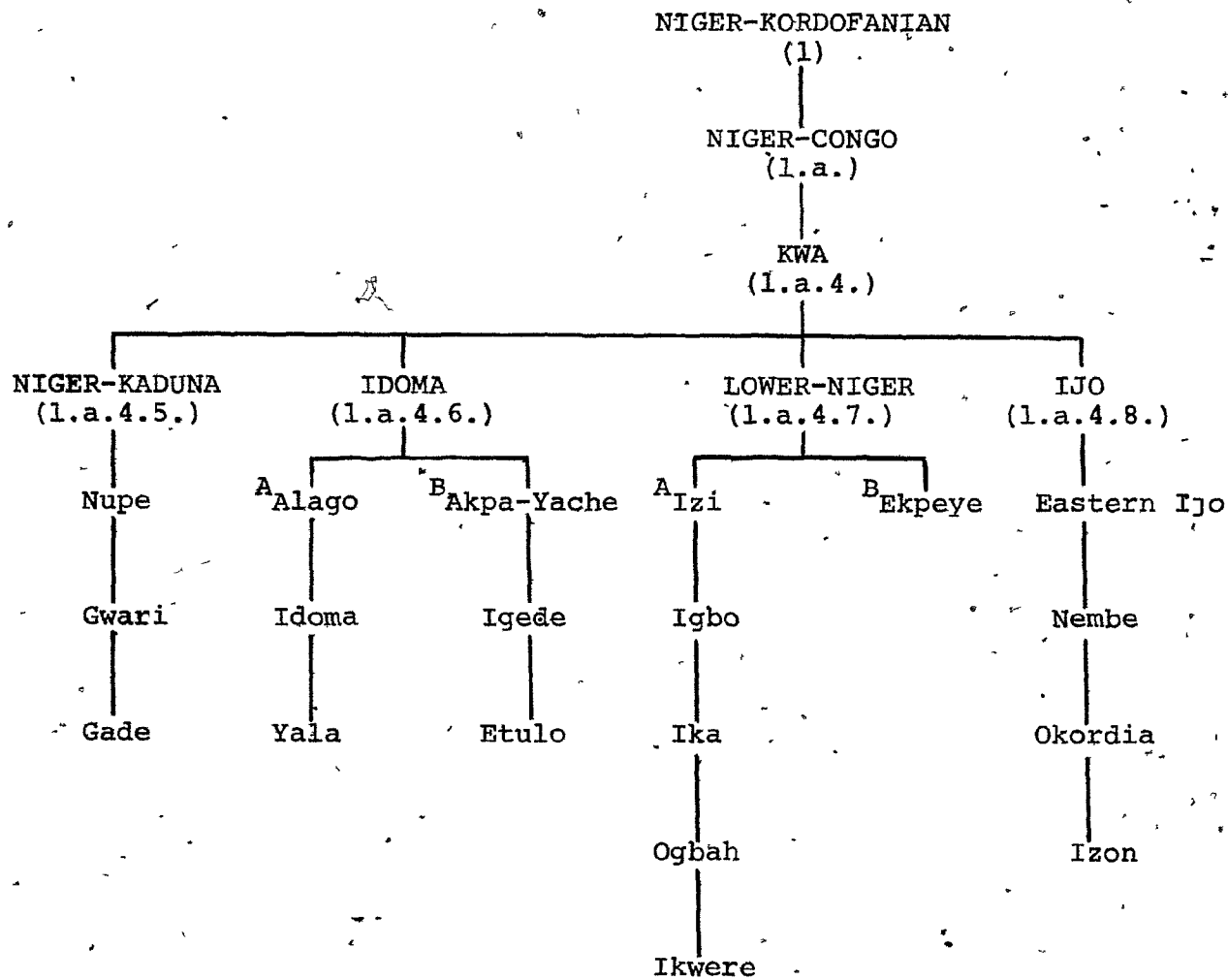


LEGEND

(W)	War	(M)	Migration
♂	Male	→	Cross reference
♀	Female	—	Known Relationship
(1838)	Fixed Date		
c.1887	Approximate date	Succession number	35

NIGERIAN LANGUAGES BY
 LANGUAGE FAMILY
 1 of 7





407

NIGERIA LANGUAGES BY
LANGUAGE FAMILY
2 OF 7

NIGER-KORDOFANIAN

(1)

NIGER-CONGO

(1.a.)

BENUE-CONGO

(1.a.5.)

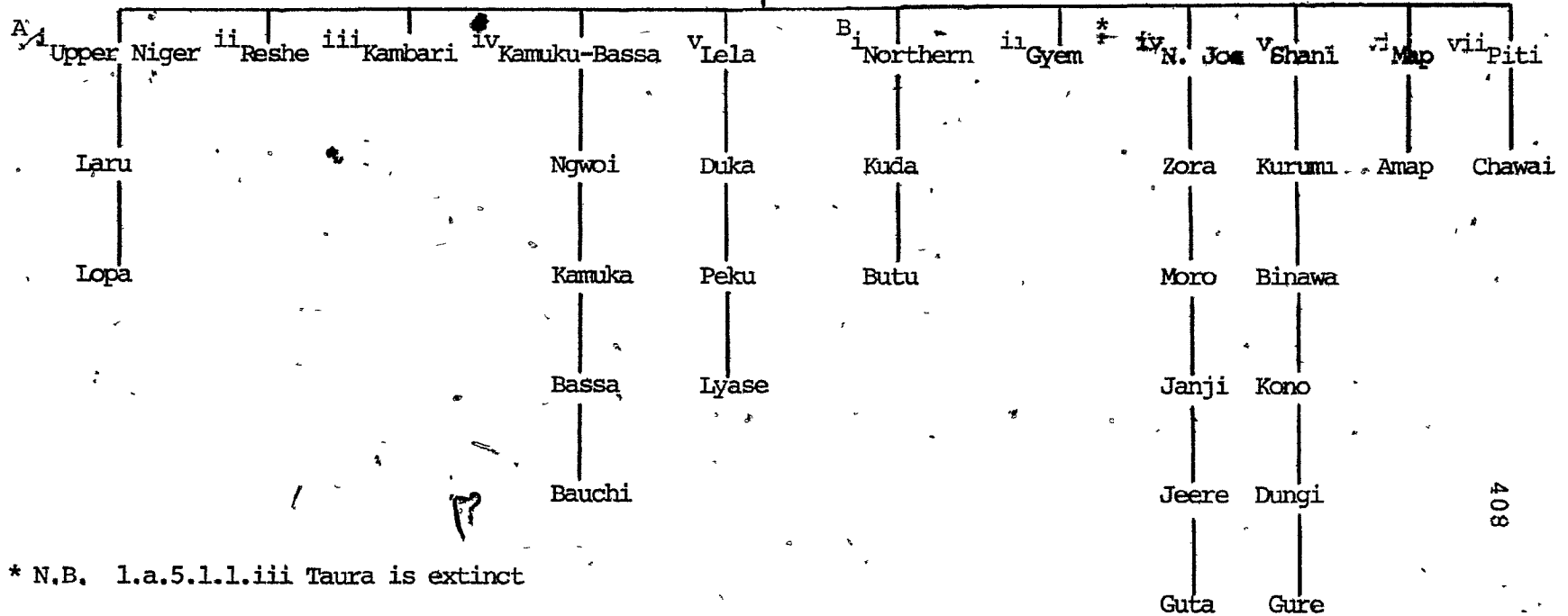
PLATEAU

(1.a.5.1.)

Western Plateau

(1.a.5.1.1.)

NIGERIAN LANGUAGES BY
LANGUAGE FAMILY
3 OF 7



* N.B. 1.a.5.1.1.iii Taura is extinct

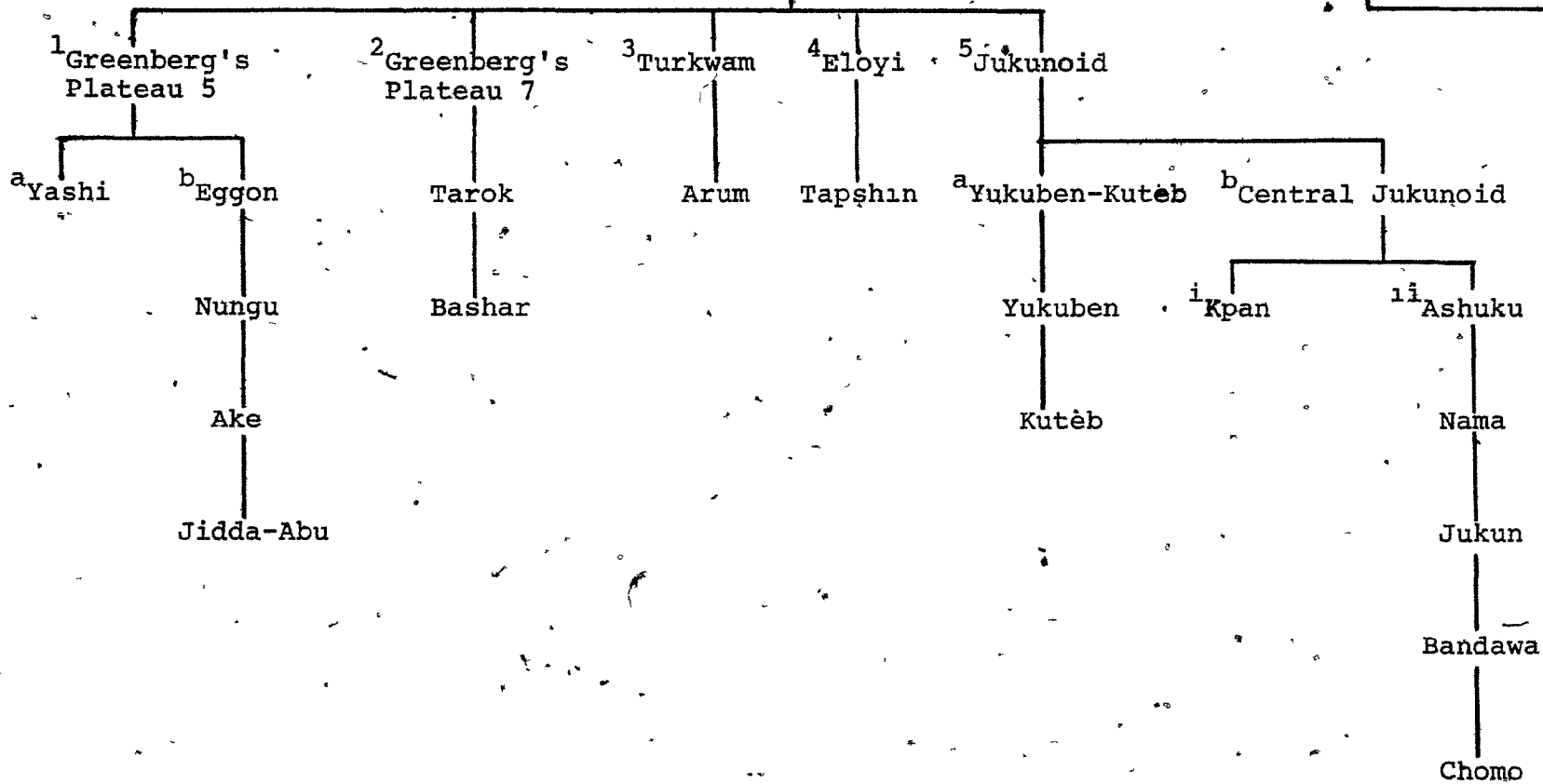
NIGER-KORDOFANIAN
(1)

NIGER-CONGO
(1.a.)

BENUE-CONGO
(1.a.5.)

BENUE
(1.a.5.2.)

NIGERIAN LANGUAGES BY
LANGUAGE FAMILY
4 OF 7



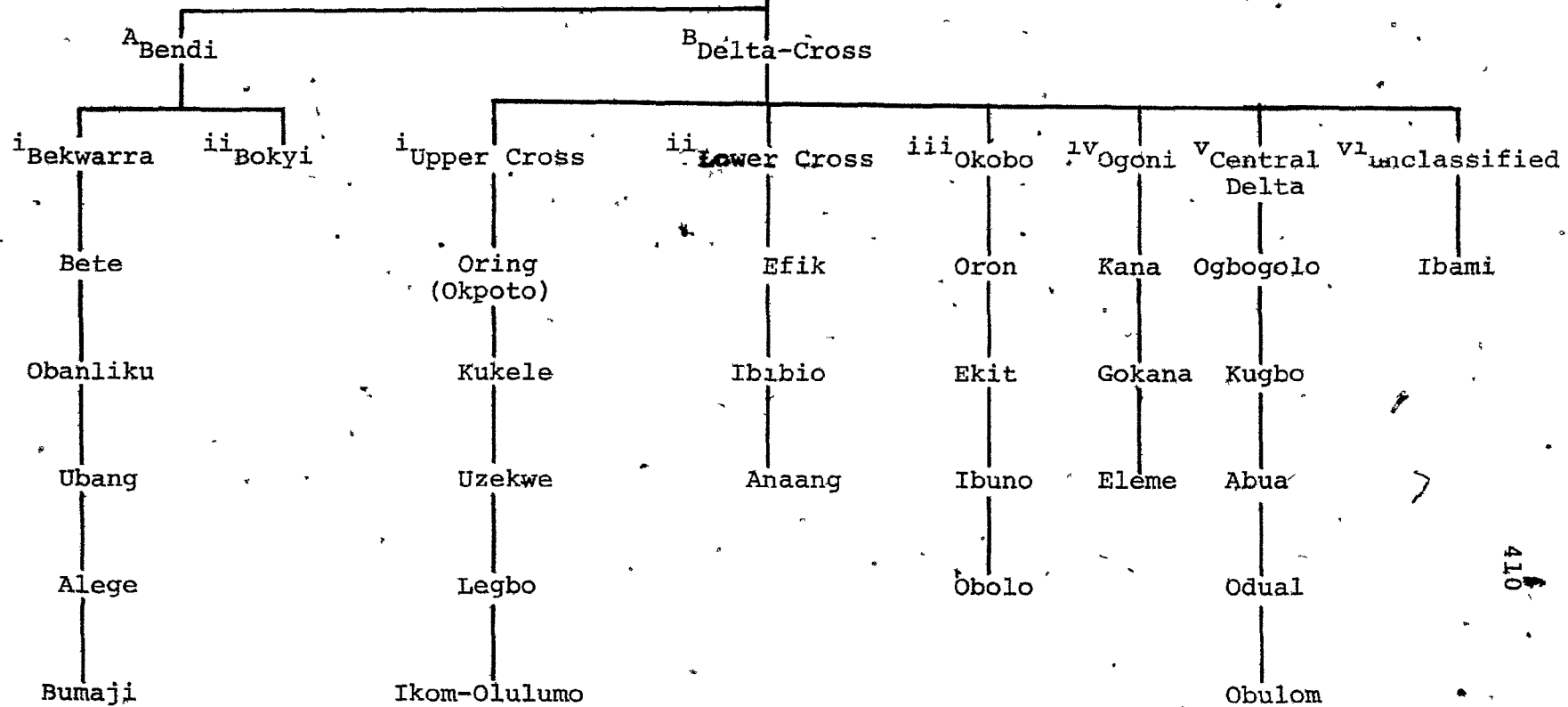
NIGER-KORDOFANIAN
(1)

NIGER-CONGO
(1.a.)

BENUE-CONGO
(1.a.5.)

CROSS RIVER
(1.a.5.3.)

NIGERIAN LANGUAGES BY
LANGUAGE FAMILY
5 OF 7



NIGER-KORDOFANIAN
(1)

NIGER-CONGO
(1.a.)

BENUE-CONGO
(1.a.5.)

BANTOID
(1.a.5.4.)

NIGERIAN LANGUAGES BY
LANGUAGE FAMILY
6 of 7

A Non-Bantoid

B Bantu

i Mambila-Vute

Mambila

Kamkam

Kila

Ndoro

Bute

ii Tiv-Batu

Tiv

Otank

Icheve

Bitare

Batu

iii Ekoid Bantu

Ndoe

Ekoi

Abanyom

Nkem

Ekajuk

iv Mbe Group

Mbe

v Jarawan Bantu

Bile

Mama

Jaku

Kulung

Jarawa

vi Grasslands
Bantu

Kpati

Kaka

