

Ikorodu-Igbogbo Military Relations in the 19th Century

ADEBOWALE ADEYEMI-SUENU, JAMES ODUNBAKU, SAMUEL ONILEOWO
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria

Abstract. Ikorodu and Igbogbo communities, though distinct in some respects but they are both Yoruba settlements of Remo extract with different, somehow interrelated but, historically interesting origins. Ikorodu and Igbogbo are both close to the Coast of Lagos lagoon, but Ikorodu is closer. This partly explains its primacy in the regional politics of that hemisphere in today's Lagos state, even in the pre-colonial and colonial times. The two settlements shared histories of antagonism, suspicion and struggle for supremacy till date despite the influence of Ikorodu in that region and in Lagos politics in particular. The 19th century history of Yorubaland however recorded a history of military cooperation, assistance and shared consensus for regional security, progress and development. This work is a study of military relations between Ikorodu and Igbogbo in the 19th century. This was a turbulent period in Yoruba history. It was the era of warfare, State degeneration, State creation and the incursion of the British imperialists into the activities of the coastal states and those in the hinterland. This work is underscored by the following questions: What necessitated the seeming inevitable military relations? Were there social, political and economic motivations on the part of both settlements? Were there separate interests for this? Were there interests largely achieved? Were there interests fraught with impact (if any) on the present status of settlements? Other possible emerging questions will be examined as they come up in this work. The research approach is multi-disciplinary because of the

nature, essence, import and dimension of this work.

Keywords: Ikorodu, Igbogbo, Military Relations, 19th Century.

1. Introduction

The 19th Century Yorubaland witnessed untold turmoil, new state formation as well as state decay; emergence of new local statesmen, new warlords and military oligarchical order in some old and newly emergent Yoruba settlements. The 19th Century wars in Yorubaland was engendered by internal crisis but its escalation and the dimension it took in the later part of the first half and the most part of the Century were enabled by several factors ranging from exogenous and endogenous, centripetal and centrifugal variables. This period witnessed untold rivalry among Yoruba settlements especially those along the trade routes against the powerful kingdoms and settlements in the hinterland who sought to gain access to the trade on the Coast.

Akintoye (1971) captured this situation correctly when he said that:

...the nineteenth century was an era of intense, tumultuous and far-reaching changes in the history of the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria. Some of these changes were brought by external factors – the intensification of trade with Europe in the natural resources of Africa in response to Industrial Revolution taking place in Europe,

and the beginning and spread of Christian missionary evangelism and western education Sponsored by various European missionary bodies. But among the Yoruba, other potent formative forces were at the same time at work. From the beginning to the end of the century, a great movement was unfolding which, itself a product of complex set of circumstances, occasioned a long series of wars and acted as the vehicle of momentous political, social and economic developments.

The statement above vividly captured the fundamental social, political and economic settings that informed the dimensions of the wars in Yorubaland in the 19th Century. Ikorodu and Igbogbo, the two Yoruba settlements north – east and east-west of the Lagos Lagoon were not spared of their portions. Debates on few fundamental historical issues appears resolved. That the nineteenth century history of Yorubaland was predominantly “the history of war, violence, diplomacy and intrigues”³. That the fall of “Oyo Empire led to the protracted civil war, from which emerged the new warrior – cities of Ijaiye, Ibadan and Abeokuta”⁴. That Ikorodu, a coastal settlement was also affected in the wars over the control of the coastal trade. The desire of Ikorodu’s great warriors to ward – off the menace of the hinterland Yoruba powerful city of Egba’s desire to submerge Ikorodu in order to gain access to the trade with the Europeans on the Coast of Ikorodu was to enable a war. This was the famous “Agbala War” of 1865. This laid the foundation of Ikorodu-Igbogbo military relations of the 19th century which is the primary focus of this

This work is divided into five parts. Part one is on the introduction while part two deals with the introduction. Part three is on the settlements of Ikorodu and Igbogbo. It justifies the historical and security conditions that necessitated the military arrangement between Ikorodu and Igbogbo within the context of strategic politics. Part four is the military relations occasioned by security reasons on the part of both settlements while part five is the conclusion.

2. Ikorodu and Igbogbo in Historical Perspective

Ikorodu lies on a plateau and is 5.3sq kilometer from north to south⁵. It stretches from Gbasemo (Aga) and Oriya stream in the south Agbala/Otokin road in the north. It is bounded in the west by the Majidun river and in the east, by a straight land/road that connects Itamaga to Abel Abu factory on the Igbogbo-Ipakodo road⁶, close to the coast of Lagos Lagoon. The top of the plateau is gently undulating and consisted of the mystery of nature such as Apeka, Etunrenren, Erikorodu, Melegoke, Yewa, Eri-Ijomu, Ota-Ona, Ota-Igbo, Erunwen among others⁷. Most of these streams have now been savagely polluted by environmental factors and effects of modernity.

Like Ikorodu and Ipakodo, the immediate neighbours to Igbogbo, Igbogbo shared common geographical and climate conditions with Ikorodu. It is also close to the Lagos Lagoon through the Offin, Baiyeku and Ebute-Iga rivers very close to Ipakodo where Dangote Industry is presently located close to the Lagos Lagoon in the present day Ikorodu Division. Igbogbo also have rivers that are deified and one of such is Yewa river⁸. It should be stressed that it is difficult to identify the boundaries which Ikorodu and Igbogbo shared with each other and the different plains of their shared communities and boundaries. That is, identification of boundaries can be very difficult by whoever is just visiting. This is partly necessitated by factors of close proximity, ancestry and socio-political and economic relations between the two settlements. This reality has a clear strategic dimension. This situation would naturally among other consideration necessitate easy military alliance in a situation where both settlements are headed by conscious military warlords and where their sovereignties are being threatened by common factors. This also partly explained the foundation of the military relations between Ikorodu and Igbogbo. Ikorodu and Igbogbo shared almost common historical origin. The common source of Remo stock from Sagamu speaks volume about their shared identities. No wonder, striking military agreement was very easy.

Ikorodu, like Igbogbo, was founded by people of Remo stock from Sagamu. While the progenitors of Ikorodu were said to have migrated from

Makun in Sagamu and led by a hunter and a warrior-prince called Oga who first settled at Ojogbe where he killed an elephant that has been disturbing the settlers. The early settlement was known as Oko-Odu which was later corrupted to Ikorodu. There still exists controversies over the actual date of Oga's departure from Makun and the date of his arrival in Ikorodu. What however appears settled were the following historical realities. Oga must have come with superior military technology and an outstanding knowledge of warfare with which he was able to submerge other early settlers on the fringe of Itumoja⁹. The centralization process of political arrangement began with him and today, he is seen as the symbol of cohesiveness and unity among the Ikorodus. This is evident in their collective acceptance of a cognomen *omo Ikorodu-Oga* among other means of collective identification. It should be stated that other groups from Ijebuland, Egba stock, especially from Igbore, a Yoruba settlement in Abeokuta, and elsewhere also settled in Ikorodu¹⁰. Whatever the controversies on the settlement of Ikorodu, it is also clear that by early nineteenth century, Ikorodu was a force to be reckoned with in the politics of Yorubaland. By 1850's, it was a settlement that must be conquered if the Egbas and Awujale forces must have direct and easy access to the trade on the coast of Lagos lagoon.

Igbogbo was said to have evolved a centralized Obaship system before Ikorodu. This was possible, partly, because the royal prince of Epe quarters in Elepe in Sagamu was also a great hunter who went on hunting expedition as far as Igbogbo where he eventually settled. Like Oga, he also came with superior military tradition and superior iron revolution with which he was able to start a centralized government over the early settlers in Igbogbo. Igbogbo was said to have been founded by one Oshinbokunren over four hundred and fifty years ago. He was the son of Oba Ogunrinade of Epe in Elepe of Remo division in Sagamu of Ogun State. He was also a brave hunter. He met nobody with crown and other paraphernalia of royalty on arrival in Igbogbo. He referred to Igbogbo as *igbo efo igbo* now known as Igbogbo. He was said to have settled at a place called Itun-Nla, meaning, the big ward. He ruled as the first Elegure who built

a great wall round Igbogbo for the purpose of defence. He was also said to be crowned as the first Oba of Igbogbo. Although, a lot of controversies surrounded the origin and the foundation of the Obaship in Igbogbo. Despite the controversies, fundamental issues appear settled. That Igbogbo Obaship was founded by a Prince from Elepe in Sagamu; that the Igbogbos like the Ikorodus are Yorubas of the Remo stock; that Obaship in Igbogbo predated that of Ikorodu; that Oshinbokunren like Oga was a great warrior, hunter. Unlike Oga, he came with a crown

Few conditions for enduring diplomatic and strategic issues are apparent in the histories of the foundations of these two prominent Yoruba – Remo settlements on the Coast of Lagos Lagoon. The fact of shared close origins makes it imperative for them to quickly strike enduring military alliance to secure the two territories from invaders and other external threats from the Egba and the Ijebu-Awujale warriors who desired to have considerable share of the prosperous Coastal trade on the Lagoon of Lagos. The two great warriors who struck the agreements were at a time members of the Awujale soldiers with enviable records in warfare. The two leading figures were Balogun Mabadeje Jaiyesimi, Ikprodu Generalissimo and Ijaolu Osho-Ojuba, Igbogbo Generalissimo. Aside all other considerations above, they were also maternal cousins. Thus defending the two territories for enduring peace which Ikorodu division still enjoy till date.

3. Ikorodu – Igbogbo Military Relations

Ikorodu-Igbogbo military relations was necessitated by a number of factors aside social, political, primordial and sectional considerations. The factors of proximity, shared borders and cultural affiliations made security collaboration for the defence of their sovereign environments imperative. The nature, dimensions and politics of Yoruba civil wars of the 19th century with the activities of the Europeans on the Coast of Lagos Lagoon necessitated the reality of inevitable military relations and agreement between the two communities.

In 1855 when Balogun Mabadeje Jaiyesimi was made the Balogun of Ikorodu, Yorubaland was already in turmoil and the influence of Awujale on the Remo towns was formidable. The relationship between Egba, Ibadan and Ijaye over the control of the trades in the hinterland was already taken a new shape. Just as this development was on,

Igbogbo had appointed Balogun Ijaolu Osho-Ojuba as the Balogun of Igbogbo. Balogun Ijaolu Osho-Ojuba had already noted the rising influence of the trade of the Ejirin Market and how it has influenced the trades on the Coast of Agbowa and Ijede. This has equally influenced the rising influence of the markets in Elepe, a route to Igbogbo as well as the rising importance of Itamaga as a trading post. These developments, among other strategic considerations, must have, in part, suggested to the two warriors the inevitability of cooperation as the two developing communities might not be able to go it alone. Their experiences in warfare must have equally be a positive factor in this direction. The threats to the two communities were apparent. From Ejirin was the possibility of

attack by Awujale who was enjoying good relationship with the Ijebu settlements towards Igbogbo and Ikorodu. Attack and defeat of Ikorodu would mean loss of revenue for Igbogbo. The route from Sagamu was unsafe because of the destruction of Remo towns by the Egba warriors. It should be underscored that Ikorodu was one of the Remo towns who rebelled against Awujale and supported Ibadan's control of the trade routes from hinterland to the Coast and by 1864. For that, many of the Remo towns were destroyed by Egba-Ijebu military alliance. The destruction of the Remo towns seem to make Ikorodu vulnerable from Sagamu through Ogijo another Remo settlement. Since the probability of attack of Ikorodu by Egba in order to have direct control to the trade of Lagos Lagoon was high, and since this would also mean a threat to Igbogbo, the military agreement between the two communities can best be appreciated.

By 1864, the possibility of attack was becoming a feasible despite the politics of support and possible neutrality being played between Egba and Ikorodu by the British.



Figure 1: Balogun Jaiyesimi's photograph.

Source: Author's photograph, 2017.

In 1864, three major military agreements were concluded between Ikorodu and Igbogbo. This was the first three years after Ijaolu Osho-Ojuba became the Balogun of Igbogbo. The fourth was agreed on in 1865 on the eve of Ikorodu-Egba confrontation at Agbala, the famous Agbala War of 1865 where the Egbas were roundly defeated. The conclusion of the war in favour of Ikorodu through the superior military alliance between Ikorodu and Igbogbo and partly by the British diplomacy on the Coast of Lagos Lagoon marked the turning point in the prosperity and peaceful development of Ikorodu, Igbogbo and

other settlements in Ikorodu division beside the expected internal tussles over Obaship, Baaleship and other contestations for local opportunities.



Figure 2: Balogun Osho-Ojuba Photograph. *Source:* Author's Photograph, 2017.



Figure 3: The modernized Ogun Shrine of Balogun Jaiyesimi where sacrifices were offered before any war. *Source:* Author's photograph, 2017

The first three were, Oreta Agreement, Ipakodo Agreement which also involved other settlements on the Lagos Lagoon e.g Ipakodo and Ebute-Iga. Itamaga Agreement. They were all referred to in the Osho-Ojuba's royal record as "Ifowosowopo Eso Jaiyesimi pelu Ijaolu Osho-Ojuba"²⁷. The first three agreements were on the need for combined military vigilance and joint operations to ward off possible attacks from external invaders through the fronts and routes secretly and openly agreed on²⁸. The two communities were to sit and amicably settle all emanating problems from the agreement and those of inter – communal rifts between the two communities²⁹. In case of any invasion, they were to assist one another. The most interesting aspect of the agreement was the joint military training which regularly also took place on the massive military compound of Ijaolu Osho-Ojuba³⁰.

The Agbala Agreement was said to have also been influenced by the British Diplomacy³¹ who also encouraged it aside the readiness of the two Generals to work together for the security and development of the two communities³² and the spirit of the extant agreement which had earlier informed their military understanding and mutual respect. With these arrangements, the two communities and Generals were able to keep their communities safe and secured from the destruction of some greater Yoruba States and also secured the progressive developmental projects of the two communities.



Figure 4: *Osho-Ojuba's room where the military agreements were signed. It is the ruins of his military palace.*
Source: *Author's photograph, 2017.*



Figure 5: *Balogun Osho-Ojuba's massive space where the warriors were trained.*
Source: *Author's photograph, 2017.*



Figure 6: *The remains of the warrior's house (Osho-Ojuba)*
Source: *Author's Photograph, 2017.*

The two Baloguns were later succeeded by other Baloguns who actually had their trainings under the commands of Balagun Mabadeje Jaiyesimi and Balagun Ijaolu Osho-Ojuba in their respective jurisdictions. In continuation of their relevance to their environments, in 1894, Balagun Jaiyesimi was appointed by the British as the first Chairman of Ikorodu Local

Government with a monthly allowance of one hundred pounds – the same amount being paid to the Akarigbo Remo³³ Balagun Ijaolu Osho-Ojuba became the Oba of Igbogbo from 1904-1931.

4. Conclusion

Nineteen century Yoruba history was a history of warfare, state destruction, revolution, state reconstruction, emergence of new forces, new wealthy class, Diplomacy and the emergence of military strategic finesse and thought of the Yorubas. The era witnessed untold but sophisticated military tactics, warfare strategies, diplomacy at its height without external influences as well as deep diplomatic and military arrangements among communities, both old and the newly emerging ones for the purposes of security, development and the protection of their sovereign environments.

Ikorodu-Igbogbo military relations in the nineteenth century was one of the cases of the arrangement being described above. The rising profile of the economic prosperity of Ikorodu because of its geographical position and proximity to the Coast of Lagos Lagoon as well as its location on a major trade routes to the Coast makes it a target of one of the states to be destroyed by the Egbas. More importantly, being one of Remo towns that rebelled against Awujale, Ikorodu must also be punished.

Igbogbo on the other hand called back Ijaolu Osho-Ojuba who was one of the prominent Awujale warriors partly because of the need to defend Igbogbo's interest in the security and prosperity calculations of the extant politics of prosperity and possibility of annexing the opportunities from the Coast as well as the need to make sure that Igbogbo was not destroyed in the event of the determination of Awujale to attack Ikorodu through Awujale's neighbouring but friendly settlements of Imota and Agbowa.

We must note that the revenues from the emerging but prosperous markets along the trade routes of Elepe settlement in the present Ijede and the trade routes of Itamaga were being shared between Ikorodu and Igbogbo. The emergence of the military treaties/agreements between the two communities to defend both environment can best be understood within the security, social and economic contexts. They offered solid defence through joint military efforts, training and deployment of forces to the threatened zones in their environment. The victories of their forces and rare military

leadership offered by both Balogun Mabadeje Jaiyesimi and Balogun Ijaolu Osho-Ojuba were timely and fruitful. This is also partly responsible for the nature of peace and development witnessed by the two communities since 20th century.

References

- Akintoye. S. A. (1971) *Revolution and power Politics in Yorubaland 1840-1893: Expansion and the Rise of Ekiti-parapo*. Longman group Limited.
- Adeyemi-Suenu, A. (2013) *Ikorodu and Her Neighbours: Politics of Development and Integration in Yorubaland in the 19th Century*. Unpublished paper delivered at Ikorodu Youth Forum, Ikorodu Local Government. P-3-4.
- Adeyemi-Suenu, A. (2017) 'Trade, Violence and Diplomacy on the Coast of Ikorodu: The Resistance of Balogun Babadeje Jaiyesimi' in *Views from the Shoreline: Community, Trade and Religion in Coastal Yorubaland and the Western Niger Delta in Yoruba Studies Review*, Special Edition, Volume 2, Number 1, Fall p-63.
- Ikorodu Oga (2015) 'History of Ikorodu' in *Manual*, p-3
- Alawaye, T.M. (2015) *History of Ota River River in Ikorodu*. An unpublished B.A. Thesis, LASU, History Department, P-9
- Hakeem, Y.A., *Yewa River in Igbogboland: Celebration of a Deity in The Voice of Igbogbo*, Volume 3, Number4. P-17.
- Adeyemi-Suenu, A., 'Reconnecting Ikorodu: A Discourse' in *General Studies Book of Readings*, edited by Dapo Asaju, LASU University Press, p-291.
- Interview with Adisa A. the Akogun of Igbogboland. In his house on September 3rd, 2017.
- Impact Newspaper. Re: *Abridged Historical Background of Elepe Town in Lagos Territory: A Rejoinder by Oshinbokunren Royal Family of Igbogbo*. January 28th, 2017.
- Adekunle, A., *The Awujale Warriors: The Celebration of Valour in Ikorodu*

- Division. Stradam Press, Somolu, Lagos. P-12.
- Interview with Pa. Adekanbi Oshunbokunren, aged 93years in the Oshunbokunren Descendants Family House, Igbogbo on 29th August, 2017.
- Ayantuga, O. O., Ijebu and its Neighbours 1851-1914. Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, University of London, 1965. P-128-129.
- Nolte. I., 'Obafemi Awoowo and the Making of Remo: The Local Politics of a Nigerian Nationalist', Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for *International African Institute*, 2009. P-80.
- E. phillips., 'The Egba at Ikorodu: Perfidious Lagos' *African Historical Studies*, 1970. P-28-29.
- Interview with Pa Mashe Osho-Ojuba, aged 97 years in Osho-Ojuba Royal Family house on September 22nd, 2017.
- The Palace Record of Ijaolu Osho-Ojuba, Balogun and a King. 1978, P-17.