POLYCENTRICITY AND SELF-GOVERNANCE IN YORUBALAND: A PASSAGE TO A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper, which is the introduction to my book and part of the case study, summarizes the products of my encounter with the Ostroms' intelligible scholarship at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis and my subsequent intellectual efforts in reconstituting order from bottom-up, in Yorubaland in particular, and in Nigeria and Africa in general. That is why I focus on communities of individuals in Yorubaland with a view to understanding the diverse ways the Yoruba people conceptualize the universe and cooperate among themselves to address problems of daily life. Like Vincent Ostrom (2000), my search is an attempt to understand these problems at their most basic levels rather than to address the great multitude of specific problems in their symptomatic manifestations.

To this extent this book raises four questions: (1) What are the factors responsible for failed state-controlled governance and the consequent persistent socio-economic and political crises in Nigeria? (2) What were/are the self-governing attributes inherent in Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era? (3) Under what conditions are the Yoruba people of Nigeria cooperating mutually in responding to their common problems? (4) Under what conditions are the Yoruba people capable of crossing the hurdles in their passage to mutually productive ways of life?

Using an institutional mode of analysis, data from empirical studies across Yorubaland are used to explain how communities of individuals fashion different ways of governing themselves in diverse areas of life in the provision and production of public goods and services such as education, health, roads, water supply, security, and conflict resolution. Data from multiethnic and cosmopolitan communities in Yorubaland shows that self-governance can thrive when individuals (including strangers) in a community have freedom in developing their initiatives and entrepreneurial capabilities. Similarly, this paper confirmed that the failure of central policing in security matters in Yorubaland had provoked the emergence of enduring polycentric security institutions in many Yoruba communities, including Saki, Olode, Igboho-Igbope and Aiyetoro.

INTRODUCTION

> *"...democracies are at risk when people conceive of their relationships as being grounded in command and control rather than on principles of self-responsibility in self-governing communities of relationships"* (Ostrom 2000:4).

This book discusses the robustness, dynamism and resilience (though not perfect) of self-governing institutions by highlighting their potentials and capabilities in resolving problems of daily existence in both rural and urban areas among the Yoruba. It explores overwhelming evidence that shows how the self-governing institutions not only have existed in the pre-colonial and colonial era, but have also become resilient and in fact survived the repressive and prolonged military regimes of about thirty one (31) years and autocratic civilian governments of about fifteen (15) years of post independence period. This book will enable Nigerians and other Africans to learn immeasurable lessons from the experiences of men and women in Yorubaland, who, despite the colonial and post-colonial despotic authoritarianism held unto their cultural values, utilize them in different ways to address their problems in their generations. The reader of this book will develop immense appreciation for the creativity and entrepreneurship of the Yoruba in history and will come to the realization of what human potentials and capabilities are able to accomplish at the grassroots level in spite of pillage and plundering of public resources (that actually belong to the people) by politicians and bureaucrats at the corridor of power.

In order to come to terms on how the Yoruba people have employed the principles of self-governance to adapt to changing circumstances and ecological conditions, I have focused on communities of individuals in Yorubaland with a view to understand the diverse ways the Yoruba people conceptualize the universe and cooperate among themselves to address problems of daily life. My search is an attempt to understand these problems at their most basic levels rather than to address the great multitude of specific problems in their symptomatic manifestations. While the book shows calamitous failure of Nigeria's government, it contends that

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different shades and forms are recurrent phenomenon across Nigeria. However, these lingering socio-economic and political crises ravaging Nigeria have been traced to the 'problem of disconnect' that has bedeviled several African states right from the colonial period.

As a result of this disconnect, several reforms adopted by successive governments (military and civilian) in Nigeria have woefully failed to increase the standard of living of the majority of the Nigerian people in spite of the excess revenues of ₦641.2 billion from crude oil in the Fourth Republic (Akinola 2005d). Priority on policy reforms is, however, misplaced in a context where patronage rather than people-oriented policy reigns (Bayart 1992; Hyden 2006). Similarly, it has been observed that the structure of Nigerian economy, "enclave" production of petroleum, does not engage citizens in contractual relations with the public authority (Strauss 2003; Hyden 2005).

Because the elite dominated political economy structures and confines material goods to the few people who can not be checked by the large majority, pillage and plundering know no bounds. Competitions into political offices are a game of 'do or die' and 'winner takes it all.' Accordingly, we have violence politics, low rate of voters turn-out, political god-fatherism and money bag politics, zero sum political game and intra-party improglio. These indices point to the fact that rather than having democracy, which has been defined as "equality of social conditions" (Tocqueville, 1966), we have elitocracy, defined as the government of the few elite by the few elite (who use "gatekeepers" for campaign and security) and for the few elite. The consequence of this is political crises and tensions.

These tensions can not be resolved when autocratic systems of governance, which rely on the dominance of single centers of Supreme Authority is the order of the day. According to V. Ostrom (2000:4):

> ...emperors come and go; empires rise and fall. Yet autocracies as systems of rule relying on some single center of Supreme Authority show surprising endurance. In such circumstances, the most that can be hoped for is some

sequence of coups d'etat, revolutionary struggles, and short-lived democratic regimes amid persistent autocracies.

For example, the first seven years of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria (1999-2006) has witnessed a high level of violence, bloodbath, insecurity, unemployment, insecurity, mass poverty etc. In my judgment, Nigeria "democracy" is at great risk. Why has a flood of crises inundated the country in spite of the existence of the so called "democracy"? There are a lot of lessons we can learn from Vincent Ostrom:

> How people conduct themselves as they directly relate to one another in the ordinary exigencies of life is much more fundamental to a democratic way of life than the principle of "one person, one vote, majority rule." Person-to-person, citizen-to-citizen relationships are what life in democratic societies is all about. Democratic ways of life turn on self-organizing and self-governing capabilities rather than presuming that something called "the Government" governs (Ostrom 2000:3-4).

What are the remedies for eliminating these disparities and governance crises in Nigeria? In an attempt to answer this question, a deep analysis of self-governing institutions as an alternative system of governance to failed state-controlled governance becomes necessary. According to Hyden (2006), there is a vibrant associational life in African society. Had Tocqueville been able to pay a visit to Africa he would no doubt have aroused by what he could see on the ground in the same way as he was when first visiting America. The kinds of civic spirit in these people in terms of willingness to make sacrifices worth commending. They are apt to postpone other activities to meet the community needs. In a nutshell, there is a strong sense of community among the Yoruba, and especially among the leadership of community-based institutions. For instance, on one occasion, during the survey in Saki community in November 2004 the leadership of Saki Parapo had to drop the interview in order to respond to an emergency that pertain to community governance about 30 kilometers away.

In trying to reconstitute African political order, we should try to get a clear understanding of the dynamic process that exists among the different African societies. As a Yorubaman, my interest in studying how the Yoruba people of southwest of Nigeria survive through collective actions and overcome the problems of daily existence at the grassroots started as early as 1998. I need to mention at this juncture that my stay at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Indiana University, Bloomington (during my sabbatical leave) in 2003/2004 reshaped and deepened my research concern with African socio-economic and political discourse.

If, however, we want to find solution to the persistent socio-economic and political crises in Africa, we must pay close attention to the self-governing arrangements that diverse African people designed by themselves to confront their common problems. That is why I focus on communities of individuals in Yorubaland with a view to understand the diverse ways the Yoruba people conceptualize the universe and cooperate among themselves to address problems of daily life. As I have mentioned earlier my search is an attempt to understand these problems at their most basic levels rather than to address the great multitude of specific problems in their symptomatic manifestations.

To this extent this book raises four questions:

1. What are the factors responsible for failed state-controlled governance and the consequent persistent socio-economic and political crises in Nigeria?

2. What were/are the self-governing attributes inherent in Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era?

3. Under what conditions are the Yoruba people of Nigeria cooperating mutually in responding to their common problems?

4. Under what conditions are the Yoruba people capable of crossing the hurdles in their passage to mutually productive ways of life?

Using an institutional mode of analysis, data from empirical studies across Yorubaland (in Aiyetoro, Ajowa, Igboho-Igbope, Offa, Olaleye, Olode, and Saki) are used to explain how communities of individuals fashion different ways of governing themselves in diverse areas of life in the provision and production of public goods and services such as education, health, roads, water supply, security and conflict resolution.

Institutional Arrangements and Collective Actions

In the opening paragraph of *The Federalist Papers,* Hamilton ([1788] 1961:33) posed the fundamental puzzle in human societies, "whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force." If we understand society as a system of human cooperation, this Hamiltonian puzzle can be formulated as two questions: Are human beings capable of cooperating with one another to organize a free, peaceful, and prosperous society? If the answer is affirmative, under what conditions can they cooperate to achieve such a goal?

These questions have bothered many theorists for a long time. The first-generation scholars of collective action are relatively pessimistic, maintaining that the cooperative capabilities of self-interested human beings are quite limited (Olson 1965; Hardin 1968). The works of these scholars were formalized in prisoner's dilemma games that essentially give a relatively pessimistic view of the capacity of self-interested individuals to organize and sustain collective action. Thus, they expect that external force plays the major role in organizing human life and keeping self-interested individuals from free-riding. Or, in Hobbes' ([1651] 1994) words, "covenants without the sword are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all." This Hobbesian tradition implies that human beings are unable to cooperate for their common interests without the threat of force.

The second-generation theories of collective action, in contrast, suggest that individuals under certain institutional arrangements and shared norms are capable of organizing and sustaining cooperation that advances the common interest of the group in which they belong (see, for example, E. Ostrom 1990). This line of thought recognizes that human beings can organize and govern themselves based on appropriate institutional arrangements and mutual agreements in a community of understanding. This is the fundamental of Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework. IAD believes in institutional arrangement designed by people who cooperate based on rules and constitution of their choice; and thereby able to resolve socio-economic and political problems which other people (external to their conditions) are not capable of doing for them.

The second-generation theories consider the role of evolution, culture, learning and social norms in the discourse on collective action (Ostrom and Walker 2003). Institutional structures that people have developed over the years avail individuals in the community to make inputs to development in their locality by contributing towards projects (labour, finance, and materials) and decision-making in political arenas in rural settings. For instance, the foundation upon which American democracy rests is on the people at the local level. The picture is captured in the words of French scholar, Alexis de Tocqueville (1966) in *Democracy in America*:

> "The village or township is the only association so well rooted in nature that whenever men assemble it forms itself...the community is the basic unit of collective organization...the people through experience of living together through successive generations work out arrangements among themselves for meeting the requirement of life". (Tocqueville, 1966).

He further declares:

> "In democratic countries the science of association is the mother of science; the progress of all the rest depends upon the progress it has made" (Tocqueville, 1966).

Examples of local people's provision of public goods using available social capital (associations) are well documented through out African continent (Smock 1971; Barkan McNulty, and Ayeni 1991; Olowu, Ayo, and Akande 1991; McGaffey 1992; Okotoni and Akinola 1996; IDS 2001; Akinola 2000, 2003a,b, 2004, 2005; Olowu and Wunsch 2004; Sawyer 2005). Self-governance is a demonstration of the self-organizing capabilities of the local communities, and the tendency to relate with one another in a rule-ordered relationship, sharing ideas, and using their own initiatives and institutional potentials to address problems of daily existence.

Ayo (2002:xxv) emphasizes the role of indigenous structures of governance, as exists in the various communities across Nigeria, which the people have come to refer to as *de facto* in ordering their lives and solving their problems. The tremendous success and achievement of Community Development Associations (CDAs) traverse culture, language and national boundaries. The CDA, as an institution is gender neutral (Awotona and Akinola 1996). It is a universal key to grassroots development that decentralized democratic systems of administration have adopted in developed societies.

If we share with the finding of second-generation theorists that institutions matter in terms of their influence on cooperation, then the questions are: (1) Under what conditions are the Yoruba people of Nigeria cooperating mutually in responding to their common problems? (2) What kinds of incentives can promote cooperation, mutual relationships, and collective action? (3) Further, if constitutional choice structures human relationships in some fundamental sense, how can constitutional institutions influence cooperation and collective action among the Yoruba people? and (4) Under what conditions are the Yoruba people capable of crossing the hurdles in their passage to mutually productive ways of life and a democratic society?

To answer these research questions, this book draws upon the analytical tools in the works of scholars such as Ayo, Berman, Boulding, Clark, Coleman, de Soto, Deutsch, Follett, Greif and Laitin, Kemp, Lasswell, Michael McGinnis, Dele Olowu,

Diverse institutions are crafted by participants within action arenas in response to diverse exogenous variables. This normally starts when participants within an action arena respond to exogenous variables or context (biophysical/material conditions, cultural and other attributes of a community, and rules-in-use) and when outcomes are positive the participants will increase their commitment to maintain the structure as it is or to another set of exogenous variables and then on and on like that. However, if outcomes are negative, participants might raise some questions on why the outcomes are negative. They might then move to a different level and change the exogenous variables to produce another set of interactions and consequently different outcomes.

A lot of skills development is necessary by the participants in crafting institutions. This skill acquisition and development plays a central role in stabilizing and balancing institutions. I will describe the process of balancing institutions as cybernetics. According to Nobert Wener (1986), cybernetics is the scientific study of the way in which information is moved about and controlled in machines, the brain, and the nervous system. It is overarching factor that guarantee stability of objects like vehicles in motion and human beings and animals in movement. In other words, it is a scientific study of human control functions. This could be applied to the study of institutions in social sciences. Institutions are like living organisms that rely on homeostatic functions or 'hypothalamus' in human beings to maintain stability at all times. Institutions are not static but dynamic. They respond to exogenous variables. The type of information generated within a particular action arena and the way the information is communicated or relayed to other participants and how the participants perceived the information will determine the outcomes to be generated.

According to E. Ostrom (2005:14), action arenas include two "holons" or subsystems: an *action situation* and the *participant* in that situation (see figure 1.1). An action situation can, in turn, be characterized using seven clusters of variables: (1) participants (who may be either single individuals or corporate actors), (2) positions, (3) potential outcomes, (4) action-outcome linkages, (5) the control that participants exercise, (6)

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types of information generated, and (7) the costs and benefits assigned to actions and outcomes. Thus, an action situation refers to the social space where participants with diverse preferences interact, ex-change goods and services, solve problems, dominate one another, or fight (among the many things that individuals do in action arenas).

Institutional and cultural factors affect our expectations of the behavior of others and their expectations of our behavior (Allen 2005). To avoid counter-productivity, "well-adjusted and productive" humans adjust their expectations and ways of interacting with others in situations that occur in diverse times and spaces (E. Ostrom 2005:5). If an individual, due to the leadership position he holds in a community, considers himself superior over other individuals in that community, he knows that what he is doing is wrong and he should reflect on his deeds and adjust his interactions with his fellow humans and do good. Otherwise, he is courting rebellion.

Given people's physical environments, the configuration of institutions in any social setting reflects the way people think and relate to one another (Tocqueville 1966; Lasswell 1971; V. Ostrom 1994; Brunner 1996; Clark 2002), and embraces constitutional, collective-choice and operational arrangements (V. Ostrom 1987a; Ostrom, et. al, 1994; McGinnis 1999a & b; E. Ostrom 2005). Constitutional arrangements define the terms and conditions of governance, which can either support or weaken the foundations for mutually productive relationships. Collective-choice arrangements set out what governing units[3] may or may not do within the framework of the terms and conditions of governance specified by the constitutional arrangements. Operational arrangements reflect how the constraints specified in both constitutional and collective-choice arrangements affect the daily decisions and activities of the individuals most directly affected. Much as the three sets of institutions may be identifiable in a shared language in some social settings, they may be indistinguishable in other settings.

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[3] Oyerinde (2006) identifies governing units among the Yoruba to include immediate families, compounds, neighborhoods, sections, villages and occupational associations as well as neighborhood development associations.

Having institutions expressed in a shared language with the best of linguistic and legal expertise is however no guarantee for their effectiveness. The ability of institutions to yield mutually productive relationships requires common understanding and common agreement, the long-term glue that productively and innovatively ties operational and collective-choice arrangements to constitutional arrangements. If they are not understood as social orderings, institutions will most likely become ineffective (V. Ostrom 1971: 65-67) and probably set stages for destructive conflicts. Institutions are more likely to be understood and accepted by participating individuals when the affected individuals can communicate and interact regularly with one another as colleagues in multiple arenas of polycentric order.

Common understanding of institutions is important for their effectiveness. Individuals may however not comply willingly with rules without regular monitoring and enforcement, whose processes, together with rule-making processes, must be commonly understood and agreed upon by participating individuals for rules to be effective. As regular monitoring and enforcement occur, the sense of legitimacy of institutions is strengthened and effective constraints can be imposed on individuals as rule-followers. It is also important that the scope of command for individuals with rulership prerogatives be kept at a minimum so that all-important conflicts can be resolved through impartial judges (V. Ostrom 1998:1078; Oyerinde 2006:14).

Loyalty and close-knit proximity advantages of the family tend to make the family an important place to subject individuals to rules and thereby facilitate mutually beneficial entrepreneurships among them (Pollak 1985). Achievement of order for greater productive potentials also requires institutions that can facilitate mutually productive interactions among diverse individuals in the larger political economy. This is more likely to be realized when the institutional structure both allows the teaching and practice of love of equality (Tocqueville 1966) and is open to more diverse ways to assemble diverse individuals in order to achieve effective complementarities among diverse jurisdictions (V. Ostrom 1994). With the existence of more than one source of rules and effective constraints on individuals having

leadership prerogatives, rules are more likely to be regarded as superior to political authorities. Also, the affected individuals are more likely to relate to one another as colleagues in exercising constitutional choice within multiple autonomous arenas.

These conditions work together, in all likelihood, to create a living process that enables and promotes institutional channels of cooperation among diverse jurisdictions co-existing and competing in solving problems (Berman 1983). Put differently, participation in such institutional circumstances is more likely to lead to productive reciprocity, mutual trust and effective communication for cooperation in the pursuit of common interests that can further facilitate greater entrepreneurial opportunities and constructive resolution of conflicts for most individuals within the political economy (Follett 1944; de Soto 2000; Deutsch 1973; Boulding 1988; Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993; Fukuyama 1995; McGinnis 1999a; Greif and Laitin 2004).

The effectiveness of institutions in creating greater potentials for most individuals can however be hindered in the presence of unlimited leadership prerogatives and/or marginalization of some groups of individuals. If individuals with rulership prerogatives to impose rules are not subject to effective limits, they may impose laws containing their own interpretations of order. As a result, the ruled/disadvantaged are more likely to be marginalized and denied the right to make and match rules to the problems they confront. This may degenerate eventually into a circumstance where the disadvantaged make operational and collective-choice arrangements that are not tied to the prevailing constitutional order, and use violent resistance, in the absence of more agreeable means, to seek recognition for their institutional arrangements. The resultant destructive relationships can in the final analysis prevent both inclusive associational life and public security required for mutually productive ways of life (North and Thomas 1976; Putnam 1993; V. Ostrom 1994, 1997; Ayling and Kelly 1997; Alston, Libecap and Mueller 1999; de Soto 2000; Oyerinde 2006:291).

In view of the above, it can admittedly then be argued that constitutional orders may have either constructive or destructive influences on patterns of associational life, violent conflicts, and commercial and industrial openness through their impacts on operational and collective-choice arrangements for governance and property relationships (Banfield 1958; North and Thomas 1976; Kemp 1981; Yang 1987; Field 1989; Duany 1992; Sawyer 1992, 2005; Berman 1993; Netting 1993; Nicholson 1993; V. Ostrom 1994, 1997, 2005; McGinnis 1999a & b; Gellar 2005; E. Ostrom 2005; Shivakumar 2005; Oyerinde 2006). The factors identified above are part of Tocquevillian analytics that enables us to understand how society functions by giving attention to people's *environmental conditions, institutions, and habits of the mind (beliefs, myths and past experiences).*

This book attempt to use the three components of Tocquevillian analytics to explain how communities of individuals fashion different ways of governing themselves in diverse areas of life in the provision and production of public goods and services such as education, health, roads, water supply, security, and conflict resolution in Aiyetoro, Ajowa, Igboho-Igbope, Offa, Olaleye, Olode, and Saki in Yorubaland.

In an attempt to use the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework in understanding how institutions affect the incentives confronting individuals and their resultant behavior in diverse communities in Yorubaland, the frameworks and conceptual maps of E. Ostrom (2005:8) will be adopted. According to E. Ostrom, the advantage of a good set of geographic maps is that after centuries of hard work, multiple levels of detailed maps of most places are available and are nested in a consistent manner within one another. It is obvious that there is not one optimal map that can be used for all purposes. Each level of detail is useful for different purposes.

In this book, the first level of conceptual maps will display how Nigerian state (under military and civilian regimes) has responded to exogenous variables and the outcomes of such interactions. The second level will show how the Yoruba people of

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southwestern Nigeria have responded to exogenous variables right from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era. The third level will show how diverse communities of individuals in Yorubaland have responded to diverse exogenous variables.

At the third level, I will show what the institutions are in the various communities in Yorubaland, how they were crafted by the participants and why they were crafted and sustained by the participants. At the same time, I will discuss the consequences they generated in diverse settings. Since I study these institutions so as to understand what they do, how they operate and why they work, I will then proceed to the strategy we can adopt to create or modify them. In the final analysis, this book will provide the medium of conveying the knowledge on new institutionalism to others tribes in Nigeria and other part of Africa.

Institutional Analysis and Governance in Nigeria

The IAD framework, as a tool of analysis, is specifically useful in deeper understanding of how ecological conditions (biophysical/material conditions), cultural and other attributes of a community, and rules structure patterns of interaction among individuals. It helps us understand how institutions structure incentives and influence choices within ecological and social environments. The study of institutions provides a useful framework for understanding governance in Nigeria from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era; the causes of failed state-controlled governance since independence of 1960 and the consequent persistent socio-economic and political crises; the high level of corruption and pillage by government officials; and the high level of mass poverty, unemployment and recurrent ethno-geographic crises.

Understanding the biophysical conditions of Nigeria, with its fertile soil (tropical/mangrove rain forest in the south and tropical savannah in the north), helps us appreciate the efforts of the indigenous peasant farmers who relied on traditional implements and yet produced 70% of Nigeria's exports and 95% of food requirements in the eve of independence (1960). We can further understand why in spite of the "commitment" of the post-independence leadership towards democratic polity the first decade of post-independence era witnessed *Agbekoya* (farmers renounce oppression)

crisis, a farmer's revolution for about two years (1967/68) across Yorubaland. Thus, we can begin to see why Nigerian state-building activities have sidelined the grassroots and the various indigenous communities and the consequence of poverty accentuation and recurrent crises that have cost several losses of lives and materials.

Institutional analysis also helps us understand the conditions under which the Yoruba people of Nigeria are cooperating mutually in responding to their common problems and the conditions under which the people can cross the hurdles in their passage to a mutually productive ways of life and a truly democratic society. I will attempt how to create institutions and pass the idea to others.

In this book, I address the challenge of reconstituting order in Nigeria that would avoid the over-centralized and predatory state model that has been a source of autocracy and repression by learning from the diverse experiences of Yoruba communities and exploring the possibility of establishing polycentric institutional arrangements capable of building upon self-organizing capabilities that would allow Nigerians to more fully utilize their human and material resources for democratic governance and development. Since we can not do without state institutions, this book is therefore concerned with how to connect the grassroots with the "summit", the micro with the macro by designing institutional framework that is capable of connecting the duos in a polycentric (multiple-centers and multiple layers of decision-making) manner so as to address socio-economic and political crises in Nigeria.

The Yoruba People

The Yoruba people, with population of over 20 million (Falola 1999:1) are, today, found in the south-western part of modern Nigeria, where they form the major ethnic group. They occupy the whole part of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo States and substantial part of Kwara and Kogi States (see the map of Nigeria). The Yoruba, as a language community perceives themselves as one entity regardless of several dialects that are spoken by the people. The name, Yoruba (called *Yar-bah*)

is believed to have been applied by the outsiders (the Fulani and the Hausa) as a nickname that refers to the people's cunning (Asiwaju 1997:29; Ayo 2002: xxvi).

Over the years, the Yoruba, however, have developed a common denominator of Yoruba linguistic expression such that the people can understand one another without any interpreter. The people in Oyo State (Oyo, Ibarapa, and Oke-ogun), Ekiti State (Ekiti), Lagos State, Ogun State (Egba, Ijebu, Awori, Egbado, and Egun), Ondo State (Ondo, Owo, Akoko, Ikale, and Ilaje,), Osun State (Ife, Ijesa, and Osun), Kwara State (Offa, Igbomina, Isanlu, and Ilorin), and Kogi State (Kabba, Yagba, and Igbira) understand the modern Yoruba language. The Yoruba have been described as the most urbanized people in Africa. This urban setting is relevant to the development of monetization and the financial institutions. The urban character of Yoruba society has fascinated many scholars (Adebayo and Fasheke undated). As Hicks (1961:92) has succinctly pointed out:

> "...the Yoruba are the town dwellers *per excellence* of West Africa. From back in history, these towns had been organized on the same model: in quarters, or wards, often no doubt (certainly in the case of Abeokuta) representing the settlements of different immigrating clans."

Geographically, the people are located in the tropical rain forest to the south and wooded savannah to the north of south-west of modern Nigeria.

Yoruba Culture and Socio-political Organizations

One of the concerns of this book is not to turn the past into an appendage of the present but to explain the relationship between the two, by invoking one or another, as customarily done among scholars in the fields of comparative politics and sociology. Sociopolitical situations change because citizens develop new ways of thinking and acting, hence our study of the past will only be useful if it has capacity to enlarge and enrich our political imagination beyond the here and now.

The history, existence and activities of self-governing capabilities among the Yoruba dated back to the pre-colonial era and these institutions derived their origins

from certain norms and cultural setting of the people. One of the oldest definitions of culture and the most widely accepted is by E.B. Taylor, who defined – culture as '...that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, customs and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society'. Allan R. Beals took another view of culture when he observed that culture can mean a social heredity or the things men learn when they are trained within a particular group of people (Beals 1967). Similarly, Herbert Marcus defined culture as a humanizing process characterized by the collective effort to preserve life, pacify the struggle for existence or hold it down to controllable limits, secure a productive organisation of society, develop the spiritual capabilities of man and brute force, misery and aggression.

According to Asiwaju (1997:22), culture can be described as "the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment". It is what gives order and meaning to the linguistic, social, political, economic, aesthetic, religious and philosophical modes and organization of a people, nation or ethnic group. Simply put, culture is a product of man's relationship with his environment (Ejifor 1984). General Obasanjo, in his opening address during Festac 77, stated that people and culture are inseparable. Culture is the aggregate of concepts which characterize a community. It follows that a people without culture are in themselves not in full existence (Obasanjo 1977:6). Clyde M. Woods concluded that culture is passed from generation to generation through the process of socialization. It is shared by members of a group and its essential features vary from society to society (Cited in Dioka, L. C. 1997).

Vincent Ostrom (2000: 203) identified human cultures with learning and that which was derived from learning through the uses of languages. In his study entitled *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History*, Muhsin Mahdi emphasizes that the Arabic root for the word translated as "culture" is a *trilateral verb* that refers to (1) a place that is (2) inhabited, stocked, or cultivated by people and kept in good repair, as contrasted to desolation, waste, or ruin, and to (3) the acts of cultivating, building, instituting, or, broadly, I presume, doing something constructive (Mahdi 1964:184). Hobbes's

reference to the Latin term *cultus* has similar connotations meaning "to cultivate." The emphasis in Mahdi's study is more on the place, the doings, and the deeds and is perhaps somewhat less on the ideas and the conceptions used to guide thought. Drawing on Mahdi's commentary, Ostrom concludes that culture is a configuration of relationships that brings together ideas and deeds with places inhabited and cultivated by people and kept in good repair through assorted activities of cultivating, building, instituting, and doing what it is that people seek to achieve.

Mahdi emphasizes the "technical" character of the term *culture* with reference to Ibn Khaldun's concern with a science of culture. He consistently refers to "the diverse arts and institutions of social life and the modes pertaining to them, beginning from the moment man invents them through the exercise of his rational faculty and throughout the various stages of their development" (Mahdi 1964:186), presumably including artisanship in producing, maintaining, using, and keeping in good repair. These circumstances might vary from more primitive conditions of tribal [nomadic] communities associated with "the pleasure of companionship" and the "natural propensity for cooperation" in sustaining a livelihood in one's place [conditions] of habitation (ibid.). Mahdi summarizes the thrust of Khaldun's science of culture as pertaining to "the social habits" associated with "the diverse arts and institutions," as "the various aspects of social life are differentiated and become more complex." "The culture of a society," then, writes Mahdi, "is these habits, and the objects (e.g., tools, buildings, and sciences) created by, and the institutions (political, economic, urban, and scientific) resulting from, the exercise of these habits" (ibid., 187). Culture refers broadly to activities in human associations.

When two or more cultures interact, they undergo changes, shed parts of their former features and acquire new forms. At this state, a culture change takes place. Louis Splindler and George Splindler have defined culture change as "any modification in the way of life of a people whether consequent to internal development or contact between two peoples with un-like ways of life" (Splindler and Splindler 1959:37).

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From these various definitions of culture, the striking features of culture are discernible and these are: "challenge of living", "environment", "cultivating", "building", "instituting", "capabilities", "collective action", "organization", and "generation to generation". From these features, I will define culture as the potentials and capabilities that are evolved by a group of people as a result of continuous interactions with their environment by cultivating, building, instituting what it is that people seek to achieve through collective action in order to face the challenge of living. These potentials and capabilities are thus transferred from one generation to the other, thus, culture should be seen as dynamic rather than static. Relating this definition to the Yoruba, the cultural configuration of collective action occurs at three levels – family, occupational group, and community.

However, it is possible for culture to exhibit negative attributes that are destructive if a certain portion of the population that are powerful control and decide the fate of the whole society like what we have had in Nigeria, over the years, especially under the military. In this circumstance, such bad examples permeate the fabric of the whole society and thus culture of oppression and lack of human feelings become the order of the day. As we all know, a leader's lifestyle is a leading style for others to follow. In Nigeria today, instead of people being their brother's keepers they become egocentric, self-centered and aggrandized. Nonetheless, as it happens in every society, no matter the level of "rottenness" in a society there are always some people, though may be few in number, who remain and live honest and straightforward lives. Though such people may be vocal or taciturn They are the ones the society will depend upon in rebuilding the society in future.

Although the level of pillage and plundering of public resources is very high in Nigeria there is convincing evidence that real democracies as practiced by community based institutions exist in Yorubaland and it is rooted in Yoruba history from pre-colonial era to this present day. Those who identify with these associations will be affirmed in the experience of the power of collectivity, trust and reciprocity among the people through their associations and will gain a new respect and appreciation for

the movement of which they are a part. On the other hand, those outside the movement will also benefit by reading this book in the sense that they will gain an understanding of the tremendous influence of self-governing institutions, which is helping us to have a new insight into how democracy works in this contemporary period.

A survey of the public landscape of Yorubaland before the British colonial occupation of the area confirms that civic democracy, using Tocquevillian terms, as a daily practice and form of life was rooted in Yoruba culture and social organization, which were based on mutual trust, reciprocity and common understanding in villages and cities. Social organization, in various forms, among the Yoruba constitutes the people's identities that mark them out from other tribes in Nigeria. These identities, invariably, explain the daily practice and collective action among the people and these enable them to operate in a self-organizing and self-governing manner.

Social organizations among the Yoruba evolved on the basis of different occupations they engaged in, which in turn were determined by the environment in which they found themselves. Environment is one of the three factors that Tocqueville identifies to be important in understanding how a society functions. This he describes as "the peculiar and accidental situation, which providence" places people. This could refer to the environmental and material conditions that are available to people in fashioning their lives (Tocqueville [1835] 1945, 1:288, Ostrom 1991:12). The Yoruba of western Nigeria are found in the tropical rainforest and wooded grassland. The period of their emergence, as a distinct people, according to Shaw (1980) coincided with the Late Stone Age (around 3000 BC), in West African history. In fact, Falola (1981:3) indicated that the earliest settlers in Ife must have practiced an economy based on food collection (food gathering) and hunting.

Following the development of agriculture, the process of state formation began with the emergence of village settlements and this development must have transformed the Yoruba from a society of wandering fruit gatherers and hunting to that of agricultural, sedentary and settled communities which were small in size and in

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number and scattered in different places in the forest and wooded grassland (Shaw 1980:32). Farming implements (cutlass, hoe and axe) and hunting equipments (bow and arrows, traps, etc) were manufactured by the blacksmiths.

As population increased, and the sizes of farms had to be increased, some people had to move out into a new virgin forest to settle near their farms. The first person or, the oldest person among the group of first settlers became the head of the village and the new comers regarded him so. That is why Yoruba people say: *Eni ti a ba l'aba l'oni aba, ohun si ni Baba* (The person we meet at the hut is the owner of the hut and he is the father of all the people in the supposed community). The transformation of village settlements to centralized states or kingdoms was the climax of social relationships and constitutional arrangements that developed or was worked out over time by the people. The social relationships were needed for the provision and production of public goods (i.e. foot-paths, roads and bridges), which required the efforts of more than one person. Rather, joint efforts of several people within the concerned settlements became necessary. Here comes the origin of social institutions/organization among the Yoruba.

Similarly, opportunity for man to make choices in life is inherent in Yoruba people as demonstrated in the word, *Eniyan,* they use for human being. In Yoruba language, the word, *Eniyan* i.e. *Eni ti o leyan* means: "The person that can choose". Having regarded human being as a person that has the power to choose, the Yoruba people culturally regard their fellow human beings as important in cooperative efforts to embark on task that can not be accomplished by an individual. Thus division of labor and specialization are culturally rooted among the Yoruba.

Nearly all events of life among the Yoruba are normically and conceptually expressed in their language. The power of collectivity and group association are clearly illustrated and understood among the Yoruba through several expressions among which are:

1. *Owo kan ko legbe eru d'ori* (One hand cannot lift a load to the head).

2. *Agbajo owo l'afi nsoya* (It takes several hands – joint efforts – of people to express confidence, especially in embarking on warfare).

3. *Enikan ki je awade* (The task that invariably requires the efforts of several people should not be embarked upon by one person).

4. *A ki ri enia l'odo ka se agbara* (When there are people around you at the river side you do not decide to lift your water-pot on to your head alone).

5. *Aja t'oba ni enia leyin yio pa obo* (A dog that is supported by people will kill monkey, though the later live on trees – i.e. the tremendous efforts of other people that support a weak person can make him accomplish much).

The import of all these expressions is that the Yoruba people believe strongly in the power of collectivity and joint efforts, that are based on contractual relationships and building of trust and reciprocity in their day to day existence. The joint efforts, however, required certain rules and laws which Tocqueville identifies as the second factor we need to study in understanding how a society functions. Without "the laws", which may refer to institutions – the working rules of going concerns (Commons [1924] 1968, Ostrom 1991:12) – that will check individuals' excesses and free-riding there is no basis for organization to exist in the first instance. Although these rules are not written down, they are already part of the people because their daily existence in all ramifications rotates around joint efforts. Their joint efforts, right from the ages past, are invariably directed towards farming, hunting, building of houses, and finance.

Three levels of social institution exist among the Yoruba and they are family as an institution (micro), guild or occupational group (messo), and community group (macro). At the family level, the Yoruba use a technique of restriction called *ewo* (taboo) on their young ones, especially to forbid them doing certain things that were considered dangerous or risky for their health and protection. Once a child is told or

warned that doing a particular thing is *ewo* (taboo) and the consequence of doing it would warrant a penalty (in form of injury or death) that would be administered or imposed by a particular deity (unseen spirit) the child refrains him/her self from doing such a thing. By so doing, norms and societal values are inculcated into the children right from the family level. The roles of family institutions and family/compound structures in collective actions are well documented and can be found elsewhere (see Gluckman 1955; Lloyd 1968; Ayo 2002).

Collective action in Yorubaland originated at the family level. Within the family institution, husband and wife as well as their children have reciprocal responsibilities towards one another within the family institution. The husband, as a farmer, is the bread winner for the family. Labor was provided by members of extended families, slaves and *Iwofa* (pawns) for large-scale agricultural production. In the process, each family or household was not only self-sufficient, but at the same time had some surplus for exchange in the local markets (Osuntokun 1997:179). The role of women in traditional Yorubaland can not be over emphasized as wives played considerable roles by assisting their husbands in harvesting of crops; carried the crops to markets for sale; managed the home and of course reared children. The important roles of women were not limited to the olden days; they are involved in management and organization of markets in contemporary time (Akinola, T. A. 2003). The children in turn are expected to obey their parents and also assist their father in his occupation – farming, blacksmithing or a combination of both.

Collective action was also inculcated into the children right from childhood. In traditional Yoruba society, all children in a family, even at times, within the extended family setting, ate together from the same plates. If the number of the children was too large for convenience, say more than five, they would be grouped into two or more classes according to their age bracket and sex. Usually, the male are separated from the female. This practice was not limited to the children; the adult also practiced it and in fact it exist till today in some communities (see plate 1 on page 33). The significance of this practice were/are many: children are taught tolerance and patience

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as any too forward child, "rushing food" (normally referred to as "rushian" or "cooler mouth", especially when the food is hot) would be corrected by the parents. At the same time, any child that is too slow would be challenged by parents to keep pace with his/her colleagues otherwise he would suffer from low ration of food. The imports of these virtues that are cultivated in children are essential ingredients of collective action in Yorubaland.

Plate 1: Adults eating together from the same plates

Source: Falola, Toyin (ed.) (2002): *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century.* Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina (Photo Album Section).

At the level of guild or occupational association, social organizations among the Yoruba originated on the basis of the different types of occupations they engaged in, which required several hands to accomplish greater outputs than one person could have achieved. The foundation of associations and corporations is as old as the Yoruba race itself. The associations were formed, as in other places, for the purpose of promoting and protecting common interests in the field of politics, economics, religion etc. The associations, in addition, had judicial functions as well as mutual help features as discovered in Ifetedo (Akinola 1997:98-99). The guild generally, according to Fadipe (1970) was partly a professional and partly a political body. Its objectives were the regulation of matters of professional interest to the members, mutual help, the taking of disciplinary measures against members who violated professional and fraternal obligations, and the observance of funeral rites for members. Every guild had its own officers and claimed special jurisdiction over its own members. The guilds of different professions made of men and women enforced trade regulations and organized the marketing of specific trade goods. In addition to their own set objectives, production guilds in Yorubaland, when called upon by the rulers and political leaders, they undertook some economic activities (such as collection of levies, taxes, and special donation) for the benefits of the entire community.

Besides, three distinct social organizations as forms of co-operations emerged among the Yoruba and these are: *Aro, Owe* and *Esusu.* While both *Aro* and *Owe* are applied to physical works, *Esusu* is used to raise financial assistance among members of the organization. *Aro* is a co-operative system devoted for bush clearing or farm cultivation including harvesting, strictly rotational among the group members. There are other forms of *aro* as discussed in chapter two of this book. *Owe* is applied, more often than not, to house construction and occasionally to harvesting of crops. It is based on the law of reciprocity described as: *Se fun mi kin se fun o* (Do to me and I do to you). The underlying principles of *owe* are trust and reciprocity. The third is the

Esusu in which a group of people come together to start a round of periodic (daily, weekly, monthly, market days) cash contributions which are then given to each member in turn until all members have had their turn.

The concept and practice of collective actions as applied to micro and messo level was adopted at the macro level, i.e. the community level. The efforts of individuals and various occupational groups are pooled together for the accomplishment of major tasks at the community level. The underlying principles behind these social institutions are embedded in the power of collectivity, mutual trust, fair-play, shared strategy – and these specify actions required and actions prohibited.

The building of wall as a security measure by the Yoruba must have been one of the roots of collective action. Since there were series of wars that were fought in those days, security against external invaders was an important consideration for community survival. This brings to mind the mode of organization and the dexterity of the children of Israel in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah (The Holy Bible, Nehemiah 4). Every Jew was involved in the construction exercise as they all had the same status – free-born. Though there were slaves in Yorubaland, their status did not discriminate against them as they can marry in the community and subsequently, their children were regarded as free-born, unlike in North America where salves' children are considered salves from generation to generation. For children of slaves to regain freedom in North America, they have to be sent out to other areas – West Indies or Louisiana – that were established by the French Monarch.

The freedom and equality those slaves' children enjoyed with other children was an additional impetus that strengthened collective action in Yorubaland. In collective action theory, it is presumed that no actor will effectively participate if his cost-benefit calculus indicates lesser payoffs as against the cost. The payoffs in this respect can be regarded as the status of the people in the community. Since slave has lesser status than the free-born, it then follows that the payoffs for slave in community

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benefits are lesser than that of the free-born. In essence, Yoruba people integrated and assimilated slaves into their midst and after some years, the memory of dichotomy between slaves and free-born went into oblivion.

Specialization and interdependency are the normative foundations of self-governing institutions because everybody realized his/her capabilities and limitations and these enabled the people to come to the understanding that he/she is not self-sufficient; rather he/she needs the services of others in order to function effectively. Everybody is important; nobody is indispensable. It is important at this juncture to say that collective action in Yorubaland in regards to communal labor in community development was not completed without the drummers playing their role in inspiring the participants during communal work.

For instance, the skill development and specialization among the blacksmiths was an indicator of "advanced" technology among the Yoruba at that time. The design and fabrication of different types of traps for gaming activities were tremendous. This could be regarded as the foundation for the design and fabrication of industrial machines. But unfortunately, the British intervention did not allow the development of local initiatives in various sector of the people's economy. For instance, in Europe, about 4000 years ago, before the discovery of guns and horses big animals like buffalo were hunted by stampeding them (using fire) into swamps. The argument is that without European contacts, the Yoruba had the potentials to develop on their own if they were given free hands to operate and the level of development of the people, socio-politically must have been advanced and well refined. It needs be reiterated without mincing words that human capabilities in resolving obstacles to their progress should never be undermined. The urbanized character of the Yoruba could have constituted the foundation for modern institutions if they had not been rubbished by the British with erratic and foreign institutions.

Communalism was very much embraced by the Yoruba people and this had a parallel scheme of development in the individualism of the Europe world (Olaoba

2001:1). By tradition, indigenous Yoruba people were involved in all aspects of their culture by learning and practice, thus performance was given a priority than theory. The performance was committed to memory and passed on from generation to generation and by so doing became legal traditions. "Because the traditional society presented an atmosphere conducive for enduring performance, albeit collectively, the extinction ratio of the legal traditions (which were often dramatized) was close to zero" (Olaoba 2001:2).

The legal traditions in various aspects of life became code of conduct, norms, values, law, and procedure which eventually constituted the basis for rewards and sanctions. The words of Basil Davidson, "The elders sit under a tree ... and talk until they agree..." (Davidson 1973:114-115). This refers to the third factor Tocqueville identifies as the "manners and customs of the people". Ostrom (1991:12) construes manners and customs to include habits of thought – cognition. We might think of people as having characteristic habits of the heart and mind that get linked in shaping human activities. The Yoruba society has never been static but dynamic. In pre-colonial era, the nature of social policy crafted to cope with societal needs evolved directly from the values of reciprocity and group centeredness existing in the political communities. Such values essentially revolving around the extended family enabled the societies to enjoy integrated policies within each of the political communities (Sanda 1980:8).

Two Yoruba proverbs become relevant at this point:

Ogbon ologbon ki je ki a pe agba ni were (Nobody is a monopoly of wisdom or, nobody is an island of knowledge).

A npe gbon ni, a kii pe go (We gather together to be wise and not to be ignorant).

In gathering together to deliberate on any issue, the Yoruba believed that decisions arrived at would be more realistic and community-oriented rather than self-centered decision taken by one or few persons. In essence, the people have the experience and rich knowledge of group discussion, an essential and invaluable ingredient of federalism and democracy.

At the risk of sounding personal, I used to stay near elders, when I was young, listening to their discussions and "recording" their proceedings. Once, I saw them gathered, pretending as if I was playing, their discussions would be my pre-occupation. And if they wanted to document any "idea", they used my service since I developed writing skill right from primary one. Some of the discussions I listened to, at that time, shaped my life orientation and life style; and these enable me to develop principles of life – hard work, "being the best of who you are", "respect to others – older and younger ones". When, in secondary school, my friends and classmates picked up different appellations and nick names, some of which reflected foreign names like Moscow, Morocco, Paris etc. I reflected deeply in deciding one for my self. Eventually, I took three words as life motto: Endurance, Assiduity and Patience, which were boldly written on all my notebooks. However, generally I was addressed as, Endurance and when ever I was called by that name, Endurance, I used to reply: "is the key of life." In this sense, I am always conscious of the name and its meaning to me personally and this has helped me to develop and sustain the habit of enduring adverse circumstances that I come across in life.

In the realm of politics, the Yoruba have developed intricate methods of limiting the powers of their rulers through democratic process despite the absence of the ballot box (Olusanya 1990:37). In Yoruba tradition, generally, there has always been a delicate balance of power between the *Obas* (the paramount rulers) and the chiefs. And these leaders, at town or village level were in turn held in check by *Oro* societies, who could express the people's displeasure with their rulers in ritually sanctioned ceremonies. The political administrative structure/institution among the Yoruba has been effective and stable as it contained bureaucratic structure of checks and balances. There was no reposition of supreme powers on one man in the administration, as existed in the northern part of the country among the Hausa/Fulani.

At town and village levels, the indigenous (traditional) administrative institution is usually composed of elders in a village or town who see to the administration of justice and maintenance of peace in their communities. The

institution is hierarchically organized starting from the *Oba* (King) to the *Bales* as the compound heads (the elders). It is the duty of the *Bale* to preserve peace and order and to maintain discipline in his compound, in the first place, and secondarily in the larger community (village or town). Before the advent of British rule in Yorubaland, the people had developed self-regulatory and democratic systems through the public – the king and his advisers. Redress, restitution, and peace-making were designed by the people for societal cohesion. It needs be pointed out that the self-regulatory system with checks and balances among the Yoruba is an important factor that distinguishes the people as democratic society. Reminiscent of African experience, Vincent Ostrom argues that:

> If Africans were to concern themselves more with covenanting with one another to form civil bodies politic, they would appreciate that African peoples draw upon diverse ways of conceptualizing patterns of order in their societies. There is as much to be learned from stateless societies as from those that merged as "kingdoms" and "empires" before the intrusion of European empires. Modern democratic societies cannot be imposed from the top. They emerge as people learn to cope with the problems of collective organization associated with their shared interdependencies (Vincent Ostrom, 1991:18).

It is sad to note however, that all these democratic principles, which observers have described as robust, could have constituted the foundation for a modern society. But unfortunately, they were rubbished and eroded first by the British colonial fiat and second by the post-independence leaders. The fundamental errors that were committed by these leaders are discussed in details under six factors – political, administrative, spatial, educational, agriculture, and judiciary and security in chapter three.

Self-governing Institutions and Democracy in Yorubaland

Self-governing institution (SGI) comprises people, who have common problems and take decisions together to address these problems through collective actions; by establishing rules, evolving monitoring mechanism and sanctions, and

distributing benefits to members and in some cases allowing conditional access to non-members. Self-governing institutions among the Yoruba have their origin and evolution intricately intertwined with the Yoruba culture and these could be traced to pre-colonial period. In the contemporary time, reality on ground in Nigeria shows that every community that desires good things of life should have self-governing institutions, charged with the task of mobilizing people and their material resources for provision and production of goods and services that meet their needs, yearnings and aspirations.

The Yoruba in contemporary time have delved into their own history to unlock the indigenous potentials and capabilities of the people to address the societal pressing problems that have defied solutions of the modern state institutions. These indigenous capabilities that were found in Yorubaland constitute the foundations upon which the current self-governing arrangements are built. And the efforts of such arrangements have been directed towards the provision and production of public goods and services (roads and bridges, schools, health facilities, water supply, community hall, markets etc.) and security of lives and property. For example, in Igboho community (a town) and Irawo community (a village) in Oyo state, there was no single project provided by government within the period of 38 years (1950 – 1988). Different social facilities and services that are available in these communities were direct efforts of the people and they have not stopped providing these services. At Oke-Igbo in Ondo State, for instance, from 1922, only one primary school belonged to the Local Authority; there are other five primary schools that were established by religious organizations in the town. At Offa in Kwara State, from 1943 to 2001, the number of primary schools that were established by non-governmental institutions was twenty one as against one by the government. The number of the secondary schools was also staggering with fifteen schools belonging to community-based institutions as against three owned by the government. As at 1980, twelve of fifteen primary schools in Gbongan and its environs in Osun State were owned by religious and private organizations, while only three were established by government.

These towns (Igboho, Offa and Oke-Igbo) were established by descendants of Oduduwa who migrated from Ile-Ife to establish these settlements at different times. Self-governing capabilities in these Yoruba communities took place under different institutional arrangements (community and religious). This is not to say that self-governance is obtained uniformly across Yoruba communities as there are certain exceptions. For instance Oyerinde (2006) has cautioned us that the idea of Yoruba "ethnic group" being regarded as an example of an autocephalous systems with a single head (as Lloyd 1962; Akinjogbin 2002 made us to believe) is misleading because violent conflicts have been breaking out between Oyo and Ife elements in the Yoruba community of Ile-Ife since 1849 with negative implications for productive entrepreneurship. Other Yoruba communities of Nigeria, such as Ibadan and Abeokuta have not experienced similar violence even though they share relatively similar ecological conditions with Ile-Ife and have always been serving as homes to diverse Yoruba elements.

Oyerinde (2006) indicated that cooperation for solving shared problems is more likely in communities where dominant beliefs enable diverse individuals to experience themselves as equals, to base social mobility on personal achievements rather than birth and to have a shared understanding about their institutional arrangements as fair ordering principles. My work has further confirmed that the idea of homogeneity across the Yoruba people of Nigeria is misleading as diverse communities of individuals across Yorubaland have devised different methods for solving shared problems.

In the light of the service delivery of these institutions, they are highly relevant to the needs and aspirations of the citizenry and thereby performing democratic functions in Yorubaland. Most community based organizations, over the years, through self-governing arrangements have developed mutual trust, shared rules and shared strategies in overcoming obstacles to their daily existence and survival.

Incidentally, these democratic principles were conspicuously absent in state institutions that were set up by the colonial and subsequently the post-colonial administrations.

A survey of self-governing institutions in Yorubaland across ages (pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence periods) unequivocally portrays fundamental and basic attributes of democratic system. Such attributes include equal representation, accountability of leadership, shared rules and strategy, provision of goods and services etc. The common feature in Yorubaland, according to Otite and Kawonise (1997:44) was that indigenous communities maintained their own indigenous structures and organizations (traditional institution, age grades, community development associations and local organizations) for popular participation throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods. Seeds of the simultaneous existence of indigenous and non-indigenous areas of associational life were sown and cultivated during the periods.

The Yoruba experience of self-governing institutions in the post-colonial era is more or less similar to the experience of Latin America as expressed by Forment (2003:xi). "In Latin America, by the middle of nineteenth century, citizens across the continent organized thousands of civic, political, and economic associations, providing themselves a place in which to give textured form and contoured shape to their yearnings at a time when the vast majority of the state and Church officials remained hostile or indifferent to them". In Yorubaland, social organizations are very resilient and continued in their existence and relevance, however, in different forms and at different times.

Resources mobilizations of these organizations are remarkable. In traditional Yoruba setting, it is one the basis of the geographical division of the communities that resources mobilization is pursued. Once a project is decided upon, the resources (money, materials and labor) for the project are allocated on the basis of the number of families in the community and the leaders from various quarters and compounds are responsible for the collection of resources allocated to his area. With this

arrangement, defaulting is minimal if non-existent. The configuration of relationships that bind the people together under this governance arrangement is cultural value. Although there are different types of organizations in Yorubaland, cultural values of the people play an important role in the operational performance of these institutions. People have respect for their elders and their leaders who are occupying positions in the community and associations. This, however, does not mean that such elders/leaders are immune against sanction if they err or commit blunders.

The Nigerian masses, men and women, from rural and urban areas and from different socio-ethnic backgrounds transformed the various voluntary groups into "models of" and "models for" democratic life, to borrow from Clifford Geertz. These enclaves of democracy surfaced alongside bastions of military authoritarianism and the two have co-existed till today, though in certain instances, some of them have clashed with the dictatorships of their time.

In Yorubaland, real democracy, through self-governing institutions, exists in a distinctive manner in several ways. First, the self-governing institutions operate separately with each organization focusing on its own survival objective(s). Citizens invest their sense of sovereignty horizontally in each other rather than vertically in government institutions, thereby provoking a gap between daily practices and institutional structures. Second, it is asymmetrical. Citizens practice democracy more readily and intensely in civil society than in political society thereby making democratic life in the region lopsided. Third, democratic life in Yorubaland is culturally hybrid as the tenets of these associations were derived from the people's culture and vividly expressed in their language.

For example, the Yoruba across all ages, in community development and mutual-aid associations practice self-rule (democracy) by participating in meetings, voting for officials, making those officials accountable to the other members of the group, deliberating about common concerns, paying their dues in a timely manner, and serving on juries that were responsible for enforcing the norms and statutes of the group. The significant aspect of these institutions is that they never went into

extinction; rather they are the tools of survival among the rural populace, especially within the first three decades of post-independence period (1960 – 1990). They were responsible for the provision and production of public goods and services such as roads and bridges, schools, health facilities, water supply, community hall, markets etc.

My research incentives on self-governing institutions were ignited during the survey of a nation-wide study on local institutions and development in Nigeria sponsored by the Ford Foundation in 1989/90. During the survey, I visited some communities in Oke-Ogun area (Oyo North), Oyo State, where I discovered immeasurable contributions of community development association to the grassroots development despite the absolute neglect of the state institution on the basic needs of the people. One important factor that stimulated my interest was the role that communal labour plays in reducing project cost. Information collected from field officials of community development shows that in Oyo state, in 1987, the total cost of self-help projects is estimated to be ₦22.8 million of which about ₦7.2 million (31.0%) is supplied by the local people through the communal labor (Akinola, 1991) {see table in appendix I}.

Whereas the general answer to the question 'what is democracy?' all over the world is, 'the government of the people by the people and for the people', performatively or, pragmatically, democracy does not exist in most nations that claimed to be running democratic governments. All that exists in the name of democracy is a charade, fierce and deception among politicians and government officials who parade themselves as representatives of the people, whom they are actually estranged and gulfed from. However, in Switzerland, where citizen is referred to as an *Eidgenosse,* that is, a covenanter - a comrade bound by oath; and in North America where the puritans of New England operate in a covenantal relationship – each is bound to uphold in governing relationships with one another (Vincent Ostrom 1991), one can say that real democracy exists.

In Yorubaland, democracy in practical terms exists and resides with the people, through their associations and organizations at the grassroots level. The world is, however, yet to take notice and realize that the fastest-growing form of democracy has an indisputable history with a pattern and a rich, deep foundation dating back to the pre-colonial era among the Yoruba of southwest of Nigeria. The Yoruba, over the ages, have collectively addressed their problems of daily existence through various associations and organizations that have existed and still exist in self-organizing and self-governing manner.

The Nexus

In view of the discussions above, self-governing institutions in Yorubaland, though not perfect, have demonstrated their robustness and resilience, which make them vital for governance of society. It is the view of Tocqueville that monocentric governance gives rise to despotism, dictatorial systems and neglect of citizens welfare. In view of this, Tocqueville advocates for "a new science of politics". The new science of politics, being advocated, according to Vincent Ostrom, is a science of association that enables people to design, create and maintain systems of governance where they can be self governing (McGinnis, 1999:24) through covenantal relationship.

Covenant or agreement is a system of governance where people govern rather than presuming that governments govern. Democracy means government of the people through their elected representatives. Shared community of understanding and agreement is the tenet of democracy. It entails harmony of thoughts and opinion by the represented (citizens) and the representer (the assembly). A democracy cannot be achieved until there is sufficient unity of the representer and/or represented to specify the terms and conditions of government applicable to a democratic assembly. In Nigeria's polity, however, there is a gap between the people and their representer in the sense that the dividends of democracy constantly elude the electorate in Nigeria. The gap presumes that it is not the government of the people but that of assembly.

At the same time, the gap necessitates that the people have to do something on their own part if life is to continue. Reality on ground as discussed above shows that the people have resorted to trusted institutional arrangements by building confidence and trust in one another through shared community of understanding and associational life to solve several societal problems, especially goods and services, security and conflict resolution. Going by the argument above, it can then be presumed that the people also govern. If the people govern then government governs in a limited sense. Reality on ground in Yorubaland is congruent with Tocqueville's discovery and philosophy on American democracy.

For governance to benefit the people, having regard to Tocqueville's study, it has to proceed from the people, be guided by them, and they should be able to modify the governing institutions as their situations change. All over the world, enlightened governments and international agencies have focused and sponsored grassroots associations in order to reach the poor for full-fledged mobilization, welfare enhancement and poverty reduction. Their active involvement in the development process is the key to success.

The argument is that if Nigeria, as a developing nation wants to emulate the successes of advanced industrial society, then she needs to learn how to make efficient use of her physical, human, and institutional resources. But the processes of learning need not be unidirectional. Experiences of community-based institutions in Nigeria on rule-ruler-ruled relationship in meeting common challenges in the delivery of common goods and social services, conflict resolution mechanism and protection of lives and properties need to be taken into consideration in policy formulation. We need to understand the ways in which local communities manage those resources that are most important to their own survival or prosperity.

Ostrom noted that human beings everywhere have the potential for learning from past failures. Reflection and choice yield adaptive potentials. The major task of this book is four fold: (1) to inform the readers about the adaptive capabilities and

potentials of the Yoruba people in various aspects of lives and from various communities across the country on how they have individually and collectively addressed their problems of daily existence in the face of dismal performance of the state-controlled governance over the years; (2) to understand the landscape of interactions at the neighborhood and community level (3) to draw out some lessons we can learn from these self-governing institutions; and (4) to develop adaptive transformation and error-correcting mechanisms in using these lessons to reconstituting order in Nigerian communities and African as a continent.

Data on ***six/seven communities across Yorubaland are used to discuss the vitality of self-governing institutions. The communities are: Olaleye in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State; Aiyetoro in Ilaje Local Government and Ajowa in Akoko North West Local Government of Ondo State; Offa in Offa Local Government of Kwara State; Olode in Ife-South Local Government of Osun State; Igboho and Igbope in Oorelope Local Government of Oyo State; and Saki in Saki East-West Governments, Oyo State.

Plan of the Book

This book is divided into two major sections. The first section consists of five chapters (chapters 1-5). The general introduction (chapter one), starts with a discussion on the tragedy of state-controlled governance in Nigeria and followed with the task of recovering the history of self-governing institutions in Yorubaland, emphasizing the vitality of these institutions across ages in spite of the unfavorable political milieu – centralized, dictatorial, autocratic and repressive – that characterized both the colonial and post colonial periods in which these instituions operated and still operate. The chapter also examines collective action theory and the framework used in discussing the case studies. It also attempts a survey of the intellectual landscape of scholars, across the world, who have devoted their time to searching out alternative self-governance arrangements in Africa. Here, the works of Elinor Ostrom and

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Vincent Ostrom provide useful insight in understanding how institutions work in Yorubaland.

Chapter two discusses and brings into the light how the Yoruba identity and its various components have constituted normative foundations for the provision and production of services prior to the introduction of Indirect Rule (Native Administration). The focus of chapter three is two fold. First, it ex-rays the Native Administration of the British Government and how the foreign political ideology was super-imposed on indigenous governance, thus, strangulated the later. Two, the adoption of centralized administration by the post-colonial leadership, the formation of local government system and its responsibilities are discussed in relation to how local government has interacted with the people in the provision of public goods and services. The chapter discusses the life-cycle of local government in Yorubaland and the weakness and inappropriateness of state-controlled institution in Yorubaland and Nigeria in general. The practical experiences of the Nigerian masses that bear the brunt of erratic and exotic models of state institutions that were imposed on indigenous system of democratic administration in Yorubaland were also discussed.

Chapter four is devoted to the discussion on the failure of agricultural and rural development programs from colonial to post-colonial periods. It shows how emphasis on oil economy stagnates agricultural development with the consequence of pillage and plundering of public resources while the masses suffer. Chapter five discusses concepts and cases of infrastructural failure and the burden of dysfunctional infrastructure and services on the citizens with the consequence of poverty among the masses in southwestern Nigeria. The chapter also highlights the responses of the people by showing how the failure of local government has unfolded self-governance arrangements. The people learnt not to have expected local government to produce the services but have decided to build upon their own foundations to carry out these important services – roots of society – themselves.

The second section comprises of five chapters (chapters 6 – 10). The section opens with a discussion on the life cycle of self-governing institutions by historicizing

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selected institutions and discussing their resilience and vulnerability over the years in Yorubaland. Chapter six discusses institutional formation and self-governance arrangements among the selected institutions. Chapter seven discusses autocratic practices, the fall of autocracy among some self-governing institutions and how the fall of autocracy has led to improved institutional arrangements. In chapter eight, the resilience of self-governing institutions is discussed with respect to specific sectors – provision and production of goods and services, security and conflict resolution. Similarly, a section is devoted to the discussion on how Yoruba people have revived their indigenous and crafted endogenous institutions to cope with the problem of insecurity in spite of intense opposition of the central government.

Drawing upon the experiences of the people in Yorubaland over the ages, chapter nine is concerned with how to design polycentricity as a means of crafting and attaining self-governance that will make the people themselves to be their own governors in Yorubaland and challenge other scholars to use the same principles as may be appropriate in other geo-political zones in Nigeria. The overall output of this intellectual adventure can then be used to design a new independence era for Nigeria and Africa as a continent. Chapter ten draws some conclusions.

PART II

CASE STUDIES

In this second part of the book, I discuss findings from empirical survey (not yet in details) on self-governing institutions in Yorubaland with respect to what the institutions are in the various sampled communities; how the institutions were crafted by the participants and why they were crafted and sustained by the participants. At the same time, I discuss the consequences the institutions generated in diverse settings. Since I study these institutions so as to understand what they do, how they operate and why they work, I will then proceed to the strategy we can adopt to create or modify them. In the final analysis, this book will provide the medium of conveying the knowledge on new institutionalism to others tribes in Nigeria and other part of Africa.

This part is organized into five chapters (chapters 6 – 10). What I intend to do for the purpose of the Mini-Conference is to sketch out the chapters to be developed fully later. However, the summary of this second part is first presented to readers.

SUMMARY OF PART II

Data from Igboho-Igbope and Aiyetoro polycentric communities confirmed that regardless of the outcomes of interactions human beings will not cooperate perpetually in any social setting if their interests are not protected. Though the people of Aiyetoro had been able to develop diverse entrepreneurships through their contact with the outside world (Germany), the hierarchical order – based on communist principles they adopted – limited the freedom of Aiyetoro people and thereby jeopardized polycentric imperatives the people of Aiyetoro could have explored to experience a truly democratic society.

When participants view interactions as unfair or otherwise inappropriate, they may change their strategies even when they are receiving positive outcomes

from the situation (E. Ostrom 2005:14; Fehr and Gachter 2000b; Frey, Benz, and Stutzer 2004). This agrees with the action of the people of Igbope. The community of individuals in Igbope decided to break away from Igboho-Igbope union (called Ifelodun Omo Igboho) when they perceived they were marginalized. Thus, the 39 years old association that had produced tremendous results disintegrated when there was no room for discussion and change of rules that they could use to resolve mistrust and inequality of social conditions.

Findings from Aiyetoro also help us to come terms with the fact that autocracy can not, and will not survive time, education and knowledge as confirmed by the fall of communism in the community. This also corroborates Vincent Ostrom (2000: 233) assertion that:

> *It is a gross illusion to presume that rulers rule other human beings as ever-obedient and submissive subjects. Human intelligibility implies that each individual acts in light of some array of alternative possibilities, which cannot be foreclosed by the commands of rulers.*"

Conditions from multiethnic and cosmopolitan Olode community shows that self-governance can thrive when individuals (including strangers) in a community have freedom in developing their initiatives and entrepreneurial capabilities. The governance structure of Olode has a "fusion" of traditional and community institutions that permits mutual trust and reciprocity, prerequisites of productive associational life. The representatives of all the diverse ethnic communities including the traditional council members form an assembly and the assembly meets every week at the Oba's palace to deliberate on community maters.

Further, the failure of central policing in security matters in Yorubaland had provoked the emergence of enduring polycentric security institutions in Saki and Offa communities. Findings also confirmed that the adoption of colonial model in conflict resolution in Yorubaland engendered collusion of two cultures that culminated into injustice in Olaleye community.

While Olode and Saki with clear rules and mutually productive relationships have continued to make progress, others such as Aiyetoro and Igboho-Igope with unclear rules and autocratic tendencies had abandoned the initial mutual relationships they had explored to make considerable achievements in the past.

CHAPTER SIX

INSTITUTIONAL FORMATION AND SELF-GOVERNANCE IN YORUBALAND

This chapter historicizes selected self-governing institutions in Yorubland and discusses their life-cycle by analyzing how participants responded to diverse exogenous variables in their different environments.

Table 6.1 The various levels of how participants in selected communities responded to diverse exogenous variables in Yorubaland.

		First Level	Second Level	Third Level	Fourth Level
1	Aiyetoro	Religion	education	Entrepreneurship	Disintegration
2	Ajowa	Community Services and Social Recognition	Community Services	Community Services	
3	Igboho-Igbope	Protection of human dignity	Social – community services	Disintegration	Two autonomous communities
4	Offa	Security			
5	Olaleye	Ecological problem	Social – community services	Social – community services	
6	Olode	Economic factors	Social – community services		
7	Saki	Family protection (prevention of wives snatching)	Social – community services, conflict	Security	

Aiyetoro

Aiyetoro, meaning, "The World at Peace" was founded in the year 1947 by a community of individuals comprising majority of Ilaje people and other settlers in Ilajeland. These people, the Ilaje prophets and members of the Cherubim & Seraphim Church reacted against some traditional practices, particularly the killing of twins and sacrifices to idols in Ilajeland. Those that founded the institution did so with the utmost intention of worshipping God through the practice of Apostolic Faith as done by the Apostles in the Holy Bible and to harmonize the different

beliefs so that there will be a common doctrine in the community. This attracted stiff resistance from the traditionalists such that those Apostles and their followers were persecuted and they had to migrate into the Atlantic Ocean, about 40 kilometers away from Igbokoda (the major town of the Ilaje) and settled on an island they named Aiyetoro. There is a parallel between Aiyetoro people and New Englanders in America. The New Englanders were dissatisfied with the unitary system of government that portrayed inequality among the citizens in England. By way of contrast, the two differs. While New Englanders followed the footprints of the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land (Canaan) and had to fight in order to conquer the land, Aiyetoro people had to search for a virgin land.

Ajowa

The emergence and sustenance of *Ajowa* (meaning, "we all come together"), a community of eight communities with different indigenous dialects and eight *Obas* (Kings) confirmed that if positive outcomes to a decision are perceived by participants, human beings are capable of constructing social 'bridges' to link perceived gaps and diverse differences among the people.

Igboho-Igbope

Ifelodun Omo Igboho[4] is a community development association for Igboho-Igbope community in Oyo State of Nigeria. The circumstances that led to the formation of Ifelodun Omo Igboho association were wrapped in defense of human rights by the Igboho indigenes in the old Gold Coast, now called Ghana in West Africa. Sometimes in the 1930s in Tamale, Ghana, one Mr. Hezekiah Siyanbola was chased, caught and forced to be enlisted as a soldier in defiance to his own volition. The barbaric acts of the British aggressors in Ghana were considered inhuman, oppressive and violation of human rights by the Igboho indigenes; they

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[4] Ifelodun Omo Igboho and Igboho-Igbope are used interchangeably in this book. Similarly, indigenes of Igboho means indigenes of Igbope, especially before the association disintegrated.

gathered and deliberated on the incident; and reached a resolution to forming a union in order to protect their rights as foreigners in 1940.

The people that gathered on that day at Tamale in Ghana were: Late Pa Hezekiah Siyanbola, (who later became the first chairman of the organization), Late Pa Joseph Idowu Adeniyi, Late Pa Salami Lagbenro, Late Pa David Dogo Balogun, Late Pa Kobomoje, Late Pa Tafa Omotosho and so on. It was in that meeting that they named the union as Ifelodun Omo Igboho, meaning the children of Igboho who are united in love (*Ifelodun* means love is sweet, while *omo* means children). Arising from that meeting, they sent representatives to enlighten all indigenes of Igboho in both English and French West African countries – Burkina Faso, Quagadogou, Cote de Voire, and Benin Republic etc. and meeting commenced in these countries.

In 1951, the association sent some emissaries to inform all Igboho indigenes in Nigeria on the birth of the association and the intention to extend its scope of operation to Nigeria. Among the emissaries that were sent were: Late Pa Jacob Owolabi, and Late Pa Samuel Akinola. They brought the feedback to Ghana that the people at home had accepted. In one of its meetings, the association decided to bring a police post to Ignoho because there was no police in the town. The closest town where police service was available was at Osogbo, the provincial headquarters, a distance of about 300 miles. In order to achieve this objective, the association sent representatives from Ghana to Lagos and Ibadan in Nigeria to solicit the assistance of their fellow indigenes in these cities so as to make necessary contacts with government officials for the approval of the police post for their community. The government approved the police post and the project was executed at Obagun, Igboho in 1955.

The first meeting in Nigeria was preceded by the visit of another set of representatives from Ghana in 1956 and they were: Late Pa Daniel Oladesu Ola, and one of the founding members, Pa Isaiah Oni, who narrated the history of the organization to me. The old man played the role of a "bridge" by linking the old

(origin of the institution) with the new (present conditions). This also occurred in Olaleye community. I realized during the survey in nearly all the communities studied, that there are gaps between the present crops of leadership and the founding fathers of those associations. The present leaderships do not have detailed history of their associations. They are "new breed". Since there are no written record of the origins of these associations, they usually make sure that at least one old person, preferably one of the founding fathers of these institutions was around during the interviews. It is important that effort be made to document the history of indigenous institutions in Africa before the founding fathers die. "The faintest pen is sharper than the brightest memory."

Olaleye: ....

Olode: ....

Saki: ....

Organizational Strcutures of Self-Governing Institutions in Yorubaland

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CHAPTER SEVEN

SELF-GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS AND AUTOCRATIC TENDENCIES
Aiyetoro:

The Oba (King) of Aiyetoro combined two offices together as the same time; he was both the spiritual and political head of the community. He, the Oba in council was the spiritual ruler and head of the community; the highest in authority. It was his responsibility to administer and coordinate the activities of the people. He performed legislative functions and made laws in collaboration with the council of elders of the community both in and outside the Church. He also performed executive functions and saw to it that laws, rules and order were enforced by his people. Cases of disorder were reported to him and with the advice of the council of elders; adequate reward and disciplinary actions were awarded as necessary.

Members of Aiyetoro community were expected to carry out developmental projects for the benefit of the entire community as a whole, such as building of tug-boats, mechanical fishing, and building of houses. All members of the community were expected to perform their duties, and defaulters were banished from the community. Their occupations were fishing, trading, mat weaving, boat building, textile making, shoe making etc.

In a bid to ensure hat the newly founded community witness rapid growth most especially as regard to its population, the leadership embarked on aggressive dissemination of information about the new haven known as Ayetoro throughout the entire Ilaje land, and beyond. The emphasis of the campaign and sermons were centred on free provision of basic needs and security:

> the moment you become a member of the community, the
> community will be responsible for all your needs...you are
> protected from any kind of security risk.

Consequently, there was a massive migration from the entire Ilaje towns, villages or communities to Ayetoro. Members increased in multiple folds daily

from different towns and villages across Yorubaland. Other ethnic groups such as Itsekiri, Urhobo, Ijaw, Edo, Calabari, Apoi, and Ikale etc. were equally not left out. Within a short period, Ayetoro witnessed rapid expansion and development in all its ramifications.

One significant feature about Ayetoro community then was that once any individual entered into the community, it was impossible for his or her extradition even by his blood related family. The State law enforcement agents were equally not allowed to enter the community; they operated their own security and judicial system. The community had a common purse, and did virtually every thing in common. Members were made up of both men and women with women outnumbered their men counterpart in ratio 3:2.

The people of Aiyetoro, like the early Apostles in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, operated a common purse (coffer) to ensure that members did not lack both physically and spiritually. This enabled the community to grow in number and their aim of preaching Christ and care for themselves was achieved. The community was a clear example of communism as the people (members) got all they needed for a living from the community purse. The community was able to sponsor all the children of members to schools.

Within a short period, Ayetoro community became a unique settlement in the entire Ilaje land and beyond. The community witnessed rapid economic, political, and social development. With her contact with Christian Missionaries and consequent education of her children both in Aiyetoro and in Germany the community built the first Aiyetoro Technical College in the entire Ilaje land, where series of items, namely knives, barrels, plates, furniture etc. were produced. The community equally acquired about twenty fishing trawlers that produced fish for Ayetoro community and other communities in Ilaje land. At a stage, to become a member of the community became highly competitive.

Furthermore, every members of the community must attend church services everyday. Another significant feature worth mentioning was that before, the

collapse of the communism system in Ayetoro, whenever, it was time for feeding, the time keeper would ring the bell and everybody would assemble at the town hall where food would be served.

There was, however, no room for property right or ownership of personal property. All property belonged to the Aiyetoro community. The community motto was:

> *The community think for you, decide what you should do, what you should be, your children are the community children, your property are the community property.*

The council of elders together with the Oba in council was saddled with the responsibility of Constitution review and the amendments passed to the general assembly of the community.

Igbope-Igbope

Igbope and Igboho communities constituted Ifelodun Omo Igboho community development association since its inception in 1940 until 1979 when the association developed social fracture and became fragmented into two groups due to what could be described as oppression of the minority entity by the dominant group within the same association.

As early as 1938 Igbope community has existed as a separate and autonomous community though there had been a union of communality between the community and Igboho. The administrative map of Oyo State (1986) confirmed the separate identity of Igbope. The union of the two communities (Igbope and Igboho) was a product of circumstances that the founding fathers found themselves in Ghana in 1940 when they were in foreign land. According to the community leaders in Igbope, Ifelodun Omo Igboho was embarced by all and sundry in Igbope when it was brought home in 1950s on the ground that the association was founded by Igbope and Igboho indigenes in Ghana and moreover, when the distance between the two communities by then was about two

kilometers. In fact, the first elite to assume the chairmanship position of Ifelodun Omo Igboho community development association was from Igbope quarter and he was the fourth chairman of the association.

Information gathered shows that the two communities (Igbope and Igboho) under the aegis of Ifelodun Omo Igboho community development association embarked on 13 socio-economic projects (see their list in chapter ***). In spite of the fact that Igbope contributed resources in no small measure to the provision and production of these projects, all these facilities were located in Igboho while none was considered fit for location in Igbope.

Another experience narrated by the Igbope community was in relation with electricity project. The federal government embarked on electricity projects for Igboho, Igbeti, and Kishi. In 1976, during the survey exercise that preceded the installation of electricity by the contractor who worked on the project awarded by the Oyo State Government, one of the secondary school students from Igbope by then who happened to be one of the community leaders now approached the surveyor to intimate him of the existence of a village, Igbope, which has been part and parcel of Igboho in terms of developmental efforts. This young man was told that the contract and the map indicated only Igboho without reference to Igbope.

The young man consulted with his colleagues in school and brought the information to their parents and elders at Igbope, who usually attended Ifelodun Omo Igboho meeting. The Igbope community then sent representatives to Ifelodun Omo Igboho's office at Igboho to intimate the officers on the exclusion of Igbope from electricity project. Though the officers promised that they would do something about the case, nothing was dome at the end of the day. Thus it was only Igboho that was electrified at that time. However, in 1987, the sole administrator of the then Irepo local government awarded the electricity contract for Igbope. But it was only the high tension cable that actually got to the first building at Igbope, just at the entrance of the community. The community then contributed money and extended the lines to other part of the community through

self-help. Another instance they cited was the water scheme designed for Igboho in exlusion of Igbope. The last straw that broke the camel back was in mid-1970s. After the first Irepo Grammar School was established, it was suggested that a Grammar School be located at Igbope by Ifelodun Omo Igboho but the idea was turned down.

All these exclusionary actions displayed by the dominant group over the minority entity within the same association eventually led to fractionalization of the association. When the Igbope community decided to break away from the union, Ifelodun Omo Igboho embarked on what could be described as victimization on the people of Igbope by mounting pressure to force the community back into the old union. In order to achieve this goal, several strategies were employed by the dominant group.

The Ifelodun Omo Igboho association decided to make the payment of annual dues to the association a prerequisite to admission and registration for the session into schools that were built by the two communities. Even the ownership of locked up shops that belonged to Igbope people at Owode market was revoked by Ifelodun. There were other cases of maltreatment that Igbope people were subjected due to non-payment of Ifelodun dues. In another case, the indigenes of Igbope are being forced to claim Igboho as their origin any time they wanted to collect certificate of local government of origin.

Despite these oppressive and aggressive tendecies of the dominant group against the minority entity, the enviable aspect of the relationship between the two communities is the peaceful co-existence between them. The Igbope people have not allowed the rift to degenerate into conflicts and undue confrontation. All they wanted is to stay alone and operate as autonomous community independent of Igboho.

Although Igbope pulled out of Ifelodun in 1979, its personal community projects had started some years (1970) before dissolution of the union (see the table). This meant that the community maintained its identity. The community

projects up to date numbering 11. The table shows that Igbope community development association had embarked on several projects that touch the life of its citizens. This demonstrates that the small size of the community did not affect its operation and performance as the community has spent N21,375,500.00 excluding communal labor.

The collapse of Autocracy in Aiyetoro and Igboho-Igbope Communities

It is a gross illusion to presume that rulers rule other human beings as ever-obedient and submissive subjects. Human intelligibility implies that each individual acts in light of some array of alternative possibilities, which cannot be foreclosed by the commands of rulers. (Vincent Ostrom 2000: 233).

Aiyetoro

A shared community of understanding really helped the people of Aiyetoro initially as rules were clear; rule-making processes were understood and agreed upon by participating individuals in the community. Consequently, regular monitoring and enforcement of rules strengthened the institutions; and effective constraints were imposed on individuals as rule-followers.

However, because the details of the people's "Constitution," derived from the Holy Bible was not clearly understood and reviewed with the growing acquisition of education, knowledge and enlightenment of the people, there arose the problem of relating their new circumstances to their initial institutional arrangements. Participants crafting institutions should pay close attention to details. Since the people of Aiyetoro regarded the Bible as the source of their "Constitution," they should have learned from the example of the disciples of Jesus Christ of Nazareth in Acts of Apostle chapter six, where the apostle introduced specialization and demarcation between spiritual and economic actions in order to address the fundamental problems that confronted them at that time.

Because of the murmuring that arose among the Grecian women who were neglected in daily food distribution, in spite of the common purse they operated,

the Apostles decided it was better to separate preaching of the gospel (spiritual) from food gathering, preparation and distribution (economy) so that different people could handle each section for specialization and efficiency. If the outcome of a strategy is perceived unfair, people would react through any means they perceive the best strategy. God did not condemn this action (murmuring) as it happened in the Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7, whereas the same action (murmuring) was condemned in the book of Numbers 16:41-47.

It is important at this juncture to provide some backgrounds for the two cases. On the first case (Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7), it was purely and administrative issue that bothered on food distribution (what we could called political economy), which every institution should be in dire quest of how to improve. On the second case (Numbers 16:41-47), it was a case of spiritual actions that Moses took on Dothan, Korah and Abiram, who rebelled against him on false accusation. Moses was innocent of the accusation as he boldly declared: "God respect not their offerings; for I have never taken an ass from them nor defrauded any of them." God answered Moses prayers and fire came down and destroyed the rebels (see Numbers 16). Like Moses, can the Oba of Aiyetoro boldy say he had not defrauded the people? The Aiyetoro people did not study the source of their "Constitution" (the Bible) very well. Any institutional arrangement that forecloses reactions from participants in the form of dissatisfaction is bound to be unsuccessful.

With educational development at Aiyetoro, there came development of knowledge as more children from Aiyetoro went out to acquire education in higher institutions of learning such as Universities of Ife and Ibadan in the 1970s and 1980s. These students began to ask questions and enlighten their parents on the evil of communism and why should one man or few individuals be dictating to them and direct their destiny. To these students, communism was a man to man slavery. There were allegations of amassing wealth and personal aggrandizement levied against the Oba, while ordinary Aiyetoro man only woke up to eat, work,

sleep like slaves. This agitation was a window of opportunity for the participants to review their working-rules or rules-in-use. Instead of reviewing the rules and go to another level in dealing with exogenous variables, the agitation was regarded as rebellion or insurrection by the leadership. The Oba of Aiyetoro should have boldy presented himself for cross-examination by his people and not to have allowed the case degenerated into violence. But he could not take this option due to the fact that the administrative system that was operated was monocratically centralized – boss rule and command control – that forbids subjects to ask questions from the boss. This is a hallmark of a dictatorial system. But because the people were already pressed to the wall; they raised questions and the issue resulted to violence and eventually communism was destroyed.

The findings in Aiyetoro only confirmed that "common knowledge, shared understanding, patterns of accountability, and the degree of mutual trust are accrued in households and among households. Households of masters and slaves provide the languages for autocracies and aristocracies; they are not proper foundations for democratic republics" (Ostrom 2000:204).

Investigation revealed that there are two schools of thought to the destruction of communism in Ayetoro community. The first school of thought emphasized mismanagement of community resources by the leadership, particularly the Oba, who was discovered to have amounted wealth to himself and his immediate family. This action on the discovery led to agitation from the people who could no longer endure after being enlightened by the returnee scholars from different schools of higher learning in the country. At the climax of this problem, the Kabiyesi ordered that every member of the community should cater for themselves that the community could no longer cater for anybody. This led to crises which resulted in lost of lives and eventual intervention of the Nigerian state that marked the destruction of communism.

The second school of thought according to findings revealed that the destruction of communism was as a result of rebellion from scholars whom the

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community sponsored to study in different schools of higher learning who returned to the community and enlightened their parents, brothers, sisters and other relatives, that communism is man to man slavery. This eventually led to crises which resulted into lost of lives. The police and other state apparatus intervened and this eventually marked the end of communism in the community.

Today in Ayetoro community, the Church exists for individuals who decide to attend. There is also a Church leader who is still the spiritual head of the church and the Oba of the community. There is freedom of acquisition of personal property as individuals are allowed to own their houses and other properties which did not exist before. Individuals, today in Ayetoro, pay their taxes to government without the involvement of the community; unlike before when taxes where paid in lump sum from the community purse to the government.

The crises in Aiyetoro happened because the power of the Oba of Aiyetoro was not kept at the minimum and there were no checks and balances. Whereas Ostrom has cautioned us that:

> *It is also important that the scope of command for individuals with rulership prerogatives be kept at a minimum so that all-important conflicts can be resolved through impartial judges* (V. Ostrom 1998:1078; Oyerinde 2006:14).

One major lesson for scholars of political science and public administration is that, though autocracy may thrive on ignorance of people, it cannot survive education and time that lead to knowledge development. "Knowledge is the most fundamental source of human capabilities – a foundation on which all other productive potentials are built" (Ostrom 2000:227). Here we see how education had helped in securing freedom for the people of Aiyetoro. Education is an important area African people and similar regions in the world should invest their resources. It was education that enabled the young scholars in Aiyetoro to enlighten their parents on the evil of communism.

To avoid counter-productivity, "well-adjusted and productive" humans adjust their expectations and ways of interacting with others in situations that occur in diverse times and spaces (E. Ostrom 2005:5). If an individual, due to the leadership position he holds in a community, considers himself superior over other individuals in that community, he knows that what he is doing is wrong and he should reflect on his deeds and adjust his interactions with his fellow humans and do good. Otherwise, he is courting rebellion as discovered in Aiyetoro.

Igboho-Igbope

The effectiveness of institutions in creating greater potentials for most individuals can however be hindered in the presence of unlimited leadership prerogatives and/or marginalization of some groups of individuals. If individuals with rulership prerogatives to impose rules are not subject to effective limits, they may impose laws containing their own interpretations of order (North and Thomas 1976; Putnam 1993; V. Ostrom 1994, 1997; Ayling and Kelly 1997; Alston, Libecap and Mueller 1999; de Soto 2000; Oyerinde 2006:291) as was found in Ifelodun Omo Igboho association.

Though Igboho-Igbope polycentric institution did not have a written constitution at the inception, common understanding and common agreement enabled the community to innovatively bring about tremendous changes in their community. What was however, lacking was review of rules from time to time. The system foreclosed discussions on changes of rules. Even though the rules were not clear in the beginning, by the time the oppressed section of the community – Igbope – raised the question on the need to spread social services across the two communities the Igoho people, who happened to be larger in number (dominant) ought to have allowed dialogue and discussions. Instead, the demand of Igbope people was ignored. This is usually the problem with autocracy. Once the interactions structure incentives to the dominant group, alternative option to redistribute incentives is usually blocked and resisted.

The ability of institutions to yield mutually productive relationships requires common understanding and common agreement, the long-term glue that productively and innovatively ties operational and collective-choice arrangements to constitutional arrangements. If they are not understood as social orderings, institutions will most likely become ineffective (V. Ostrom 1971: 65-67) and probably set stages for destructive conflicts. Institutions are more likely to be understood and accepted by participating individuals when the affected individuals can communicate and interact regularly with one another as colleagues in multiple arenas of polycentric order (Oyerinde 2006:14).

While the people of Igboho are willing to continue the union, the Igbope people are not ready for re-union at all. Rather, they conducted me around during the survey to see the projects they had embarked upon so as to prove that they are up to the task. To social scientist working on institutional analysis, this type of error is for us to learn so as to prevent its occurrence in the future.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RESILIENCE OF SELF-GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS

The self-governing institutions in Yorubaland are very resilient in the way they operate over the years. Even those that were discovered to have had autocratic tendencies were able to deal with their conditions and allowed the emergence of a new pattern of associational life. This means that these institutions are making progress.

The Fusion of Traditional Authorities and Community Institutions in Olode.

"How people conduct themselves as they directly relate to one another in the ordinary exigencies of life is much more fundamental to a democratic way of life than the principle of 'one person, one vote, majority rule.'" (Ostrom 2000:3) is confirmed by findings in Olode community. All the diverse ethnic communities in Olode have representatives in the Oba's palace where they meet as an assembly or "House of Representative." The assembly meets every Friday to deliberate on matters affecting the welfare of the community. The respective community leaders also meet their people weekly to provide feedback and convey their findings back to the assembly at the next Friday meeting. The day for quarter's meetings varies depending on the decision in each quarter. However, the quarters' meetings hold before the next Friday meeting. The Oba and his council cannot unilaterally take a decision on the community. Decisions are based on mutual understanding from multilayer and multiple centers of interactions among diverse individuals at Olode.

The collective-choice arrangements in Olode set out the governing units to include families, zones, villages and occupational associations as well as neighborhood development associations (CDAs). This has facilitated mutually productive relationships among the people of Olode as daily decisions are taken by the diverse individuals in the community.

Except the Oba, all the traditional council members (Chiefs) are members of the CDAs, a kind of dual (membership) for them. This means that they are part of the decisions making units at the zone level. It then becomes difficult for any of them, who has been part of that decision to go against it at the assembly as he is not the only one representing that zone where the original idea was muted.

The community is full of development associations ranging from vocational associations to interest groups. Some of these are the carpenters union, bricklayer unions, the Okada Riders Association, The National Union of Roads Transport Workers, Petrol Dealers Association, Olode Ayedun Association. All these unions have effective impact on the development of the community. The umbrella union of these unions is the Olode progressive Union (OPU).

Adaptation Strategy and Saki Security Initiatives

Although the Federal Government of Nigeria had banned and re-banned (on several occasions) ethnic security outfits across the country, these outfits continued to re-invent their strategies from time to time. Banning them is then not the best option. The question is what produced these organizations? They were produced by oppressive government; found relevance due to the failure of governments in security matters; and nurtured and grew up under hostile and poverty ridden conditions. Accordingly, they tend to be violent. This is what the concept of social capital is all about. Social capital can be positive or negative depending on the circumstances of the society or community in which the group is located. The important thing is to design institutional framework that could convert the negative social capital into positive social capital as in the case of Saki community in Oke-Ogun, Oyo State. The Saki people, through collective action, have been able to transform the Oodua People Congress (OPC) in their community from violent orientation to positive result such that there exists a symbiotic relationship between OPC and the Local Government with the community development association as the facilitator between the duo.

Though very wild, the leadership of the Saki community saw the usefulness of the group and thus, seized the opportunity by using their initiatives to "hijack" and "tame" the group. The leadership of Saki Parapo (Saki United) held several meeting with the group on how they could be of help in combating armed robbery in the area. The cases of armed robbery in the community reached its zenith as traders could no longer travel safe and in fact the indigenes of the community who resided outside decided not to come home for celebration of festivals because of the problem of insecurity. Considering the implications of this ugly development on socio-economic affairs of the community, the Saki leadership swung into action.

The first step that was taken was to first of all identify the specific spots where the robbers normally lodged before they launched their operations. In Yorubaland, it is believed that a thief cannot come from outside to operate in a community except there is an insider, who is a collaborator. The leadership of the community sponsored the membership of OPC into beer parlous, hotels and restaurants to drink and at the same time ascertain the type of people at such spots. At the end of the exercise, they were able to identify some spots, where the robbers lodged. The community then invited the owners of such spots, informed them of their findings and warned them. The hoteliers cooperated with the community and the robbers were flushed out; some arrested, while others escaped. They waged war against them into far villages and using some techniques, they were able to identify them even among the villagers.

The next line of action was to make the routes to Ibadan, the state capital secure for traveling for the traders and businessmen and women. Because the operation required the Saki's security outfits (OPC) to cross the borders of some local governments, they linked up with the concerned communities and their traditional rulers. Specifically, discussions were held with the executives of the community development associations in other local government and were carried along on the ground that the problem of armed robbery affected their own

communities too. In unison they made a special request to the Commissioner of Police in Ibadan for permission so that the communities could provide security for their traders on business trips to and fro Ibadan from time to time. The request was granted.

What the community did was that all vehicles traveling to Ibadan commenced their journey at the same time, in a convoy and led by the OPC's security force. Since this strategy started, armed robbery on the road had reduced drastically in the region. Having achieved this level of success on security, the community decided to put the responsibility on the local government. Since the central government has failed, the local government has no option than to assume the responsibility of paying the salary of the members of OPC. The group was also given a patrol vehicle for their operations by the local government as well. However, the OPC takes instructions from the leadership of the community and not from the local government. An important factor that enhances the operations of OPC is that the local people freely give information on any strange person or somebody with dubious characters to the OPC and not to the police.

The operation of the OPC outside Saki community started in Ijaye-Ile because the place was notorious for armed robbery. The OPC stormed the town and with the assistance of the people they fished out the criminals. They were able to confirm a criminal by his skin, facial appearance as these easily distinguish robbers from real farmers, who till the ground. Following the success of Saki initiatives, other communities such as Kishi and Igbeti in Irepo North local government, Igboho in Oorelope local government were the first set to follow Saki. Then, Iseyin in Iseyin local government adopted the system too.

A lot of lessons could be learnt from adaptation strategy as displayed in Saki initiatives. The Saki people, through collective action, have been able to transform the OPC in their community from violent orientation to positive result such that there exists a symbiotic relationship between OPC and the Local

Government with the community development association as the facilitator between the duo.

Sanctions and Conflict Resolution Strategy in Saki: The Tool of History

Sanctions against defaulters, offenders, and law breakers in the community are graduated and the processes of determining the veracity of cases revolve around the history of the offenders. This is because the people know the history and background of one another. For instance, the elders use the good behavior of parents to challenge a man or woman who misbehaves. Conversely, the bad characters of parents are also use to ridicule a man or woman who misbehaves. This practice has been successfully used to make the offender sober or confess the allegation levied against him or her. For example, there was a case of a man in Saki that snatched a woman from her husband and married her. The man collected N280,000.00 from the woman and later dumped her and drove her away. The woman took the case to the community leaders, where she believed she would get justice and redress for the wrong committed against her. When the man was brought before the elders, he denied the allegation. But the elders, going down the memory lane, narrated how they discovered how his father stole a cow several years ago. The father's evil was uncovered when they traced the blood of the cow to the door step of his father's house. On hearing this, the young man became speechless and admitted he collected the money from the woman and was guilty of the offence. There had been instances when parent's evidence would be used to convict their children since they (the parents) know the characters of their children. There are times the elders would ask the accused person to remove his shoes and stand on the ground barefooted before saying anything. That means a lot to any indigene of Saki if he or she tells lies. If a stranger is found guilty of committing crime, he would be ex-communicated from the community.

When somebody commits an offence and escaped to another country, the Saki indigenes in that country would bring the criminal back home to face

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judgment. The people have a well coordinated network within and outside the community. There was a case of somebody who was discovered to be in possession of a large sum of fake money in Saki; they arrested him and got the money from him and destroyed the money. If the money had been spent by the criminal in Saki, several people would run into great loss in their businesses.

The tool of history is also extended to the area of conflict resolution even among other tribes that are not indigenes of Saki. In conflict resolution and building peace, Saki Parapo got involved in the affairs of other tribes within its jurisdiction. For example, all the Ibos were united until March 2004 when they broke into two groups because of a dispute that occurred among them. Since the elders in the community knew about how the Ibos came one by one and settled, Saki Parapo used that history and settled the case and the two factions are now united as one body.

The Intervention of Self-Governing Institution in the Resolution of Ile-Ife/Modakeke Crises

The Ife/Modakeke Crises that could not be resolved through the use of force by the Nigeria's Police and peace meetings by traditional rulers and religious bodies was eventually brought to an end with the intervention of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), a self-governing institution. As one of the major trade unions in Nigeria, the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) which was established in 1978 has become a key player in the affairs of the country.

The communal crises of between 1997 and 2000 put the Police at their wit's end as both communities had acquired sophisticated weapons of war and the war seemed to have no end. According to information from the Police, the Commissioner of Police at the state capital, Osogbo, having realized that members of NURTW in both communities were the active warriors, invited the executives of the union at the state level for a discussion on how to broker peace among their

members, who were the warlords. Consequently, state executives invited the union executives in both communities for a meeting. The outcome of the meeting was that, "if any of the two communities or, both communities should engage in warfare again, the state branch of the union would impose a sanction on all their vehicles not to operate to any neighbouring towns and cities in Nigeria." If such a sanction was imposed, the implication was that these vehicles operators and their families would be economically rendered impotent. Not only that, most of the operators would loose their vehicles to vehicle dealers if they defaulted in the monthly installmental payment since most of their vehicles were bought on hire purchase. The strategy worked and the four years old communal war was brought to an end. This confirmed that the conflict resolution capability of self-governing institutions can not be undermined if they are brought into the main stream of conflict resolution.

Provision and Production of Public Goods and Services

CHAPTER NINE

DESIGNING POLYCENTRICITY AND SELF-GOVERNANCE FOR NIGERIA

Self-Governance and Democratic Society

CHAPTER TEN
CONCLUSIONS