

*Review*

# Oyo-Ondo relations: A study in pristine inter-group relations in Nigeria

Adegboyega Ajayi\* and Ajishola Omojeje

Department of History, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo State, Nigeria.

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The noticeable degree of Benin and Ife influence on Ondo has not obliterated the Oyo factor as a strong force in the history of Ondo, especially its traditions of origin. This paper focuses on Oyo-Ondo connections as a study in pristine inter-group relations. It argues that although Oyo is situated in the savanna region of Yorubaland, while Ondo is placed in the forest region, certain traits offer strong proof that Ondo enjoyed close cordial relationship with Oyo and this must have accounted for the relative peace which Ondo enjoyed before and during the protracted internecine wars in Yorubaland. In fact, no oral and documentary evidence lends credence to the likelihood of Ondo being dominated by Oyo before the advent of colonial rule or even thereafter. The Osemawe monarchical institution, which was established through the enthronement of Pupupu in 1516AD, was said to have emanated from Alaafin Oluaso, one of the pristine rulers of Oyo. His twins and the support group, who wandered through many adverse situations and tortuous terrain, had precipitated the coming of what came to be known as the Ondo group into Ondo land with concomitant vestiges of Oyo traditions. This is evident in the structure of the intricate Ondo political system with its network of chieftaincy titles, the drums and drumming patterns, traditional attire and costumes as well as in tribal marks of which two are visible in the face while fourteen are hidden in other parts of the body. This study relies on oral interviews, Archival documents and relevant secondary materials.

**Key words:** Oyo tradition, Osemawe monarchical institutions, pristine, Yorubaland, chieftaincy titles, inter-group relations.

## INTRODUCTION

There is no doubting the fact that there existed a symbiotic relationship between Oyo and Ondo before the advent of the British. This pristine inter group relationship must have accounted for the reason why Ondo was not involved during the more than eight decades of internecine wars in Yorubaland. It would be recalled that Ondo maintained a neutral position during the wars in Yorubaland while trading with the belligerents during the wars. This study is an insight into the relationship

between Oyo and Ondo in the days before the coming of colonialism and it posits that there was a biological relationship between the two Yoruba communities and this manifested in virtually all areas of human endeavours; politics, religion, culture and tradition, language, ancestral origin, economy etc. The paper maintains that this relationship also manifested during the Yoruba wars, while other Yoruba towns and villages were engulfed in war, Ondo was spared. Instead, she became a

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [gboyegaajayi57@gmail.com](mailto:gboyegaajayi57@gmail.com).

commercial trade center to such a noticeable degree that it became an alternative route to the eastern part of Yorubaland when the British were brokering the Anglo-Yoruba peace agreement. The Ondo road, eastward of Lagos, was crucial to putting an end to the fratricidal wars in Yorubaland thereby further fostering the existing cordial relationship between Oyo and Ondo (Akintoye 1969: 581-598; Omiduwura, 2005: 6). Specifically, this work will be discussed under the following sub headings: Inter-group relations in Nigeria, the founding of Ondo; the Oyo connection, Post foundation; Ondo-Oyo political relations, Surviving socio-cultural traits and Concluding remarks.

### Inter-group relations in Nigeria

Inter-group relations simply imply co-operation between different communities to aid the economic and political survival of their community depending on their established relationship. Nigeria, a multi ethnic and multi-cultural society which has about 250 distinct languages had been noted to have robust inter-group relations, in spite of the different geographical regions, political and social organisations and divergent occupation. No Nigerian group could be treated in isolation of the others and it is neither possible nor realistic for any community to ignore its neighbours, as no development could take place in isolation.

Earlier before the intervention of the British into Nigeria politics, there had been inter-group relations among indigenous Nigerian people and this was manifest in the recognition and maintenance of sovereignty and territory, promotion of trade, inter-state tours by the rulers or their representatives, inter-state marriages and the establishment of diplomatic relations. During this early time, the people operated on unwritten rules and regulations made by the governing counsellors or the council of elders which were seriously followed (Park, 1963:1). Specifically, inter-group relations in Nigerian had been broadly facilitated by historical, economical, political, social and cultural activities. These areas of inter-group relationship include; common ancestral origin, politics, trade and trade routes, religious institutions, social and cultural institutions, Arts and crafts, language, migration, diplomacy and warfare (Okpeh, 2007; Omaide, 2007; Ofili, 2016).

First, common ancestral origin remains a considerable historical factor that narrates the relationship between the various states that make up Nigeria. The legend of Bayajidda reveals considerably the origin of the seven Hausa *Bokwoi* or legitimate states while the Oduduwa legend reveals the origin of the nation states in Yorubaland through Oduduwa, the eponymous father of the Yoruba. All the communities in Yorubaland regarded Ile-Ife as their ancestral home. The assistance given by Oranmiyan of Ile-Ife to the people of Benin while founding their kingdom made it necessary that a new *Oba* of Benin would get a staff of office from the *Ooni* of Ife. Therefore,

this legendary belief created a context for inter-group relations among individual states, villages, and ethnic groups of the Nigerian society in as much as they regarded themselves as descendants of the same progenitor.

Second, inter-group relations in Nigerian have been really promoted by religion. From early times, Nigerians were very religious people who believed in the existence of the supreme God and other lesser gods (Akinwumi, et al. 2006). Their belief in the supreme God who created everything in the world was reflected in many things they did or said including their children's names e.g. Olorunfemi (God loves me) by the Yoruba, the equivalent Chukwunonye by the Igbo etc. Moreover, the nation states that shared common ancestry understandably worshipped the same gods in their various states. The nation-states of Yoruba, for instance, believed in *ogun* (the god of iron) among other gods. The nation-states in Hausa, Igbo and all other ethnic groups such as *Ibibio*, *Urhobo*, *Tiv*, *Birum*, *Nupe*, *Junkun* etc. had some gods they believed in and worshipped often times cutting across ethno-linguistics frontiers (Abimbola, 1968).

Moreso, many religious families inter-marry and thereby created a hybrid civilisation. Usman Dan Fodio's Jihad for instance led to Sokoto becoming the seat of Islamic civilisation in Nigeria, encompassing nearly the whole of present day Northern Nigeria (Abubakar, 1980: 303-326). Third; inter-groups relations in Nigeria had also been facilitated by the resemblance and similarity of languages. Many Nigerian nation-states spoke a common language. This is true of many states who claimed common origin. Hausa and the Yoruba peoples, which are contiguous to each other, spoke or at least understood one another's language to a large extent. Similarly, in the Niger-Benin confluence, which comprised *Igala*, *Igbira*, Hausa, *Kakanda*, *Nupe*, *Edo*, Yoruba languages were spoken in various forms. Therefore, nearness of boundary of nation-states which facilitates similarity of language also aided robust inter-group relations of Nigerians (Makinwa, 1981:19; Oshomha, 1990a).

Fourth, the greatest factor enhancing inter-group relations in Nigeria and even in other parts of world is the economic factor. Trade among other factors was perhaps the most important which linked many groups together. Interaction could be concretised through successful trade. No community was self-sufficient in the production of agricultural and manufactured goods which it required either for its necessities or luxuries. As the economist would say, human needs are numerous and unlimited and the need to satisfy them are limited<sup>1</sup>. This principle led the indigenous Nigerians to frequent exchange of goods and services.

For instance, an area could be suitable for the large scale manufacture of a specific product whereas the land

<sup>1</sup> The desire to satisfy these wants usually lead to alternative forgone and scale of preference.

might not be good for the production of another important product Oshomha, 1990b:126-131. Therefore, products that survive well are produced on a large scale for exchange in places where they are relatively scarce. The geographical variations in Nigeria that is, the Savannah and the forest zones determined what could be grown or manufactured in each area (Oshomha, 1990c:60-64). There were also developed centers of specialisation in certain mining and manufacturing activities which attracted migrants and buyers from other groups. For example, the plateau region was known for its tin (Oshomha, 1990d: 33-40), Ilorin and Iwo for iron and Bini for brass work (Oshomha, 1990e:136). Craftsmen from some of these centers plied their trade and settled in other parts of the country.

The Delta states of Ijaw, Kalabari, Itsekiri and Urhobo established common markets where their goods were exchanged (Oshomha, 1990f:175-180). Even European goods were exchanged for foodstuffs, palm oil, goat, sheep, cattle, and slaves (Alagoa, 1980: 56-72). Also, strategic location aided inter-group relations. The centers of trade which developed based on the mineral deposits utilisation attracted many diverse traders, who partook extensively in exchange of their agricultural products for the uncommon minerals like gold, silver, diamond, ivory etc. These traders settled, bought and sold, inter-married and exchanged cultural traits with the people in such areas. Therefore, trading activities remain one of the greatest factors that facilitated inter-group relations. Fifth, the culture and traditions of the diverse elements in Nigeria followed the same pattern. The same thing is applicable to government and politics in Nigeria. For example, the Oyo model of system of government permeates the whole of Yorubaland; the Igbo traditional set up was acephalous while in the Hausa states and in the states of the middle belt, a definite political system which followed the same pattern was presented.

### **The founding of Ondo; the Oyo connection**

Historically, the enhancement of settled communities before colonialism was informed by the development of agriculture. Aside other factors such as natural disaster and political antagonism, agriculture must have made considerable impact on the course of the history of the Yoruba people as it did on the history of other people Atanda, (2007). This phenomenon, according to Atanda, (2007) had been a veritable instrument which, in its entirety, had transformed the Yoruba people especially from wandering to sedentary life and changing them from a band or society of "hunters and food gatherers" to one of the agricultural and settled communities. However, these communities would be, at their inception and as would be expected, relatively small in number but certainly, they antedated the development of agriculture and existed predominantly in nucleated and scattered

places and as such marked the beginning of the process of state formation in Yorubaland.

Equally germane to this discussion on the etymology of communities in Yorubaland is the theory propounded by Ade Obayemi. Obayemi had succeeded in establishing a fascinating theory of the process of state formation among the Yoruba as well as the Edo Benin people and their neighbours (Atanda, 2007:16). Obayemi, through a detailed ethnographic observation, asserted that there was the co-existence of small and great states. He therefore called the states on the "small category" as "mini" states while those which were a little more advanced than those earlier referred to as small, Obayemi called "mega" states (Obayemi, 1976: 201-209). He went further to define the mini states as settlements or group of settlements which were devoid of powerful royal dynasties or, to put it succinctly, those states without highly centralised governments, lacking urban capital, and much smaller both in population and geographical territory. These states could aptly be called a village, hamlet, town or clan as the case may be (Obayemi, 1976:209). The Mega state category comprised those with advanced political structure epitomised by large urban capital and centralised political systems (Obayemi,1976:204). If we go by Obayemi's classification, Oyo and Ondo could be considered mega states (Obayemi, 1976:204).

Moving further in this direction, Akinjogbin, albeit through independent investigation and using extensively the *Ikedu* and other traditions, revealed the existence of ancient village communities scattered all over the length and breadth of Yorubaland even before the coming of Oduduwa (Obayemi,1976:204). A thorough analysis of Obayemi's and Akinjogbin's work, reveal that many of the villages which featured in Akinjogbin's work on the *Ikedu* tradition were also identified in the mini states lists of Obayemi. For example, such mini states as Oyooro, Ikoyi, Igboho, Saki, Irawo and so on readily come to mind, while such villages which had been in existence before Oduduwa, according to Akinjogbin included the thirteen villages in Ife area, which were Iloromu, Ido, Iraye, Ideta, Oke Awo, Ijugbe, Iwinrin, Omologun and Parakin (Akinjogbin,1981:207). In Akure, such villages were Igan, Ipalefa, Odopetu, Oba and Ileru (Akinjogbin, 1981:207). The Ijebu list of such villages included Ojofa, Imepe, Idele, Ife Alapo, Ikamigbo, Ijada, Mogbelu, Lasado, Isola, Mobayegun, Ita Ajana and Imupa (Akinjogbin,1981:201).

There existed such villages as Ilemure Itaji Ikogun Omu Ipesi, Okosa Ilare, Ipesin, Ibosijirin in Ilesa area, while the Owo list of such villages comprised of Ilale, Upa, Isijogun, Aso, Ilemo, Ijgunmo and Amurin (Akinjogbin,1981:201). In Ado Ekiti, the areas inhabited by such pre-Oduduwa villages or mini states were Ulesun, Isinla, Agbaun, Ulero, Lamoji, Asa Aso and Uhere (Obayemi, 1976: 206), whereas in Ondoland, four groups of such settlement, Udoko, Ifore, Oka and Epe (Ijama) were clearly

identified (Obayemi, 1976:206). The process of development of these four mini states in Ondoland may have spanned many centuries. For example, the Ife and Udoko had been in existence probably as mini states hundreds of years before the coming of Ondo migrant groups in the sixteenth century. Though, they might not have been the earliest of these states, it is important to note that they were the oldest which have survived especially in their respective areas. Migration pattern into the geographical area called Ondo before the advent of both the missionary and the British colonial conquistadors as well as their mercantilist agents followed the same trend as that of other Yoruba towns generally. It is worthy of note that the town of Ondo, as from the sixteenth century, had comprised of Ife, Epe, Udoko, Oka and Ondo (Obayemi, 1976:204)..

Like many other Yoruba towns, traditions of origin of Ondo are premised on myth (Johnson, 1921:79). Thus, four communities, whose stories are shrouded in myth like that of the Ondo group had been in the present day Ondo even before the coming of Oduduwa. These communities, thriving in the ambience of primitive communal setting which Akinjogbin referred to as either a mini state or mega state (Akinjogbin, 1981), had been existing long before 1510 when the Ondo group of Pupupu extraction came. There are many versions of the traditions of the origin of Ondo group. These are the Oyo, Benin and Ile-Ife versions (Olupona, 1992:25). Although the Oyo version was rejected in parts and the Benin version was rejected outright, the degree of proximity of these three accounts is skewed towards the positive side on the influence of the Oyo, Ife and Benin on the growth and development of Ondo, both at creating a sub-ethnic identity and in effecting a change in their identity as well as enhancing conducive atmosphere for power relations in their areas.

There may not have been a generally accepted version especially of the origin of a community generally of which Ondo is not an exception. Thus, the origin of Ondo as a people is rooted in controversy (Adewetan, Interview, 2013), and even from recent writings, it is still not settled. Chief Akinbinuade, during an interview, quoted some analysts as saying that the Ondo were part of the movement of people from North Africa and South-east Asia (Adewetan, Interview, 2013). However, one could not attach any credibility to this assertion as available researches have shown that such accounts of the origin of the Ondo as a people may not reflect its true history. In all, there was no evidence, over time, of similarities in the pattern of behaviour of the Ondo and the North Africans or South-east Asians. The culture and traditions of Ondo did not manifest any striking semblance of either the North Africans or the South-east Asians. But, three distinct accounts of the origin of Ondo have become plausible, these are the Benin account by Jacob Egbarevba and the one given by the reverend Johnson, (1921) who claimed that the Ondos originated from Oyo

during the reign of *Alaafin* Oluaso, and the one which established a relationship between Oyo and Ife concerning the coming of Ondo people to their present place of abode (Johnson, 1921:74). Johnson's account has it that Ondo came from Oyo through one of the favourite wives of *Alaafin* Oluaso, who ruled Oyo until 1497. This legendary father of the Yoruba had, at that time, given birth to a set of twins (a boy and a girl) in Oyo. It was considered a sacrilege then to give birth to twins. And as it portrayed a bad omen, the king was said to have exclaimed, *Ese Omo re!*, meaning these children are abomination. It is claimed that it was from this exclamation that the name *Osemawe* which was to become the title of Ondo Kings eventually evolved. As a result of the beauty of the young children and the privileged position of their mother then, the *Alaafin* decided to send them and their mother first to a remote part which is believed to be a place in the Fulani kingdom called Epin, near Gbere (Ogunsakin, 1976:10). They were accompanied by a large number of emissaries under a war leader named Uja. (Ogunsakin, 1976:10) Though they were received with an open arm in the Fulani country around 1497, the attitude of the Epin people, which was once cordial towards the *Alaafin* emissaries, soon changed to oppression and molestation, following the demise of *Alaafin* Oluaso.

Noticing this change of attitude, Uja again led this people back to Oyo. This time, *Alaafin* Onigbogi was already on the throne of Oyo around 1498 but like Oluaso, his predecessor, Onigbogi was desirous of providing protection for the twins and their mother. This is possibly because he was young on the throne and did not want to be opposed to the sacrosanct set rules and practices of Oyo tradition which abhorred giving birth to twins. He, therefore, instructed Uja, the warlord, to lead them out of Oyo in the direction of Ile-Ife. This probably explains the degree of proximity between the Oyo and Ife traditions of the origin of Ondo. The entourage was further reinforced on their arrival at Ife due to the recognition accorded the *Alaafin* of Oyo by the Ooni of Ife who provided additional emissaries. The party continued its journey until it reached a place called Ijama from where it arrived at Epe, a community which had been existing with a definite political and religious institution at the primordial level, and which is about twelve kilometres from the present site of Ondo. There, the *Yangede*, leader and ruler of Epe, received the party warmly.

It was in Epe that the male twin died (Allen Akinola, Interview 2012). Given the sorrow which his death evoked, it was decided that a new place of sojourn, apart from Epe, should be found. In order to settle in a conducive and favourable environment, devoid of calamity or inherent danger, *Ifa*, the Yoruba means of divination was consulted for direction. And while they were wandering about for a suitable place to settle, the royal party sighted smoke from the distance which they followed in the belief that they would find some

settlement around the smoke. They finally found some sort of what could be called a settlement at a point near a yam stake around Oke Agunla (Olubusade, Interview, 2013). From this place, Ifa was consulted again, this time they were told to move forward with a yam stake (called *Edo* in Ondo dialect) and that where the yam stake would not penetrate the ground is the place of their permanent abode.

As the royal party continued its journey, they got to Ifore, at a spot called Oiden, where they met Ekiri, the political ruler and leader of the Ifore people<sup>2</sup>. Hitherto, they had met the Udoko people with their ruler who did not want to willingly give them the right of passage. But through astute diplomacy or military might on the part of the Ondo people especially, given that Uja, the mighty warrior, had been reinforced by the monarch of Ife, they were able to manoeuvre the Udoko people into granting them access through their territory.

Olupona has maintained that other external sources, though not mentioned, also suggest that sometimes around the thirteenth or fourteenth century, various Yoruba groups emigrated from Ile-Ife to find new kingdoms.

There may have been no single motivation for these dispersals. But, in the words of Atanda, (2007) there could be reasons for the dispersals of people generally during this period, chiefly among which were (a) a political crisis as a result of which many, if not all members, of Oduduwa dynasty had to flee Ile-Ife to other areas of Yorubaland; (b) a natural catastrophe like an epidemic or even drought which sent some of the population packing; (c) population pressures as the available land in Ife and its neighbourhood became inadequate; and (d) sheer ambition on the part of the more adventurous members of the ruling families who were anxious to carve areas of power for themselves (Atanda, 1980:10).

Perhaps therefore, the Ondo group, according to oral traditions, might have left Ile-Ife or Oyo, as the case may be, as a result of the first two factors; that is, the sacrilege twins which were given birth to in the palace and the political upheaval that followed and the need to find a place which would guarantee the safety of the royal victims (Olupona, 1992:25).

### Post-foundation; Ondo-Oyo political relations

The *Osemawe* dynasty was established in 1516 when Pupupu, one of the offspring of the *Alaafin* of Oyo, Oluaso, was enthroned in Ondo. Since then, there has

been cordial relationship between Oyo and Ondo and oral accounts have it that during the early days of Ondo as a community, the *Osemawe* usually paid visit to Oyo especially for protection, support and succour during difficult times. When Olu, the mother of the twins whose sister became the *Osemawe*, died at Ile-Oluji, an outpost of Ondo, history has it that instructions on how to prepare her for burial were given by the people of Oyo (Bada, 1940:22). Although, tributes were paid to the *Alaafin* of Oyo by Ondo people during this time but such was not mandatory for, it was then seen as a mark of respect and not subjection to the patriarch of the Ondos. It would be recalled that throughout the period, Ondo was not dominated by Oyo and there was no record of the Oyo provincial governor, *Ajele*, in the domain of Ondo.

Furthermore, post-foundation Ondo-Oyo political relations overtly manifested in the frequent visit of Ondo monarchs to Oyo especially during hard times. Jogunde, the 16<sup>th</sup> *Osemawe* who reigned between 1759 and 1777 was known for his mysterious feat of releasing sparks of fire from his mouth when and how he wished. History has it that, he got this power from Oyo during the reign of *Alaafin* Majeogbe (Omojeje, 2017:114). Furthermore, Luju, the 3<sup>rd</sup> *Osemawe* who reigned between 1561 and 1590 demonstrated an overt respect for *Alaafin* Ajiboyede by presenting himself to the Oyo monarch as a worthy son. The relationship was so cordial to the extent that Luju was allowed to examine the style and architectural form of the *Alaafin*'s palace. Not only this, he also watched how the *Alaafin* organised and conducted the affairs of his kingdom. All these *Oba* Luju admired greatly so much that, upon returning to Ondo after the visit, he ordered his people to build him the *Alaafin*'s style of palace or *Aafin*. This he did to accentuate his royal status in his domain.

Furthermore, to forestall the occurrence of wars and skirmishes between Ondo and her neighbours, Luju, with the help of the *Alaafin* of Oyo, prepared a powerful medicine which had the effect of warding off attacks on his town and people by neighbours or intruders. To provide additional protection, he fortified Ondo by planting egungun trees round the town and instructed the Ondo people not to build their houses outside the boundary of the trees. These trees still surround the old boundary till date. Furthermore, it was during the reign of Luju that the *Alaafin* of Oyo stopped the Ondos from sending the yearly tribute known as *Asingba* or *Isakole* to Oyo (Omojeje, 2017:108).

In addition to this, Ondo traditional historians recorded that the relationship that existed between Oyo and Ondo from the reign of *Oba* Luju continued and, indeed, that the reign of *Oba* Leyo was the watershed of these peaceful relations so much so that Ondo could rely on the prompt help of Oyo forces in case of any external attack. This was why the Ondos gave Leyo the nickname *Ologun Leyo* (he who has a ready made troop in Oyo). He received this honorific title, *Leyo*, from this relationship with Oyo kingdom. This version of historical account is further supported by the view of Ogunsakin (1976)

<sup>2</sup> This is the place where the Ondo people met the Ekiri of Ifore, they decided to settle there first because the yamstake would not enter the ground, *ededo*, on the instruction of Ifa. There must have been a bilateral or symbiotic agreement between the *Ekiri* of Ifore and the Ondo people, hence the welcome. Today, the *Osemawe* had to perform an important installation rite at *oiden* in Ifore first as a mark of respect and also as a pre-requisite to his being enthroned as the monarch of Ondo.

According to him, when it occurred to him (Leyo) that a storm of opposition from the surrounding districts was gathering momentum around him, he made friend with *Oba Ayibi*, the *Alaafin* of Oyo. So deep was the friendship that, when words reached the *Alaafin* that Ondo town was being attacked, he immediately dispatched a large contingent of soldiers to assist the *Oba*. Thus, Ondo conquered their attackers and suppressed the rebellion from every facet (Ogunsakin, 1976:22).

From these assertions, one cannot but agree that there was a robust and cordial relationship between Ondo and Oyo during the period. This post-foundation Ondo-Oyo cordiality has helped, in no small measure, in the transformation of Ondo into a mega state with an intricate system of politics premised not only on a network of chieftaincy titles but also on strict and sacrosanct set rules, mores and traditions.

### Surviving socio-cultural traits

Some traits, which established a serious fraternal relationship between Ondo and Oyo have survived up till today. These traits are always noticeable especially in the areas of ancestral origin, religion, language, economy, politics, culture and tradition. As it was in Oyo kingdom, the *Osemawe* title is hereditary and indicates royalty with relationship to *Oduduwa*, the progenitor of the Yoruba. Ondo briefly operated a matrilineal political system from 1516 to 1530 under the matrilineal rulership of *Pupupu*, the first monarch, who was said to be a princess from Oyo. The political system later changed to patrilineal as from 1530 following the emergence of *Airo*, the first male *Osemawe* and the eldest son of *Pupupu*. The pre-colonial Ondo political organisation was built around the *Osemawe* and the three grades of chiefs namely: the *Eghae*, the *Ukule* and the *Elegbe*, and this was typical of the Oyo political setting although with a little modification. Furthermore, in the installation rites of the *Osemawe*, it is compulsory for the would-be king to spend three lunar months in chief *Babegha's* chieftaincy house at *Oke Lisa* where chief *Babegha* and few of his chiefs, would incise the *gombo* marks on the face of the prince as a mark of his being from Oyo. Only those present at this ceremony were allowed to see the prince within 7 days. After the *Ita* (3) and *Ije* (7) days ceremonies at the *Uli Uboju*, the prince would then be allowed to receive guests while giving *Eyo'gho* (cowries) and coins to those who came to pay homage to him *Bada*, 1940:23).

This arrangement was put in place as a reminder of the fact that the prince was an offspring of Oyo who has dominated the area and thus extending Oyo influence to such area. Apart from this, the coming of the Ondo people from Oyo perhaps has accounted for its cosmopolitan nature. Probably to allow for expansion, the Ondo extended its frontiers while establishing offshoot settlements from the existing proto settlement. This feat,

patterned towards the Oyo example, has enabled the Ondo to spread into the woods thereby dominating the environment. With this, the Ondo practiced agriculture to a great extent and established farmsteads and villages which were administered by loyalists and relatives of the *Osemawe*. Villages, as well as satellite towns were given to resident chiefs known as *Oloja*. Thus, during this period, communities such as *Araromi-Obu*, *Ajebandele* and *Ayesan*, were under the *Osemawe* and were regularly monitored through the *Oloja* appointed by him. Many of these villages established at the behest of the Ondo monarch were put in care of either his relatives or his trusted subordinates, as noted earlier. Such villages or satellite communities are collectively referred to in Ondo as *Ishan*, some of them are:- *Igbindo*, *Igbado*, *Igunshin*, *Ilu-Nla*, *Oke-Opa*, *Erinla*, *Ajue*, *Lapahun*, *Oro*, *Igburowo*, e.t.c. (Moloye, 2013: 52-69). The *Oloja* of these satellite communities, like Oyo, collect tributes and carry out other services while acting as patrons of such communities. (Ogunsakin, 1976). It is worthy of note that many of the inhabitants of these settlements are migrants especially from Oyo and they occupy vantage positions both in politics and general administration of the town.

In the area of trade and commerce, Oyo and Ondo had robust relationship especially in the pre-colonial period. During the time, oral accounts have it that Ondo usually paid tributes to the king of Oyo until it was stopped by the *Udoko*, an aboriginal community in *Ondoland* (*Bada*, 1940: 28-31). Furthermore, in the Nineteenth Century, this commercial nexus continued especially when there was an alteration in the phenomena of trade and economy in *Yorubaland* (Ojo, 2005:12-13). It was gathered that, as from 1820, slaves were imported into Ondo especially from northern *Yorubaland* therefore, Oyo, *Owu* and *Egba* traders usually engage in commercial activities of which one of the *Osemawe* of Ondo, *Arilekolasi*, benefitted immensely and this trade link had continued until the dispersion of the Ondo people around 1870-1875 (Omojeje, 2007:252).

Even at the disintegration of Oyo in the Nineteenth Century, this trade relation continued especially when the propensity of affluence was measured in slaves. Thus, a man would command great respect and wield more economic and political power based on the number of slaves he possessed. During the period, Oyo and Ondo traders established common markets at *Ife*, *Iperindo* and *Okeigbo* (Omojeje, 2007:244). Therefore, with the destruction of *Owu* and *Apomu*, *Okeigbo*, an outpost of Ondo, became the commercial nerve center for Oyo, Ondo, *Ife*, *Ijesa* and *Egba* traders. It is worthy of note therefore that notable Ondo traders such as *Arilekolasi*, *Lisa Edun Kolidoye*, *Ajakaye* and *Koyemi* engaged in commercial activities with Oyo traders at these markets (Olowoje, 1970:10-12).

In the area of culture and traditions, Ondo shared affinity with Oyo in the area of drumming, clothing and to some extent, their tribal mark. The Ondo people are very

enterprising and this is manifested in their all-round trades such as blacksmithing, drumming, wood carving etc. For example, the carved drums of the *Osemawe* and of the high chiefs, *Opon ayo*, *Opon ifa* and the carved masks of the “*egungun*”, weaving, leather work and design making, etc. In the context of Ondo tradition, it must be said that drumming, both as a form of art and pastime activity, was patterned towards the Oyo type and was an exclusive trade of certain families. The Ondo people have varieties of music which they enjoy intermittently.

These include *Gangan*, *Ojigbo*, *Adan*, *Agba*, *Ugbaji*, *Ijigi* e.t.c. Also, the value of Ondo's appreciation of *Aso-Oke* cannot be over emphasised. Generally, the term *Aso-Oke* implies cloths made in the hinterland, and it refers to the traditional Yoruba hand-woven cloths made of spun yarn. Cloth weavers in the community use almost exclusively home grown and home spun cotton and borrowed knowledge extensively from weavers in the Oyo-Iseyin axis.

This has accounted for the good quality of the traditional cloth in Ondo. The hand made spun yarn are either derived from cotton or the cocoons of *anaphe*, (a specie of wild moth) and woven on a loom. The Oyo name for loom is *Ofi*, hence the cloths made on loom are generally called *Aso Ofi*.

There are two types of loom: the vertical broad loom used mostly by women and the horizontal narrow loom used traditionally by men (Ademuleya, B. A. 2011:129). The three major traditional Yoruba hand-woven cloths of this type are *Etu*, *Alaari*, and *Sanyan* (Mama Julianah and Mrs M, Peleyeju, Interview 2014). *Sanyan*, usually pronounced as *Sanmiyan* in Ondo dialect, is usually of pale greyish brown colour which is often time divided by white longitudinal swap lines (Ademuleya, B. A. 2011:129). It is traditionally made of yarn deriving from spun nest of *Anaphe* caterpillar (Ademuleya, 2011). On its own, *Alaari* is crimson in colour, originally made from a mixture of *Sanyan* but dyed in red camwood and imported *Alharini* thread (Mrs Akinagbe, Interview, 2014). *Alaari* is variegated hence not all of them are of pure red colour, some are combined with dyed cotton of various colours and patterns. *Etu* is usually made of predominantly dark blue or indigo dyed cotton but with fine light blue at its background. The earliest ones are said to have contained a considerable proportion of *Sanyan* silk (Bamitale Akinwotu, Interview, 2014). Oral accounts have it that the facial marks by which the Ondos are easily recognised or identified originated from Oyo.

Although Ondo and Oyo at present do not have the same kind of facial marks, a deep understanding of the history of Ondo would reveal some hidden facts about the close affinity between Ondo and Oyo concerning the marks of identity. Historical accounts of the Yoruba explain that, in ancient time, all princesses of Oyo had a style of facial marks called *Kese* or *Ibaramu* (Ogunshakin, 1976:60). As we have alluded to previously the wife of *Alaafin* Oluaso named Olu, bore him twin

children: a male and a female, one of whom founded the town of Ondo. As custom demanded, the twin children and their mother had to be eliminated because it was an offence against the spirit of the land punishable by death, as it was an abomination to bear twin children in Oyo then. But because of the love the *Alaafin* had for the woman and her twin children, he had reasons for providing the children with adequate protection and perfect safety from the sacrosanct law and tradition of the empire.

The *Alaafin* therefore ordered the twins and their mother to be taken secretly out of Oyo. He further directed that only one stroke of mark should be cut on each cheek of the children. This was purposely to ensure that the children did not suffer any unnecessary agony which the fresh wound from *Kese* or *Ibaramu* marks would inadvertently inflict on them in the course of their journey. It might also be that the *Alaafin* of Oyo gave the instruction in order to be able to recognise the twins in case they met in future.

Thereafter, the cutting of single stroke mark on each cheek of every newly-born child in Ondo became an established custom, independent of the Udoko, Oka and Ifore (the autochthonous communities). Other versions of facial marks in Ondo include the marks under the lower lips of ladies. According to oral information obtained at Ifore and Udoko, this kind of mark is usually administered on ladies who are from the royal house and those who belong to the blacksmith family (Omojeje, 2017:234-235). In fact, Up till today, no *Osemawe* would be installed in Ondo without spending some time in the house of *Babegha*, where he would be incised with the semblance of Oyo tribal marks of *kese* or *ibaramu* and a special song, reminiscent in nature, would be composed for him. This becomes a tradition in Ondo not because of aesthetics but purposely for the continuation of the existing relationship between Ondo and Oyo.

## Conclusion

From the historical antecedence of Ondo, it is an established fact that Ondo shared a lot of things in common with Oyo and this is noticeable in virtually all areas of the two kingdoms. This relationship, which could be attributed to the biological connection which existed primordially between *Alaafin* Oluaso and one of his children who became the *Osemawe* of Ondo, continued long after the establishment of Ondo as a Yoruba community. It is noteworthy that many of the Ondo kings maintained such relationship with succeeding Oyo kings to such an extent that Ondo politics as well as its socio-cultural setting was structured like Oyo and its palace patterned like the *Aafin* in Oyo. This probably has accounted for the peace the town enjoyed during the fratricidal wars which ravaged virtually all Yoruba towns and communities before colonialism.

Even now, such traditions as festivals, installation rites,

and traditional attire bear eloquent testimony of an established nexus between Oyo and Ondo. Predictably the largest number of foreigners in Ondo community is Oyo migrants who reside predominantly in the offshoot settlements of Ondo. Majority of these Oyo migrants have been fully absorbed into the mainstream of Ondo traditional politics with some of them becoming *Baale* and *Oloja* of satellite communities in Ondo, and some even contesting and winning elections as councilors in Ondo West and East Local Government Councils in contemporary times. The primordial relationship as well as the tolerant disposition of Ondo natives made this possible. It is our belief that this kind of disposition could facilitate and sustain genuine integration even beyond the local level.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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