



ORIGINS, CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF ÀGBÒYÍ, LAGOS, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: This is a historical research into the origins, customs and traditions of Àgbòyí town, an island settlement situated in Kosofe Local Government Area of Lagos state, Nigeria. It is an in-depth study of its origin; its socio-economic and political organisation; and the customary traditions and way of life of its people. Àgbòyí people are predominantly of the Àwòrì sub-group of Yoruba. Indigenous religions and festivals are till this day in popular practice among the people who had vowed never to jettison the traditional heritage of their ancestors. Such ancient religions and festivals include Ògún, Orò, Yemoja, Egúngún, Gèlèdè, Awo Opa (Opa Cult) and the Òsúgbó/Ògbóni Cult). Àgbòyí could be aptly thus be described as an oasis of customs and traditions within the modern metropolitan Lagos. The study observed that the economic activities of the people are dominated by fishing (typical of the natives of riverine settlements) though a number of other traditional crafts also existed. Àgbòyí people enjoy good relations and inter-marriages with their neighbours, and this significantly boosted peace, trade and commerce. The ambience of the water bodies and the peaceful attitude of the people make trading easy, interesting and rewarding for all and sundry, hence, Àgbòyí is also dubbed Ìlú Ajé (town of prosperity). However, the study uncovered that two distinct families, Ògúnloye and Òdòyí have been contending for the soul of Àgbòyí as its first settler and owner. At the time of this research, it remains a matter for litigation awaiting adjudication at the courts. This paper could however be described as an abridged report of the general findings.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Àgbòyí is predominately settled by the Àwòrì people, a Yoruba subgroup. The town is located in Lagos State. Àgbòyí people

practice different African indigenous religions, but today, many have embraced Christianity and Islam, yet all have coexisted peacefully. The people cherished traditions and respected their chiefs as the custodians of their heritage. They dutifully observe their festivals to promote and perpetuate their customary practices across their generations. By environmental imposition as an island, Àgbòyí people primarily specialize in fishing, but they also engage in other crafts and businesses. Notably, the ambience of the water bodies and the areas' pervading peace make trading and investments easy and profitable, hence Àgbòyí is dubbed *Ìlú Ajé* (town of prosperity). Today however, many indigenes are educated and engaged in white collar jobs, but Àgbòyí remains one place with strict adherence to traditions despite the surrounding modernity. This study uncovered the fact that two distinct families, the Ògúnloye and Òdòyí are contending with counter-claims to be the de facto owner of Àgbòyí town, and currently, the case is under litigation in a Nigerian court of law.

OBJECTIVES/MOTIVATIONS/METHODOLOGY/ LIMITATIONS

The purpose of this study is to historically document the origin and traditions, the socio- economic and cultural developments, and the customary and indigenous religious practices of Àgbòyí people. The study is particularly motivated by the desire to contribute to historical knowledge against the backdrop of the dearth of documented accounts about distinct native communities, particularly the subject of study. Data from secondary sources are utilised, but the study is very dependent on primary sources, particularly the oral interviews conducted with traditional authorities, griots,

elders and other indigenes of the community, and the actual observations of indigenous religions and festivals with oral accounts from priests and adherents. The secondary sources include government pamphlets, court proceedings, journals, books, documentaries and newspapers. Also, the research utilised internet based materials. The problem envisaged is that of the distortion of facts from oral accounts which these researchers fear greatly. But these limitations will be consciously managed to make the research fairly objective.

ÀGBÒYÍ TOWN AND ITS CONTESTED ORIGINS

In a claim by a community elder, the founder of Àgbòyí was one Ògúnloye, the seventh of the sixteen children of Eshinlokùn (Alhaji Tajudeen Adio Gafar). Ògúnloye originated from Eko, popularly known as Lagos, and his grandfather, Ologun Kutere was the then Oba of Lagos (1749-1775). He had 6 children and they are Eshinlokùn (Ògúnloye's father), Adele, Akitoye, Olusi, Akiolu and Olukoya (Olusi, 2006). Oba Ologun Kutere joined his ancestors in 1775 and Eshinlokùn, being the first son was supposed to become the next Oba. He was however denied of this right when his brother, Adele Ajosun was made the Oba of Lagos. This event angered Eshinlokùn who out of fury left the town and went to Langbasa where he sojourned before he was recalled to become the Oba of Lagos between 1780 and 1819 (Olusi, 2006). During this period, Ògúnloye, who had dual occupations of fishing and hunting, was equally angered by this same act committed to his father. In the same account with Gafar Kukoyi, Ògúnloye left Lagos for Ibeshe, his maternal home in the year 1775 where he settled for some months before the Ifa oracle instructed him to move forward to the shore and he named the place "Ajégúnlè". After spending some moons in

Ajégúnlè (as they depend on moon phases in numbering their days, months and years), he left and got to a creek where he stopped and built a hamlet named Àgbòyí. Àgbòyí denotes a knife in Ìjèbú language. During Ògúnloyes adventure he held a knife as a means of protection. On getting to Àgbòyí (his new abode), he forced the knife through the ground and that was how the town came into existence in 1776 (Alhaji Tajudeen Adio Gafar). By this account, Àgbòyí town had been in existence since 1776.

However in a counter-claim, the Òdòyí family dispelled Ògúnloye as the founder but that the original founder of Àgbòyí was Òdòyí-Ògbo who came from Ile-Ife. While migrating, he carried his crown with him alongside *Ifa-Merindinlogun* Oracle. He stopped first at Ìsheri-Olófin where he consulted the oracle and was informed to move further as two crowned kings cannot stay in a town. After some moons, he along with his wife arrived at an island Orubu (now known as Oruba), he again consulted the *Ifa* oracle but the divinity told him that he has not reached his final destination. He continued further using his canoe as he was also a fisherman by profession. Òdòyí consulted the oracle repeatedly as he was going and the *Ifa* divinity was directing him. Eventually, one of his *Ifa-Merindinlogun* dropped in the water, the spot is known today as 'Olokan'. Finally he arrived at the place where *Ifa* instructed him to dwell as his final destination. Òdòyí made a shrine called 'Oju *elegba*' in the newly found place. He made other shrines too such as *Oju Egun* and *Oju Ogun* (Fatai Akintunde Bankole).

After some days when he did not return, his worried wife searched for him, calling out his name and making some

sounds. She later found his canoe where he left it at the river-bank and also saw the shrine (*Oju-elegba*) he has established. She continued to search further and eventually saw her husband where he sat. She said in *Àwòrì* language 'a de mi gbo yin gbo yin lataro a mope ibi le wa' (I have been calling you since morning, I did not know you were here). Then *Òdòyí* responded saying 'Agbo yi la wa' 'I am in this vicinity/compound'. Thus came forth the town's name *Àgbòyí*. They started to live there and later begat Kenwo, Akinmasa, Aina Edu, Ombejo and Shomokun. Some new settlers came to join them, and *Òdòyí* and his wife accommodated them and gave each family a place to stay. The following families were quartered in *Àgbòyí* by the *Òdòyí* family and became stakeholders in *Àgbòyí* till date. They are Owoyele, Oduganganyi, *Ògúnloye*, Onikòró, Kadunka and others. The following are the rulers of *Àgbòyí* after the founder's demise (*Aborè Laditi Adebayo*):

- I. Baale Idowu Ado, son of *Ògúnloye*
- II. Baale Dada Osa, son of *Ògúnloye* 1896 - 1922
- III. Baale Abudu Ige, son of Idowu Odo 1922 - 1934
- IV. Baale Sanni Odu (a.k.a Ganganyan) 1934 - 1943
- V. Olu Lawani Oyekan 1956 - 1964
- VI. Olu Yisa Durosimi 1965 - 1990
- VII. Oba Disu Alagbe Akinlabi 2006 - 2015.

THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF *ÀGBÒYÍ* TOWN

A study of the *Àwòrì* and cultural mixture of its people greatly reflected their being impacted by the Yoruba upheavals and warfare in the hinterland in the nineteenth-century (Hakeem, 2005). The *Àwòrìs* are a peaceful and distinct people, a sub-ethnic group of the larger Yoruba

extraction in Nigeria, West Africa. Often found in large concentrations in parts of Lagos and Ogun States - Nigeria, they are a set of people who shared common cultural values with other Yoruba and Edo groups and are said to be the second most populous indigenous tribe in Lagos ("Àwóri People: Distinct Sub-Yoruba Coastal People of Nigeria"). All Àwóri shared common cultural values/traits with Àgbòyí indigenes because most Àgbòyí settlers originated from the Àwóri clan. The Àwóri are mainly Yoruba speakers, but due to trans-national and inter-ethnic interactions, majority of the Àwóri people are bilingual, speaking both the Yoruba and Ègùn dialects ("Àwóri People: Distinct Sub-Yoruba Coastal People of Nigeria"). Apart from Àgbòyí town, significant Àwóri populations are located in *Apapa, Ajégúnlè, Makoko, Oto, Iwaya, Bariga, Oko Baba, Ebute-Meta, Oyingbo, Ijora, Igbo Elejo, Ojo, Alorò Island, Ajah, Badore, Iton Agan, Owòrònsoki, Bayeku* etc.

INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS, CULTURAL / CUSTOMARY PRACTICES IN ÀGBÒYÍ

Every African ethnic group practiced traditional religions handed down across generations. But today, among the indigenous peoples are Christians and Muslims. Nonetheless, before their advents, Yoruba societies had always been characterized by certain indigenous religious beliefs and worships of deities (male or female) (Horton, 1993). The beliefs in spirits and extra-terrestrial beings are common phenomena among Àgbòyí indigenes which perhaps influences their beliefs in the invisible and supernatural world that whatsoever may befall a man -good or evil - are attributable to the spirit world. Amongst Àgbòyí indigenes exist different

forms of traditional worships and festivals of gods (*Òrìsà*) that are also common among all Yoruba.

Ògún is a prominent Yoruba deity celebrated annually by the different families in *Àgbòyí*. *Ògún* is generally held among Yoruba to bring fortune and so is usually worshiped particularly before the people undertake special missions. A foremost knowledge of the deity is that he was one of the earliest divinities. *Ògún* is referred as "Osin-Imole" - *Chief among the divinities* (Awolalu, 1993) In *Àgbòyí*, it is celebrated between August and September by everybody especially those who make use of iron in their day-to-day occupation such as welders, drivers, blacksmiths etc. The ritual items for each family differ, but the festival serves as an occasion whereby the memory of deceased ancestors and cultural heroes are commemorated, and participants are richly dressed with white and blue powder on their faces while masquerades are seen on the streets dancing (Owoyele Shakiru Adekunle).

Also among the Yoruba, *Òrìsà Yemoja* is regarded as the mother of mankind and a number of other deities like *Sango*, *Obaluaiye* and *Dada*. *Yemoja* is held to be created by *Olodumare* (Idowu, 1982). In *Àgbòyí* land the worship of *Yemoja* is neither seasonal nor annual. It is only done when devotees see requisite signs or if things are not going well with the town, for instance, when there is no rainfall, or the scarcity of fish in the rivers. *Aborè Laditi Adebayo* claimed that she could appear to them in dreams and vision, or if she comes out of the water. The propitiation/celebration normally takes place at the *Yemoja's* shrine, situated on the river bank. The offerings are mostly for blessing, and the meals are an

opportunity for communion between the goddess and her children (the devotees). It is strongly believed that through the worship, the goddess is appeased, the land is blessed, fishes will be in abundance, and there shall be no account of boat mishaps and deaths by drowning (Aborè Laditi Adebayo).

Other indigenous deities in Àgbòyí include the *Orò*, *Agemo*, *Awo-Opa*, *Gèlèdé*, *Egúngún* and *Ògbóni*. *Ògbóni* (known as *Òsúgbó* in *Ìjèbú*) is a fraternal institution indigenous to the Yoruba and Edo peoples. The cult performs a range of political and religious functions, and exercises a profound influence on monarchs and on jurisprudence. Members are generally considered to constitute the nobility of the various Yoruba kingdoms of West Africa, serving as advisory body to the king and sometimes directing the affairs of the town in the absence of a king. In Àgbòyí, every family has its own *Òsúgbó* and the Chief Priest is the *Olúwo*, who operates with a team of male and female lieutenants. Their activities are often shrouded in secrecy, only known by the initiates. The *Òsúgbó* deity, called *Edan* is installed in a secret room in the *Ilédi* (Shrine) and must not be seen by any woman, including the female initiates. They do not have any particular festival, but they lead on *Ìsèse* Day. They also perform crucial rituals when members die. They usually bury their dead in the midnight and make merry thereafter. Owoyele Shakiru Adekunle claimed that *Ògúnloye* brought *Òsúgbó* to Àgbòyí land, hence, the family solely holds the multiple titles of *Lisa*, *Baasala*, *Onilado* and *Apena* in the cult.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF ÀGBÒYÍ TOWN

Generally among the Yoruba social status was and still is determined by sex, age, descent group and wealth. These features determine hierarchy in social relations and govern each other's rights, obligations and comportment, vis-à-vis others. In the past, elderly males held most positions of civic authority, though senior women also do. In modern era, emerging class distinctions are calculated by wealth, education, and occupation ("Yoruba - Sociopolitical Organization"). High prestige also goes to people who are hospitable and philanthropy. Indigenous political systems consist of a ruler and an advisory Council of Chiefs representing major sectors of the society; descent groups, military, age grades, markets, the religious and secret societies. They advise, adjudicate and administer set rules. The ruler perform rituals, conduct external affairs, keep peace and wield general powers of life and death over subjects.

In Àgbòyí, there exists the Council of Oba consisting the advisory chiefs. They are:

- The *Olúwo* of Àgbòyí - a male, and the chief priest of the *Ògbóni*. Highly placed, He inaugurates the other chiefs and performs traditional rites in the community.
- The *Aro* of Àgbòyí - for Owoyele family, the holder is next in command to the *Olúwo*.
- The *Lisa* of Àgbòyí - From *Ògúnloye* family, the *Lisa* is third in command in the *Ògbóni* society. He makes vital decisions in the day-to-day running of the cult.

- The *Apena* - is the Ògbóni messenger in the Ilédì Shrine.
- The *Iyalode* - The titleholder can be picked from any Àgbòyí family. A chieftaincy title bestowed on women, *Iyalode* signifies the "queen of women" and is given to the most distinguished lady. She represents the interests of the women in Àgbòyí Land.
- The *Otun* - acts in the absence of the Olúwo, Aro or *Apena*.
- The *Balogun* - ensures security in the community.
- The *Elero* - from Owoyele family, he accommodates strangers in the community.
- The *Odunmarun* and *Onilado* - both are Ògbóni titles and are active in the Ilédì.

Also in Àgbòyí land they have the *Olóyè Oba* (King's chosen chiefs) to advise him during his reign. They include; the *Balogun, Iyalode, Asiwaju, Ekerin, Otun-Oba, Bobagunwa, Ajiroba* and others. There are also the Ògbóni Chiefs, a group of six principal officers collectively known as the *Ìwàrèfà* (The Six Wise Men). They include: the *Olúwo, Àró, Lisa, Elero, Odunmarun* and *Ekerin* (from the Idi-Okun family). They are the most powerful figures in Àgbòyí land, and are the kingmakers, and constitute the inner council of advisors to the king, and in the absence of a reigning monarch, the *Ìwàrèfà* takes charge of affairs in the community. Most chieftaincy titles in Àgbòyí are compound/family affair. Families owned the titles and can give it to anyone (either the biological child or relatives) within the family at the death of the incumbent.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN ÀGBÒYÍ COMMUNITY

Occupation is conceived as economic role separated from household activity as a result of the growth of market for labour (Scott & Marshall, 2005). But Africans engaged in subsistence occupation in which their yield was mainly for their own consumption (Ekpo, 2008). Yet, Ekpo noted that a few others engage in peasantry where production was for consumption and income generation. Due to the geographical nature of their environment, fishing is the traditional preoccupation of Àgbòyí people. But today, their occupations vary significantly as many indigenes are now educated and therefore engaged in white collar jobs. Pre-colonial economy in Àgbòyí was primarily fishing and hunting, but agriculture, trade and crafts were also significant. The Àwòrìs engaged themselves in rearing such animals as goats, sheep, short-horned cattle, local pigs and domestic fowls in family compound. Until around the mid-twentieth century, the main farming tools are hoe, axe, and machete ("Àwòrì People: Distinct Sub-Yoruba Coastal People of Nigeria"). In Àgbòyí land, the soil is often infertile due to the presence of excess iron and salt, hence, only few crops as maize, vegetables and the bush straws used for traditional mat-weaving thrive well.

Fishing is a popular vocation among Àgbòyí indigenes, and is done either early in the morning or night, depending on the fishing implements and weather. The fisherman may later collect his catch or wait until catches are made. The women engage in swamp fishing usually during dry seasons when the swamps were relatively dry, allowing un-hindered access to the fish. Fishing could also be done with fishhook and fishnets. The people also fished with the use of *Ogu*, a conical basket trap made from *Opa* (raffia palm fronds). This trap

permits only water to flow in-between the woven pieces tied to a strong tree at the river edge. As the river flows, the fish enters it and is thereby trapped. The economic value of this venture is that the fish were often sold fresh to standby customers or as smoked fish at the neighborhood market usually at a higher value ("Àwòrì People: Distinct Sub-Yoruba Coastal People of Nigeria").

Sand is a crucial component in building and constructions, and this, particularly the highly demanded sea-sand, is in abundance in Àgbòyí. While some are good for molding blocks, others are better for plastering walls and even for road construction. It is in this realization that some Àgbòyí indigenes engage in commercial sea and on-shore sand-mining. Others engage in commercial block-molding for building constructions. Also in Àgbòyí, men practice metal works, wood carving, and weaving. Since the mid-nineteenth century, they have also taken up carpentry, tailoring, shoemaking and the artisans often belonged to vocational guilds. Women's crafts included weaving, basketry, dressmaking and midwifery etc. Also, both men and women of Àgbòyí conduct long-distance commerce. Women organized local trade networks and markets, and consequently were given official roles in public affairs ("Yoruba - Sociopolitical Organization"). In the pre-colonial era, markets were held in periodic cycles of 4, 8 and 15 days. But today, in the twenty-first century, trading and other forms of commercial activities are conducted daily.

INTERGROUP RELATIONS BETWEEN ÀGBÒYÍ AND NEIGHBOURS

Àgbòyí is a riverine rural settlement on the northeastern plane of the city of Lagos sharing boundaries with Ògùdù and

Owode-Elede communities. Àgbòyí people are predominantly Àwòrì dialect speakers and are the dominant group, vis-à-vis other indigenes. The community had existed long before Ògùdù Oruba and Alápèrè as most people voyaged through Àgbòyí Rivers to attend schools, markets, mosques and churches in Àgbòyí. Back in the early 1970s, Ògùdù Oruba community as well as Alápèrè-Ketu were known to be more of a farmland as farmers established settlements close to their farms and journeyed to Àgbòyí market every 15 days to trade their produce as cocoa, rubber, yam, kolanut, etc., for coconut, fish, mat etc. from Àgbòyí indigenes. This continued for a very long time until the 21st century when some portions of the land were sold to non-indigenes who built exotic houses, good roads etc. Thus, on the other side of the community is an expensive estate populated by the rich and upwardly mobile Lagosians. Furthermore, the relationship with these neighbouring communities had fostered inter-marriages between them, namely; Alápèrè-Ketu, Ojótà, Ikosi, Ògùdù, Owode, Majidun, even as far as Mushin and Ikeja (Owoyele Shakiru Adekunle).

TRADITIONAL, CULTURAL AND CUSTOMARY PRACTICES AMONG THE ÀGBÒYÍ

Culture is the peoples' way of life, while custom refers to a practice of the people which by common adoption and acquiescence and by long and constant habit has become compulsory and had acquired the force of a law with respect to the place or subject matter to which it relates (Agbonika & Matthew. 2012). Customary or cultural practices are therefore rules of conduct established by usage or continuous practice over a long time. Marriage is a vital means of kinship formation and interfamily relationships among Yoruba. A

general rule among the Yoruba is that individuals of required age must marry. The need to get married revolves more around the premium placed on procreation and having someone to look after one's concerns than on romance. To refuse marriage is to oppose the procreative will of the *Elédã* - God (Oyebade, 2006). Deviants with their relatives could be socially humiliated. Traditional marriage is the commonest in Àgbòyí. Marriages are pre-arranged between two families, while parents often marry their children off to friendly families to solidify friendships. The concerned children are required to submit to their parents' will. The wife is taken to her betrothed husband's family to stay for 41 days while engaging with household chores. She remains around the house under supervision, but a young girl, called '*omo Iyawo*' is released to her from her family to help in errands.

The would-be bride learns to relate with her husband's family, who also in the process assess her character. If found worthy and accepted, women in the compound will train her on family care, and also give to her their blessings and gifts. She is then escorted to her husband's house by family and friends. With pomp and pageantry she is received, and cold water poured on her feet in prayer that she experiences comfort in her new home. She is then blessed by both families (Owoyele Shakiru Adekunle). The dowry must be paid before the marriage ceremony. The Dowry items, which is general to all Yoruba, includes forty pieces of *obi ajopa* (kolanut) symbolising security, forty *Orógbo* (bitter kolanut) for long life, *oyin* (honey) symbolising happiness, plenty alligator pepper for fruitfulness, and gallons of local drinks (Ajisafe, 1946).

Compound (*aagboole*) organisation/headship and conflict resolution in Àgbòyí is interesting. The oldest male member heads his immediate families and their compound. Usually among Yoruba, the compound Head is referred as Baálé (father in-house). But, with recent civilisation which had engendered individualism against collectivism, and prompted also the gradual abandonment of the Compound dwelling system, the Baálé title is fast fizzling out. The new coinage and fashion is now *olóri-ebí*, meaning - head of family, and it may not necessarily be given to the oldest male but perhaps the most prominent or wealthy senior male. Since the compound is made up of immediate families, such Head of any given Àgbòyí compound, along with the sub-heads of the member families that constitute his compound runs their affairs together. Compound Heads command the respect of their members when they are impartial, and work together to seek their general commonwealth and well-being.

The compound Heads perform diverse functions. They ensure that compound members are law-abiding and cooperative members of the Àgbòyí society. The Heads must be exemplary to lead their members to obey the *Oba* and his Chiefs. They also mobilize members to worship the compound's ancestors and gods. The effective control of conflicts makes interdependent relationships productive and enables people to live in harmony (Oyebade, 2006). A major function of the Heads is to resolve disputes among feuding members. Conflicts within families and compounds are handled through the use of native intelligence and the principles of *alajobi* (consanguinity), *alajogbe* (co-residentship), *eri-okan* (clear conscience) and *omoluwabi* (good character). Conflicting parties are required tell the truth and judgment must be fair.

However, conflict resolution within feuding units is aimed at peace-making and achieving cohesion rather than the apportionment of blame. It rests on the principle that '*ká jà ká pari ẹ niyi omoluwabi*' (amicable reconciliation is the hallmark of good character).

Unresolved disputes at the compound level are transferred to the Chiefs, elders or *Ògbóni* of Àgbòyí. These are usually disputes between two or more families, or within the community. Àgbòyí standards required the judges to be impartial, and the disputants to be truthful. The belief in impartial settlements of conflicts at various levels in Àgbòyí is apparent in a common saying that *agba osika lo ngbejo enikan* (a wicked judge listens only to a single party in a feud). The king may also pronounce the final decision. However, the goal of conflict resolution in Àgbòyí society is to sustain friendship and achieve cohesion among feuding parties within the principle of equity. Dispute hearing begins with the payment of *èsùn* (*hearing fees*). The fees are administrative and meant for thorough investigations. The guilty is fined in the forms of money, local gin, goat or a feast for the community. The offender is fined based on the weight of the offense. However, in the case of murder or other crimes, the State police is involved.

Law and socio-ethical codes guiding interpersonal conducts differ among Yoruba, just as the legitimacy and desirability of punishment divided penologists. But there is consensus on the need to punish the breakers of societal socio-ethical codes. Globally, there are penal laws as the consensus is that the society cannot progress without law and order. It is argued that social deviation requires social indignation and

that failure to punish offender is tantamount to ethical and juridical indifference to public morality (Etim, 2013). Punishment is defined as the infliction of pain, suffering, loss, or social disability as a consequence of some action or omission on the part of the punished ("Punishment". The New Encyclopedia Britannica).

In Àgbòyí society for instance, the following few are taboos as (Gafar Kukoyi) listed.

- It is forbidden for married women to be adulterous. Though the taboo is biased against women, it is highly frowned at for a wife to cheat on her husband. A man that suspects his wife of sexual infidelity may lace her with *mágùn* (a local charm) in order to kill her extramarital lover. The use of *mágùn* is customary among Àgbòyí indigenes, and men are often warned never to commit adultery with Àgbòyí wives.
- Another taboo in Àgbòyí is that the corpse of drowned persons must not be brought home for burial. Whosoever dies by the river must be buried by that river. It is believed that violating the taboo may anger the gods to cause more deaths without cause.
- There is also a socio-ethical code that eating, writing, and especially giving or receiving with the left hand is considered traditionally absurd and disrespectful.

Generally among Yoruba, families are patriarchal and often influential in the lives of individual family members contrary to the western world. The compound system among Àgbòyí people, fosters family familiarity and commonwealth. Their joint inheritances also reinforce the role that the larger family plays in the lives and choices family members. Although

children are important to Àgbòyí families for old age parental care, family relationships are customarily guided by strict system of 'seniority' and male tended egoistic values. This because female members will inevitably leave the family on account of marriage to other unrelated families. Thus, little significance is attached to female members in the direction of the family matters. It is thus not strange in Àgbòyí that boy-child enjoys a preferential treatment over the girl-child. This is also true of most African societies.

OWNERSHIP, SHARING AND DISPOSAL OF LAND IN ÀGBÒYÍ LAND

Land is a critical factor which serves a variety of purposes among the Yoruba. Land serves for agriculture, hunting, housing, markets, roads, and sacred groves. Rivers and streams in Àgbòyí are sources of fishing and water for domestic use, sales and irrigation during the dry seasons. Thus, a complex bond exists between Àgbòyí people and land for livelihoods. Àgbòyí lands were originally held exclusively by compounds. Such lands are shared out among its members, for housing, trading and other purposes. However, a major impediment to farming in Àgbòyí is the heavy presence of iron oxide - an anti-farming substance in the soil. Every claimant in the compound is also allowed to allot to his sons parts of the portion he controls.

Today however, and with the pressure being mounted by population explosion and Lagos megacity expansion, land sales have massively begun in Àgbòyí. With this, indigenes began to live away from their compounds as lands were sold to different categories of individuals. It is told in an interview with Alhaji Tajudeen Adio Gafar that Àgbòyí people sold the

lands of *Alápèrè*, *Ketu*, *Mile 12*, parts of *Ògùdù* and *Ojótà*. The *Onikòró* family sold *Alápèrè* and *Kétu* to the *Alákétu*. *Ògúnloye* family sold parts of the land to the *Ìlàje* people migrating from Ondo areas. The *Òdòyí* family sold *Òdòyí* Estate and *Okoagbon-Àgbòyí*. However, with the booming land sales came the problem of land-grabbing which had become a menace to landlords, homeowners and other investors. To arrest the ugly trend, effective Criminal Laws have been enacted, stipulating a two-year jail term for violators of the State's Land Use Act.

ÀGBÒYÍ LAND AND THE ORIGIN/OWNERSHIP TUSSLE

It is important to close with a write-up on the criticality of the doubts surrounding the origins and ownership of *Àgbòyí* which currently is a battle before the Courts, and generating crises over land ownerships, lettings and sales. In fact, the tussle has hindered the enthronement of a new Oba since the demise of the last king, Oba Disu Alagbe Akinlabi in 2015. The issue about the original settler started long ago when the *Ògúnloye* family laid claims as the traditional owners of *Àgbòyí* and its environments. On this averment the *Ògúnloye* family claimed to have let some portions of the village farms to tenants for the purpose of hewing firewood. According to them, they had been collecting rents from the tenants until they were disturbed in 1959. They averred that in 1958, one Bata Ajiboye, who was then the Head of *Òdòyí* Family sued three members of the *Ògúnloye* family for trespass in the Courts, but his claims in that suit were dismissed. The *Ògúnloyes* contended that since that judgment, they had not been disturbed from 1961 until again in 1969 when their tenants ceased to pay rents to them on the allegation that the *Òdòyí* Family had forcefully collected the rents from the

tenants. It was for this that the Ògúnloyes' filed a suit against the Òdòyí in the court of law.

In their Statement of Defence, the Òdòyí Family denied the Ògúnloyes' allegations and rather claimed the ownership of Àgbòyí Village through settlement by their progenitor. They claimed that Àgbòyí originally belonged to Òdòyí-Ògbo the first settler who migrated from Ile-Ife long ago to found the settlement. They claimed that there is a Communal Land in Àgbòyí which consists of *Ito Ogun, Ito Asan, Ito Kurudu, Ito Balegin, Ito Asuni and Ito Àgbòyí*, and that all the six *Ito* belonged originally to Òdòyí. They averred that it was their ancestors that brought Ògúnloye to Àgbòyí and permitted him to live on a portion of the land. They also contend that the Ògúnloyes' are ancestrally *Ìjèbú* from *Ìjèbú Òde* near *Ìkòròdú*, and not *Àwòrìs*.

Òdòyís' other averments were that all Àgbòyí shrines were hence being kept by their Family. They claimed that the Ògúnloyes' and their ancestors were tenants to Chiefs *Olótò* and *Ashafá* of Lagos in respect of a land in *Ìfàkò* and that it was from that area that the Ògúnloyes were fetching materials for mat weaving, and that this area is quite different from Àgbòyí land. The Òdòyís claimed that they had for the past 40 years had tenants on their lands, with rents been paid to them, and that such rents were used for communal benefits, traditional sacrifices to their gods and for the general improvements of Àgbòyí land. They claimed that when the Ògúnloyes' attempted in 1969 to lease lands to tenants they protested and that after some prominent people and the Police intervened, the Ògúnloye Family stopped to lease Àgbòyí lands without Òdòyís' consent (*Ògúnloye versus*

Durosinmi). Both parties had presented evidences to support their claims and until the Court makes its ruling, Àgbòyí's origin remains in doubt, hence, the historical study is still underway.

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