UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, Nsukka

DEPARTMENT OF SUB-SCIENCE EDUCATION
(KD/SOCIAL STUDIES)

THE ANCIENT COMMUNITY IN NIGERIA
THE IGBO, YORUBA, EDO, SO, AND
NON-SPEAKING PEOPLE AND THEIR
CULTURE

A TERM PAPER
PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENT OF THE COURSE
SOCIAL STUDIES 112

BY

OZIOKO FRSTUS

REG NO: 2001/110266

LECTURER: DR (MRS) F.M. AKURUE

JULY 2003.
THE ANCIENT COMMUNITY IN NIGERIANS:
THE ENTIRE PEOPLE FROM YORUBA, NON,
SO, EDO AND IGBO SPEAKING AREA.
DEDICATION

This term paper is dedicated to almighty God who made this work possible.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My immense gratitude goes to my lecturer Dr. Mrs P.N. Akubue, who has been guiding me academically and otherwise and also to the librarian who provided me with the required materials for writing this term paper.
This piece of work critically talked about the ancient community in Nigeria, the entire people and their culture. This include, Yoruba, Edo Igbo, So and Nok people in Nigeria. Chapter are discusses the ancient community people of Yoruba and their culture.

Chapter two study the ancient community people of Edo and their cultural background.

Chapter three make mention of the ancient people of Igbo and the culture.

Chapter four look critically how ancient community and cultural background of the entire people of So and Nok speaking people and the culture, which is also comprises the conclusion.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title Page:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedication:</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acknowledgement:</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preface:</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table of Contents:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CHAPTER ONE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Ancient Community of Yoruba</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>The Political and Religious Cultures of Yoruba</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CHAPTER TWO</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The Ancient Community life of Edo People</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>The Religion and the Political system of Edo People</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CHAPTER THREE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Ancient community people of Igbo land</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Political and Religious Cultures of Igbo</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CHAPTER FOUR</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The Location of Nok people and the Cultures</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The So community and their Cultures</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction:

By 1800 A.D there was nothing like the political entity called Nigeria. Nigeria as a geo-political entity was a colonial creation which started in the late 19th century with the conquer and colonization of Lagos in 1854 by Britain. From this point in time, the conquering and annexing of more regions was continuous and progressive until the two protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were created in 1900. The actual birth of Nigeria took place in 1914 when two protectorates were amalgamated and governed as a single geopolitical unit. Before then they had some ancient people like the Igbo, Yoruba, Edo, So and Mak etc, people and the culture which is completely different with the one in which the colonial people brought into the country.

1.2 The Ancient Community of Yoruba:

That we may have a better understanding of any organisation in the Yoruba kingdom of these days, it is extremely worth-while to know something about the origin of the Yoruba themselves.

Throughout the Yoruba land today, there is the circulated belief that they migrated from some where else to their home. The Yoruba have two major stories to tell about their origin.
The first of these is the Yoruba creation myth which talks of Ile-Ife. "Olorun" or the Supreme God was said to have let down his son Oduwu through a chain. The face of the earth was mere water then and Oduwu carried a handful of earth, a cockerel and a palm nut. After he has scattered the earth on the water as the myth goes, land, on which the palm tree grew, appeared. This palm tree was said to have had sixteen branches symbolizing the sixteen crown heads of the Yorubas.

The second myth states that Oduwu was eastern prince who, as a result of religious disagreement, was driven out of his kingdom. After travelling southwards for ninety days he and all his people arrived at Ile-Ife and settled down. This migration of the Yoruba has been placed between 600 and 6000 A.D. Though, there are discrepancies (difference) in this stories about Oduwu, yet the two agree on the same points, that is to say that the two stories gave the same Oduwu as the founder of the Yorubas. They also agree that Yorubas came from somewhere else which the two acknowledged Ile-Ife as the first home of the Yoruba.

Meanwhile, at Ile-Ife, Oduwu gave birth to Okanbi who in turn gave birth to seven children. His last born was OMANYAN, who accidentally became the founder and the Alafin of Oyo. (This was Oyo Aja). Incidentally, Alafin of Oyo grew to be the supreme ruler of the Yoruba land.
The Political and Religious Cultures Feature of Yoruba

Alafin ruled always with the help of a complex administration. The Alafin of Oyo was never a feudal lord nor an autocrat. He was always elected among the royal family by the seven principal councillors of state known as Oyo-mesi whose membership was hereditary. This Oyo-mesi was headed by the Bashorun— the Prime Minister of the state. He, it was, who conveyed the decision of the Oyo-mesi to the king. If any Alafin despised the Oyo-mesi or went beyond condititional periphery, it was this Bashorun, (sent by Oyomesi) who presented an empty calabash or parrot's eggs to such Alafin. This type of presentation meant that the Alafin concerned would have to commit suicide once the people and the land had rejected him.

Alafin, on the other hand, was a divine king. He was the owner of the earth, and a companion of the Gods, the first born of any Alafin was Aremo. In order to put an end to the nefarious (wicked) actions of some unscrupulous or non honest Aremo who murdered their father, any Aremo was made to rule with his father. So, when the father died, he too would have to commit suicide. Apart from the Aremo who ruled with him in the palace, Alafin was always surrounded by titled official Munchehs and Ilarios. Under Alafin were several provincial kings paying homage directly or indirectly to him. In those provinces there was always an Oba or Bale in the towns and the villages.
They also have some qualities identical with those of Alafin himself. Another arm of the state was the military council. The members of this council beneath the Oyo-mesi were known as the 'Eede'. Membership here was non-hereditary but strictly military. The military commander who headed this council was always the Kakanfo. Oyo army was very powerful and reputable because any Kakanfo who lost his war had to commit suicide.

The Religious Life of Yoruba

Religion was a very strong force in the Yorubaland as there is nobody who could be called an unbeliever. Though, there were several gods worshipped by the Yorubas, there was also the sense of loyalty to one's gods. Because of this, the type of organisations which evolved in the religious sphere were as strong as the believers were strong in their belief. At the head of every religious sect, there was always a religious priest. In his own respect, he was powerful as the Alafin. But like the Alafin, he could not afford to be autocratic. While, as a subject, he paid his regular homage to this Oba, the Oba gave each priest, a sort of spiritual respect.

Just as there were chiefs of the state, the religious sects had as many chiefs as possible. On a level comparable to the Oyomesi, each priest had a council of elders which was very close to him. The Alafin or the Oba of any town or village had free access to any religious house or cult.
It is even stated that the authority of the Alaafin was represented by a group of three emuchs in the religious spheres. The political and religious leaders of the Yoruba land all saw to the smooth running of the state. From time to time, a priest of any particular deity might be called upon to placate his angry god by offering sacrifices. If the goals were happy, the belief was that there would be peace and prosperity all over the land.

The Early Social Life of Yoruba People

In all Yorubaland, there was no type of any caste system, i.e. a social system based on difference in family origin, rank or wealth, etc. There were series of social organisations designed to achieve one aim or the other. But, in some parts of the Yorubaland, the most pronounced social organisation was the age group system. Children born within the same age or range of years were generally ranked as equals in all aspects. These sets of children developing together usually had some rituals such as initiation to manhood or any other relevant thing to perform in the society. They usually had a head who directed their affairs. Members of one age-group usually recognised the age superiority or inferiority of other age group. Apart from these, there were series of cults in Yoruba land. The most popular social cult or club of the nature was the Ogbóní society or cult. The membership of this had
nothing to do with age. Membership was open to all sections of
the society, even the Oba or Olowo was always a member.

In all Yoruba social or religious organizations, the order
followed the pattern of that of the state. There was always
an acknowledged head supported by other high-ranking and low-
ranking officials. After these were the populace or the floor
members. Every Yoruba man appeared to be aware or conscious
of order as the first thing. So, whatever form these organiza-
tions might take, they were always run peacefully as nobody
could afford to flout or deviate from tradition in those days.
CHAPTER TWO

2.1 The Ancient Community of Edo People

The miracle of Benin is its survival. It is one of the few great African kingdoms that has not crumbled away completely under the oppression of its own pests. This 'miracle' makes the history of Benin a fascinating study.

This great kingdom of the Edo started as a small city state on the River Benin. The historical development of the Binis is almost akin to that of the Yorubas. Just as the Yorubas, Benin claims to have an eastern origin. The set of people who migrated from the Sudan to settle down in Benin were known as the 'EPA'. Since there is no record that these Efis met Benin in a vacuum, the society which later evolved must have been the mixture of the original inhabitants and that of the new comers. Be it as it may this was the origin of the first Benin Empire.

The true relationship existed between the Yorubas and the Binis or the Edo is not clear. It is difficult to be categorical on whether the two of them came from the same East at the same time sharing the same pact or whether one came before the other. However, the story goes on that when the Edo were tired of the chaotic nature of their state, they requested Odudua the leader of the Yorubas at Ile-Ife to send them a ruler. After much deliberations which went on for nearly three years, Odudua sent Oranyan, his grandchild to them.
But as soon as Oranyan was at Benin, he realised that the type of man capable of ruling the Binis had to be somebody well informed or advanced in the custom and culture of the people, if success was the target. On account of this, Oranyan decided to go back to Ile-Ife as early as possible. It is interesting all the same to note that during his short duration at Benin, Oranyan got himself associated with one trimmwind, the daughter of a local chief. Through Oranyan, this woman had a child whom Gaate made Eweka 1 of Benin. This Eweka 1 is then seen as the founder of the second Benin Empire. Though, we may say here that the idea of Omaship were from Ile-Ife, the first Oba of the second Benin Empire was a Bini both by virtue of his birth and his upbringing.

2.2 The Political and Religious Cultures System of Benin Empire

As the departure of Oranyan from Benin brought Eweka to the throne at an early age. As he was very young the administration of the state was carried on by a group of chiefs and Onogie of Ego, the father of Eweka's mother became his chief adviser. The said group of chiefs were directly responsible to the king but Onogie misused his own position. He was high-handed and too ambitious. He also accumulated wealth to the detriment of the people. He later committed suicide.
It was after this that Eweka appointed a council of six chief like the Oyo-Nesi, the members of this council Uzama, were to be hereditary. If peace was to continue, two council was a necessity because, up till that time, there was no rigid rule or principle of succession in Benin. This Uzama was not as powerful as the Oyo-Nesi because they did not make but elect kings. Their work was to install the eldest son of a dead Oba once the law of primogeniture had been established. They did not require any power to depose any king. In the midst of peace and order, Eweka reigned for a very long time. He was later succeeded by Uwaeken, one of his elder sons.
CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Ancient Community People of Igbo Land

Nri in Anambra State is regarded as the ancestral home of the Igbo. In Nigeria, the Igbo generally occupied the former eastern region and a part of the former mid-western region. The Igbo generally had no Kings or Chief (i.e. Igbo Enwe-Eze). However, few towns like Onitsha had what looked like a recognized Chief. The Igbo operated a democratic system of government. The highest democratic institution among the Igbo was the Ohana Eze (i.e. the town assembly). The Igbo had a decentralised system of government. The executive, legislative and judicial powers were vested in the Ohana Eze, the council of elders, the Igbo title holders, the family, the Osu title holders, the Age-Grades, the Umudam and the Alas or the Earth's goddess represented by a Chief priest.

3.2 Political and Religious Culture of Igbo

The main political institutions among the Igbo were the Ohana Eze (the two Assembly, the King or Ruler; the Council of Elders or Chief and the Age grade). The Assembly of the whole town or village group is the highest platform for political decision and action. All adult males can attend and participate in the meetings of the town Assembly. In the town assembly the titled elders presided over affairs. They deliberated over general decisions on a separate caucus consultation called 'Igba Isu' and finally announced final decisions which quite
often won a general vocal approval of the people. Occasionally the final decisions of the elders are rejected and fresh efforts are started towards winning common consensus. The Council of elders were made up of Chief and elders in the town. For example the war chiefs, the religious chiefs, the market chiefs the functions of the council of elders. The functions of the council of the elders include advising of king on day-to-day administration; removing the king if need be; regulating trade by fixing prices for essential commodities and deciding on days for religious ceremonies and carrying them out. Others are firing offenders and ensuring that the punishment imposed on them are carried out; organizing age groups and assigning duties to them, and negotiating peace with neighbours as well as planning for and engaging in war.

RELIGIONS: The Igbo practised traditional religion. They had chief priests who performed sacrifice from time to time to appease the gods. The Igbo have great respect for the deities and departed ancestors. The chief priests were the link between the people and the deities, as well as the departed ancestors. The Igbo believe in re-incarnation. Profaning of deities was a very serious offence among the Igbo. The religious life of the Igbo were surrounded by mysticisms and superstitions.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 The Location of Nok People

Location and Discovery:

The first Nok site was discovered by the miners in Nok located in Jemaa local government area. The site is about 300 km southwest of Jos, capital of Plateau state in this site which was mentioned earlier while discussing stone age cultures of Nigeria, three cultural layers were observed. Like the terracotta, Iron age culture or Nok layer, that middle stone age culture layer and ach-eullian layer. Tin mining destroyed this site although some artifacts were collected by. We know that archaeologists require much more than the artifacts in a site for the reconstruction of the past history of a site. Fortunately, near the site is a habitation site where the same group of people lived.

The second site, Bsum Dukiya has excavated in 1970.

The archaeologist, Mass Augela.

4.2 The Nok People and their Culture

The earliest identified culture in Nigeria is that of the Nok people, who flourished between about 500 BC and about AD 200 in the area north of the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers on the Jos Plateau. The Nok culture, are the ancient Iron age culture that existed on the Benue Plateau of Nigeria between about 500 BC and AD 200.
First discovered in 1928 in the small tin mining village of Nok, artifacts of similar feature were found over an area that stretched about 300 miles (480 km) east to west and 200 miles (320 km) north to south. The most characteristic Nok artifacts are clay figurines of animals and stylized human beings, usually heads, perforated eyes of an elliptical or triangular shape, typical of the style. Other artifacts of the Nok culture include iron tools, stone axes and other stone tools and stone ornaments. They dug ten trenches of 10 x 2m at 10m intervals and recovered a lot of useful data. The occupation layer was about 20cm thick and the finds include: fragments of Nok style figurine, some charcoal, potter, including stone, stone beads, iron knives, arrow heads, spear heads and bracelets all in iron. The two C-14 dates obtained are as follows 210 + 9 BC from the occupation layer and 320 + 115 BC from the Basal deposit.

**How to Identify Nok Terracotta**

The human figure are stylized while the animals are naturalistic. The terracotta human back are usually broken off at the neck. The eye are triangular or sub-triangular with a hole and a wide awake expression. The figurines provide details of dress, personal adornment such as beads, and pendants. Other objects made in terracotta are elephants, snake fluted pumpkin etc.
The dating of Nok Iron smelting techniques and the origin of iron in West Africa were discussed above in the section concerning the earliest iron workers in Nigeria, but we would summarize it here. The Nok iron smelting furnaces found at Taruga dates to more than 500 BC and are the oldest so far discovered in the whole of tropical Africa.

4.2 The So Community and Their Cultures

The historian review that, tradition records which the original stone age inhabitants of the Chad were little Yellow men. People were either massacred expelled by the people of superior skills and organisational gifts known as So, their language was a kin to modern Hausa. It is very important to understand the So community or people who has a considerable political and artistic genius. They organised community in Kanem and modern Bornu. They fought many gallant and successful battles against the conquering Hausa.

The government was by an elaborate hierarchy. It is headed by a divine ruler who as a god was worshipped by his people and held it control their destiny.

So Culture.

The So cultural woman both the Queen Mother and the elder sister are well respected in the society. Mother and the elder sister of the ruler exercised considerable political control on the government of the state. Their government and
civilization is well demonstrated by their long resistance to the empires of Kanem and Damnu and by the fact that many cultural characteristics of the Kaburi have been adopted from So.

So people were highly known as craftsmen and artistic men. They work in clay and metals to manufacture household utensils, waves of arts and tools for a special purpose.

4.3 Conclusion

Unlike other tribes in Nigeria like Hausa/Yoruba for example had a highly centralised system of government. The Yoruba, Edó had a weak or partial centralised system of government while the Igbo, had a decentralised system of government. The So, Nok, Yoruba, and Edó precolonial political systems had well recognized laings, while the Igbo had no kings and therefore, regarded as one of the Acephalons societies. However, other tribal areas like Yoruba, So, Nok and Edó, have a central chief or king who decide on the issues in their society.