

## HISTORY OF ILUOMOBA EKITI IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the origin, socio-cultural, and economic activities of Iluomoba-Ekiti, a town in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Using oral and written sources, this research reconstructs the history of Iluomoba-Ekiti, tracing its origins to Ile-Ife and the migration of various lineages. The paper explores the town's transformation from Igboomoba to Iluomoba, its agricultural economy, and the impact of colonialism and Christianity.

**Keywords:** Iluomoba Ekiti, History, Political, tradition, Economic, Cultural

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Iluomoba-Ekiti, located in Gbonyin Local Government Area, Ekiti State, has a rich history dating back to the 19th century. This study aims to preserve the town's cultural heritage and reconstruct its history.

Iluomoba -Ekiti lies within the latitudes 7025N and 703E of the Equator and Longitudes 6028E and 8057E (Collins and Longman, 1977). Iluomoba Ekiti is located in Gbonyin Local Government Area, and in the southwestern part of Ekiti State, is about 22km drive from Ado-Ekiti, the state capital. Her neighbors who shared common boundaries with Iluomoba are Ijan-Ekiti, Aisegba -Ekiti, Ise-Ekiti, Ijesa isu, and Igbemo-Ekiti.

According to the 1963 census, the population of the town is 10,678. (Adeyanju, 1980). Iluomoba- Ekiti belongs to a people called the Ekiti. The people speak Ekiti dialect which is somehow mixed with proper Yoruba Language. The culture of the people is similar to what we have in other Yoruba towns (Ojo, 1971). According to oral traditions obtained, the early settlers came from Ile-lfe about 1,000 years ago to Igboomoba. Before Western civilization, Iluomoba was known as Igboomoba before it was later changed to Iluomoba as a result of Western civilizations. The town was called Igboomoba or Iluomoba because the town belonged to a prince. (S. Adebiyi, Personal Communication, 9 May, 2009). Other immigrants were forced to leave their original place of origin because of chieftaincy disputes, land hunger, and the desire to be free from the exploitation of their local chiefs (S. Adeyemi, Personal Communication, 18 April, 2009). Such immigrants came from Asa, Uso, Ejure, Eporo Owo, and other parts of eastern Yorubaland (Ajogo, 1931).

Iluomoba-Ekiti is part of the Western axis (below 300m) made up of rich alluvial deposits. The plains have rich fertile soils which support intensive farming which is the mainstay of the inhabitants (Iluomoba-Ekiti Day Celebration Brochure, 2007).

Iluomoba Ekiti falls within the tropical hinterland (wet) climate as found in the rainforest belt. The temperature throughout the year ranges between 21c and 30c, while the annual rainfall supports the growth of food crops like yam, cassava, cocoyam, plantain, maize, etc. The vegetation is made up of trees of various types and species of varying heights, like iroko, obeche, afara mahogany oil palm e.t.c. which has given rise to a flourishing timber business for several years. The town is presently having about ten (10) sawmills all producing at full capacity (Ibid). Iluomoba people are mostly farmers of cocoa, palm oil, timber, coffee, rice, and other cash crops.

There are many settlements and farmsteads which combined to make the population of the town increase. Some of which are: Ajebamidele, Obalu, Adebayo, Ayetoro, Oke Akola, Oke Eliju, Udimo Oketa Bolorunduro, Oke Agbe, etc. Some of these places have some social amenities like schools, motorable roads e.t.c. that made them accessible (Ibid).

Palm wine is Iluomoba's all-year cash earner and is a popular drink gotten from the raffia palm. Some of the people in Iluomoba engage in lumbering activities, block making, furniture works, vulcanizing, petty trading, small poultry rearing, welding, mechanical workshops, etc. (Esinkin, Personal Communication, 9 April, 2009).

## 2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ILUOMOBA EKITI

How and when people occupied Iluomoba Ekiti cannot be answered precisely since the ancestors left no written records of their activities. There is a body of tradition that claims that an Ifa priest from Ile-Ife called Ejinmikin Fatoba founded Igboomoba about some years ago. On leaving Ile-Ife, Ejinmikin and his wife, Elebe went to Ijumu before they later migrated to Igboomoba (Ogundana, 1980).

At Igboomoba, other people came to join the established settlement. People like Baisa, Opoto, Anaun Agbotunbiagogo, Osere Ogunduole, Ajagun, Olokoju and Elewere Udimeyinsuno (Ajogo, 1931: 6). According to one tradition, Ejinmikin reigned as king in Igboomoba until the dynasty was displaced and eventually obliterated by Ajagun. How Ajagun overshadowed Ejinmikin has been rationally explained by many oral traditions. Another tradition claims that when Ejinmikin was sick, he persuaded his people to let Ajagun succeed him as the king of Igboomoba because Ejinmikin had no male child to succeed him. Another tradition also claims that Ejinmikin was only the king over Opoto Lineage, Olokoju lineage before Ajagun succeeded him while Anaun was the head of Osere lineage, Baisa lineage, and Elewere lineage. Whichever way, what I believe is that Ejinmikin was the first settler in Igboomoba (E. U Orimolade, Personal Communication, 9 April, 2009).

Iluomoba Ekiti consisted of seven (7) lineages each with its own tradition of origin which contradicts each other (S. Adebisi, Same Date). Despite the contradictions, there seem to be certain facts that are useful in the reconstruction of the history of the origin of Iluomoba Ekiti. Although some lineages like the Olokoju lineage and Elewere lineage seem not to have very much information to offer in the task of reconstructing the history of the origin of Iluomoba Ekiti, they are one of the lineages that constituted Iluomoba Ekiti. (Ogundana op.cit.)

There are numerous traditions to the origin of this lineage. One tradition claims that Ajagun and his wife came to settle in Igboomoba from Uso. Ajagun met Ejimikin and Opoto at

Igboomoba, and after him, came Baisa from Egure in Owo and the rest of the lineages. After a period, Ajagun displaced Ejinmikin as the king of Igboomoba (Ajogo, 1931).

Another tradition claims that Ajagun migrated from Ile -Ife as a result of a chieftaincy dispute at Ile-Ife. Ajagun was said to have arrived at Igboomoba during the reign of the fifth Ejimikin. He lived at the Royal Court until the death of Ejimikin. While on his sick bed, Ejinkinkin persuaded his people to let Ajagun succeed him as the king of Igboomoba because he had no male child to succeed him. Ejinmikin thus appeals to Opoto to allow Ajagun to be king of Igboomoba (J. A. Agbanigo, Personal Communication, 11 April, 2009). Thus Ajagun became the king of Igboomoba lording it over the older lineages.

Anaun was said to be the heir apparent to the throne of Olowo of Owo. He was the Olori Omo Owa. Anaun Agborunbiagogo left Owo in protest as a result of a secession dispute in which he felt deprived of the throne. About 1,000 people followed Him from Owo with their god, Imole Owo which the people continue to worship when they got to Igboomoba. Anaun on getting to Igboomoba lodged with Baisa at Olumeruku. Anaun was with Baisa's family as Baisa's visitors for some months. That is the reason why up till today, Anaun elects to stay in Baisa's house for three months as part of his traditional rites. Later Imole Owo directed them to move on to Obalu. After the death of Anaun Agborunbiagogo his son Salaoka succeeded him (P. Ademiloye, Personal Communication, 12 December, 2009).

One tradition claims that when Anaun get to Igboomoba, the people of Igboomoba persuaded Anaun to settle permanently among them. That during this period, Ejinmikin was the king while another tradition claims that Anaun was the head of Osere, Elewere, and Baisa while Ejinmikin was the head of Opoto, Ajagun, and Olokoju (J. Akeju, Personal Communication, 12 December, 2009).

Whatever the case may be, in those days people did not live in large conglomerates rather, each lineage lived separately, not very far away from each other. The groups were jointly known by the name Igboomoba. According to the tradition obtained in the lineage, three families make up the lineage: Baisa, Elebiro, and Aroke. Each family lived independently of each other. Ejinmikin was the king of Igboomoba then while Opoto was his aid. Ejinmikin quarter was at Iju while Opoto was at Asa while Baisa was at Egure. After years of living together, Ejinmikin and Opoto discovered Baisa and his people at Egure. Baisa was persuaded to leave Egure with his people for Olumeruku in Igboomoba. On getting to Igboomoba, Baisa was made the second in command usurping Opoto's power. The only reasonable explanation is that Baisa was allowed to be second in command because the people and Opoto wanted Baisa and his people to enlarge the population of the settlement. After this change, Anaun came from Owo with a large crowd of people. Baisa urged Anaun to settle down with them in Igboomoba, to increase the population. Anaun was made the number two man of the town once he accepted to settle down in Igboomoba (J. Akeju).

Elewere lineage led his people from Ido Faboro. From most Oral traditions, the Elewere lineage appears to be the latest lineage in Iluomoba. Oral tradition is not particularly certain about the origin of the lineage. What is of significance is that Elewere lineage surfaced in Igboomoba after the town had evolved a stable political system. Whatever the case might be, Elewere's lineage left Ido Faboro as a result of a chieftaincy dispute at Ido (A. Fasinas, Personal Communication, 4 April, 2009).

Much is not known about this lineage except that the lineage was formerly known as the Odunro lineage. The Odunro people came from Egbe Oba. Odunro lineage got absorbed by Olokoju when Adesuyi, a native of Ijesa Isu left Ijesa Isu for Igboomoba (E. U. Orimolade, Personal Communication, 12 December, 2009). He settled at Iso with Odunro lineage by virtue of being related to the lineage through his maternal line. Adesuyi was Fasunwon's son who lived and died in Igboomoba. Fasunwon was the son of Okeranaga, although, Okeranaga did not come to Igboomoba, he was considered to be the founder of the Olokoju lineage which absorbed the Odunro lineage (Ibid).

Most traditions claim that Opoto is the oldest lineage in Igboomoba. The first to come into contact with Ejinminkin. When Ejinminkin got in contact with Opoto, Opoto was lured into settling down in Igboomoba to form a substantial population. Ejinminkin's and Opoto's people lived in harmony for so long before they decided to have an overall ruler. Opoto considered Ejinminkin to become the king of Igboomoba (Court case 44/50 land dispute between Ijesa Isu and Olokoju family of Iluomoba). Opoto was the number two man until the arrival of the new lineage. Ajagun and Anaun (who both came to occupy the number one and two respectively in Igboomoba. Opoto settled at Asa quarter while Ejinminkin was at Iju). According to Rev. J.B.A. Ajogo in his book "Iwe itan Igboomoba ti a yi si Iluomoba", Opoto and his wife Odumule came to join Ejinminkin after two years and nine months of Ejinminkin's settlement in Igboomoba. Opoto was said to have come from Asa.

Osere people led by Ogunduole came from Owo. These people left Owo as a result of a chieftaincy dispute in the town. According to tradition as obtained in Osere lineage, Anaun, and Osere had the same mother but different fathers. Later Anaun followed Osere in protest of justice over the Chieftaincy dispute which was unfavourable to Osere. Osere lived at Ehin Ogbe in Owo while Anaun lived at Iloro in Owo. Osere people founded Isebu after the fall of Igboomoba in 1815 (Weir N. A. C., NAI CS026, District of Ekiti, Ondo Province).

These seven lineages form the nucleus of Igboomoba. Although, initially, there were nine lineages, the rest of this lineage had either been fixed into larger ones or been extinct in the course of history. For instance, the Ejinminkin lineage has been totally absorbed into the Ajagun lineage. The name of Ejinminkin is only associated with the founder of Igboomoba.

However, the history of Iluomba took a different course from 1815 when the combined forces of Ikere/Benin invaded the town and sent the people in different directions. The people later regrouped in 1890 to form the present town which got its name changed from Igboomoba to Iluomoba in 1931 (S. Adebisi, Same Date).

From 1815 upwards Igboomoba was deserted by its inhabitant. There are many reasons given for this. The reason was the 1815 invasion of the combined forces of Ikere and Benin (R. Smith, 1969: 13). The greater part of the people of the town were said to be taken into captivity to Ikere and Benin colony (O. A. Oguntuyi, 1979: 43).

Although the evacuation by the people of the town was total, there was a very old man named Salaoka, an herbalist in the Anaun lineage. Salaoka migrated from Igboomoba to Igbo Isebo his farmland which was given to him by Baisa. Salaoka was said to be the only living man in Igboomoba by 1886 when the Ekiti Parapo War was stopped by the Europeans (Letter from

Anaun Family to the Chieftaincy of Ekiti East Local Government in Omuo-Ekiti dated 18<sup>th</sup> June 1984).

After the war, Igboomoba people in the diaspora started migrating back. People of Elewere lineage after leaving Ikere went to Ido before coming down to Igboomoba. Many people returned to Igboomoba from Ikere when peace and stability had returned to Ekiti land generally. After settling down at Isebe, the people moved to Igbo Ilapa near Alaore and the people later moved to a site very near Isesi River. It was at this site that Imole Owo told the people to leave the site and wander until they found Oka & Ojola with Alilile. The people were told to kill those snakes and settle there but before the people got there, Ojola had left the remaining Oka. These things came to pass because they saw all these things that were told that they would see and the people settled there, that is the present-day Iluomoba (S. Adebisi, Same Date).

By 1890, Iluomoba had formed a sound political footing with Ajagun Osamolaji as the first Ajagun of the resettled town, Anaun Salaoka as the number two man, and Opoto Obalogan as the number three man and the first Opoto in the re-settled town (A. Oyerinde, Personal Communication, 10 April, 2009).

As late as the wake of the twentieth century, Iluomoba had seven compounds each belonging to each of the lineages in the town. Things are now changing. There are many people in Iluomoba who do not belong to any lineage but consider themselves to be part and parcel of the town. There are Yoruba people from Iresi etc. (A. Oyerinde, Same Date). They bear names such as Iluomoba Sanmi. There are also non-Yoruba settlers in Iluomoba. These are the Igbara and Isobo people. The migration of these people into Iluomoba was a result of the colonial economy which created a migratory labour force. As a result of the accommodation and integration of migrants into the present Iluomoba, the direction of viewing the origin of the people of the town has widened.

### **3.0 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: THE INTRODUCTION OF EDUCATION TO ILUOMOBA-EKITI**

As was the case with the development of Western education in Nigeria, the establishment of schools in Iluomoba went *pari passu* with the establishment of churches by the missionaries. It was for a good reason, there was an urgent need to train the much-needed personnel for churches like lay readers and Sunday school teachers, and to enable converts to read the Bible for the spread of the gospel. More importantly, it was considered essential for a good Christian to be able to sing hymns, recite the catechism, and communicate both orally and in written form. (S. Adeyemi, Personal Communication, 12 December, 2009).

The first primary schools, St. Michaels Anglican Primary School and St. Michaels Catholic Primary Schools were founded in 1955. During the ancient era going to school was an uphill task. The poor pupils had to get up early in the morning for manual labor on their parent's farms before going to school. There were cases of parents who refused to send their children to school for various reasons. To them the real essence of Western education was unknown, some thought it was a refined form of slavery by the white man to abduct children; some could not afford to excuse their children from the farm. So they allowed only children of their slaves or the children or the wives that they did not like to go to school. Only a few who had the



opportunity of exposure from places like Ibadan, Lagos e.t.c were able to appreciate Western education for their children (S. Adeyemi, same date).

The criteria for determining maturity for people to be admitted to schools was to ask the candidate to stretch his right hand across the head in order to reach the ear on the other side. If the hand wouldn't touch the left ear, the candidate was considered not to be of school age and rejected, but if the hand touched the left ear, could then proceed to class test. Meanwhile, during the golden age of education in the community, many primary schools sprang up. It is worthy of note that St. Michael Anglican Primary School changed its name to St. Peters Anglican Primary School in 1976 due to a similar identity (S. Adeyemi, same date).

The following are the primary schools in the urban and rural areas of Iluomoba Ekiti with their years of establishment:

St. Michael's Catholic Primary School - 1955

St. Peters Anglican Primary School - 1955

Community Primary School - 1977

St. John's Anglican Primary School- 1998

C. A. C. Primary School - 2000

Later, some private schools were established. The following are the private schools that were established in Iluomoba with their years of establishment:

Omotola Nursery & Primary School- 1995

Ranti Model Nursery & Primary School 2004

Iyanuoluwa Nursery & Primary School 2006

By 1980, Iluomoba communities established a secondary school called Community Grammar School which in effect brought secondary school education to the doorstep of the community. Later, one private secondary school was established, Iyanuoluwa Secondary School founded in 2008 (K. E. Akinwamide, Personal Communication, 18 April, 2009). By 1978, Technical College was first established in Iluomoba but later closed in 1986 by the State Government due to financial problems and later reopened in 2007 (S. Adebisi, same date).

### 3.1 Introduction of Christianity to Iluomoba Ekiti

One cannot write about Christianity in any part of Yoruba land without reference to the pioneer efforts of Bishop Ajayi Crowder, Born in 1806 at Osogun near Oyo. He was taken away as a slave by a Fulani trader. When he regained his freedom in 1822, he joined the Royal Niger Mission founded in 1841 for the spread of Christianity in the Niger Delta Area. Later he assisted greatly to preach the gospel in Abeokuta and Badagry by building churches and schools through which Christianity was taken to the hooks and crannies of Yorubaland, the people of Ekiti embraced it through their kinsmen who came back from Lagos, Ibadan and

elsewhere after the Kiriji war (Onijogun, 1898: 5). These were men and women of Ekiti origin who were captured by the Ibadan army and sold as slaves to Lagos, Ijebu, Egba, and Ibadan merchants.

However, a close examination of the antecedents shows that some Ekiti people who were residents in Lagos must have had contact with Bishop Philips, a consecrated priest, and persuaded him to introduce Christianity to their people in Ekiti. Initially, church activities were conducted in Iluomoba at Olupo and Aladesuyi compound in 1896. When Bishop Philips visited Iluomoba in 1896. He came with cutlasses and distributed them to the people of the town to encourage them to be converted. At the onset, some traditional worshippers tried their efforts to discourage those that were converted by fighting seriously with them. But after 1922 peace started to reign among the believers (Gbadamosi, 1978: 125).

By 1939, the first church building was already in place and things began to go well with the Christians. For many years the C.M.S church held sway in Iluomoba. Whoever was a Christian in town during that period was a member of the C.M.S (E. O. I. Ogundana, Personal Communication, 8 April, 2009).

A prominent feature that has characterized the church organization since the introduction of Christianity to Ekiti is the institution of titled officers. The institution of title officers is very much similar to the appointment of elders in the early church. The practice cuts across nearly all the denominations in the modern church. The following are the oldest churches in Iluomoba Ekiti and their year of establishment:

St. Peters Anglican Church -	1896
St. Michaels Catholic Church -	1922
Christ Apostolic Church -	1938
Baptist Church -	1958

The churches in Iluomoba had increased with the introduction of some Pentecostal churches in the town. (Ibid).

### 3.2 Introduction of Islam in Iluomoba Ekiti

Islam came to Ekiti earlier than Christianity; Islam was introduced to Nigerians in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The religion entered the country through Muslim traders and Arabic teachers who came from North Africa (Gbadamosi, 1978). Islam was introduced to Iluomoba Ekiti by an indigene Alhaji Moliki, who traveled to Pakistan in the 1930s (A. Osasona, Personal Communication, 25 April, 2009). Alhaji Moliki was formerly a Christian and a member of the St. Michael Catholic Church. Later, as a result of a dispute, he left the church and decided to keep to himself for about three years selling various things like beans cake, rice, and palm wine. After some years, he traveled to Pakistan where he was introduced to the Islamic religion.

He returned to Iluomoba after some years and introduced Islamic doctrine to the people and the people embraced it. They commenced the observance of Islamic tenets in the town (Omoregbe,

1999: 6). They offered their salat (prayer) five times a day at specific times. Not only that, but they also prayed with all the rules and regulations i.e. standing, bowing, sitting, and prostrating. The number of converts started increasing as a result of the nature of the religion which permitted that the adherents could have as many as four wives as opposed to the doctrine Christians of one man one wife. The process of conversion was also not rigorous. The new convert is required to make some confession, starting with the first fundamental principle of Islam, the oneness of the lordship of Allah, to believe that there is only one lord for the entire universe before they could start worshipping Allah (A. Osasona, same date).

Before every Muslim in Iluomoba was an Ansar-ud-deen which Alhaji Moliki was the head but later, they, were divided into two. Ansar-ud-deen and Hamadiyah as a result of a financial dispute. Mr. Bada a native of Ikirun who was resident in Iluomoba became the head of Ansar-ud Deen while Alhaji Moliki became the head of Hamadiyah. After a while, Mr. Bada went back to his home town and Alhaji Adeyemo (from Oyo) was in turn later Alhaji Soliu succeeded him (A. Osasona, same date).

### **3.3 Age Grade System in Iluomoba Ekiti**

The age grade system has remained an important aspect of the socio-cultural life of the Iluomoba people. For instance, seniority confers social and economic privileges in the sharing of spoils, prizes, and wealth (S. Adebisi, same date). The major age grades are:

Egiri- from 25- 50 years.

Jeimi- from 15 -25 years

Origbo- the rest of the youth.

The leader of Egiri is usually called Elegiri, that of Jeimi is called Oloojeimi and the leader of Origbo is called Olorigbo. Movement of people from one age grade to another is done every 7 or 9 years after all the necessary initiation rites have been performed. Each grade has specific duties to perform toward the development of the town. For instance; it is part of the duties of Jeimi to clean the streets during festivals. They are also messengers for the elders and senior chiefs. They clear the paths that lead to villages or neighbouring markets. This class is responsible for blowing the trumpet to summon people for any general work. They supplied the old people with wood for general housewarming. They Construct roads in the town, take part in the erection of buildings (usually mud walls), and clear the king's palace and the compounds of some important chiefs. The Egiri allocates duties to Origbo and Jeimi and also takes part in the general work. They are the soldiers or warriors of the town. They maintain discipline by punishing people like thieves, and wizards. They settle quarrels arising from land disputes and boundary adjustments. Serve as representatives of the town. (S. Adeyemi, same date)

The significance of the age grade system was more pronounced in the past when most of the activities and essential work in the town was done communally. But now, western civilization has influenced it because people no longer adhere strictly to this age-grade system.

### **3.4 Indigenous Societies (Egbe Ibile)**



There are several societies of which nearly all Iluomoba citizens are members. Membership is based on age-grades or peer groups irrespective of whether one is educated or not or one is living at home or not. There is always a president whose position is permanent. The President can only be changed if he resigned if is involved in a criminal act. The majority of the Egbe Ibiles take firm roots from religious affiliations and have strong attachments to the church or mosque.

However, their basic objective is to promote the religious, social, and economic interests of members as well as the town as a whole. The meetings are usually held on Sundays or during the week. Sometimes they rotate their meeting places, it can be in their member's house or the residence of the president, or a place designed for the Egbe ibile (I. Olokoju, Personal Communication, 9 April, 2009).

These are the names of the indigenous societies in Iluomoba Ekiti: Egbe Imototo, Egbe Irewolu, Egbe Ilosiwaju, Egbe Ifesowapo, Egbe Amuludun, Egbe Fehintoluwa, Egbe Imole, Egbe Ifelodun, Egbe Fesojoye, and others too numerous to mention.

#### 4.0 TRADITIONAL RELIGION

Iluomoba people believed in the existence of a Supreme Being whom they referred to as Olodumare or Olorun (Fabunmi, 1985: 7). They believe that God is too great to be worshipped directly; hence they have some intermediaries who would carry their supplications to the Almighty God. These intermediaries were the great deities whom they referred to as Orisa (small gods). Examples of such Orisa are Tambo or Oolua (Imole Owo), Olooke, Ogbese, Ogun, Omoluta, etc. (J. Agbanigo, Personal Communication, 12 April, 2009).

Tradition claims that Tambo (Imole Owo) directed the people of Iluomoba from where they were before to Iluomoba. Such ancient lead left an indelible mark on the community. Each of the family or lineage has its own deities which are worshiped by them at different periods of the years. Tambo (Imole Owo) is associated with the Anaun and Osere families because they came together from Owo (Falana, :16). Oloke is associated with the Ajagun and Olokoju families.

Ijesu Festival is associated with the Ajagun family.

Ogbese is associated with the Opoto family

Ogun is associated with Olokoju and Baisa families.

Omoluta is associated with the Elewere family and

Oliki and Iyanrigi festival is associated with everybody in Iluomoba-Ekiti.

Traditional religion creates a sort of entertainment for the people in the community since dancing, drinking wine, and eating pounded yams are associated with the celebrations of all these traditional festivals. The masquerades create entertainment for the young people, before the advent of Western culture, the major forms of entertainment in the town were masquerades.

The masquerades are very tall and giant in structure and the children see them and run away fast without wasting any time. Masquerades like Ede, Ure, and Efon Agbo are very good in the areas of creating amusement for the sick people, these masquerades move from one compound to another praying for the people and the people will give them gifts in return. Prominent among the Masquerades are Egun ure, Agbo, Ede, Owi, Agbe, Olele, Efon, Ayedege, etc. The masquerades were introduced to Iluomoba from different towns and villages, but mostly from Ijan Ekiti, purposely to persecute the Christians of the time. Till today masquerade entertainment is so important that children who are Sick can easily forget their sickness at the sight of seeing an egungun in the street (A. Fasinas, same date).

#### 4.1 Mode of Dressing, Food, and Housing

Iluomoba people have always worn clothes. The men wore light loin clothes known as ibante, while the women wore something like an apron (yeri). All the males and young females exposed the upper half of their bodies, but the older women used covering clothes that they wore over their aprons. The cotton used for making these clothes was cultivated by Iluomoba farmers and was harvested and processed by the women. Before the advent of the Europeans, sewing was done using bone or ivory needles. The Europeans introduced the use of steel needles and sewing machines (Ibid).

In modern times, Iluomoba people, like other parts of Yorubaland, have different kinds of traditional wear. The males wear buba with a traditional pair of trousers known as soro usually the same colour as the buba. A bigger overall known as agbada is worn over the buba and soro there is also a cap to match. The buba and soro can be worn separately without the agbada. The females wear buba with Iro to match. They also put on the headgear known as gele and another piece of cloth known as lborun which is usually worn over the shoulders. Beads are worn around the neck and the wrists of traditional and honorary chiefs (Ibid).

Since they are predominantly farmers, Iluomoba people depend on their farm produce for a living. They practice subsistence farming. They plant mainly yams from which they make pounded yams (iyan). This is the main food of the people. An average Iluomoba citizen can eat pounded yam three times a day Cocoyam was also pounded and eaten (Ibid).

The ancient Iluomoba people lived together in large, enclosed compounds where large buildings known as akodi were built. Each akodi was walled round and contained several smaller buildings, the number of which depended on the number of families which made up the extended patrilineal family. The houses had no windows; there were only two doors, one at the main entrance and the other one leading to the backyard. The walls were often plastered with red lines and sheep's dung to make them smooth. The roofs were made of thatched leaves and the floors were smoothed with sheep's dung. There were separate apartments for males and females. The first building to be roofed with iron sheets in Iluomoba was that of Chief Onijogun. The first-story building was built by Mr. Olokunlade about 60 years age (S. Adebisi, same date).

In modern times, houses are built with concrete blocks and are roofed with corrugated iron sheets. The walls are painted and the floors are cemented and decorated with terrazzo. Iluomoba people are peace-loving and do not abhor crimes in any form. This is seen in the songs of their festivals, especially the Oliko and iyanrigi which ridicule those who are guilty of any crime and

praise heroes (S. Adebisi, same date). The people are very hard-working. They have always been able to feed themselves adequately.

#### 4.2 Traditional Games

Traditional games in Iluomoba include arin tita, Ubo jijan, ayo tita and wrestling (Udi Jija), and others, though ayo appears to be the most common nowadays. Wrestling (Udi), was so prominent among male adolescents that inter and intra-quarter wrestling competitions were common. With the advent of Western culture, it has been replaced with football (S. Adebisi, same date).

#### 4.3 Naming Ceremony in Iluomoba Ekiti

The naming ceremony of a newborn baby is usually performed on the seventh day. It is usually performed by one of the elders of the family. Materials used for the ceremony include alligator pepper, bitter kola, Kolanuts, salt, honey, money, water, and sugar. In the case of twins, the conditions remain the same but the items presented are usually more than for one baby. A child having a sixth finger is known generally as Olugbodi (I. Olokunlade, same date).

The naming of a child is always an important ceremony because. It is the first time the child is brought out of the house "Iko omo jade". A child is supposed to be born with a name. The name may be literally brought from heaven i.e. amutorunwa, like Taiye, Kehinde, Qjo, Oke, Ajayi, Aina, Talabi e.t.c, or those given to the child following circumstances connected with the fortunes of the family such names can be Bamikole, Adesina, Ilesanmi, Adebola, Babatunde, Olasupo, on the other hand, certain names depict the deity worshipped in the family. Falade, Oguntola, Osanyinlusi, Ogbesetuyi etc. Also in the royal family at Iluomoba, names like Adeyemi, Adeolu, Adedotun, and Adeleke are given to children from the royal family to show greater identity. (S. Adebisi, same date). Some children are given names resulting from the circumstances of birth. In the olden days, there was a high degree of Abiku as a result of lack of adequate medical care; such deaths were attributed to a fraternity of demons living in the forest in Iroko trees. Hence, pregnant women were warned against walking alone in any bush or forest at midday for fear of being followed by evil spirits. Names given to children who were believed to die prematurely nearly always indicated the belief in reincarnation. Such names were Oluropo, Malomo, Kokumo e.t.c. (S. Adebisi, same date).

As a result of Western education, only a few parents still give these names to their children. As a result of the introduction of Christianity in Iluomoba, people started giving their children names like John, Solomon, and Janet while Muslims took on names depicting the Islamic religion e.g. Sulema, Adijat, Ganiyat e.t.c. (Ibid).

Another aspect of Iluomoba culture that links up with names is totem or pet names. These names are associated with heroic or showing endearment. Totem names are of immense importance in the tracing of a pedigree. Some women, particularly housewives are so good in the citation that listeners can trace the family stock. The totem represents any conceivable object- leopard, elephant-like Ekun, Erin, Ogun, etc. (Ibid).

In Iluomoba, there is what we call oriki or cognomen. This is what women use at ceremonies and admiration of one's pedigree during a reunion. Reciting oriki is a talent because some

women are better than others. They refer to both the maternal and paternal sides for balance. Oriki is used mostly in the morning when a person greets his or her parents or elders (Biobaku, 1981: 64). Cognomen traced the history of a particular person. During ceremonies, housewives usually use the local fan to keep people cool with oriki (S. Adebisi, same date).

As a result of Western education, many housewives nowadays do not have time to learn the cognomen of their immediate and extended family. Iluomoba people treasure their names and believe that the greatest legacy anyone can hand over to his children is a good name.

#### 4.4 Marriages

Marriage is a very important custom of Iluomoba people. Like in most Yoruba towns, there are three stages to be observed: Rev. Samuel Johnson in his books "History of the Yoruba" puts it as.

- i. Early initiation
- ii. Formal betrothal and
- iii. The marriage.

In the past, when a woman was pregnant and a man wanted to marry from that family, either because of the good family background of bravery or affluence, the man would visit the pregnant woman occasionally bringing gifts such as firewood, tubers of yam, bush meat, palm oil e.t.c. if the woman delivered and the baby was a boy, the man would have to wait till another time and repeat his services to the family but if the baby was a girl, then the suitor was lucky. The care would continue till the age of puberty and everyone around would know that the young girl had got a husband (S. Johnson, 1921).

Another one is that, a father can give his daughter to a man either because he was rich or influential or in appreciation of an act of kindness done to the father sometimes in the past. Another type of marriage was when a man saw a girl of his choice. What he did was to get a close associate (alarena) through whom he could send messages until the girl had agreed to marry him, and then the middleman would withdraw. When a man met a girl of his choice, the families of both sides would find out if the families were free from any hereditary disease like insanity, leprosy, or financial embarrassment. Then the man would start giving gifts to the lady from the day she agreed to marry him. The fiancée would avoid seeing the relatives of the husband. During festivals and the New Year and Christmas celebrations, the man would give money and some other materials to the girl (G. Parinder).

Then, betrothal took place. The man will give the parent of the bride kola-nut, honey, bitter kola, yams, alligator pepper, and the bride price, and the parent of the bride will later fix a date for the marriage. Marriage can be celebrated at any time of the year (S. Johnson, 1921: 113). On the evening of the day of the marriage, after the bridegroom had met the necessary conditions, the bride would kneel before her parents and receive their blessing. They encouraged her to behave well in her husband's house. Then, they will sing for the bride in the evening when going to her husband's house. The bride would dress well with a white veil, and wives from her family would carry the belongings on their heads and put them down after the parents of the bridegroom gave some money to them. The bridegroom would stay in the house of a close relative nearby and return to meet his wife at home (Olaogun, 1996:5)

At the entrance of the groom's compound, an old but clean calabash would be placed on the ground together with water in a bowl. Then the feet of the bride would be washed by a senior wife from the bridegroom's house and she would be asked to jump on the calabash. It was believed that the number of broken pieces of the calabash indicated the number of children the bride would have while the washing of the feet indicated washing off all evil from the new wife as she entered a new household (Voel, 1997).

If the man met his wife as a virgin, a shot would be fired into the air very early the following morning to announce. In the evening, the white bed sheet stained with blood would be exhibited. The bride would receive many gifts from the husband and his close relatives. The bride's parents would prepare meals three times a day for seven days for their daughter. This was done to let the bride rest. The bride would stay indoors for seven days rubbing her body with Osun (cream) obtained from the bark of a tree. Then she would go with her housemaid to draw water in small pots for the use of the elderly men in the extended family. In return, the men would give their new bride money (Parinder).

If the bride was found to be unchaste, all these activities would be unchaste. All these activities would be denied her. She would be subjected to serious humiliation and even made to run errands immediately. She became a disgrace to her parent; she would not be entitled to any gift. The treatment that would be meted out to her would be similar to that of a slave (Jackson, 2004).

Polygamy was part and passu of some Iluomoba people because this appeared to have been dictated by economic considerations. Over seventy-five percent of the people were farmers and so many men needed these women to assist them in their farm, particularly during the harvest period when crops were carried from one place to the other. It was a sign of affluence to have many wives and children.

#### **4.5 Chieftaincy Institutions**

The traditional chieftaincy institution consists of three parts:

Iwarefa Mefa

Elumo Chiefs

Elegbe Chiefs

All members of Iwarefa Mefa are automatic members of Elumo but not all members of Elumo are members of Iwarefa Mefa. The members of Iwarefa Mefa are heads of their respective clans while the Elumo chiefs and other high-ranking chiefs are selected from amongst the clans, the two groups form the highest decision-making body in issues affecting the town.

The duties of the council include but are not limited to the following:

- To represent the Iluomoba community in the traditional council meeting of Gbonyin Local Government Area when the need arises.



- To initiate discuss and implement policy matters geared towards the progress and well-being of the town.
- To discuss issues relating to security, and welfare and adjudicate on intra and inter-community feuds if any.
- To undertake any other assignment as many as directed by His Royal Majesty the Ajagun of Iluomoba Ekiti.

#### Composition of the Council

- i. HRM Alayeluwa Oba George Ibisani Olawumi Olatuyi (i) JP - The Ajagun.
- ii. High Chief Adebisi Ademiloyo- Anaun Member
- iii. High Chief C. O. Ademnwagun (JP) - Opoto Member
- iv. High Chief Samuel Adebisi- Osere Member
- v. High Chief Baisa- Vacant Member
- vi. High Chief Elewer- Vacant Member

Apart from the above-listed Iwarefa Mefa, the council is also made of other arrays of high chiefs and other chiefs representing their various clans. They hold meeting with the king from time to time. (Iluomoba Ekiti Day Celebration, 2007. Brochure: 11)

#### 5.0 CONCLUSION

This study provides an in-depth understanding of Iluomoba-Ekiti's history, cultural heritage, and transformation over the centuries.

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