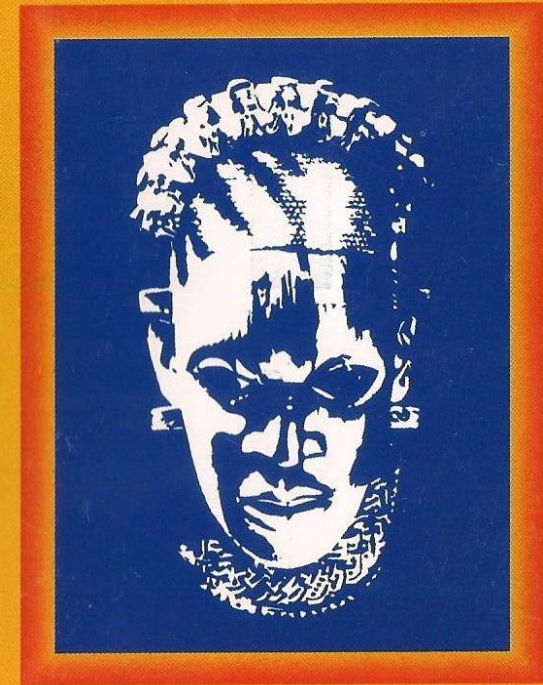


ILORIN JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



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**Editorial Note**

In compliance with our tradition, we bring before you a potpourri of articles from seasoned researchers. We hope that the papers in this volume will advance the frontiers of historical knowledge. We thank you for your sustained interest in *Ilorin Journal of History and International Studies* (IJOHIS).

**Professor S.O. Aghalino**  
**(Editor)**

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## NUPE INFLUENCE AND LINGUISTIC VARIATION IN IGBOMINALAND

Aboyeji, Adeniyi Justus, PhD\*

### Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the influence of Nupe imperialism on the linguistic variation in Igbominaland. For a proper underpinning of the discourse, a brief aspect of the physical and human geography of the Igbomina and Nupe, as well as the variation in the imperial experiences of the different Igbomina groups under different overlords are deemed necessary. The study adopts a historic-structural and systematic approach and made use of primary and secondary sources of literature relevant to the issues in contention. Findings, in this study, reveal the aspects of Nupe linguistic influence on Igbomina, which includes, among others, language borrowing and dialectic variation. Extant researches create links between words such as Nupe's Soko and the Yoruba deity—Sàngo. Eégún (or Egungún) from gugu, Elu from elo, Ìgunnu from gunu, as well as titles such as Shaba, Benu, Nakoju, Kpotun, Makun, Olupoun, Balogun, and Lapene, the related form of Alapinni, are also among examples of linguistic borrowings from Nupe into the Igbomina and Yoruba lexicon. It considers the dialectic classification of Igbomina and also suggests probable factors responsible for the dialectic variation among the Igbomina, said to be progenies of a common progenitor. This includes a rather hypothetical explanation, which claims that the water man drinks affects his tongue. The paper concludes that in spite of being of the same linguistic stock, the Yoruba evidently have various dialectic variations of which the Igbomina can be distinguished. Yet, even among the Igbomina, variation can be observed as in the 'Mo san', 'Mo han' and 'Mo ye e' sub-groups who were balkanised along historical imperial divides by the Ilorin, Ibadan and Nupe respectively. The paper, therefore, recommends that, while the hypothetical conundrum posed in this paper might appear rather unscientific on a cursory outlook, it might, at least, provide a working hypothesis for interested researchers in the areas under study.

**Keywords:** Igbomina, Nupe Influence, Linguistic variation

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### Introduction

As long as men share certain things in common, which consequently knit them together in social relation, either in terms of ethnic, religious, historical, geographical or linguistic affiliations, whether for peace or for war, lines of divide are already delineated. Language may be aptly described as the vehicle of ideas. Most of the languages of West Africa, including Yoruba, are closely related, most of them being classified under the *Kwa sub-group* of the Niger-Congo family of languages.<sup>1</sup> Whereas myriads of expressions akin to those found in the Old Testament point to it as having a derivation, or at least a very ancient connection with the Hebrew, the syntax or peculiarity of its construction shares some semblance with the Greek and Latin. Greenberg, in *The Languages of Africa*,<sup>2</sup> viewed the Yoruba language with appropriateness as the parent source of all the languages in the Bight of Guinea, and of many in Southern Sudan. Archaeological and linguistic evidences validate it that the Yoruba have been dwelling in their present habitat from as early as the 5th century B.C.<sup>3</sup>

At all events, by the 16th century, a number of distinct sub-cultural groups were identifiable in the Yoruba area, based on regional variations of the common language differences in political and social arrangements, details of land tenure and local emphasis on particular deities from the common pantheon. The principal ones were the Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti, Ebira, Owo, Akoko, Ondo, Ilaje, Ijebu, Egbado, Awori, Egba, Owo and Oyo. On the eastern and western fringes and around the coastal lagoons, there were other related groups. Prominent among those in the north-eastern section of Yorubaland were the Igbomina.<sup>4</sup>

Obayemi, in "The Yoruba and Edo-speaking Peoples and their Neighbours before 1600 AD"<sup>5</sup>, opined that language, more than any other consideration, forms the basis for the usage of the names: 'Yoruba', (originally the name of the Oyo only), 'Edo' (strictly speaking, the Benin district), 'Nupe', 'Igala' or 'Idoma'. This may be adapted to Igbomina that perhaps, more than any other consideration, language forms the principal basis for the usage of the name 'Igbomina' for the Igbomina people. In his own capacity, Toyin Falola has argued that "...the Igbomina are recognised by themselves, and by others as a distinct dialectic sub-group of the Yoruba, inhabiting the northern part of the Yoruba country today, they are found in the two states of Kwara and Osun".<sup>6</sup> Hence, the term, Igbomina, refers to the people, the land they occupy<sup>7</sup> and the version of the Yoruba language they speak.

### Geographical Description of Igbominaland

Aboyeji posited that an awareness of certain aspects of the physical and human geography of the Igbomina area is indispensable to the understanding of its historical economic and dialectic variations. Indeed, the geography of Eastern



Yorubaland has long been conducive to human habitation.<sup>8</sup> The level of rainfall allowed for luxuriant grasses that attracted pastoralists, or nomads and their herds, while also creating favourable conditions for agriculture. The vegetation type is another geographical factor, which played a significant role in the historical development in the area. The possibility of the cultivation of a variety of crops therefore, made the region attractive to many ambitious immigrants. Furthermore, the rugged topography, and marshy section provided adequate places of refuge for those fleeing from enemies.<sup>9</sup> It possesses a trans-cultural border and strategic location which places it at a relatively advantageous position to benefit economically from trade with the north and south. Igbomina was thus, like the *Plimsoll Line*,<sup>10</sup> which cuts across vegetation belts, economic zones, linguistic borders and ethnic boundaries. Her location among different and often distinct neighbours make Igbominaland a multicultural area.<sup>11</sup>

Igbominaland is bounded to the west by Ilorin; to the North-East by the Yagba; to the South-East by the Ekiti; to the North by the Nupe; and to the South-West by the Ibolo, while she shares her Northern boundary with the Yoruba of present Osun State.<sup>12</sup> Before the Fulani invasion, the Igbomina were said to have occupied some 900 square miles between the South-West boundary of the province, to the Yagba District on the East, and a few miles of Ilorin town on the North.<sup>13</sup> While Ila-Orangun, the most Southern part is at the edge of the forest, the other Igbomina group in Kwara mainly falls within the savannah stretch below the band of the River Niger. This area forms part of the Southern border of what has come to be known as the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

Today, Igbomina is situated between Longitude 8° and 9° North and Latitude 4° and 8° East, and is located on the South-Eastern side of Ilorin,<sup>14</sup> with an area of land covering about 66, 709<sup>2</sup> kms.<sup>15</sup> They all agree to have shared a common language (dialect), culture and political institution, from their origin through one descent. Geographical location, culture and history, all combine to prove that the Igbomina people are Yoruba, both in language and culture.<sup>16</sup> All Igbomina towns, apart from Oke-Ila, Ajaba, Ila-Orangun and Ora-Igbomina, in the present Ila and Ifedapo LGAs of Osun State,<sup>17</sup> are presently located in Kwara State of Nigeria, with well over 250 communities. They are particularly found in the whole of Isin, Ifelodun and Irepodun L.G.A of the State. However, other pockets of Igbomina towns have been discovered in other districts of Kwara State, including Jebba in Lanwa District, Apado in the Iponrin District, Apa-Ola, Joroma, Ilota, Fufu, among others in Akanbi District and Ogbondoroko in Afon District, now classified as Ilorin Emirate.<sup>18</sup> Dada has revealed that the mother of *Sulu Gambari*, the ninth emir of Ilorin was an Igbomina from Agbeyangi in Iponrin District of Ilorin-East L.G.A.<sup>19</sup> The Igbomina people now constitute a mixture of

the Nupe, Fulani and Yoruba as a result of inter-tribal marriage, as evident in areas such as Oro-Ago, Igbaja, Share, Idofian and Oke-Ode Districts.<sup>20</sup>

Her geographical location, which strategically situates her as a linear settlement in the Middle-Belt and as a gateway between the North and South, however, made her particularly susceptible to series of foreign imposters and influences, including the Nupe.

### The Nupe Influence

The Igbomina and Ibolo traditions mentioned numerous encounters with the Tapa,<sup>21</sup> and it is not uncommon to find some lineages among them (the Igbomina and Ibolo) preserving memories of their Tapa ancestry in their '*Oriki*' and lineage rituals, even till today.<sup>22</sup> But who are the Nupe? In the words of Idrees, ...it seems impossible to know the origin of the term, "Nupe".

What we do know is that the term 'Nupe' refers to a distinct group of people who dwell within Nupeland in the Trans-Niger areas. They speak Nupe as their first language.<sup>23</sup>

The names "Kwararafa" and "Nupe" are cited in chronicles of the Hausa Kingdoms, referring to events put in the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century context.<sup>24</sup> There are formal accounts which relate to the emergence of the Nupe kingdom. Samuel has identified various stories about the possible origin of the Nupe, entrenched in the oral traditions and annals of the Nupe folk from timeless beginning. Among these are the Yisa, Abdul Al-Nafiu, Egyptian, Nubia, Bayajidda, Benin and Tsoede traditions. However, many of these are not only unpopular, they have oftentimes, showcased certain chauvinistic and racial sentiments inherent among the races of mankind. For instance, the Bayajidda tradition which traces Nupe origin to one of the popularised Hausa *Banza* or *Banza Bakwai* (illegitimate or impure/bastard) tradition of Bayajidda or Abuyazidda, a prince of Baghdad, by a slave girl named Gwari, has been criticised as political, a supremacist game-bid to entrench the racist superiority claim, by the Arabs and Fulanis, who are deemed to be Caucasians, above the Negroid peoples of Middle-Belt Nigeria. The Middle-Belt people are in turn deemed as equally racially superior to the pure negroes of Southern Nigeria, although racially inferior to the Arabs/Fulanis.<sup>25</sup>

Dates for the foundation of the kingdom had been suggested on the basis of their king-list, all beginning with Edegi (Tsoede) as the uncontested first king of Nupeland. Archaeological findings have also placed the establishment of the Nupe kingdom, under Tsoede, from Idah, towards the end of 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup> The Nupe constituted one of the most prominent entities in the Niger-Benue Confluence area, and had, along with the Igala and Kwararafa (Jukun) kingdoms, exercised dominant influence in the area, especially in the pre-1800 history.



The land areas they occupy fall between Latitude  $9^{\circ} 3' 0''$  and  $8^{\circ} 3' 0''$  North, within the lower basins of the rivers Niger and Kaduna. These cover the land area of about 11, 200<sup>2</sup> kilometres.<sup>27</sup> Nupeland shares boundary with the Yoruba sub-groups of Igbomina, Yagba, Owe and Oworo on the west bank of the River Niger, in the hinterland. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all these Western neighbours had fallen under the political sphere of influence of the Nupe, and remained so, until the advent of the British.<sup>28</sup>

There are suggestions that the Igbomina area was inhabited earlier on by the Nupe. They were later dislodged and partially absorbed by successive waves of Yoruba immigrants first, from Ile-Ife, and then from Oyo-Yoruba speaking areas.<sup>29</sup> As reported by Johnson, traditions of the neighbouring states and kingdoms concerning Nupe militarism prior to 1800 included those of the old Yoruba, revealing a pre-occupation of the ancient *Alaafins* with Baruba and Nupe states, to the North and North-East respectively. These traditions of Oyo-Tapa (pronounced as '*Takpa*'—the Yoruba name for the Nupe) relations were almost predominantly martial,<sup>30</sup> featuring in memories of the reigns of some *Alaafin*, such as Oranmiyan, the founder of Oyo, probably around 1390 AD, Sàngó and Ajuan, otherwise known as Ajaka.<sup>31</sup>

### The Linguistic Influence of Nupe

Nupe influence in Yorubaland might have antedated the invasion of Old Oyo in 1791, which probably represents an extension of Nupe influence to Igbominaland. Nupe-Igbomina (commercial) relations, which might have been initially symbiotic, began as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as an important industrial<sup>32</sup> and distribution centre for trade between the Savannah states of the North and the forest kingdoms of the South. Basically, by this time, the task of establishing a stable polity in Nupeland had been completed by Tsoede. At this same time, several Igbomina settlements had also emerged and were already undergoing different phases of transformations.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Nupe-Igbomina relations, before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, tended to be peaceful rather than warlike. This was probably before the *powerful* Igbomina began to wane in their belligerency. The tense political relations between the duo probably began, especially since the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Igbomina's peaceful established order came under considerable stress during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. They, however, perhaps became weakened as they became subjected to incessant military pressures from their more belligerent neighbours.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, prior to this time, political relations between the Igbomina and her neighbouring Yoruba states had degenerated into acrimony, as Yoruba states such as Ijesa, Oyo, Benin and later Ibadan endeavoured to launch their political hegemony over the Igbomina. Drawing inferences from traditions prevalent in Igbominaland, Gege has revealed that military encounters between the

Igbomina and their neighbours had probably begun to take place by the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, as traditions revealed, hostilities resumed with the Ijesa's marauding activities for slaves around the Igbomina country by the present day Ajase from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This was followed by attempts by Benin armies to penetrate Igbominaland through Akoko and Ekiti lands.<sup>36</sup>

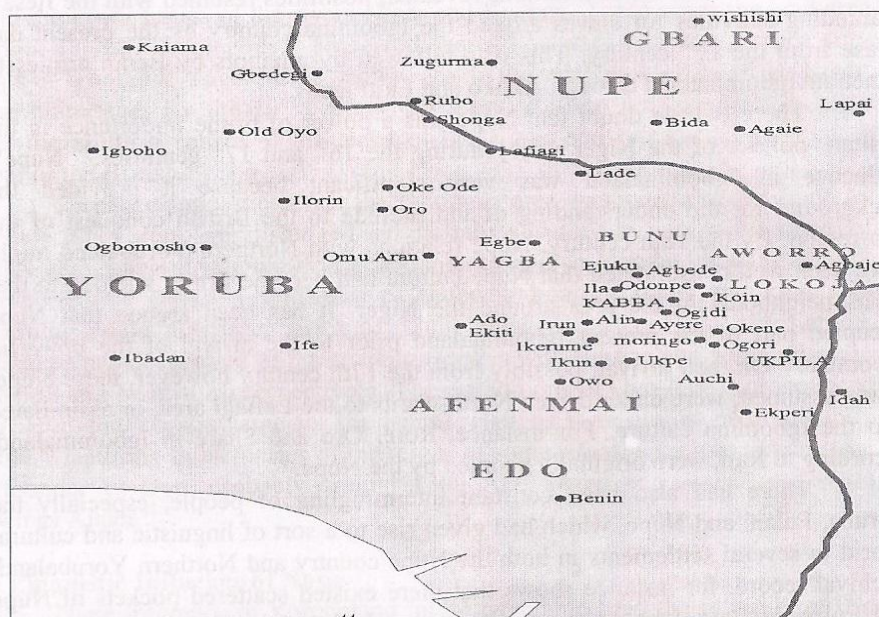
There is little doubt that Nupe was a power of prime importance in the military politics of the Niger valley during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>37</sup> Nupe's influence in Igbominaland was very significant because it provided the background for the understanding of/and prelude to the British conquest of the sub-region. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Nupe relations with Northern Yorubaland might have been well consolidated that Nupe culture had become firmly wielded to that of its neighbours in the area around the Niger. It has been argued that Nupe occupied part of the present Igbominaland prior to the arrival of the *powerful* Igbomina.<sup>38</sup> On their arrival, possibly from the 17<sup>th</sup> century however, these Nupe, it was assumed, were either driven North-wards to the Lafiagi area, or assimilated into the Igbomina culture. For instance, Roré, Oro and Shàré in Igbominaland, according to Raji, were originally peopled by the Nupe.<sup>39</sup>

There had also been constant intermingling of people, especially the Yoruba, Fulani and Nupe, which had given rise to a sort of linguistic and cultural hybrid in several settlements in both the Nupe country and Northern Yorubaland. Archival record, for instance shows that there existed scattered pockets of Nupe and Fulani settlers, who have now been absorbed and integrated into the local society among the Igbomina.<sup>40</sup> It is important to note that in order to improve their relations and benefit maximally from the commercial activities with the Nupe, Igbomina merchants, during the pre-colonial era, often encouraged their members to adopt Nupe cultural practices, values and belief system, notably *Egungun* and Islam.<sup>41</sup>

The source of Nupe's power and influence on Igbominaland was obviously military. As Apata noted, virtually all communities in both the North-West and North-East of Eastern Yorubaland, especially the frontier settlements, became Nupe dependencies through her military conquest particularly under two very prominent *Etsus*—Masaba (1833-1873) and Umaru Maijigi (1873-1882).<sup>42</sup> The Iwo/Oke-Aba joint military alliance against the Nupe raids and final invasion for slaves, as well as her (Nupe) imperial wars of expansion around 1787 at a place called, *Akitimo*,<sup>43</sup> is a good example.



MAP OF NUPE IN 1900



Source: Lewu, M.A.Y., 2016,<sup>44</sup>

Besides other aspects of Nupe influence on Igbomina in the social sphere, such as the extinction of many Igbomina settlements,<sup>45</sup> foundation of new settlements, especially by the fleeing or displaced inhabitants of the dislodged and destroyed settlements,<sup>46</sup> a sort of *Nupeisation* via inter-marriages in which those affected forsook their own language (s) and abandoned most of their original cultural traits, Nupe acculturation through which many non-Nupe simply became *Nupeised* or 'naturalised' into the Nupe cultural society in the course of time, as may be seen in Share and Tsaragi, thereby producing another species of people known as the *Yoruba-Nupe* people, mixed-blood as in Rore and Ora, a village said to have been originally peopled from Nupeland,<sup>47</sup> the Odo-Rore and Ilafe sections of Oro-Ago, Oke-Apata compound at Owu and Oponda,<sup>48</sup> cultural diffusion, body and facial markings such as the *etsa* "patterns", cut deep into the foreskin of both male and female babies, which differ in the different sub-groups,<sup>49</sup> to mention but a few, the aspect of religion also constitutes one area in which linguistic influence is most evident.

Socio-culturally, there existed probable Yoruba-Nupe exchanges along the lines of ancestor personification. Certain non-Yoruba features adopted by the

Nupe, which appear in records, have been identified. Examples of such linguistic borrowings from Nupe into Yoruba lexicon include *Eégún* from *Gugu* (i.e. masquerade); *Elu—elo* and *Ìgunnu*, from *Gunu* (a masquerade type).<sup>50</sup> Socio-politically too, recognisable *Nupeisms* are easily identified in terminologies and *Oriki*, as Nupe titles such as *Lapene*, the related form of *Alapinni*, the Oyo chieftain who presided over *Egúngún* (masquerade) affairs in that town.<sup>51</sup> Titles such as *Shaba*, *Bemu*, *Nakoju*, *Kpotun*, *Makun*, *Olupoun* and *Balogun* have also crept into the political institution of the Igbomina in places like Ora, Oke-Ọḍe and Agunjin.<sup>52</sup>

Akinjogbin and Ayandele have posited that the Oyo<sup>53</sup> had to mix early with non-Yoruba elements such as the Tapa and Ibariba, with whom they intermarried. The *Egungun* cult was, therefore, believed to have been introduced into Yorubaland from the Tapa, (that is Nupe) country.<sup>54</sup> The *Egúngún* festival, which is still presently an on-going phenomenon in some Igbomina communities such as Omu-Aran, Oko, Arandun and Oro-Ago, is believed to have been introduced into Igbominaland from Nupeland.<sup>55</sup> Raji affirms that through the population shift, migrations and resettlements prevalent in the era, certain Nupe cultural and religious practices such as the *Egungun Elewe* penetrated into Igbominaland.<sup>56</sup> The *Egúngún Elewe* is believed to have been copied from Nupeland, perhaps, due partly to the prevalence of *Ìgunnu*.<sup>57</sup> The Odogbo compound at Isanlu-Isin of which Lobanika masquerade was peculiar to, is a legacy of Nupe conquest in that area. Nupe descendants could still be found there.<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, some have attempted a link between *Soko*, a Nupe name for God, and the Yoruba deity—*Sàngó*—who has, for long, been understood as an intrusive Northern figure. *Soko* is however, a compound name derived from the combination of *so*, which means the sky heaven and *ko*, which implies something big, great and undimensional. The Nupe idea about this name is that this God, who inhabits the heavens, is great and unlimited in power and authority.<sup>59</sup> *Sokogba* or *Sogbo* are the Nupe variant names for the accredited god of thunder and lightening, who possesses all the attributes of the Yoruba *Sàngó*. *Sàngó* was actually of both Ife and Nupe parentage from Oduduwa and Torosi, the daughter of Elempe, the Nupe king respectively. Hence, *Sàngó*, although an Oyo, had a Nupe maternal record. In the Oyo tradition, this provides a historical rationale for fixing the advent of *Sàngó* into Oyo-Nupe relations. He was known as *Etsu Shago*, who ruled in old Oyo, among the Nupe folk.<sup>60</sup> Documented legends also helped us to link *Sàngó* with *Oya*,<sup>61</sup> one Yoruba variant name for the River Niger. They were said to be husband and wife respectively. Meanwhile, in spite of the Christianisation and Islamisation of the Igbomina-Yoruba society, traces of *Sàngó*



worship and relics have survived, till date, in Igbominaland; for example, in Omugo and Oro-Ago.

Although some believe that *Ifa*, the Yoruba divination system, is indigenous to Yorubaland, many have, at least, attributed the penetration of the practice into the Igbomina country, and probably the entire Yorubaland through Nupe influence.<sup>62</sup> Obayemi has equally conjectured the likelihood of the introduction of *Ifá* oracle into the Yoruba homeland from Nupeland, arguing that '*Ifá* derives from the North of Yorubaland, although it is also a strong member of the central Yoruba pantheon'.<sup>63</sup> With reference to Nupe's early contact with Islam, Nupe names for satan: '*Shetan*', '*Abili*' or '*Ibili*', which are presumed to have been loaned from the Arabic language, must have crept into the Yoruba-Igbomina language from probable corruption of the Arabic words, *Satan* and *ibilis*. In Nupe language, the word *bili* or *elibi* comes from the fusion of *eli* (behaviour either good or bad) with *bi* or *bibichi* connoting evil, malevolence or something bad or incorrect. This is probably where the Nupe got the idea of '*ebi*' (faeces). One is however not too certain if there is a connection between this and the Yoruba word *ebibi* or *eebi* for vomit, since both refer to detestable discharges of body wastes.

The Nupe word *abili*, used to connote Satan, could also mean riot, trouble, pandemonium or mayhem, a state of chaos, all reminiscent of who Satan or the devil is to the Nupe. The Igbomina-Yoruba who undoubtedly had culture and commercial contact with the Nupe could have borrowed this idea for the word *abilii* to describe the event of an unexpected malevolence. For instance, when there is a sudden face-off between two jolly friends or when someone or something pleasant suddenly turns horrid or vile, the Igbomina-Yoruba people say that *abilii* is at work.<sup>64</sup>

From Nupe-Yoruba linguistic consideration, the touch of linguistic comparative analysis could also be turned to such words as are captured in the table below. Indeed, one is not too certain of the level of influence the Nupe words, either had on, or received from Yoruba:

S/N	Nupe <sup>65</sup>	Igbomina-Yoruba	Meaning
1	'eshé'	'osó'	male witches known as wizards
2	kàrà	àkàrà	bean cake
3	baba	baba	for male in Nupe; and father in Yoruba
4	rinà	alárinà	a conjugal middleman
5	yàwó	iyàwó	bride
6	lálì	làlì	hyena leaves dye
7	èjè	Noun form: <i>jìjẹ</i> , ' <i>ounjẹ</i> ' or its verb form ' <i>je</i>	food.

Others words which are believed to have been loaned from Arabic into Nupe lexicon.<sup>66</sup> might have crept into the Igbomina-Yoruba lexicon through cultural contact with the Nupe, with slight tonal modifications without losing their meanings. A few examples of such are as below:

S/N	Yoruba/Nupe	Arabic	Meaning
1	tuba	tawbah	apology
2	àníyàn	anniyah	intent
3	hàrà mù	haram	illegality
4	láfíyà	al-afiya	good health
5	àdùrà	ad-du'a	prayer or supplication
6	Kádàrà	Qadar	destiny

Indeed, the full impact of the cultural diffusion of the Igbomina, who were taken as slaves into Nupeland is yet to be determined. That may form the subject of a further research. As such, today, many of the Igbomina who are close neighbours to the Nupe, speak the Nupe language and conform in their whole social structure to the standards of Nupe culture. One significant distinction between the sub-groups and the Nupe proper, is that most people in these sub-groups are bilingual, and so, understand and speak both their own dialect, as well as Nupe proper.<sup>65</sup> It is particularly interesting that the incumbent governor of Kwara State, Abdulfatah Ahmed is a descendant of one of such communities—Share. Though believed to be Igbomina, he speaks the Nupe language. During his electioneering campaign, he addressed the Nupe speakers in the state in Nupe language in a telecast.

#### Classification of the Variants of Igbomina Dialect

The land and people of Igbomina were precariously balkanised by foreign imposters, both during the pre-colonial, as well as colonial epochs. During the pre-colonial era, whereas the Fulani took hold of Western Igbomina, the Nupe had a firm grip of the North-east of Igbomina. Nupe-Igbomina, as the place was termed, was derived from the long historical relationship between the Nupe and the inhabitants of Ora, Igbaja, Ile-Ire, Oro-Ago, Oke-Ode and others in the present day Ifelodun and part of Ilorin South local government areas of Kwara State. Igbomina was also polarised into three unequal sectional entities during the colonial era: the South-Western group under the Fulani, with headquarter at Ilorin; the South-Eastern Ila group, which precariously remained under Ibadan influence, and the North-Eastern fragment under the Nupe-Fulani based at Lafiagi.<sup>66</sup>

The distinct historical experiences of the Igbomina, under their culturally variant imperialists, would not but bequeath its own legacies on them.



Linguistically, the Igbomina, may be broadly categorised into the *Mo san* and *Mọ yẹ ẹ* dialectic grouping. The *Mọ yẹ ẹ* group, which fell under Lafiagi or Nupe control in the Northern<sup>67</sup> (North-Eastern<sup>68</sup>) section of Igbomina, comprised Oro-Ago, Ora, Ile-Ire, Oko, Olla, Oke-Ode, Idofin and Agunjin districts. The *Mo san* group, which predominately lived in the Southern<sup>69</sup> (South-Western<sup>70</sup>) section and which came under the Fulani rule, based in Ilorin in the pre-colonial era included Ajase, the Iwo group, Igbaja, Isin, Omu-Aran, Eku-Mesan Oro, Esie, Share, Omupo, Idofian and Ila Orangun Districts.<sup>71</sup> However, the Ila group (i.e. Ila Orangun, Oke-Ila-Orangun and Ora-Igbomina) in the South-Eastern section remains precariously under Ibadan influence. The *Mo san* group, however, may be further split into the real *Mo san* – (Isin area, for example) and the *Mo han*<sup>72</sup> – (Arandun area, for instance) groups. Even among the *Mọ yẹ ẹ* group, there are, even if, at least, slight variations among the Oro-Ago, Ile-Ire, Oko, Olla, Idofin and other variants.

An oral source, giving explanations to the dialectic differentiations, even among people of the same geographical region, provides a rather hypothetical explanation. The source argues that the water you drink [among other things such as food, dresses, contact with people of different languages, geographical and social factors] affect your tongue; and so explains the dialect diffusion of a people with the same historical and linguistic background—the Igbomina. The Osin River, which almost practically encircles Igbominaland,<sup>73</sup> to him, provides the answer to the linguistic conundrum. Though this might appear rather unscientific, on a cursory outlook, it might, at least, provide a working hypothesis for interested researchers in that area. In the same vein, among the *Mo san* group, there are the *Mo san* and *Mo han* sub-groups. An example of the *Mo san* segment includes Iwo, while Arandun provides an example for the *Mo han* fragment. Certain linguistic influences have also been identified in the form of borrowed words, salutations and accent variations from the Nupe and other Igbomina neighbours.

### Conclusion

In spite of being of the same linguistic stock, the Yoruba evidently have various dialectic variations of which the Igbomina can be distinguished. Although the common historical experiences of wars, oppression, deprivation, persecutions and adaptation, which blended the Igbomina people together, are still largely here with us. They have bequeathed to us some form of language influence or linguistic borrowing, in terms of loan words and intonation. The Igbomina, at least, still have a common language to show for it, but there seems to be more variant versions of the Igbomina than ever before, all broadly grouped under two broad linguistic groups. It has been noted earlier that each of the three 19<sup>th</sup> century major scramblers for Igbomina, eventually succeeded in having its own fair share or

chunk of Igbominaland. The South-Eastern section (Ila) fell into the hands of Ibadan; the South-Western Igbomina, under the Ilorin-Fulani, while the North-Eastern bloc (Oke-Ode and Oro-Ago) fell under the Nupe at Lafiagi.

From the foregoing, although the Igbomina, at least, still have a common language to show for it, however, these distinct historical experiences under their culturally variant imperialists, has bequeathed its own legacies on them. The dialectic variation evident in Igbominaland today occasioned by the linguistic borrowings which came through the commercial and religious value system transfer, is perhaps one of the most profound aspects of inter-group relations and foreign influence on Igbomina today. Through this, the Nupe, Hausa and Arabic languages expressions reached many parts of Igbomina and vast sections of Yorubaland, particularly with the emergence of pockets of Nupe, Hausa and Fulani settlements in Igbomina communities such as Ora, Share, Rore and Babaloma towards the closing years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>74</sup>

Obviously, Igbomina's strategic location as a frontier Yoruba state, turned her into a launch-pad; a battle-field among such intrepid imperial masters as Oyo, Nupe, Fulani/Ilorin, Ibadan and later the Europeans. Due to her strategic position in the Nigerian middle-belt, sandwiched among peoples of cultural and dialectic variations, she became an area of cultural interactions.<sup>75</sup> The historical antecedents-cum-experiences, as well as the peaceful disposition of the people as open-armed and hospitable people made them to receive with open arms folks and foes they should have successfully sternly resisted from outset.<sup>76</sup>

Foreign influence on Igbomina, from her various historic potentates (the Nupe, Fulani/Ilorin, Ibadan and Europeans) undoubtedly left their lasting imprints on the Igbomina; and that includes the area of linguistic and language borrowings which today has resulted into the dialectic variation of the Igbomina into the *Mọ yẹ ẹ*, *Mo san* and *Mo han* tongues. In this, the role of the Nupe, is perhaps, most profound.

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## WHERE CULTURE MEETS DEVELOPMENT: EKITI KINGS IN CONCERT (1900-1991)

Onipede Kayode Joseph\*

### Abstract

The challenges of development in recent times have impacted on kingship institution and culture in Yorubaland generally, and Ekitiland, in particular. This paper, motivated by the impact among Ekiti kingship institution and dearth of scholarly studies in the context of social change and development in kingship culture, examines the Ekiti kingship concert from 1900-1991. Data for the study were collected from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary source includes oral interview collected through structured and unstructured questionnaire, archival documents and private papers. Textbooks and journal articles were also used in the study. The data collected through these sources were analysed using descriptive and interpretive methods of historical features. Culture climaxed the institution of kingship as the apex of political authority in pre-colonial Yoruba and Ekiti society, where the king was the head of all authorities. The kingship institution was transformed to administrative institution by the colonial authority in 1900, when the kings became district heads as president, subservient to colonial control. The institution was formalised and hierarchical structure was introduced which snowballed into seniority clash against hitherto equality statuses of the Oba. The institution of the oba became subsumed under a new political system, and was subservient to subsequent political authorities. These challenges destroyed the culture of kingship but paved way for social rapport cum economic and political development of Ekiti society that has continued to the contemporary period. The paper concludes by stressing that government needs to acknowledge the diversity of the traditions and culture as a basis for cultural revival/development.

**Keywords:** Development, Culture, Monarchism, Institution, Relationship

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