

July, 1972

LTC No. 79

THE LAND TENURE CENTER
310 King Hall
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Migrant Farmers and Land Tenure in the Nigerian Cocoa Belt

by

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All views, interpretations, recommendations and conclusions expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of the supporting or cooperating organizations.

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Migrant farmers were not the pioneers of cocoa growing in Nigeria,¹ but they have played an important role in the post-World War II expansion of Nigerian cocoa production and their advent has inevitably affected patterns of economic activity and the character of economic institutions in parts of the cocoa belt. It is impossible in a short essay to document adequately every aspect of the immigrant farmers' impact on the Nigerian cocoa economy. In this paper, therefore, I shall briefly describe the migratory process and then discuss its effects on one aspect of the farming economy--viz., land tenure--in the cocoa belt.²

The migrant farmers I wish to discuss in this paper are largely Yorubas from savannah areas who have been coming to the Western Nigerian forests since the late 1930's in order to grow cocoa.³ By singling out this particular pattern

¹The pioneering role played by migrant farmers in the development of Ghanaian cocoa has been documented by Polly Hill, Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana (Cambridge, 1963). Other writers have often stressed the importance of migrants in spreading innovations from one West African society to another. See, e.g., A.L. Mabogunje, "Lectures on Regional Mobility in West Africa," (typescript, 1969). In Nigeria, the early development of cocoa growing was carried out largely by Yoruba farmers within the borders of their own city-states. S.S. Berry, "Cocoa in Western Nigeria, 1890-1940," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1967).

²This essay is based on research carried out in Nigeria in 1970-71, which will be more fully reported in a forthcoming study on the development of the cocoa economy in Western Nigeria.

³Some farmers have also moved from old cocoa growing areas, such as Egba and Ibadan, to eastern parts of the cocoa belt to obtain additional land. However, most of the migrant farmers one encounters there come from towns in Oshun Division in the Western State or from the Igbomina areas of Kwara State. In general, migration from savannah to forest belt in Western Nigeria has been ignored in the literature until recently. It is not mentioned, except for brief references to migrant laborers, in R. Galletti, K.D.S. Baldwin and I.O. Dina, Nigerian Cocoa Farmers (London, 1956). P.C. Lloyd thought, as late as 1962, that it did not exist. Yoruba Land Law (London, 1962), p. 88. In the last few years, however, it has begun to attract attention and several studies of different aspects of it are now underway. Agboola, C.O. Ilori and P.O. Olusanya of the University of Ife are studying patterns of migration from savannah to forest; B.A. Agiri, University of Lagos, has studied migration connected with

of migration, I do not mean to imply that other Nigerian cocoa farmers are sedentary. Yoruba agriculture characteristically involves considerable mobility. In the past, most Yoruba farmers lived in towns and either travelled to and from their farms each day or, if their farms were several miles away, erected huts near them where they slept during busy periods in the farming season.⁴ With the introduction of cocoa growing to Western Nigeria, farmers already resident in the forest belt began to move further and further into the forests to expand their cocoa plantings; eventually they built larger, more permanent communities in the cocoa growing areas. Even when they came to spend most of their time in these villages, however, farmers retained many associations with the towns and travelled there frequently for commercial, social or religious activities.

More generally, mobility has been characteristic of Yoruba economic and social life for a long time.⁵ Trade with the coast and with other parts of West Africa dates back for centuries; during the nineteenth century travel within Yorubaland was often interrupted by the wars, but increased again after the peace in 1893. During the next two decades, many people left their home towns and travelled to larger towns or to the coast to take advantage of expanding opportunities for trade or employment.⁶ In many of the interior towns and

(3, continued) the early development of kola production; M. Hündsalz, University of Ife, has collected material on migration to and from a number of towns in northern Oshun Division; and the Rural Economic Research Unit, Ahmadu Bello University, has studied the economies of several villages in Kwara State, including patterns of emigration.

⁴C.D. Forde, Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria (London, 1951), p. 15; R. Galletti, et. al., p. 85; P.C. Lloyd, p. 54; S. Goddard, "Town Farm Relationships in Yorubaland," Africa, XXV, 1 (January, 1965).

⁵See, e.g., P. Morton-Williams, "The Oyo Yoruba and the Atlantic Trade, 1670-1830," Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, III, 1 (1964); C.W. Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and Its Rulers (Oxford, 1961); S. Johnson, History of the Yorubas (Lagos, 1921).

⁶J.O. Oyemakinde, "A History of Indigenous Labour on the Nigerian Railway, 1895-1945," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Ibadan, 1970); conversation with B.A. Agiri.

villages I visited, people said that cocoa was introduced there by men who had travelled to Lagos or other parts of West Africa, as laborers or traders, and had observed people making money by growing and selling the crop.

Migration from the northern to the southern parts of Yorubaland seems to have begun towards the end of the nineteenth century as part of the general increase in movement following the peace. In general, it appears that the early migrants left home in search of employment and better opportunities to earn income than they could find at home.⁷ Some of the northerners became traders or managed to acquire training and skilled jobs, but most worked as laborers-- for trading firms, on the railway, on the docks in Lagos or on farms, where they encountered cocoa and other tree crops.⁸ Like migrants from towns in the forest belt, the northern Yoruba migrants were impressed by the evident prosperity of people engaged in growing and/or selling cocoa. They went to work as laborers on cocoa farms and soon learned how to cultivate the crop. Some individuals acquired the use of uncultivated land around Otta and began to plant cocoa for themselves.

Uncultivated forest land well suited to cocoa cultivation was not abundantly available in southern Egbaland or Colony Province, however, and by the early 1930's northern emigrants began to experience difficulties in expanding their own farms or finding land for their friends and relatives in this area. Accordingly, they began to look for land elsewhere. They were aided in their search by other migrants who had found work around Ife, where there turned out to be a great deal of uncultivated forest land.⁹ Northern Yorubas began

⁷Oyemakinde, pp. 24-25; J.B. Webster, African Churches Among the Yoruba, 1898-1922 (Oxford, 1964), p. 105; conversations with B.A. Agiri and M. Hündsalz.

⁸Some of the first cocoa plantations in Nigeria were established outside Lagos, near Agege, in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Many men from the interior found work there and later returned home, bringing knowledge of cocoa and other tree crops with them. Webster, op. cit., and "Agege: Plantations and the African Church," N.I.S.E.R. Conference Proceedings (March, 1962).

⁹See Appendix.

acquiring land and planting cocoa in Ife (and southern Oshun Division) as early as 1929. During the next decade, their first settlements (such as Aba Iresi, Imokore and Aye-Oba) grew rapidly; by the early 1940's, these places had become centers of local dispersal, where migrants coming directly from the north to plant cocoa in Ife found shelter, contacts with local landowners, and an opportunity to accumulate savings and acquire experience with cocoa growing in preparation for establishing their own farms.

During the 1940's, the number of people migrating from savannah towns to Ife appears to have increased greatly. In the early 1940's, the first migrants to settle at such places as Omifunfun, Asawure, or Onigbodogi found almost no one living there except for a few relatives or followers of the Ife landowners, who were engaged primarily in hunting and growing food crops. By the late 1940's, however, the stream of settlers had become a flood. People "rushed" to obtain land and plant cocoa, as several of my informants put it. In Ifetedo, 1948 is remembered as the year of the "influx of strangers."¹⁰ This rapid flow of immigration into the Ife forests continued well into the 1950's, until settlers began to find it difficult to obtain additional uncultivated land. Table 1 shows the approximate dates of establishment and first arrival of strangers in nineteen Ife villages. In most of them, my informants said that people had stopped coming there because there was no more uncultivated land available for planting cocoa. In Asawure, for example, the population doubled between 1952 and 1962 but, according to the present inhabitants, there has not been any uncultivated land available there since the early 1960's.¹¹ Although in some parts of Ife Division immigrants can still obtain uncultivated land today, since

¹⁰J.F.A. Ajayi and A.A. Igun, Population Census of Nigeria, 1963: Lists of Historical Events for Determination of Individual Ages (Ibadan, 1963).

¹¹Fashola, "Changing Landscape of Ifetedo Area," (unpublished essay, Geography Department, University of Ibadan, 1963).

the late 1950's, newcomers or earlier settlers wishing to expand their cocoa farms have usually had to go to Ilesha or Ondo to find land.¹²

Table 1. Dates of Establishment and Arrival of Strangers in Some Ife Villages

Village	Founded	First Strangers arrived	Last Strangers arrived
Aba Iresi	1929	1929	late 1940's
Abanata	1928	1945	1969
Akeredolu	19th century	mid-1950's	--
Amula Soji	19th century	ca 1960	still coming
Asawure	1936	late 1940's	ca 1960
Aye Oba	--	late 1930's	ca 1960
Banaba	19th century	1959	still coming
Egbejoda	1924	ca 1950	--
Ijipade**	19th century	--	--
Ishoya	before 19th century	ca 1936	--
Okoro	--	1947	--
Ologiri	1960*	1960	1968
Olope	1920's	1947	1960
Omidire	--	1947	late 1950's
Omifunfun	1934*	ca 1939	late 1950's
Onigbodogi	1947*	1947	early 1960's
Oniperegun	19th century	ca 1950	still coming
Shekunde	long ago	1931	--
Womonle	--	ca 1945	--

* The area was considered the farmland of an Ife family before this date, but there was no settlement there.

** There are no strangers in Ijipade.

¹²In their survey of soils in the cocoa belt, Smyth and Montgomery estimated that in the late 1950's, there were over 1,180,000 acres of uncultivated land with soils suitable for cocoa cultivation, including quite a bit of land in the vicinity of Ife and older cocoa farming areas such as Ibadan. Much of this "available" land is, however, classified as "old woody fallow" or even "grassland" rather than as forest. Under present techniques of cultivation, it is probably more profitable for cocoa farmers to move to areas where uncultivated forest land is available than to try to establish cocoa farms on old fallow land. Smyth and Montgomery, Soils and Land Use in Central Western Nigeria (Ibadan, 1962), pp. 191, 205; West African Cocoa Research Institute, Annual Report, 1962/63.

The direction and timing of this migration depended largely upon geographic and economic circumstances. The migrants' choice of Ife appears to have been determined mainly by the relative availability of good cocoa land there. Although there is no statistical information on the distribution of cocoa plantings in Ife and the eastern parts of the cocoa belt around 1930, many of my informants concurred with the opinion of one that "at that time, Ife farms stopped at Iyanfoworogi"--i.e., most of the area southeast of Iyanfoworogi was still uncultivated forest in the 1930's. Also, Ife's proximity to the migrants' home areas, compared to that of, e.g., Ondo, made it easier and cheaper for migrants to reach Ife in the first place and later to visit or communicate regularly with their home towns.

As far as timing is concerned, the beginnings of the migration from Egba, Ibadan and northern Yoruba communities to Ife and southern Oshun coincided by and large with the international depression of the 1930's. At first, it may seem paradoxical that the depression which, in the wealthy industrialized economies of Europe and North America, involved drastic declines in investment and massive increases in unemployment should have been associated with positive agricultural developments in Western Nigeria. However, this result is not so surprising when viewed in the context of Nigeria's colonial economic structure at that time. The principal economic activities in Nigeria in the 1930's were agriculture and commerce; industry was virtually nonexistent and the public sector fairly small.¹³ The depression affected the Nigerian economy primarily through its external trade. World prices of Nigerian export commodities fell sharply, with corresponding reductions in Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and capacity to purchase imports. "Between 1929 and 1931, the value of Nigerian

¹³G.K. Helleiner, Peasant Agriculture, Government and Economic Growth in Nigeria (Homewood, Illinois, 1966), pp. 13-14; A. McPhee, The Economic Revolution in British West Africa (London, 1926), esp. Ch. V; C. Liedholm, "The Influence of Colonial Policy on the Growth and Development of Nigeria's Industrial Sector," in C.K. Eicher and C. Liedholm, eds., Growth and Development of the Nigerian Economy (East Lansing, Michigan, 1970).

exports plummeted from £17.8 million to £8.8 million, the purchasing power of exports dropped by 38 percent, and the value of imports fell from £13.2 million in 1929 to £6.5 million."¹⁴ As a result, incomes of Nigerian traders and export producers declined and their demand for domestic as well as imported commodities fell accordingly, leading to declining incomes for people who produced for domestic markets as well. At the same time, the colonial administration in Nigeria was forced to cut its expenditures, both because the depression hurt its major source of revenue--customs duties--and because the British Government was less disposed than ever to subsidize the colonies.¹⁵ As a result, many government employees were laid off.¹⁶

Although incomes and spending declined throughout the Nigerian economy, there is little evidence that this led to large-scale unemployment. Instead, ex-government workers and traders whose businesses failed because of the depression tended to move into agriculture, where they could provide themselves with at least a subsistence income. One official report of this period refers to a "'Back to the Land' drift of unemployed clerks, artisans, etc., who are now growing their own foodstuffs,"¹⁷ and others noted that the supplies of, e.g., palm kernels offered to European trading firms increased in the early 1930's, despite declining prices. In Ondo, one official attributed this to the activity of labor released by timber concerns which were forced to close by the depression.¹⁸ In general, the depression affected skilled as well as unskilled

¹⁴Helleiner, p. 18.

¹⁵The cardinal fiscal principle underlying British colonial policy was that "the surest test for the soundness of measures for the improvement of an uncivilized people is that they should be self-supporting." Quoted in A. Pim, "Public Finance," in M. Perham, ed., The Economics of a Tropical Dependency (London, 1946-48), p. 226.

¹⁶See, e.g., Oyemakinde, pp. 127-131.

¹⁷Ilorin Province, Annual Report, 1932 (Nigerian National Archives, cited hereinafter as NNA).

¹⁸Ondo Province, Annual Report, 1931 (NNA).

workers and self-employed persons, so that a good deal of training and entrepreneurial talent, as well as unskilled manpower, moved into agriculture during the depression.¹⁹

Moreover, for farmers in the forest belt of Western Nigeria, cocoa appears to have been a relatively attractive economic crop and to have remained so during the depression, despite the fact that its price fell heavily.²⁰ The unit value of Nigerian cocoa exports fell by 67% between 1927, when the pre-depression price reached a peak, and 1934, when it reached its lowest level. The unit value of cotton exports fell by only 53%, from peak to trough, but the corresponding declines for palm kernels and rubber were 69% and 78%.²¹ Since cotton is grown mainly in the drier parts of Western Nigeria and yields considerably lower absolute returns than cocoa even today, when cocoa yields are lower than in the past, it seems unlikely that farmers had much incentive to switch from

¹⁹For example, J.A. Obisesan, who had worked as a railway clerk and then as an agent for different European trading firms, was forced to close his shop with the UAC in 1930 because of financial difficulties. He began to spend increasing amounts of time on his farms where he discovered that closer supervision improved the efficiency of his laborers. He became quite proud of his accomplishments as a farmer, remarking once in his diary that "God loves me much. A Man without any means...[does] farm work like a man possessing 100 souls." (Sept. 1, 1934) During this time, he also became increasingly concerned with cocoa marketing from the farmers' point of view and began to organize what eventually became the Cooperative Produce Marketing Society of Western Nigeria.

I heard a similar story about a produce buyer in Ife, named Jones Adeyeye, whose business suffered during the depression. In 1934, when "there was no other work for him," he settled down to farm on his family's land near what is now Omifunfun in southeastern Ife Division. He soon recognized the advantages to be derived from giving out land to the strangers who were beginning to come to Ife in order to plant cocoa. In fact, he did not wait for prospective tenants to seek him out, but went to Bajepade at Aye-Oba to recruit them. (See Appendix) When his tenants began to prosper from the cocoa they planted on his land, Adeyeye also planted cocoa for himself. His efforts were eminently successful. When he died in 1969, he had six cocoa farms of his own and his family has hundreds of tenants at Omifunfun, where they are the principal landowners.

²⁰Berry, pp. 149-52; Galletti, *et. al.*, pp. 340, 368-75; Perham, vol. I, pp. 97-98.

²¹Helleiner, p. 19.

cocoa to cotton during this period. And the SSVD Survey indicates that in fact Nigerian farmers continued to plant cocoa at an undiminished rate during the 1930's.²²

Finally, it appears from contemporary records that the depression may also have enhanced the relative advantages of farming in the forest belt as opposed to the savannah areas of Yorubaland. Official reports of the 1920's indicate that northern Yorubaland produced mainly foodstuffs and handicrafts which were sold in the urban markets of southern and, to some extent, northern Nigeria.²³ Foreign trading firms in Ilorin purchased shea nuts and some ground-nuts and cotton, but in general farmers found yam and guinea corn more remunerative than these export crops and hence preferred to grow them. During the depression, however, southern demand for foodstuffs "imported" from savannah areas appears to have declined--both because income fell and because more people took up farming and grew their own food crops. As a result, prices fell and by 1933 the export of foodstuffs from Ilorin Province had practically ceased. Expatriate firms' purchases of exportable crops had also dwindled to almost nothing by 1932 and 1933. See Tables 2 and 3. In short, the possibilities for earning cash income were so poor north of the forest belt in the 1930's, that the chance to do so by growing cocoa in the south may have appeared more attractive than ever to northern Yorubas, despite the steep decline in cocoa prices.²⁴

²²The Swollen Shoot Virus Disease Survey was carried out by the Nigerian Department of Agriculture in the late 1940's. A summary of its findings on the dates of planting of Nigerian cocoa is printed in Tree Crop Planting Projects (Western Nigeria Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Ibadan, n.d.), p. 16.

²³Information in this paragraph was compiled from Annual Reports for Ilorin and Oyo Provinces (NNA).

²⁴Similarly, the south offered relatively attractive prospects to other northern Nigerians in this period. In 1932, the District Officer in Ilorin noted that "bands of northerners," from Godabawa, Sokoto and Niger, had passed through Ilorin in the dry season looking for work. Cf., R.M. Prothero, "Migratory Labour from North-Western Nigeria," Africa (July, 1957).

Table 2. Price Indices of Some Staple Foodstuffs

Year	Lagos			Ilorin	
	Yam	Maize	Plantain	Yam	Guinea Corn
1927-29	100	100	100	100	100
1930	94	86	151	67-71	80
1931	94	86	151	33-56	18-26
1932	31	86	142	12-26	8-17
1933	31	75	57		
1934	31	75	57		
1935-38	31	69	57		

Sources: Southern Nigeria, Bluebooks; Ilorin Province, Annual Reports.

Table 3. Goods Purchased by Foreign Firms in Ilorin Province (tons)

Year	Palm Kernels	Cotton	Groundnuts	Shea Nuts
1924	502	354		290
1925	565	175		1,882
1926	693	257	256	2,065
1927	824	230	434	374
1928	563	181	806	1,890
1927/28		281	657	1,795
1928/29		405	430 (638)	1,538
1929/30				
1930/31			122	1,279
1931/32		99	36	931
1932/33		29	138	619
1933/34		60	182	400

Source: Compiled from Ilorin Province, Annual Reports.

If the relative worsening of other economic opportunities encouraged people to invest in new cocoa plantings and even migrate considerable distances to find good uncultivated land during the depression, the spectacular rise in cocoa prices after World War II greatly accelerated these trends. The price of cocoa began to recover toward the end of the war, doubling between 1943/44 and 1945/46. The following year it doubled again and continued to climb steadily to unprecedented heights. At the peak, in 1954/55 and 1955/56, the price which the Marketing Board paid for all cocoa purchased in Nigeria was £196 per ton--more than ten times the average price which trading firms paid in Lagos during the 1930's and early 1940's.²⁵ Unfortunately there are no reliable data on cocoa plantings after the mid-1940's, so that we cannot plot the impact of this phenomenal rise on new plantings. However, all of the oral evidence I was able to collect indicates that migrant farmers poured into Ife in the late 1940's and early 1950's, and the substantial increases in Nigerian cocoa output in the late 1950's suggest that a great deal of new planting took place during the price boom.²⁶

As migrants flooded into Ife in the 1940's and 1950's, and later moved eastward to Ondo, etc., their advent served to increase the demand for good cocoa land in these areas. In general, the spread of cocoa farming and the rising demand for land led to the development of a system of tenancy which was quite different from the older relationship between the head of a lineage or

²⁵Helleiner, Table II-B-1.

²⁶Some of the increased cocoa output of the late 1950's and early 1960's is undoubtedly attributable to the introduction of insecticides and pesticides to control capsid and black pod disease. However, capsid control would tend to increase output only once; thereafter its regular use would be required to maintain the higher level of output already achieved. Hence it is not sufficient to explain the continued rise of Nigerian output since the mid-1950's. According to A. Gorenz of the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria, the effectiveness of black pod control is too uncertain to warrant any overall assessment of its impact on output. Cf., Annual Reports of the Cocoa Research Institute.

community and outsiders who sought permission to settle on the lineage's or community's land. Also, over time, there has developed a market, if not in rural land, at least in immovable improvements on the land such as cocoa trees. And, as good cocoa land has become increasingly scarce in areas of extensive cultivation, the cost of acquiring either uncultivated forest land or established cocoa farms has risen. To some extent the migrants affected land tenure in the cocoa belt by extending or accelerating these developments which had already been initiated by the spread of cocoa cultivation. In order to determine whether they had any additional effects which might not have arisen from further cocoa planting by local farmers, I shall try to compare developments in Ife and Ondo with those in Ibadan--an area which did not experience a large influx of migrant farmers from other city-states.²⁷

Before the introduction of cocoa, the ownership of farmland in most Yoruba city-states was vested in patrilineages (idile). Any male member of the lineage had the right to farm on a piece of the lineage's land, but could not dispose of the land without the consent of the rest of its members. If a lineage grew too big for its farmland, individual members would have to seek land from other lineages. Permission was usually granted to outsiders (alejo or "strangers" to the lineage in question) on condition that the latter acknowledge the grantor lineage's superior claim to the land by annual gifts or contributions of produce (ishakole), and obey the authority of the lineage head. If the stranger decided to settle permanently with the new lineage, he was gradually absorbed into it, often through marriage. In that case, he could pass his farmland on to his children, but could not alienate it. (Neither could any individual member of the lineage, without the consent of the others). These rules were "not

²⁷I have collected information on the development of cocoa farming in over thirty Ibadan villages, in twenty-one Ife villages and in twenty Ondo villages; I have also done intensive surveys of four villages--one each in Ibadan and Ife, and two in Ondo.

so much concerned with rights in land as with immigration; a grant of land to a stranger suggests that he is planning to settle permanently in the community and it is for the leaders of the community to accede to this proposal; they may deny the right of permanent settlement to any person suspected of hostile intentions or of bad character."²⁸

The advent of cocoa farming tended to modify methods and costs of acquiring rights to farmland, but did not completely disrupt the old system. As Lloyd points out, customary rules concerning relations between a community head and a stranger treated the latter primarily as an immigrant and only incidentally as a user of land. But in the early twentieth century, Ibadans moved into the southern forests not to join or to conquer new communities, but to acquire a particular type of land for economic exploitation. By the time of the first world war, Ibadan hunters familiar with the forest had shown land to hundreds of farmers, who could not be readily absorbed into the hunters' lineages in the "traditional" manner; similar developments occurred later in Ife and Ondo. Although relations between these farmers and the families asserting prior claim to the forest areas retained some of the characteristics of the traditional dependent relationship between a Yoruba lineage head and strangers on the lineage's land, in some respects they came to resemble the predominantly economic relationship between a landowner and his tenants generally found in societies where cultivable land has long been a relatively scarce factor of production.²⁹

²⁸Lloyd, pp. 64-65. This very brief description of the ownership and transfer of rights to rural land in Yoruba communities before the advent of cocoa hardly does justice to the careful research which has been done on the subject. For more detailed information, see Lloyd, passim; H.L. Ward Price, Land Tenure in the Yoruba Provinces (Lagos, 1939); C.W. Rowling, "Land Tenure in Ondo Province" (NNA); West African Lands Committee, Minutes of Evidence and Papers and Correspondence (Printed for the use of the Colonial Office, 1916).

²⁹The transitional nature of the relationships between land holders and land users in the cocoa farming areas of Ibadan (and other parts of Western Nigeria) is reflected both in the terms people use to talk about them and in the nature of the land owner's and land user's obligations to one another.

These developments were reflected in changes in the form and amount of ishakole which tenants pay to landowners. In Ibadan, ishakole consisted originally of a small annual gift of produce--a few yams or a tin of palm oil--or of occasional labor service on the landowner's own farms. One witness told the West African Lands Committee, in 1913, that his father did not require any specific payment from farmers to whom he gave land, but the "tenants willingly rendered him any help they thought right." For example, "they helped us when we put up our father's house."³⁰ Another landowner, Chief J. Akinpelu Obisesan, referred frequently in his diary to services rendered him by his family's tenants. These ranged from hospitality offered him when he visited their villages to contributions to his family's festivities or labor on his own cocoa farms.³¹ In judging land disputes involving landowners and their tenants, the Ibadan Lands Court has often referred to the tenants' obligation to "serve" the landowner every year, either with gifts of palm oil or by actually working for him.³² Similarly, a number of the farmers whom I interviewed stated that they gave annual presents of foodstuffs to the owners of their farmlands.

Often, however, tenants paid ishakole in cash. This practice appears to be an old one in the Ibadan cocoa farming areas. Informants whose fathers had

(29 continued) Yorubas often refer to tenants as alejo (strangers), but this term may also refer to strangers who have no rights to land at all. Moreover, it does not distinguish between someone who is not a member of the lineage (omo idile) and someone who comes from another city-state (i.e., who is not omo Ibadan), although in some cases this distinction affects the terms on which a stranger may obtain land. (See below, pp. 19-25) Alternatively, a tenant farmer may be denominated olori oko (head or owner of the farm), because he owns the crops he has planted, but this term may also be used to refer to the landowner! In this study, I have followed the practice of English-speaking Yorubas and use the terms "landowner" and "tenant," but must ask the reader to bear in mind that they do not mean quite the same thing in Western Nigeria as they do in other societies.

³⁰West African Lands Committee, Papers and Correspondence, p. 203.

³¹J.A. Obisesan, Diary 1/1/1921, 19/4/1930, 7/9/1932 (Deposited in the University of Ibadan Library).

³²Ibadan Lands Court Records, cases 72/37, 74/37, 88/37, 84/37, 42/37, 134/52; Ibadan Native Court Records, case 1048/11.

begun planting cocoa around the turn of the century stated that they had always paid ishakole in cash, and cash payments of ishakole were stipulated in judgments by the Ibadan Native Court as early as 1914.³³ Farmers who acquired land south of Ibadan for planting cocoa after the first world war almost invariably paid ishakole in cash rather than in kind. Nevertheless, ishakole has not evolved into an economic rent in Ibadan. Usually the amount is nominal--5 shillings or 10 shillings per farmer--and remains fixed over time.³⁴ In some cases, ishakole is paid by a village as a whole rather than by individual farmers, but the amount rarely exceeds £1 or £2 and bears no necessary relation to the economic resources of the village. Similarly, variations in the amounts paid by individual farmers are not usually associated with differences in the size or productivity of their farms.

Before cocoa growing became widespread in Ife, an outsider or an Ife farmer seeking land from another lineage could obtain it with little difficulty; here, also, ishakole was only a token "present."³⁵ However, by the 1930's, the continued spread of cocoa cultivation in Ife, which was accelerated by the arrival of farmers from other Yoruba communities seeking land for growing cocoa, began to influence the terms on which farmers could obtain land for planting cocoa. Within the next twenty or so years, a system of tenancy developed in Ife which was more exclusively economic in character and retained fewer of the social and personal aspects of the traditional relationship between lineage head and stranger than the system of tenancy we have observed in Ibadan.

The early immigrants to Ife usually obtained land for planting cocoa in exchange for a small present to the head of the landowning family (e.g., a cutlass

³³Ibadan Native Court Records, case 163/14.

³⁴Based on my interviews. Cf., A. Obisesan to District Officer, Ibadan, 31/5/1918 (NNA, OYOPROF 4/5/12).

³⁵West African Lands Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Q 13,460; Ife Customary Court Records, case 420/29.

or two, salt, drinks and/or a small sum of money--usually less than E1 per acre) and a promise to pay ishakole annually. At first, the amount of ishakole bore little relation to the amount of land allotted to a stranger. Usually, a land-owning family asked the same amount of ishakole from each tenant regardless of how much land he cultivated (often the land was not even measured nor were boundaries clearly marked), although if a tenant acquired additional plots of land he was usually expected to pay additional ishakole.

However, the collection of ishakole in Ife differed from that in Ibadan in one important respect. In Ibadan, the amount of ishakole was nominal whereas, in Ife, although strangers paid a nominal amount at first, once their cocoa trees began to bear marketable amounts of fruit the amount increased significantly. Thus, a tenant might give a few yams each year to the owner(s) of his land until his cocoa began to yield. Thereafter, he paid a certain amount of dried cocoa--one hundredweight (112 lbs.) is the amount one most frequently encounters, although two quarters (56 lbs.) is not uncommon--or its equivalent value in cash every year for as long as he continued to use the farm.³⁶ If a tenant transferred his farm to someone else, through inheritance, pawning or sale, the new owner would continue to pay ishakole to the landowner.³⁷

³⁶Sometimes the amount of ishakole is stipulated in cash--e.g., E2/10 or E5 per tenant per annum. However, it is usually stated in kind, so that the value fluctuates from year to year with changes in the price of cocoa.

³⁷In recent years, the practice of collecting a substantial amount of ishakole on bearing cocoa farms has also begun to spread to Ondo, as migrant cocoa farmers have pushed eastward from Ife in search of more uncultivated forest land. As in Ife, the ishakole is usually fixed in terms of dried cocoa and tends to be 1 cwt. or less per annum. In some areas, this is beginning to create lineage rights in rural land similar to those which obtain in Ibadan and Ife. Strangers are shown land by an Ondo family farming in the area and they then pay an initial amount plus ishakole to that family. (Interviews in Idi Iroko, Omifon, Okeigbo; Ondo Customary Court Records, 038/61, 96/59, 284/62, 201/64, 192/62, 45/67) In other cases, they have obtained land from the chief (oloja) of a subordinate town and sometimes pay ishakole to him or his representative. (Interviews in Bamikemo which is under Ile Oluji, and Orotedo which is under Oro) The Oshemawe has sometimes attempted to assert his "customary" right to collect tribute from all strangers farming on Ondo land (Lloyd, pp.

Just as the economic value of ishakole has increased with the spread of cocoa cultivation and the movement of large numbers of farmers into forest areas well suited to the crop, so its non-economic aspects have declined in importance. Historically, the payment of ishakole carried with it overtones of the tenant's social subordination to or dependence on the landowner. In Ibadan, as we have seen, tenants were often expected to render service to the landowner, either by working on his farms or by helping with special projects such as building a house, and to join in his family's celebrations of marriages, funerals, chieftancy titles, etc. The landowner, in turn was responsible for representing his tenants in community decisions, for settling disputes among them and for seeing to their general welfare, in much the same way as a lineage head is responsible for the members of his compound.³⁸ In return, a tenant was expected to respect his landowner, and not to show hostility or arrogance or "seem to make himself a man of high (sic) value than the grantor" of his land.³⁹ In most of the Ibadan villages I visited, the head man (Bale) was either a member of the principal landowning family in the area, or an old and trusted tenant who could be relied upon to collect ishakole and to represent the landowners' interests in the village.

In Ife and Ondo, on the other hand, the non-economic aspects of ishakole appear to receive less emphasis. It is very unusual now for tenants to work on the landowner's farms without pay, although anyone who is short of cash may hire out his services temporarily to a neighbor--who may be the landowner or

(37 continued) 29-30), but individual families have resisted such attempts. (Interviews with the Oshemawe and with farmers in Ondo, Ajebamidele, and Oboto.)

³⁸Obinisan's diary contains several references to his family's authority over their tenants: e.g., "Some of the Aperins believe stupidly that they are to govern and are not prepared to respect the dignity and personality of the men under their feudal authority..." (28/6/35).

³⁹Ibadan Lands Court Records, 42/37; also 77/37, and Ibadan Native Court Records 103/11, 324/14.

another tenant. Many Ife and Ondo landowners do not live in their villages and visit there only occasionally. Often the tenants govern themselves, one of their number serving as Bale. In Ondo, some tenants prefer to pay cash rather than to participate directly in the landowner's family projects or ceremonies, and others refuse to contribute anything at all. In settling disputes, the customary courts in Ife and Ondo rarely concern themselves with non-economic issues, such as the tenant's social behavior or his attitude toward his landowner--unlike the Ibadan Lands Court, which frequently criticized tenants for arrogance or "ingratitude."

So far, I have discussed changes in land tenure which can be explained largely by the spread of cocoa growing, whether the cocoa is grown by immigrant or by local farmers. The system of tenancy I have described in Ife applies both to strangers and to local farmers. In Ibadan, there were few non-Ibadans growing cocoa in the village which I surveyed intensively, but this was because most of the strangers had arrived after cocoa land had become scarce in the area. They had come to take advantage of the market afforded by a prosperous cocoa farming community, by working as traders or craftsmen, rather than to grow cocoa themselves. In Ife and Ondo, most of the strangers I talked to had been able to obtain land or established cocoa farms on the same terms as local farmers.⁴⁰ The cost of acquiring either the right to plant cocoa on uncultivated land or established cocoa farms has risen in different areas when demand began to press on a limited supply of uncultivated forest land, but I have found no evidence to suggest that such costs were higher at any given time for strangers

⁴⁰Strangers do, however, often encounter difficulties in obtaining credit locally to finance the establishment or purchase of a cocoa farm. Hence, few northern Yorubas have started out by buying already established farms. In a number of Ife villages I saw separate cooperative loan or marketing societies which had been organized by immigrant farmers. Also, the fact that there were so many migrants from the north helped to solve their financial problems, since they often helped each other with housing, food and even labor while establishing their farms.

than for people indigenous to the area in question. The system of collecting a quantity of cocoa as ishakole was associated in Ife and Ondo with the advent of a large number of migrant farmers, but the amount collected from individual tenants has not increased over time and ishakole is usually asked of anyone from outside the landowner's lineage, regardless of the tenant's birthplace.

On the other hand, the presence of large numbers of outsiders growing cocoa may have facilitated the sale of cocoa farms in Ife. In all Yoruba communities, customary law distinguishes between land and man-made improvements on the land; the latter are considered to be the personal property of the individual(s) who made them.⁴¹ Thus, in all of the areas I have studied, tenants are allowed to pass their cocoa farms on to their heirs. Also, tenants may use their cocoa farms as security for loans. If a farmer wishes to borrow money he may "pawn" his cocoa farm to a creditor, who has the right to reap the cocoa and keep the proceeds for himself, as interest on the loan, until the loan is repaid. In some cases, part of the proceeds from the farm may count toward repayment of the principal, but this appears to be a fairly recent development.⁴²

However, if a tenant wishes to sell his cocoa or other tree crops outright, the possibility arises that the buyer will someday claim title to the land as well as to the trees. In Ondo, where until recently lineages did not have strongly vested rights to particular rural areas, such potential claims have never been considered much of a problem. Sales of cocoa farms occur frequently, and have done so since the early days of cocoa cultivation. In fact, it is more common for a farmer to sell a plot of cocoa in Ondo than to pawn it if he wishes to raise cash. A number of the farmers I interviewed had either bought

⁴¹Lloyd, pp. 13, 82, 310 and discussions of individual communities.

⁴²Ibadan Lands Court Records, 43/48.

or sold cocoa farms themselves, and others acknowledged the practice as usual and accepted.⁴³

In other areas where lineage rights in rural land have been more clearly established and closely guarded than in Ondo, landowners may be reluctant to permit tenants (or even members of their own lineages) to sell cocoa farms. This is particularly true in Ibadan, where many people still deny that cocoa farms may be sold at all and where the courts have, on occasion, prevented tenants from selling the trees they had planted.⁴⁴ Others admit that it is done, but they do not approve of the practice.

In Ife, on the other hand, although the principle that rural land belongs to local lineages antedates cocoa, landowners have offered much less resistance to sales of established cocoa farms by tenants. The chief difference between Ife and Ibadan which might explain this difference in landowners' attitudes toward sales of cocoa farms is the fact that most tenant farmers in Ibadan are from Ibadan, whereas in many parts of Ife they are strangers. Because Ibadan tenants belong to Ibadan lineages, who presumably have some rural land of their own in Ibadan, the distinction between landowner and tenant may easily become blurred unless great care is taken to maintain it. If both landowner and tenant come from the same town, the only way of establishing their positions with respect to a piece of land is to ascertain their economic rights to it, which will be indicated primarily by the transactions they have engaged in. In the absence of written agreements between owner and tenant, landowners must rely chiefly on witnesses to substantiate their claims to receive ishakole on a farm which has been sold. This can be a risky business, especially if the original grant of land occurred a long time ago. A tenant from another city-state, on the other hand, is easily identifiable as a stranger, with no possible lineage rights to

⁴³Lloyd, pp. 128-29, 311; Rowling; Ondo Customary Court Records, Grade B, passim.

⁴⁴Ibadan Lands Court Records, 74/47, 105/47.

local land. Thus, in Ife, where in many areas the majority of tenants are strangers, there is no question of a tenant claiming ownership of rural land--his ancestry is sufficient to rule out that possibility, without reference to his past land transactions. Thus, the presence of large numbers of stranger farmers in Ife may have facilitated the development of a market in rural landed property there, by providing an independent criterion by which to distinguish landowner from tenant and thus relieving landowners' fears of having their titles challenged by tree-owning tenants.

Indeed, the arrival of many immigrant farmers in Ife may, in itself, have helped to clarify the distinction between landowners and tenants there. There are, after all, Ife tenants in Ife, most of whom were tenants to other Ife families before the immigration began, but their existence does not appear to constitute the same kind of threat to Ife landowners as Ibadan landowners feel from their predominantly Ibadan tenants. We have seen that the line between landowner and tenant does seem to be more sharply drawn in Ife than in Ibadan: ishakole is closer to a form of economic rent in Ife, and there exist fewer mutual social obligations between landowners and land users than is often the case in Ibadan. That this distinction may be partly due to the predominance of strangers among the tenant cocoa farmers in much of Ife is suggested by the history of a land dispute (or, more accurately, series of land disputes) which escalated into a major political crisis in Ife before it was settled. This was the Ife-Modakeke dispute of the late 1940's and early 1950's.

The Modakekes were originally refugees who fled Oyo during the upheavals of the early 19th century and settled at Ife.⁴⁵ Their relations with the Ifes were not very cordial; there were open clashes after the death of Oni Abewella

⁴⁵On the history of the Modakekes' settlement at Ife and their relations with the indigenous inhabitants, see Johnson, pp. 230-33, 525ff, 646-48; Ife District, Organization Report (NNA); Ikire District, Intelligence Report.

ca 1850, and again during the Sixteen Years' War, when the Oyos sided with Ibadan whereas the Ifes were inclined to sympathize with the Ekitiparapo. An uneasy truce prevailed from 1886 until 1909, when the Modakekes left Ife town altogether, moving to their farms south and west of Ile-Ife or across the Shasha River to Gbongan, Odeomu and other towns in what is now southern Oshun Division. In the early 1920's, they were allowed to return to Ife town and settled in their own quarter there. Many Modakeke farmers planted cocoa, especially south of Ife town. In 1921, the District Officer (H.L. Ward Price) commented that "there must be about 5000 of them in different farms in the Ife district alone."⁴⁶ In 1949, Modakeke farmers were reported to be living in a large number of Ife villages.⁴⁷

In the late 1940's, a dispute broke out between the Ifes and the Modakekes over whether or not the Modakekes owned the land they were farming on in Ife Division. It began when an Ife man successfully prosecuted several Modakeke farmers for non-payment of ishakole. The customary court upheld the Ife's claim and ordered the Modakekes to pay 1 cwt. of cocoa apiece as ishakole; in effect, the decision declared the Modakekes to be tenants. The case set a precedent for several similar ones pending before the court and the Modakeke community became alarmed. They petitioned the government repeatedly, with complaints ranging from individual instances of harrassment or assault to charges that the Ife Native Court was biased against them and hence incompetent to adjudicate any case involving Ife claims for ishakole from Modakeke farmers. They were particularly incensed because a number of Ife families began to hire "Sobo" laborers to reap palm trees growing in Modakeke farms.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Oyo Province, Annual Report, 1921 (NNA).

⁴⁷"Ishakole: Collection of" (NNA, IFEDIV 1/1/113).

⁴⁸This was an effort on the Ifes' part to strengthen their claim to title over the land since, according to customary law, only the owner of a piece of land may reap the palm trees there, whoever may be using the land for other purposes. Ife Customary Court Records, 9/38, 86/69, and 1949 passim. Cf., Lloyd, p. 274.

As the number of individual court cases between Ifes and Modakekes proliferated, feelings in the community ran high. Efforts by the Bale and chiefs of Modakeke quarter to urge their people to compromise led to disaffection--at one point, a group of Modakekes petitioned the government to depose the Modakeke chiefs.⁴⁹ Various political organizations became involved. An Ife organization, known as the Egbe Omo Ibile (Society of Native Sons), tried to organize a campaign against the Oni and chiefs of Ife on behalf of Ife tenants and the Egbe Omo Oduduwa attempted to mediate between Ifes and Modakekes.⁵⁰ In May, 1949, there was a small riot in Ile-Ife, when police tried to arrest some Modakeke farmers accused of reaping palm trees unlawfully. Eventually attempts at a negotiated settlement failed and the issue was resolved only in 1953, when the Native Courts were legally empowered to attach immoveable property in order to enforce compliance with their decisions. Faced with the prospect of having their cocoa farms sold by court order, the Modakekes gave up and began to pay ishakole.⁵¹

From the official correspondence concerning this dispute, it appears that up until the 1940's Modakekes had grown both food crops and cocoa on Ife rural land, but had paid little or no ishakole. According to some of their own spokesmen, "the Modakekes have for years recognized the Oni of Ife as their suzerain, but since 1938 they have been subjected en bloc to arbitrary and unwarrantable demands of Ishakole...by individual Ife people."⁵² It is not clear how many of the Ife demands were for more ishakole from admitted tenants and how many were attempts to collect ishakole from farmers who had never previously paid it, but the fact that many Ife "landowners" had not previously bothered to try reaping

⁴⁹Ife Division, Annual Report, 1951 (NNA).

⁵⁰"Ishakole: Collection of."

⁵¹Ife Division, Annual Report, 1953 (NNA).

⁵²"Ife-Modakeke Dispute Court Cases" (NNA, IFEDIV 1/1/113B).

palm trees on Modakeke farms suggests that they had not been assiduous in collecting ishakole either.

With the sudden increase in cocoa prices of the late 1940's and early 1950's, the Ifes apparently used the precedent set by their relations with the early immigrant farmers to claim ishakole from another group of "strangers" in their midst. While the dispute was still in progress, a District Officer noted its wider implications: "the whole relationship between landlords and tenants, of whatever tribe, in the Ife district is being affected by the Modakekes' apparently successful stand against the Ife landowners."⁵³ On another occasion he commented that although traditionally ishakole consisted merely of a gift of yams in acknowledgement of the landowner's title, the Ifes had "made the most of cocoa...to extract an economic rent not only from Modakeke but from Ife and other tenants as well."⁵⁴ Whether these developments would have occurred as a result of the rising market price, had there not been a growing influx of immigrant farmers, is, of course, impossible to say. However, the outcome of the Ife-Modakeke dispute probably cemented Ife lineages' claims to rural landownership and helped to define relations between Ife landowners and all tenants in largely economic terms.

The spread of cocoa cultivation in the forests of Western Nigeria gave rise to a considerable amount of movement and, ultimately, geographical redistribution of the Yoruba peoples. People moved into uncultivated forest areas, first from towns located in the forest belt and later from savannah communities as well. The growing demand for forest land has tended to commercialize the rural land tenure system in Western Nigeria. Both exchanges of various rights to land and relations between land holders and land users have become increasingly economic in character and, in the case of land transactions, more expensive.

⁵³"Ishakole: Collection of."

⁵⁴Ibid.

These developments have been intensified by the movement of farmers from one Yoruba city-state to another. The migrants have not only increased the demand for land in areas such as Ife and Ondo, but also constitute an ethnically distinct class of tenant farmers there. Because they are readily identifiable as outsiders, their presence has served to sharpen the distinction between "landowners" and "tenants" and thus probably to accentuate the commercialization of relations between them.

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November, 1971

Appendix

The process by which Yorubas from the savannah areas first became involved in growing cocoa can best be illustrated by a few examples. The brief case histories which follow concern three towns or groups of settlements in the northern parts of Yorubaland. One of these--Isanlu-Isin--I visited because its people are widely reputed to have played a pioneering role in the migration to the cocoa belt. In some Ife and Ondo villages, all Yoruba migrants from savannah areas are referred to as "Isanlus" although in fact they come from many different towns. I actually found people from Isanlu itself in ten of the twenty Ife villages I visited and also in several places in Ondo. [There were Isanlus in: Aye Oba, Amula Soji, Asawure, Okoro, Omidire, Omifunfun, Onigbodogi, Oniperegun, Shekunde, Aba Orafidiya. I was also told of many Isanlus in Olode, Mefoworade.] There was a sizeable group of Isanlus in Omifon--one of the two Ondo villages where I conducted a series of detailed interviews with local and stranger farmers. Isanlu-Isin is actually the principal town of the Isin group which, according to the chiefs of Isanlu, includes seven smaller towns and eleven subordinate villages in addition to Isanlu itself.¹

In Abanata, the Ife village which I surveyed in detail, most of the immigrant farmers came from two "sister" towns in northern Oshun Division--Eripa and Iree--and I have compiled historical information about migration from these two communities from my interviews in Abanata. Finally, I also interviewed a group of farmers from Iresi, a town about seven miles east of Eripa and Iree. The Iresis consider themselves to have been one of the first groups to obtain land for cocoa growing in Ife Division. (Their Ife landlord supports this claim.) These three communities obviously cannot be considered a "representative

¹For brevity, I shall henceforth refer to Isanlu-Isin simply as Isanlu, but should point out that it is quite different from Isanlu Makutu which is also located in Kwara State.

sample" of all the savannah communities from which people have gone to farm in the cocoa belt, but their experiences are similar to those described to me more briefly by farmers from other towns, and their stories may serve to illustrate the migratory process.

Isanlu-Isin²

According to tradition, the first oba of Isanlu (the Olusin) came from Ile-Ife to settle at Isanlu. He was later joined by others from Ife, Iseyin and Oyo. As the community expanded, people established the other Isin towns and villages. The people of the Isin group are part of the Igbominas, a sub-group of the Yoruba speaking peoples.³ Isanlu warriors fought together with other Igbomina soldiers during the nineteenth century wars; during the Sixteen Years War in the late nineteenth century, they supported the Ekitiparapo.⁴ After the wars, people could move about more freely and some began to leave Isanlu for Lagos and other towns in Western Nigeria, where they traded or worked as laborers.

Sometime before 1930, a young man from Isanlu named Ogagba Bolarin followed the example of his fellow townspeople and went to Lagos in search of work.⁵ At first he worked as a laborer for a produce buyer in Lagos; then he and three other Isanlus went to Otta area in Egba Division to weed farms and cut palm fruit. At Otta, he and his companions saw farmers growing cocoa and making money from it. They decided to try cultivating it themselves and approached their employer for some land, which he gave them. They paid money when they were allotted land but did not pay ishakole to the grantor afterwards. However, they were not considered owners of the land.⁶

The village where Bolarin and his companions went to farm was Oganna, near Otta. Oganna was a center for migrants from the northern parts of Yorubaland who came to work as farm laborers in the Otta area. At Oganna, the migrants obtained shelter upon their arrival and information about jobs in the area. The present Bale of Oganna is from Ikirun.⁷ After Bolarin and his companions

²Sources: Olusin and Chiefs of Isanlu-Isin; five farmers in Isanlu; Ogagba Bolarin in Imokore; E. Afolayan in Aye-Oba; B.A. Elujobade in Ifetedo. Some of these details were subsequently corroborated by B.A. Agiri of the History Dept., University of Lagos, who has done research on the development of kola growing in southern Egba and Ijebu areas.

³Forde, pp. 71-75.

⁴Johnson, pp. 439-44; S.A. Akintoye, "The Ekitiparapo and the Kiriji War" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Ibadan, 1966).

⁵The exact date is uncertain. Bolarin himself said it was after the railway had reached Ilorin--1907. A junior brother of Bolarin's, whom I met independently at Aye-Oba in Ife Division, said that he had gone to work near Agege in 1919, but did not indicate whether he left Isanlu before or after his brother.

⁶Cf. Lloyd, esp. pp. 275-6.

⁷I am indebted for this information to B.A. Agiri, University of Lagos.

had planted cocoa at Oganna, he returned to Isanlu and told people that there was money in growing cocoa. Some Isanlus followed him back to Oganna to grow cocoa for themselves.

The Isanlus remained at Oganna for several years, but their cocoa farms did not do very well, and they found it difficult to obtain additional uncultivated land in the area. So when some of the Ikiruns at Oganna reported that there was good cocoa land available near Orile Owu (in present day Southern Oshun Division), Bolarin and the other Isanlus decided to move there. In 1932,⁸ they obtained land at a village called Imokore; it turned out to be very good for cocoa and when they sent word of this home to Isanlu, more people came to join them from Isanlu and other Igbomina towns. Some, including Ogagba Bolarin, still live there.⁹

Igbominas came to Imokore in such numbers that they soon exhausted the available supplies of uncultivated forest land in the immediate vicinity. By the late 1930's, they began to move on to Ife, where an Isanlu man named Bajepade had obtained farmland from the Oni of Ife ca 1935.¹⁰ Some people settled at Aye-Oba with Bajepade; others obtained land in different parts of Ife Division, especially in the forests south and east of Aye-Oba. Among the villages I visited, Isanlus claimed to have been the first strangers to settle in Omifunfun, Amula Soji, and Aye-Oba, arriving in the late 1930's and 1940's. Many people went first from Isanlu to Imokore or Aye-Oba, where they learned how to grow cocoa (often by working as laborers for a year or two) from the Isanlus already settled there, before seeking land of their own. Many later acquired land and planted cocoa in several places, using the proceeds from their first farms to develop additional ones. Today, the sons of some of the early migrants have established farms in Ilesha or Ondo in addition to those their fathers planted in Ife.

⁸Bolarin's brother gave the date of the move to Imokore as Nov., 1932. Bolarin said that this brother was the only educated member of his family and had written down the date at the time. The Olusin of Isanlu said that the move to Imokore occurred in 1933, the year that his father was installed as Isanlu, which closely corroborates Bolarin's brother's information.

⁹Ogagba Bolarin seems to have been an influential man among the Isanlus. The Olusin and Chiefs of Isanlu described him as "the man who led the Igbominas to the West." He is a herbalist and babalawo as well as a farmer and blacksmith, whom people consult for guidance on dealing with illness and other problems. Isanlus whom I met in different Ife villages spoke of him with respect, which seemed to corroborate the Olusin's description. Bolarin's own account of the move from Oganna to Imokore was as follows: At Oganna, some Ikirun people asked him to consult the Ifa oracle concerning their future. Bolarin learned from the oracle that the Ikiruns would go to Imokore to plant cocoa. He then asked them to let him know whether the land at Imokore was indeed good for growing cocoa. They sent word that it was, so he and his people followed the Ikiruns to Imokore, where the Ikiruns helped the Isanlus obtain land.

¹⁰Several sources in Ife mentioned Bajepade as the first Isanlu to have settled in Ife. He apparently worked as a laborer in Ife for several years, before approaching the Oni for land. He then became a tenant on the Oni's own family land at Aye-Oba. Interviews with B.A. Elujobade; Bale of Aye-Oba; chiefs and farmers in Isanlu.

Iresi¹¹

Cocoa was introduced to Iresi in the 1920's. Some people started to plant it on nearby uncultivated forest land belonging to Ila, but the Iilas drove them away. One of these nearly planters, a man named Joesph Oladiran, had two brothers who were working as pit sawyers near Ife. When he told them, in 1928, that the Iilas had destroyed his cocoa farm, they offered to help him find land in Ife. They appealed to one of their Ife clients, who was sympathetic to their request for farmland but had none to spare at his own village (Ogbagba--see Map). He did, however, approach various Ife families on the Oladirans' behalf and, after several months, found one--the Abeweilas--who agreed to accept the Oladirans as tenants. (The Abeweilas said that, at that time, the Oladirans' request for uncultivated forest land on which to plant cocoa was considered unusual; the family deliberated for some time and held a general meeting before deciding to give out part of their land.)

In 1929, Joseph Oladiran and his wife started to farm on the Abeweilas' land; the following year, one of his brothers left his work as a sawyer and joined him on the farm. During the next few years, more people came from Iresi to plant cocoa at Ife. The Abeweilas, most of whom lived and worked in Ife rather than on their farmland, put Joseph Oladiran in charge of allocating farmland to each newcomer, and the strangers' settlement was called Aba Iresi after their hometown. Later people also came from Eripa, Ikirun and Ilorin to settle at Aba Iresi; there are now five villages on the Abeweilas' land, populated almost entirely by non-Ife Yorubas. The Abeweilas themselves had not planted cocoa before the Iresis arrived and began to do so only when they observed how much money the Iresis were earning from their cocoa farms.

By the late 1930's, most of the Abeweilas' forest land had been cultivated or allocated to potential farmers, so people coming to Aba Iresi for land had to look elsewhere in Ife Division. Also some of the early settlers discovered that their plots of cocoa did not yield as well as their neighbors'; accordingly, they too sought better land in other parts of Ife--e.g., at Bolorunduro and Ogudu. Aba Iresi became a stopping place for migrants from Iresi and neighboring towns, just as Imokore and Aye-Oba were for Isanlus. Newcomers lodged at Aba Iresi while they looked for land of their own, or settled down there for a year or two to learn the techniques of cocoa cultivation and save money for starting their own farms, by working as laborers for the farmers already established there.¹² A number of the farmers from Eripa and Iree who eventually settled at Abanata had come there via Aba Iresi.

Eripa and Iree¹³

Like the Isanlus and people from other Yoruba towns, men from Eripa and Iree first encountered cocoa around Lagos and southern Egbaland, where they had

¹¹Sources: Abeweila family, Ife; Afolayan and his son, Dr. A. Afolayan of the University of Ife; Bale of Aba Iresi; Mrs. Oladiran; Rev. G.A. Bamikole, Ijebu-Ode.

¹²In 1936, the Oni of Ife wrote to the District Officer: "We in Ife require labour from other places too, like Irehe, Iresi and Erin in Ibadan Division, Oye and Ifaki in Ekiti and Offa in Ilorin Division." (NNA, IFEDIV 1/1/112).

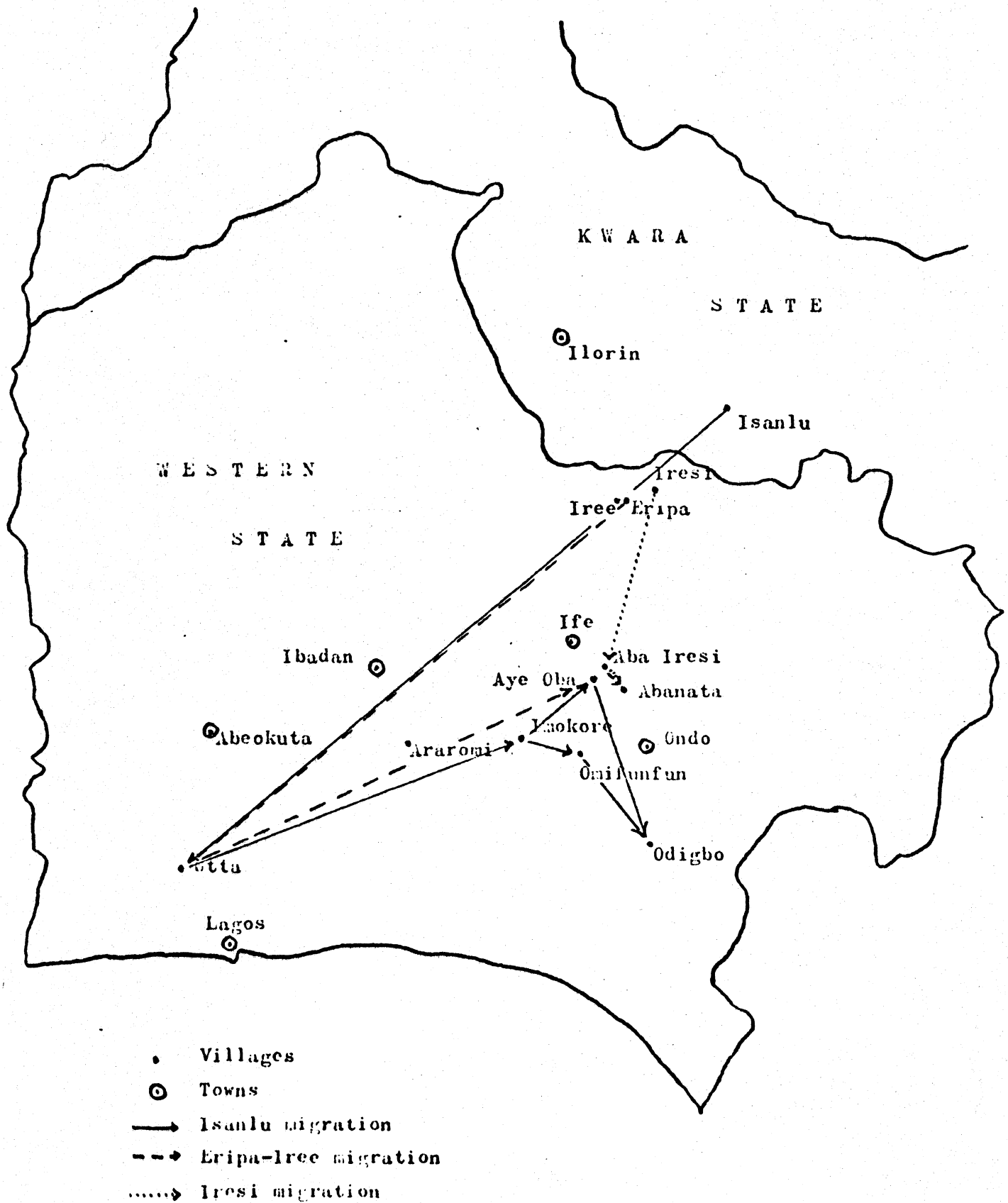
¹³Sources: Interviews in Abanata; Rev. G.A. Bamikole; Hündsalz.

travelled to trade or work. Jacob Okediji, now the head of the strangers at Abanata village in Ife Division, first went to Lagos around 1920, seeking employment. At first he worked as a laborer, clearing farms and headloading produce, at Ijoko-Ata (near Otta); later he obtained land there and planted cocoa. Like Ogagba Bolarin, he gave presents to the owner of the land, but paid no ishakole. His cocoa did not yield well however, so after some time he sold it and went to Ife, where his son was teaching school at Aba Iresi. Through a half-brother who was also living at Aba Iresi, Okediji met the Bale of Abanata, who agreed to give him land. Jacob Okediji came to Abanata in 1949. At that time there were only three Ife families, a man from Erinle¹⁴ and two brothers from Iree farming at Abanata, but Jacob Okediji sent word home that there was plenty of good land there and before the end of the year, more people began arriving from Eripa and Iree.

Most of the tenants at Abanata arrived during the early 1950's, several after spending a year or two at Aba Iresi or another Ife village such as Olode. Since then, some have gone on to acquire land and plant additional farms (either for themselves or for their sons or junior brothers) at such places as Igbo Olodumare, Etioni and Aba Ijesha.

¹⁴The first tenant to reach Abanata came from Erinle in 1945. Like Jacob Okediji, he had first gone to Lagos where he rented a hearing cocoa farm at Agege. Later he went to Ife; he first obtained land at Balogun village, but his cocoa didn't grow well there, so he moved on to Abanata.

SAMPLE MIGRATORY PATTERNS



IFE DIVISION

To Ibadan

To Ede

To Ilesha

GBONGAN

ASHIPA

IPETUMOLO

EDUNABON

IFE

Akaredolu

Ishoya

Ladin

Iyanfoworogi

Ogbagha

Abata Egba

Aba Iresi

Aye Oba

Abanata

Bantaba

Olode

Omidire

Ijipade

Asawure

Shekude

Egbejoda

Oniperarun

Ologiri

IFE
FOREST
RESERVE

Okoro

Omifunfun

IFEEDO

Olope

Amija

OKEIGBO

Onigbodogi

Soji

To Ondo

Mejoworade

SHASHA FOREST

Towns

IFE



RESERVE

Villages

Olode



Main Roads



Divisional Boundary



Forest Reserve Boundary

