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THE POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION  
OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE  
RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA

BY

LAWRENCE A.B. IYAGBA

Submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
University of Glasgow  
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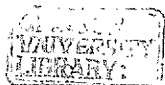
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Dedicated to  
BOMA and OJUAPU

ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the politics and administration of community development in the Rivers State of Nigeria. Prior to the creation of the Rivers State in 1967, efforts had been made by the people to improve their local communities; and the people's attainment of political autonomy presented enormous challenge in the task of local development. Today, both at the local and state government levels, resources are mobilised so as to improve living conditions in the state. There are new expectations in a new state.

At the local level, there are different participants in community development, namely, planning committees, chiefs, elders, youths and communal patrons. However, neither are all participants in community development united, nor is there a widespread consensus about political interests and values among the people. In some communities, there are political disputes and power struggles among the different participants, thus affecting the pace of local development. Nevertheless, all the participants appreciate the need for development. At the official level, there are planning bodies, Rural Development Officers, Sole Authorities, Permanent Secretaries and Commissioners who make or influence decisions in respect of community development. Of the different participants in community development, this work shows that those of the patron class are the most eminent, not only in the locality but also in the public service. Hence the patron is in a position to play a 'linkage role' between the locality and Port Harcourt, the seat of administration. The linkage role of the patron largely explains the fact that rural polyethnic politics is projected into Port Harcourt.

Hence this thesis casts light on: the politics of communalism, the activities of the different participants in community development and the emergence of community influentials. One of the main themes of the thesis is that, given the general pattern of expectations in a new state, even as an administrator, the community influential (the patron) will always protect the interests (whether they be real or imagined) of his people. In short, the main argument is that administration has no purpose other than to serve the political goals of the different communities in the State.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I wish to thank all those who have helped me to obtain information for this work. In the local areas, many chiefs, elders, development committee officials, and other dignitaries generously gave their time to inform me about their functions and activities in the task of community development. In addition, while in the Rivers State on field work, most of the people were very hospitable and kind to me. In Port Harcourt, many public servants (particularly, Chief Biriye, Dr. Akobo, Messrs. Tsaro Wiwa, Kobani, Ateli and Wokocha) granted me several interviews. Besides, I had access to official papers relating to my field of study. I would like to record my indebtedness to all these officials.

I am most grateful to my supervisor, Mr. Martin Staniland, for his unflinching support and guidance. His comments and criticisms have been very helpful. Professor G. Parry also went through this work, especially in the final writing stages; in fact he was involved in a quasi-supervisory capacity. Both Messrs. Christopher Hood and Collins Baker made very helpful comments on certain parts of this work. I am greatly indebted to all of them.

Finally, whilst engaged upon this thesis, I have been financed by the Rivers State Government; my thanks are to them for the grant.

POSTSCRIPT

On 29th July 1975, the government of General Gowon was overthrown in a military coup. Nigeria's new leader, Brigadier Mø Mohammed, has appointed twelve new Governors for the States. The newly appointed Governor for the Rivers State, Lt. Colonel Z. Lekwuot, has formed his own cabinet. However, this work does not cover the events in the Rivers State since the coup.

INFORMATION FOR THIS STUDY

Information for this work has been collected from a number of sources. The bulk of the material was collected from a number of primary sources: interviews, private papers, official documents, minutes of local development committee meetings, and general reference works. Secondary sources were also used, especially for Chapter 2.

Of the primary sources, interviews were the most challenging and interesting. It was a great opportunity to meet and talk with the people who have been actively involved in the activities covered by this study. As far as possible, attempts were made to see most of these local dignitaries and Port Harcourt officials whose roles in community development are of primary importance. However, because of certain factors - the poor communication network in the state, my limited time and financial resources - it was not possible to meet all those who are connected with the events which I have recorded. Besides, some were unwilling to talk about their activities; others warned me not to ask too many questions. Naturally, the availability of the materials has influenced the shape and nature of this work.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Ag	Acting
AG	Action Group
ARDO	Assistant Rural Development Officer
Asst	Assistant
CC	County Council
CPP	Convention Peoples Party
CRDO	Chief Rural Development Officer
Dev	Development
I/C	In Charge
MP	Member of Parliament
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (later known as National Council of Nigerian citizens)
NDC	Niger Delta Congress
NPC	Northern People's Congress
P.H.	Port Harcourt
PRDO	Principal Rural Development Officer
RDO	Rural Development Officer
R.D. Org	Senior Rural Development <del>Officer</del> <i>Organiser</i>
SRDO	Senior Rural Development Officer
Suptd	Superintendent



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION.

BACKGROUND.

In recent years, political scientists have shown an increasing concern with central-local relationships in African countries. Of great interest is the variety of social, economic and political networks which tie the locality to the centre. Some writers examine the bureaucratic relations between the centre and the locality; others analyse the politics of ethnic solidarity and the role of local notables in diverting central resources to the locality. Interest has also centred on the pooling of resources by each of the local communities for development purposes, and the role played by the central government in assisting or directing these processes of change in the rural areas.

One major theme running through these works is that both the people and the governments are making, or have made, attempts to bring about improvements in the rural areas - in different ways, using different strategies. The point is that in dealing with these strategies for rural development, the different writers analyse different aspects of central-local relations in African countries. In general, the aspects they analyse relate mostly to the notions of distributive politics, communal particularism and the manipulative ability of the politicians and policy-makers. Of particular interest to this study are the works of Owusu, Dunn, Robertson, Lamb, Miller, Smock, Wolpe and Melson which will be summarised in the section that follows for the purpose of showing the similarities (and dissimilarities) between this work and theirs.

Maxwell Owusu<sup>1</sup> explores the notion of distributive politics in Ghana. His analysis shows that in a political market, allegiance is determined by the goods on offer. He, therefore, explains the ease with which the

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<sup>1</sup>M. Owusu 'Politics in Swedru' in D. Austin & R. Luckham, eds., Politicians and Soldiers in Ghana, 1966-1972. London. 1975. pp 233-260.

Nkrumah regime in Ghana was swept away by the army when the C.P.P. ceased to attract widespread approval, apparently because of scarcities in the market. He concludes that if the distributive government runs out of benefits needed to keep intact its network of political alliances, the clients, if they can, will go elsewhere - as happened in Ghana. Hence Owusu's description of voters attitudes is one of an 'instrumentalist' view of politics - governments as instruments of disbursement via an intermediary elite to the electorate. In his view, the Ghanaian army won great support not only because of its claim to be a 'righteous government' but also because it promised a restored world of plenty. Owusu therefore implies that in Ghanaian politics, the 'profit motive' is of great importance, especially to the clients. In short, clients will continue to support any government as long as they profit.

However, writing about political events in Ghana in the same period, John Dunn<sup>1</sup> lays less stress on the notion of distribution; rather he emphasises the strength of personal obligations, traditional loyalties or ethnic ties within the constituencies. Furthermore, he emphasises the indispensability of the role of cultural brokers: roles which are culturally approved in Ghana. He throws some light on the moral credibility of the leaders' presentation of themselves as brokers. His conclusions about the activities of these brokers and the levels at which they operate confirm that the politics of Ahafo have always been "a politics of faction"<sup>2</sup> at a lineage, a town, or divisional level, rather than a politics of class;<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Dunn 'Politics in Asunafo' in D.Austin & R.Luckham op. cit. pp 168-208.

<sup>2</sup>There is an illuminating discussion of factionalism in local politics in M.E.Spiro 'Factionalism & Politics in Village Burma' in M.J.Swartz, ed., Local-Level Politics London, 1969 pp 401-20.

<sup>3</sup>Kenneth Grundy also discusses how African leaders have rejected the use of class for analysing political, social and economic relationships in Africa. See K.Grundy 'The Class Struggle in Africa : an examination of conflicting theories' JMAS. Vol. 2, 1964, pp 379-93.

a class struggle between kinship groups and places rather than between geographically dispersed economic interests"<sup>1</sup>. Dunn's emphasis is on the insistent recurrence of 'localist values' in elections - that is, the politics of ethnic solidarity.

Dunn's account does not of course suggest that compared with clients in Swedru, clients in Asunafo are less profit-seeking. Rather he examines another aspect of the 'profit motive' in politics: in Asunafo the clients vote for the 'insider' (as against the outsider) who is most likely to further the interests of the group in the larger political arena.

These works - Owusu and Dunn - dealing with the notion of a political stock exchange and the brokers have examined only one aspect of central-local relationships. The other writers focus on (i) policy making and aspects of competitive politics in the bureaucracy (ii) local expectations of the central government in the distribution of resources, and (iii) ways in which the centre exercises control over the periphery.

In contrast with Owusu and Dunn, the aspects of central-local relationships which are of great interest to Robertson<sup>2</sup> and Dunn<sup>3</sup> are the patterns of inter-group competition for central government benefits and the functions of local councils. Their observation is that in the rural areas the vagueness of popular understanding of the structure of the public service could be contrasted with the clarity with which its proper functions are

<sup>1</sup>J. Dunn 'Politics in Asunafo' in D. Austin & R. Luckham op.cit.

<sup>2</sup>A.F. Robertson & J. Dunn. Dependence and Opportunity: Political Change in Ahafo. London. 1973.

<sup>3</sup>In this context I am drawing a line between the two works of the same writer - Dunn - because different aspects of central-local relationships are examined in his two works. I do not, however, suggest that there are two different Duns, except in terms of Dunn's two areas of interest as reflected in his works.

perceived: the government should provide the amenities "which have become the modern requisite of communal aggrandisement"<sup>1</sup>. They observe that because the Ahafo are opportunistic, the exploitation of opportunities is obligatory, the main protagonists (the politicians) are impelled not simply by personal interest but by communal responsibilities. Their conclusion is that because of the keen competition for group benefits, the astute politician in Ahafo is watchful for every opportunity.

It is suggested that competition between groups arises mainly because the state is the major source of money and opportunities. And in the case of the Ahafo it is the 'patriotic politician', and not other local notables, who is watchful for every opportunity to promote the cause of his people.

Regarding the role of the politician in these inter-group competitions for state benefits, the conclusion of Robertson and Dunn in relation to the Ghanaian situation is by no means unique. Lamb's<sup>2</sup> study of rural politics in Kenya complements the conclusions of Robertson and Dunn. Not only does Lamb examine the role of the government in the rural areas, but points out that politicians have fought over power, wealth and status. He adds that these peasant<sup>3</sup> leaders have influenced the distribution not only of political power but also of economic resources in the countryside. The conclusion is that at the local level the politicians use their political power to influence the distribution of resources. In short, as in Ghana, the politicians in Kenya are watchful for every opportunity to advance both their interests and those of their people.

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<sup>1</sup>A.F.Robertson & J.Dunn, op.cit, p.294.

<sup>2</sup>G.Lamb. Peasant Politics. Sussex. 1974.

<sup>3</sup>For debates concerning the direction of peasant politics in Africa, see T.Shanin, ed. Peasants and Peasantries. Harmondsworth. 1971.

These political aspects of the centre-periphery relationships which highlight the role of the important political figures in the rural areas are also analysed by Miller<sup>1</sup> in relation to the situation in Tanzania. However, Miller concentrates on the patterns of communication between the various upper levels of the government (TANU) and the people. Most important of all, he shows that besides these communication links between the government and the people, responsibility for the mobilisation of local labour for the building of rural schools and hospitals lies with important political figures. Again the rural party organisations have several notable characteristics: they are the institutional nerve endings of the national party structure; they are also the local institutions by which the people are brought into the national political arena and through which the 'commands' of the governing elite (the politicians) are channelled. Hence participation in rural institutions, such as the political party, the local councils and local voluntary associations is fused. In other words, in Tanzania, both the ordinary people and the politicians participate actively in matters concerning the welfare of the state and the locality.

But the question is: what factors account for the active participation of people in matters concerning the locality? It is this question which Wolpe<sup>2</sup> discusses in relation to the Ibos of Nigeria. Wolpe examines two factors which account for the active participation of the Ibos in matters concerning the welfare of the primary or larger ethnic group. These factors relate to Ibo organisational adaptability and internal political cohesiveness<sup>3</sup>. Wolpe

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Miller 'The Rural African Party: Political Participation in Tanzania' in APSR Vol. 64, 1970, pp 548-71.

<sup>2</sup> H. Wolpe 'Port Harcourt: Ibo politics in microcosm' in JMAS Vol. 7, 1969. pp 469-93.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Wolpe also explains that the pan Ibo movement which preaches Ibo unity is a recent creation; that it was created because of the political circumstances in which Ibos had to compete with other ethnic groups (the Yorubas and Hausas in particular) for the control of the central government in Nigeria.



shows that among the Ibos there are deep fundamental unities at the village level, and so, even in the urban areas, Ibo immigrants identify themselves strongly with their kinsmen, and see themselves as local ambassadors. In short, the Ibos do not forget their rural heritage. Hence communal identities comprise the most convenient mode of social and political categorisation.

Besides the politics of communalism among the Ibos, Wolpe further examines the relationship between communalism and modernisation. His view is that the Port Harcourt experience suggests that there is no a priori reason to assume that "as economic development accelerates, the creation of new functionally specific, social identities will eventually undermine the organizational bases upon which a politics of communalism rests"<sup>1</sup>. In short, among the Ibos, communal particularisms is still a persistent feature, in spite of the effects of modernisation. Wolpe's explanation is that the paradoxical blending of 'civic' and 'primordial'<sup>2</sup> sentiments best defines the modern Ibo political<sup>3</sup> experience. Wolpe suggests that Ibo communalism<sup>4</sup> was not made manifest in political patronage alone; the Ibo rank and file were firmly tied to their respective communal organisations (the organisations which sponsored development projects) which, in turn, were closely integrated with the fused institution of party and government.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 470.

<sup>2</sup>For a clearer understanding of the use of this term, see C. Geertz, ed. Old Societies & New States. Glencoe III, 1963. pp 105-56.

<sup>3</sup>A.C. Smock's work (Ibo Politics. Cambridge, Mass. 1971) throws light on the political roles of Ibo ethnic unions in the Nigerian political scene.

<sup>4</sup>Wolpe gives the example of one Mr. Jumbo (a Rivers man) who was a victim of Ibo communalism in issues concerning political patronage. Mr. Jumbo was a staunch NCNC supporter, a one time Chairman of NCNC's Eastern working committee and Deputy Mayor of Port Harcourt. Yet in spite of Jumbo's prominence within the Port Harcourt municipal council, because he was not an Ibo, he was repeatedly denied the local party's nomination for office as Mayor, a key post which the Ibos reserved for their kinsmen. See H. Wolpe; op. cit. pp 483-84.

Smock<sup>1</sup> has buttressed the arguments of Wolpe, demonstrating the omnipresence of the ethnic factor as a major determinant in Nigerian politics. Of particular interest is the political dimension of micro political ethnicity, as it has been reflected in the relationship between the dominant political party in a region and the various ethnic unions. Smock shows and stresses that "the resilience of the primary ethnic groups (in Eastern Nigeria) resulted in part from the organisational deficiencies of the NCNC and also reflected the strength of the ethnic unions"<sup>2</sup>. Political participation, she argues, accentuated the significance of the clans, since the clan was the most inclusive ethnic grouping in Mbaise (Eastern Nigeria) through which economic amenities and political nominations could be distributed. Smock further shows that when local councils were established in Eastern Nigeria in 1956, these council areas, most of which coincided with the clan boundaries, became the foci for certain kinds of communal activity - such as development schemes. Hence she concludes that because of the resilience of the primary ethnic group, both the politicians and the people are deeply committed to furthering the interests of their people.

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<sup>1</sup> For A.C. Smock's analysis of the omnipresence of ethnic factors in Nigerian politics, see her work 'The NCNC and Ethnic unions in Biafra' in JMAS Vol. 7, 1969. pp 21-34. She focuses attention on a) how the different ethnic unions in Mbaise operated to further the interests of their members and b) the issues on which the NCNC came into conflict with the ethnic unions as a result of the politics of ethnic solidarity. For example unions rejected the party's nominees at elections, rather they nominated and voted for their own candidates who would protect their interests in parliament.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.21.

### THEME.

The primary focus of this work is the central-local relationship in the Rivers State of Nigeria. Port Harcourt, the administrative capital of the state and the main centre of decision making, represents the centre, while four communities<sup>1</sup> in the riverine bloc, namely, Kalabari, Nembe, Bonny and Okrika; and two communities in the hinterland bloc - the Ogbas and Ogonis - represent the localities. This thesis explores both the political dimensions of micro political communalism in the Rivers State, as it is reflected in the relationship between the State government, the major distributor of resources, and the six communities, and the dynamics of intra communal politics in community development matters. Hence great emphasis is laid on the omnipresence of the communal factor as a major determinant in Rivers State politics. Therefore, because of the omnipresence of communalism in Rivers State politics, this study tends to focus more on the politics of communalism and less on formal structures (the bureaucracy)<sup>2</sup> and roles of the officials.

Having identified the major interests of this study, it will be shown how far some of the works already cited fit into our investigations. Maxwell Owusu's work is related to this study in certain respects. Like Owusu's, the present study explores the notion of distributive politics. Because of the limited economic resources of these communities and their desire for development, every community in the Rivers State is interested in the 'national booty' since the Port Harcourt administration is seen as the distributor of state resources; and it is the patron who sees himself,

<sup>1</sup>In terms of population, the riverine and hinterland blocs constitute about 67% and 33% respectively of the total state population.

<sup>2</sup>In the context of the developing countries, H. Bretton, Power and Politics in Africa. Aldine - Chicago. 1973 p. 285, has also pointed out that attempts to "draw sharp distinction between -----public and private interests may

and is seen by his people, as a cultural broker and as a member of an elite of intermediaries. As the case study on Tsaro Wiwa in Chapter 3 shows, when patrons run out of political goods, there is usually a shift of loyalties: the clients shift their loyalties from the fallen hero to those they believe can better satisfy their needs.

The role of the government in the rural areas, as Dunn and Robertson have ably described it, is also made clear especially in Chapters 4 and 7. Given the distributive character of the Port Harcourt administration, there is tense inter-community competition. Every community desires that the government should both provide amenities and assist enterprising communities wishing to mobilise local resources for development. Hence, at the Port Harcourt level, inter-community competition and communal aggrandisement arise largely because of the hunger for governmental assistance. Inevitably it is only a government which promises and offers a 'world of plenty' that is popular in the eyes of the people - of course, the promise of a 'world of plenty' as a major factor influencing voters preferences is by no means unique<sup>1</sup> to the Rivers State.

The accounts of John Dunn and Smock also provide us with a background for understanding the politics of communal solidarity. Rivers State politics is invariably factional at the community level. The factional bases of politics will be seen not only in the competition for benefit at the Port Harcourt level, but also in the elections which are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. However, unlike Dunn's accounts, the factions in the Rivers State politics will be seen mostly at the community level and in communities such as Okrika the community is split into more factions.

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<sup>1</sup> Similar electoral preferences exist in European countries. For a perceptive analysis of voters attitudes in Britain, see R.L. Leonard. Elections in Britain. London, 1968.

More important is the fact that in the Rivers State, factional solidarity does not stretch to the divisional or provincial level (the larger units), as seems to be the case in the area studied by Dunn.

Regarding the status and manipulative skills of the patrons and politicians<sup>1</sup> vis-a-vis their clients, the analysis of Dunn and Robertson, Miller and Owusu provide an insight into the dynamics of patron-client relationships in the Rivers State. Not only are the patrons brokers as these writers have shown; in the Rivers State the patrons are the most senior policy-makers in the public service (See Chapters 3-6). As senior policy-makers, they are expected to perform important roles in the distribution of amenities to, and in the administration of, the local areas. By virtue of their senior positions in Port Harcourt, Rivers State patrons<sup>2</sup> have also become local notables; hence they are leaders both in their localities and in Port Harcourt. They have also become community spokesmen in Port Harcourt. They see themselves, and are seen by their people, as benefactors; and the people (most of whom are clients) have become the beneficiaries. Yet as benefactors they distribute public, not private, resources. It is clear, therefore, that there is a conversion of public service positions to political currencies at the local level. However, in terms of roles, the official expectations are that the patron, an official, should be impartial in the implementation of policies, and should also act as a bridge between the people and the government for the transmission of official policies.

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<sup>1</sup>The patrons and politicians described in this work are the political leaders whom R.L. Sklar & C.S. Whitaker have described in their work (in J.S. Coleman & C.G. Rosberg, eds. Political Parties & National Integration in Tropical Africa. Berkeley & Los Angeles. 1964 pp 597-654) as 'communal heroes', while the elders and chiefs - see Chapter 3- are referred to as 'traditional notables'.

<sup>2</sup>R. Sklar has suggested that : it is less frequently recognised that tribal movements may be created and instigated to action by the new men of power in furtherance of their own special interests. See R. Sklar 'Political Science and National Integration - A Radical Approach' JMAS Vol.5. 1967 p.7.

Yet the local expectation is that the patron should keep the government actively devoted to his people's interests - as seems to be the case in the area (the Ibos in Port Harcourt) studied by Wolpe. Here lies the divergence between official and local expectations.

The conversion of official positions to political currencies at the local level is facilitated for certain reasons which will be explained in greater detail in Chapters 3-7. The local area is often a pedestrian society; there is general poverty and the ordinary citizen has no direct contact with the government - this is analagous to the plight of the peasant in Kenya, as analysed by Lamb. Movement to, and contact with, Port Harcourt is necessary for those who wish to improve their life styles. Hence, for most rural individuals, the world is in essence a microcosm with the community as the centre. Since the chiefs and elders are merely traditional notables, they cannot influence policies in Port Harcourt. Therefore considering the official position of the patron and the great expectations of the people, it is the patron who is called on to satisfy the people's expectations by influencing policies in Port Harcourt to the advantage of his community. The patron, therefore, combines the role of administrator and politician and in these two capacities he brings benefit to his people.

Of course, the instrumentalist view of politics - of governments as instruments of disbursement via an intermediary elite to the people - is not peculiar to the Rivers State. Owusu has given a similar account of this phenomenon in Ghana. No doubt, clientage and brokerage are age old. The major argument in this work is that in the Rivers State, such 'trading relationships' between the State government and the local centres of power have become the prime matrix of political life.

From the foregoing it is clear that the relationship between the patrons and clients is one between benefactors and beneficiaries. At this point one would ask whether it is purely an exchange<sup>1</sup> relationship - one of reciprocity between equals - or is one party always giving while the other party is always at the receiving end. The discussions in Chapters 3 and 6 explain the ethics of this relationship. It would not be unexpected that patrons who are benefactors would desire to have large followings of clients at the local level, because while in office the patrons need the goodwill and support of their clients so that their 'good image' would always be protected by the clients.

Obviously, among the Rivers people, as elsewhere in Africa, becoming a big man (patron) represents one of the highest goals to which ordinary people in the society can aspire. Therefore since there are many aspirants for the big man status in the community, those who are successful in attaining this status must inevitably strive to build up the size and strength of a personal following, and vie with one another to win the favour of the elders, chiefs and the various marks of prestige acknowledged in the rural society. As Epstein has rightly observed, the attainment of big man status is ---"the outcome of a series of acts which elevate a person above the common herd and attract about him a coterie of loyal lesser men --- leadership is a creation - a creation of followership"<sup>2</sup>. Besides, when patrons

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<sup>1</sup>For an elaborate discussion of the nature of this exchange relationship see (I) J.D. Powell 'Peasant Society & Clientelistic Politics' APSR Vol.64, 1970. pp. 411-425 & (II) P. Blau Exchange and Power in Social Life. N.Y.1964

<sup>2</sup>A.L.Epstein 'Power, Politics and Leadership : Some central African & Melanesian contrasts' in M.J. Swartz. op. cit. p.61.

compete among themselves at the state level for the control of the machinery of government, each patron is bound to mobilise<sup>1</sup> his command organisation behind him for support. The fact is that in Nigeria, the patrons make appeals to the most easily mobilised communal loyalties. And since patrons advance the interests of their respective nationalities at the state level and offer their people political protection, any patron soliciting support must first of all count on his beneficiaries (his people) before appealing, perhaps unsuccessfully, to the outsider. Nevertheless, the ambition to gather a large following is fraught with problems, for the more successful the patron is, the greater the size of his following, the greater his influence and prestige in relation to other contestants, and the greater the expectations and the range of the needs of the followers which must be met.

For their part, the subordinates (clients) who receive, or expect to receive, both political protection and material assistance from their patrons are expected to be loyal and remain indebted to render certain services - such as the formation of fan clubs for protecting the 'good names' of the patrons - to the patrons, in appreciation of the benevolence of the latter: one good turn deserves another. Besides, because the patrons and their clients are usually from the same community (see Chapters 3 and 6), clients are expected to support the cause of the patrons since failure to do so is looked upon as a violation of ethnic obligations. Therefore it is evident

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<sup>1</sup>It is emphasised that the patrons greatly depend on their communities of origin for support. Indeed, aspirant politicians and the leaders of the N.C.N.C., N.D.C., A.G., & N.P.C. greatly mobilised this kind of communal support - See Chapters 5 & 6. Nigerian politicians, especially the successful ones, are also known for organising large followings.



that there is an exchange relationship in clientelism; an interchange of non-comparable<sup>1</sup> goods and services. In short, the exchange relationship is one which takes some account of the position, status and resources of the parties involved.

#### CONCEPTS.

Having discussed an instrumentalist view of politics as it affects the relationship between patrons and clients in the community<sup>2</sup>, I shall at this stage introduce some clarification of the notion of the community. Such an investigation is important for purposes of: (i) ascertaining the levels - such as the village or town which are the units of political action - in which patrons and clients operate, (ii) identifying the scope of the community<sup>3</sup> in our study of the relationship between the locality and the centre and (iii) understanding the nature and political significance of unity and/or conflicts at the local level.

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<sup>1</sup>J.D.Powell argues that in the relationship between patrons and clients, an interchange of non comparable goods and services is of profound importance. See J.D.Powell. op. cit. p. 412.

<sup>2</sup>The names of the communities - Bonny, Okrika, etc. - refer to both the people and their respective localities. In this section, a discussion on the community will be made for purposes of greater clarity in relation to the 'units' which constitute the locality or community. In later pages it will also become apparent that the concepts of developmental and protective communalism are related to the theme: 'benefit for the community'.

<sup>3</sup>For some notion of the community which is applicable to the modern metropolitan world, see R.L.Warren. 'Towards a reformulation of community theory' in Human Organisation Vol. XV, 1957.

At the core of the Rivers State rural society is the village (Iwoama), comprising a group of patrilineal, and sometimes matrilineal, kinship ties play a crucial role in the social and political relations of the villagers. Thus the unity of these kinsmen and the stability of the village<sup>1</sup> is always proclaimed by the elders as village ideals. The village has its own chieftaincy, and 'national god', the latter symbolises the togetherness of the village; and in fact this togetherness is a goal shared by virtually everyone without regard to political differences among the villagers. Beyond the village, there is the town (Ama) which is made up of either a group of villages or of descendants of a common ancestor. The citizens speak the same dialect. And beyond the town, there is the clan<sup>2</sup> (Se) or county, comprising the villages and towns which speak a common dialect of Ijaw<sup>3</sup>. It is at this level that the cultural differences between groups of people<sup>4</sup> in the Rivers State assumes the greatest significance. Thus one can differentiate between say, a Kalabari and an Ogoni; and the county council administration discussed in Chapter 4 is organised on this basis.

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<sup>1</sup>The patterns of village settlements in the Ijaw Delta area are well discussed in (i) E.J. Alagoa A History of the Niger Delta, Ibadan, 1972 (ii) K.O. Dike. Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1855. Oxford, 1956 & (iii) P.A. Talbot Peoples of Southern Nigeria. Vol.1 London, 1926.

<sup>2</sup>The village, town and clan are not only significant social units; they are physical discrete entities with established boundaries. Again, each unit has a distinctive name, usually known by the name of an ancestor.

<sup>3</sup>The Ijaws are typical riverine groups which form the cream of the Rivers State society. They may therefore be used as models of analysis for other groups in the State.

<sup>4</sup>An ethnographic analysis follows in Chapter 2.

Every Se has certain basic structures and institutions such as Amanyabobo chieftaincies (See Chapter 5), Iria ceremonies and Oru traditional shrines and festivities<sup>1</sup>. Besides, the Se has a common god; for example Fenibeso is the Okrika god while Akaso is the god of the Kalabaris; and beyond these gods are a number of 'primal forces which were there before the gods came'<sup>2</sup>. These include Amatemeso (city creating destiny) and Amakiri (city earth). All citizens of the Se are also expected to observe other prescribed taboos of the group. In fact these religious and traditional beliefs and practices represent the notion of the permanence of the Se. Indeed, they represent the very character or living spirit of each group, while the destiny and aspirations of the group may be said to depend on them.

But although these traditional symbols, shrines and spirits are the basic unifying forces at the clan level, yet as a community, the clan is not a homogeneous unit, as my previous discussion has shown. Besides, each unit has its own interests - both political and economic - though sometimes there might be a convergence of interests among the units, depending on their needs at any point in time (See Chapter 5). In this respect, the average Rivers State citizen belongs not to one but to three communities of origin (the village, town and clan). That is, there are 'communities' within the community; there are concentric circles of communalism. Therefore communal identities<sup>3</sup> based on the clan, town and village exist side by side; the

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<sup>1</sup>Festivities in which the group strengthens itself against the hazards of the future and those of other groups.

<sup>2</sup>Version of the elders and chiefs.

<sup>3</sup>A.C. Smock 'The NCNC and Ethnic Unions in Biafra' op. cit. offers a stimulating discussion of the different levels of communal identities in Mbaise, and the competition among groups for development and patronage.

village being a more primary 'ethnic group' than the town, and the town more primary than the clan.

As a consequence of the superimposition of inclusive communal identities on more primary ones, the ordinary citizen or patron could at any time identify himself or his interests as belonging to one of three levels of 'ethnic' communities. In some situations, however, villages and towns join together in defence of some common political commitment (see Chapters 5 & 6). In others, they organise to protect and promote the interests and prestige of villages and towns (See Chapter 7). It could therefore be argued that the people's perceptions of the content of politics matters a great deal at any given moment. Similarly, as the discussions in Chapters 3, 4 & 7 show, age grades and development committees contribute money for and execute development projects at one or all of the three levels where community unions exist. Again, because of these multiple identities, patrons organise their followings and carry out their activities at any of these three levels, depending on their interests at any point in time (See Chapters<sup>1</sup> 5 & 6). Hence Rivers State politicians depend a great deal on communal solidarity to ensure their political survival. No doubt, in terms of political support, sentiments are most easily mobilised at the village and town levels, given the deep fundamental unities at these levels.

At the state level too, for both the patron and the average citizen, the relative political salience of each communal reference shifts according to the changing political situation. Hence though the political conflicts

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<sup>1</sup>The Fiberesima/Kiri/Jamabo and Biriye/Jamabo rivalries explain the factional bases of politics in the locality.

between the Konijus and Tubonijus in Okrika (See Chapter 5) are expressed in direct personal attack and erupt<sup>1</sup> into physical violence, at the Port Harcourt level, they present a common front to complain about Kalabari and Nembe domination. The point is that this goal of clan unity emerges clearly when the citizens of the clan perceive themselves as facing the outsiders<sup>2</sup> and the larger Port Harcourt world around them. Obviously, in the Port Harcourt world where several communities compete for political rewards, it becomes necessary for the patron to protect his clan identity and interests. Hence though the factional<sup>3</sup> bases of politics may be strong at the home front, at the Port Harcourt level, there are realignments in factional membership. Therefore it is clear that the stability of the Rivers State political system lies in ad hoc, ever shifting alignments at different levels of the society.

#### COMMUNALISM.

Besides the relationship between patrons and clients, and the application of the concept of community in this work, there is another important theme, extensively discussed by both Smock and Wolpe in relation to the Ibos, which will be reflected in this work. This theme has to do with the politics of

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<sup>1</sup>Spiro makes a different remark about factionalism in a smaller community, Yeigy. He says that despite the bitterness which characterised the relationships between factions in Yeigy, it never erupted into physical violence; rather it was expressed in withdrawal and avoidance. See M.E. Spiro 'Factionalism and Politics in Village Burma' in M.J.Swartz op.cit. pp 401-20.

<sup>2</sup>Wolpe. op.cit. argues that the Ibos seemed particularly adept at closing ranks and combining against the outsiders.

<sup>3</sup>For a comparative work on the attributes of factions, see R.W.Nicholas, Political Systems and the distribution of power. Association of Social Anthropologists. Monograph 2. Tavistock.London, 1966.

communalism at the centre and the locality. Since the concept of communalism will be discussed later on in this chapter, it will suffice at this stage to stress that among the Rivers people, as among the Ibos, there are deep fundamental unities at the community level.

Having referred to the works of Smock and Wolpe in relation to communalism, and shown that the concept is useful for an understanding of Rivers State politics both at the local and state levels, I shall now discuss how the concept will be applied in this work.

In this study the concept will be applied largely in the same way as Melson<sup>1</sup> and Wolpe applied it in their study of Nigerian politics. Communalism refers to the political assertiveness of groups<sup>2</sup> which have three salient characteristics. First, their membership comprises people who have a common culture, language and identity. The members are bound together by felt ties of kinship<sup>3</sup> or contiguity; and so they communicate<sup>4</sup> more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of their group, than with the outsider - as discussed in relation to the community. In short, in terms of identity and communication at the state level, members of the group constitute a distinct 'cultural section'<sup>5</sup>. Secondly, as Melson

<sup>1</sup>See R.Melson & H.Wolpe, 'Modernisation and the politics of communalism: A theoretical perspective' in APSR Vol.64 1970 pp. 1112-1130.

<sup>2</sup>In their studies, Wolpe and Melson referred mostly to the larger ethnic groups such as Yorubas, Ibos and Hausas. But in this work, the groups referred to, are the Ijaw ethnic minorities (Rivers people) in the former Eastern Nigeria.

<sup>3</sup>The kinship factor is also important in Smock's definition of the ethnic group. See A.C.Smock. Ibo Politics Cambridge, Mass. 1971. p.4.

<sup>4</sup>For a discussion of the "complementarity of communication" see Karl Deutsch. Nationalism and Social Communication Cambridge. 1953. p.71.

<sup>5</sup>In their book, Structure and Conflict in Nigeria 1960-1966 London. 1973, K.Post and M.Vickers use the term 'cultural sections' for the Ibos and Yorubas. I have applied this term in a more elastic sense.

and Wolpe have described it, their membership encompasses "the full range of demographic divisions within the wider society and provides for a network of groups and institutions extending throughout the individual's entire life cycle".<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, within the group there are differences<sup>2</sup> in wealth, status and power. Thus depending on the position<sup>3</sup> occupied by the individuals in the group, some are more functional to the welfare of the group than others.

In order to understand the means by which groups become politically assertive, as shown in the characteristics of such groups, certain points should be made. In Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa, the levels of identification of the individual in the society are well known. First and foremost, an individual belongs to a native place - the village, town or clan. In the native place, some particular cultural practices help to strengthen the individual's ties with the community - these ties which Clifford Geertz refers to as having an 'unaccountable absolute import' and the 'primordial sentiments'.<sup>4</sup> Even immigrants<sup>5</sup> in Nigerian cities are known

<sup>1</sup>R. Melson & H. Wolpe. op.cit. p. 112.

<sup>2</sup>In this work, differences in the group based on wealth, status and power will not be discussed in terms of the concept of class, largely because of its association with Marxism and the inherent sharp conflicts in society. What this work suggests is that there are 'social divisions' in the Rivers State arising out of common social, economic and political conditions that definitely determine or at least influence each individual's status and position in the society.

<sup>3</sup>For example, compared with the chiefs and elders, the greater role which the patrons play in community development (See Chapters 3-6) could be traced to the fundamental differences in status and power.

<sup>4</sup>See C. Geertz. op.cit. p. 109.

<sup>5</sup>H. Wolpe has described the strong attachment of Ibos in Port Harcourt to their communities of origin, hence the formation of Ibo improvement unions. See H. Wolpe. op.cit.

to have strong ties not only with their kinsmen in the new towns, but with their native places. Busia's analysis of the individuals ties with his 'kinsmen' aptly summarises the strong bonds which unite the group: - "--- the solidarity of the group has deep foundation"<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, this solidarity has a deep foundation, hence the emergence of numerous local improvement and welfare unions in Nigerian cities is attributed largely to the interest which Nigerian migrants have taken in the welfare of their native territories. It is this consciousness of, and close identification with one's membership of the group, and the exertion of political pressures through the group for its benefit which this study refers to as communalism, not tribalism<sup>2</sup>. My argument is that the manifestation of membership of this group is not just an emotional one, and if emotional, not naively so. It is natural because it is a logical derivation of man's affection for his native place.

If what I have discussed as natural is parochialism it appears to me a 'parochialism of interest and need'. This is particularly applicable to Rivers people, and some of the reasons for this attitude are not hard to find, as later discussions in this work will point out. Rivers people have been minorities. They have learnt through a painful process to look at the development of their native territory as their primary responsibility: primary because in the past, their dependance on the Eastern Nigerian government for the improvement of their underdeveloped and swampy communities turned out to be a disappointment to them. This is the Rivers man's version of self-reliance<sup>3</sup> based on the community as a unit - that is, the community as the centre of development activities.

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<sup>1</sup>K.A. Busia. Africa in Search of Democracy. London 1967. p.11.

<sup>2</sup>It is common for writers to refer to this kind of loyalty as tribalism.

<sup>3</sup>It will however be discovered that in spite of the Rivers peoples belief in self-reliance, there is great dependence on the State government for benefits.



## MANIFESTATIONS OF COMMUNALISM.

Communalism, therefore, may be understood as a political strategy in which the interests of the community, as defined and seen by the group, are identified and protected by members of the group.

Since communalism is about the protection of group interests, I shall at this stage discuss the different reflections or shades of communalism in the Rivers State. For purposes of this work, two shades<sup>1</sup> of communalism may be identified, namely developmental and protective communalism; the first shade manifests itself in the locality (community) while the second is manifested at the centre (Port Harcourt). The two shades will now be discussed in greater detail.

### Developmental Communalism<sup>2</sup>

Communalism, as applied in this context is the form which is principally responsible for propelling group action by helping to promote loyalty to the

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<sup>1</sup>Melson & Wolpe. op.cit. identify several shades of communalism. For example, their term 'competitive communalism' is similar to my term 'protective communalism'. They have also listed fourteen propositions which link communalism with modernisation.

<sup>2</sup>A greater part of the discussion in this work deals with protective rather than developmental communalism.

communal group. It is this driving force which accounts for the zeal underlying community development work. It motivates the different individuals in the community (the village, town or clan) to harness their resources<sup>1</sup> for the good of the community.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, as community councils at the three levels, or other associations<sup>3</sup> thereof, service their respective constituents, the citizens develop a vested interest in their communal identities. As the local saying goes 'charity begins at home', and so the members of the group accept the challenge that first and foremost they must develop their own community in order to make the community a more attractive place.

In this situation, communalism is purely internal. Indeed, it is communalism on the home front. Therefore internal conflict is minimal, and, where there is conflict, appeals for unity are made (see Chapter 5), not merely for the preservation of group culture, but because of the need to create an atmosphere conducive to community development. Both in internal and external relations, patriotism, based on the community, is the key note because it is at this level that the solidarity of the group has the deepest foundation. The local philosophy of 'one people, one destiny' is upheld. In brief, then, developmental communalism provides the basic

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<sup>1</sup>In Chapter 3, it will be seen that age grades (Setari and Ilaye Ilame) in the community have contributed money for the development of Okrika, while patrons such as Tsaro Wiwa, have also donated money for launching development projects in their communities.

<sup>2</sup>H. Wolpe. op.cit. p.484 described this interest as the 'significant neighbourhood stimulus to community development'.

<sup>3</sup>For an insightful discussion of the contributions of such communal associations in community development in West African states, see K. Little. West African urbanisation: A study of voluntary associations in social change. Cambridge. 1963. K. Little also observes that these para-communities (voluntary associations) are concerned with achievement and social welfare not only in the cities but also in the rural hinterland. In the Rivers State, though communal associations - for example Ilaye Ilame- serve mainly social and economic functions, they soon became politicised, acting as communal pressure groups and so led delegations to the government in matters concerning <sup>the</sup> interest of the community.

answer to the query: why must a people unite to initiate development work, and for what purpose?

Protective Communalism.

Given the desire of every community to promote its own development and given the limited economic resources of the communities in the Rivers State, it might be expected that the people would more or less regard the government as a distributing agent, as elsewhere in Africa. Since the different communities will see the Public Service as the principal arena for sharing public benefits, understandably, every community will seek to have a fair share of the state resources. Hence different communal pressures would be exerted in the public service arena: a public service which represents 'Santa Claus'. It is in this respect that the centre becomes the arena for every community to compete<sup>1</sup> with the others for state benefits and political rewards. Because of the different needs and interests of the different communities - especially at the clan level - each group must protect its interests not only in the locality but also at the centre.

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<sup>1</sup>Melson & Wolpe, op. cit. also argue that in a culturally plural society, the competition engendered by social mobilisation will tend to be defined in communal terms. Such competitions often lead to conflicts; and in Nigeria, communal conflicts, arising from inter group competitions, are frequent occurrences. In R. Melson & H. Wolpe, eds. Nigeria : Modernisation and the politics of Communalism. East Lansing, 1974, J. Paden 'Communal competition, conflict and violence in Kano' offers an excellent analysis of such conflicts in the former Northern Nigeria.

Truly, because of the creation of a new state and public service, the people's aspirations and expectations have changed. They want and demand more goods (perhaps goods denied them in the former Eastern Nigeria). It is not surprising therefore that because all the communities (the clans, in particular) desire precisely the same scarce resources, they are bound to compete for these resources<sup>1</sup>. In these competitions, the groups are bound to attribute one group's failure to another group's success - since the goods are scarce; hence the ordinary people tend to perceive their competitive world through communal prisms.

Conceiving the Rivers State political system in transactional terms in this work, the patron is the policy maker concerned in the authoritative allocation of benefits, while the ordinary citizens (most of whom are clients) are the 'spectators'. It would therefore follow that the patron who is seen

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<sup>1</sup>For purposes of sharing political profits in the Nigerian federation, it is a common experience that every ethnic group regards the other as an outsider. Prior to military rule in 1966, the Yoruba-Ibo-Hausa rivalries and conflicts would be seen largely in this perspective. For discussions on these patterns of inter-group rivalries, see B.J. Dudley, Instability and political order: Politics and Crisis in Nigeria. Ibadan. 1973.

by his people not only as their ambassador but as the embodiment of their aspirations, would be expected to protect local interests in the Port Harcourt decision-making bodies. For communalism in Port Harcourt impinges mainly on issues related to communal interests<sup>1</sup> and patronage<sup>2</sup> - issues upon which the prestige and welfare of the competing groups depend - and rarely affects routine administrative matters<sup>3</sup>. It is because of this kind of expectation - that the patrons must maximise returns to their people - that the Rivers State patrons, most of whom are astute politicians are portrayed in this work as "parochial", "vindictive" and "arch-communalists". As arch-communalists, they are alleged to exploit the opportunities in the new state, hence communalism becomes a matter of opportunism.

Problems and Implications.

Generally, public service administrative units are commonly accepted as structures in which politics is nominally absent. In short, it is expected that communalism will not be reflected or reproduced<sup>4</sup> in the bureaucracy since the norms of the public service specifically exclude

<sup>1</sup> R. Wolpe 'Port Harcourt, Ibo Politics in Microcosm' op. cit. p.484. has also used this factor (protective communalism) to explain the apparent incongruity between Jumbo's (an Ijaw) political prominence in Port Harcourt on the one hand, and his political impotence within the local party (NCNC) executive on the other. That is, because Jumbo was not an Ibo, in a predominantly Ibo settlement, he could not translate his influence into the kind of communal backing required in contests for higher office. In the Rivers State it will be seen - in Chapters 5 & 6 - that such communalistic considerations were of great importance in elections.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapters 5 & 6. Rivers State politicians - Biriye, Jamabo and Fiberesima - also mobilise their different communities behind their candidacy, and their people view their candidacy as expressions of the group aspirations. Electoral victories are therefore viewed as indicators of group recognition and power.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the routine decisions taken by Sole Authorities do not provoke inter communal jealousies and rivalries. Similarly when all communal interests are satisfied, there are no local complaints with regard to the arch-communalistic practices of the patrons - see Chapter 4.

<sup>4</sup> J. La Palombara has however argued that the dispute in the political system will be reproduced in the bureaucracy. See his work on "An Overview of Bureaucracy and Political Development" in Bureaucracy and Political Development ed. Princeton. 1965. p.15.

political activities within the organisation.

Therefore, the official is expected to pursue one of two courses of action. The first is to act strictly according to public service norms. In short, the protection of the state's interests should be the officials sole concern. The second course is to participate in political activities designed to protect his people's interests. It is true that official life carries with it certain kinds of organisational imperatives which inevitably are designed to make the official appreciate the primacy of state interests, as opposed to communalistic interests. Yet in the Rivers State context, I have argued that the rural heritage of the official must be the starting point for our analysis of Port Harcourt political life. Constant pressures exist upon the official to use his good offices to the advantage of his people, hence the official norms are bound to be neglected or given secondary importance. Obviously, that the official norms do not count for very much - at least in the eye of the people - in part shows the mythical character of the claim to be 'above politics' which most public services are prone to put forward either in self-delusion or in self-defence. The indifference to rules of political neutrality is however aggravated by the virulence of communal particularisms in new states, such as Nigeria.

Curbing these communalistic particularisms appears to be a major problem facing new public services (see Chapter 4). Yet in the Rivers State, one of the key problems facing the government is that the government at local level is suffering the throes of general economic disenchantment following the high hopes of the people prior to the attainment of new statehood. The government, it will be seen, claims to be doing its best in order to develop the rural communities. Yet in spite of governmental efforts and claims, most of the lofty expectations of the people are unrealised. On

the shoulders of the patron rests the responsibility to champion the cause of his people. No doubt, the patron has the ability to create the administrative universe within which he functions to meet his people's needs. Hence in the eyes of the people, the implementation of most of the policies pertain to communalised instead of impartially determined universes - a price the patron pays for his close identification with his community. Consequently, a dual<sup>1</sup> system of legitimacy results - two administrative universes, one in which the ethics of the public service are kept, and the other in which these ethics are overshadowed by communalism<sup>2</sup>. In the case of the latter, the 'completeness' with which the public service has been really or allegedly politicised is not necessarily due to some unique quality of Rivers State politics. It stems rather from the fact that the centre possesses resources which eminent local political actors (patrons) want to control for the benefit of their communities, and from the fact that, given the particularism in the Rivers State, there are few or no effective ways in which either senior administrators or commissioners (the cabinet ministers in the military regime) can insulate or protect these institutions from such political incursions.

<sup>1</sup>H. Bretton, op.cit. p.19 remarks that in new states, distinctions between public and private interests, legality and illegality, and legitimacy and its opposites tend to become obliterated. He adds that public service ethics have not yet been codified nor are they sufficiently entrenched or established to serve as guidelines or clear reference points of evaluation of public and private behaviour.

<sup>2</sup>R. Sklar offers a list of devices that the Nigerian ins used to keep power - bribery, corruption and communalistic practices. See R. Sklar 'The Federal Republic of Nigeria' in G.M. Carter (ed) National Unity and Regionalism in Eight African States. N.Y. 1966.







CHAPTER 2THE RIVERS STATE AND ITS PEOPLE

The community development schemes that have been launched in the Rivers State since the creation of states in May 1967, perhaps rank among the most striking events in the political history of the State. It is significant that communities, local unions, and age sets have initiated (or have been encouraged to do so) such projects. The State Government and other arms of it have also been deeply involved, and have played very significant part, in directing and managing these processes of community change. In the six communities chosen for this study this aspect of development is particularly well marked because little less than a decade ago the Rivers people and more especially the Riverine people were little known. They were generally unknown largely because of their geographical isolation (island-dwellers); and even the few places which were known because of their nearness to the hinterland were believed not to be involved in the processes of community change. The neighbours of the Rivers people, the Ibos, who were unaccustomed to the aquatic conditions of Riverine territories believed generally that it was impossible to develop swamps and creeks - the areas believed to be inhabited by the Rivers people. It therefore followed that because of these severe geographical odds, rural life and conditions in these places would remain unchanged; that is, the areas were doomed to remain perpetually undeveloped in spite of what efforts and resources are mobilised in fighting against these forces.

The Rivers State is a society divided geographically, politically, culturally and socially, thus giving rise to all forms of cleavage of which the dominant are political (mostly sub-communal and communal) and cultural. Yet because of the new statehood which has thrown up new challenges and has instilled some feeling of unity among certain groups which hitherto had remained disunited, both the communities and the

Government have tried to redouble their efforts in developing the rural communities. Nevertheless, the geographical and economic difficulties still remain even though they are reduced in number and size because of conscientious efforts on the part of the people. These are the forces in combination with other political, historical, and cultural elements which this chapter will discuss in some generalised context.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL

The Rivers State<sup>1</sup> of Nigeria created by a Federal Government Decree No. 14 of 27 May 1967, and with a population of 1,544,314 (1963 Nigerian Census) occupies an area of 7,000 square miles. This territory is a part of what is usually referred to in very broad terms as Nigeria's Niger Delta; that is, as part of the Niger water zone. A recent study<sup>2</sup> established that this Niger water is discharged to the sea through only a limited number of Nigerian coastal Rivers, namely: the Nun River, 26%; the Ramos River, 24%; the Sengana River, 15%; the Forcados River, 15%; the Brass River, 8%; and the Dodo River, 6%. Following this map of water discharge, the present extent of a large part of the Rivers State territory (excluding parts of the hinterland areas), as part of the Niger River zone, lies between the Forcados River on the West and the Brass River to the East. This coastal region is the heartland of Ijaw<sup>3</sup> settlement; and it is also the area occupied by four communities - Okrika, Kalabari, Bonny and Nembe - out of the six major ones with which this study is concerned.

In broad terms the entire Delta Zone is divisible<sup>4</sup> physically, into three belts, namely:

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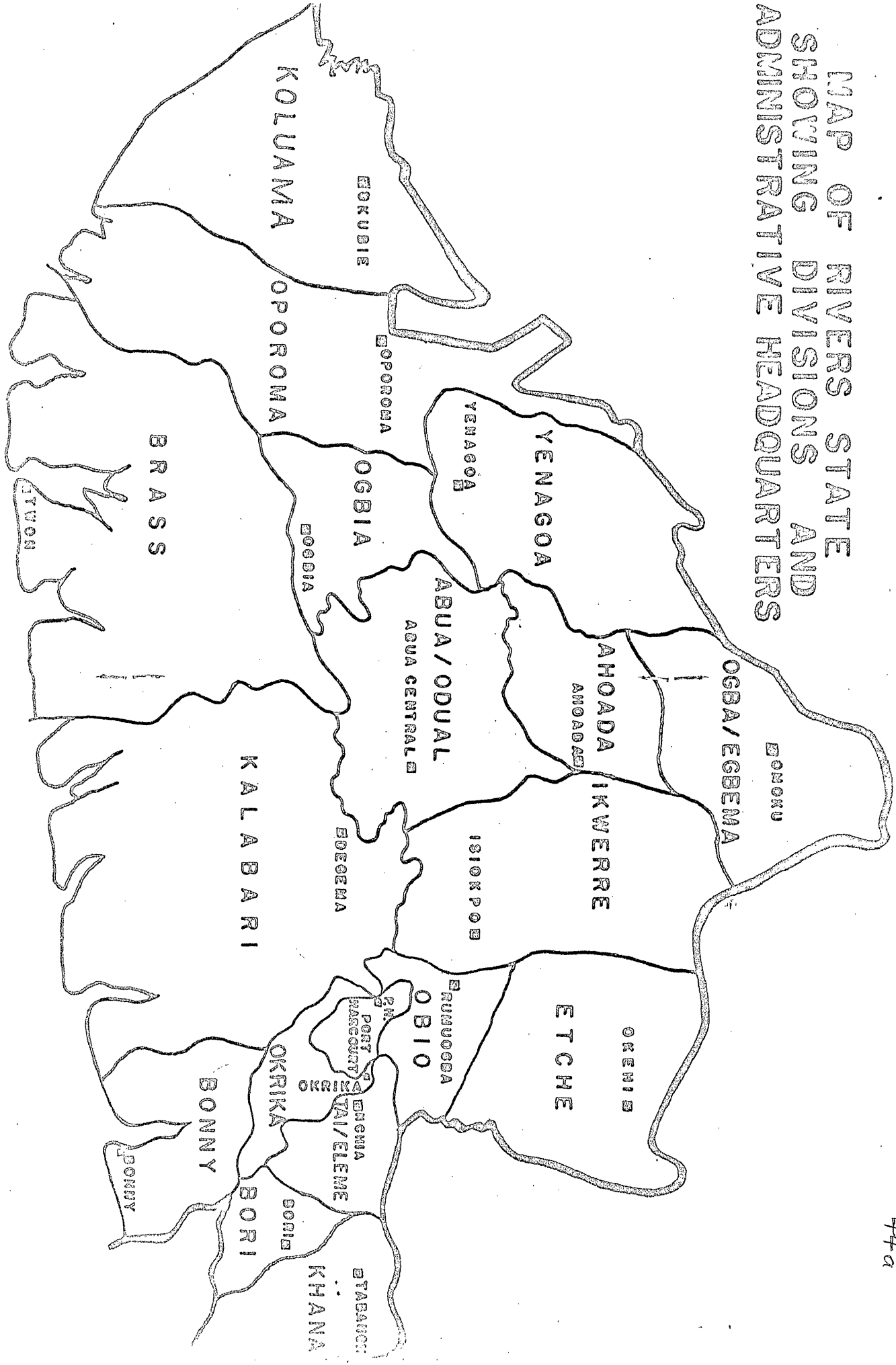
<sup>1</sup>See map overleaf.

<sup>2</sup>Nedeco, The Waters of the Niger Delta : Report on an Investigation, the Hague, 1961, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>A name commonly used to identify these Riverine people.

<sup>4</sup>Nedeco, Report on Niger Delta Development, the Hague, 1960. pp. 6-10

MAP OF RIVERS STATE  
 SHOWING DIVISIONS AND  
 ADMINISTRATIVE HEADQUARTERS



- (i) the sandy beach ridges
- (ii) the salt water swamp and
- (iii) the fresh water swamp area.

But ecologically the State as it is constituted at present (1973) can be divided into four zones:

- (1) the sandy beach zone - such as Bonny area;
- (2) the fresh water swamp zone
- (3) the salt water swamp zone - for example, the Kalabari, Okrika and Nembe areas;
- (4) the dry land zone - the two hinterland groups; the Ogbas and the Ogonis.

In the 1970 Administrative structure of the state, there were five divisions in the state - Ahoada, Port Harcourt, Brass, Ogoni and Degema. The hinterland communities are the principal inhabitants of Ahoada and Port Harcourt divisions and each of these occupies an area of 1,977 and 17 square miles respectively while the typical Riverine communities inhabit Brass and Degema divisions, each occupying an area of 3,350 and 1,250 square miles respectively. The Ogonis who inhabit Ogoni division with an area of 404 square miles are largely hinterland but partly riverine. The zonal and divisional (sub divided into 17 counties) demarcations correspond to, and largely reflect, differences in the nature of the riverine water (hinterland soil conditions, as well as types of occupation and the vegetation in the area). Similarly, they are also the major belts along which different (sub-cultural units) patterns of community lives could be identified.

The villages which lie in the sandy beach zone consist of a number of small coastal islands which lie on a higher and drier piece of land. They vary from less than 100 feet to about 5 miles in width; and they are about the youngest settlements. Because of the presence of fresh water ponds (originating from rain) in most of these villages, it is not uncommon to find fresh water vegetation. These isolated villages were, and are, centres of

high population density and in fact in the 19th century these were the settlements (especially Bonny<sup>1</sup>) which grew in fame and importance as they were placed at strategic points for internal and external commerce. On the other hand, the 'red mangrove' communities in the salt water swamp zone form a wider belt of between 20 and 25 miles. These areas are predominantly low-lying and population density is lowest here. In terms of commerce, these settlements did not enjoy the advantage which their sandy beach counterparts did.

Nevertheless, in spite of the contrasting picture given between these two regions, they share some similarities. A large part of these two Riverine divisions inhabited by four of the communities to which reference has already been made, constitute about 66% of the total territory of the state. These stretches of land and water form a compact area of mangrove swamps, estuaries, creeks and waterways which break through to the sea and rivers. Being riverine, their surroundings are damp and humid. Perhaps the following late 19th century account by Mary Kingsley, even though exaggerated, gives a more vivid picture of this mangrove region which in earlier times was notorious for its unhealthiness:

"I believe the great swamp region of the Bight of Biafra (referring to the Niger Delta) is the greatest in the world and that in its immensity and gloom it has a grandeur equal to that of the Himalayas."<sup>2</sup>

Most of the banks of these waterways are often flooded at high tide, especially those in the salt water swamp zone. In times of such flood most of the neighbouring land areas are inundated. Therefore communication in these areas is exceedingly difficult, and small canoes which are not well designed for negotiating surf are used by villagers for their everyday

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<sup>1</sup>The area in particular became an important navigable waterway. It therefore controlled the volume of Atlantic commerce.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in K. Dike. Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta (1830-1885) London. 1956. p. 19.

fishing and transport needs. These seasonal floods occur with very devastating results - such as rendering people homeless and destroying swamp crops. The condition in the hinterland areas will now be examined.

It is difficult to argue that in comparison with their riverine counterparts, the geographical conditions of the hinterland regions are substantially better. Excepting the big towns, such as Port Harcourt the state capital, where fairly modern and convenient transport routes and systems are in operation, in most of the rural areas the transport network is poor as there are only small feeder roads which connect the different villages and other main transport centres. In describing the poor transport network, and in comparing these with the general transport system in western countries, Sir Harry Johnson wrote. "There are hardly any roads existing in the Delta."<sup>1</sup> It is within this complex communication framework that the markets and resources of both the hinterland and Riverine communities are linked with one another.

These geographical differences with the consequent cultural differences and transport difficulties between the different parts of the state have affected movements of the people from one community to another. Inter village mobility (of people and goods) has been severely limited and especially among the islanders each community has to a considerable extent developed separatist tendencies - a kind of communalistic feeling typical of island dwellers. Hence to the average villager, the development of the village is the primary responsibility of the people and every citizen, particularly those highly placed in the Public Service, is expected to use his position and resources to bring benefits to his people. Therefore almost every community - including those which speak the same or identical dialect - sees itself as distinct<sup>2</sup> from the other and the interpretation<sup>v</sup> of

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<sup>1</sup> F.O.-84/1882. Memo on the British Protectorate of the Oil Rivers, Part 11.

<sup>2</sup> ~~the~~  
Communication with the elders and chiefs.  
For details refer to Chapter 3, 5 and 7.

government programmes and policies (with special reference to the allocation of government projects to communities) is done within these local horizons. It has become a common practice for local people to assign 'profit and loss'<sup>1</sup> values to central government decisions; that is, projects which are located in any community (the community which is receiving the profit) are seen by others (the non-benefiting communities) as a loss either in the short or long run. Therefore almost every issue apart from being a bone of contention, provokes local rifts and rivalry. (See chapters 6 and 7). Much of local politics operates within this nexus.

Nevertheless, these isolationist and separatist tendencies have also been partly responsible for generating and stimulating a spirit of competition among different sections and communities for embarking on separate local projects.<sup>2</sup> Consequently this politicking has been a kind of disunity which encourages some measure of diversification<sup>3</sup> in the type of projects sponsored by different groups or communities. To take an example, since 1972 (the rural development year) communities which are interested in executing self help projects have competed for state government grants. Between 1972 and 1973, many communities which qualified for state government grants spent their money on town hall projects (see Chapter 7) largely because the town hall was regarded as a status symbol for the community. In short, because most of the communities had a sense of 'showmanship', only communities of culture and distinction could build town halls. However, in 1974 some villages in Ogoni area decided to build markets<sup>4</sup> and libraries on the grounds that the two projects represented the new status symbol. Since 1974, the Kalabaris

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapters 3, 4 and 7

<sup>3</sup>Interview with members of the local planning committees. September 1973 and September 1974.

<sup>4</sup>In Chapter 4, it will be seen that the Ogonis in particular attach great importance to building local markets, partly because of its economic value and partly because it was, and is, a local prestige project.



and Okrikans have competed with the Ogonis, and it is the ambition of almost every community to build the new prestige projects. Hence today there is rarely any other thing that 'fills the heart of the average Rivers man' than building either a library or a market for his community.

On the administrative side, because of these harsh geographical conditions there are tremendous difficulties in the establishment of administrative organs in the very remote villages. Similarly, the poor communication and inadequate transport facilities render field administration and the establishment of other government-sponsored projects a difficult task (as will be shown in Chapters 4 and 7). Yet these problems do not invalidate the fact that communication will also determine the extent and practicability of decentralisation (and the management of community development projects) irrespective of whether the government wants it or not. And under these conditions the tendency is to over-concentrate government projects and offices in those towns such as Port Harcourt, and the old divisional headquarters of Ahoada, Degema, Bori and Brass - where transport and communication links are less hazardous. Indeed, because of these facilities in the urban and quasi-urban centres, these centres have become the homes or the permanent residential places of most of the educated people (senior public servants and company executives) in the state. It is therefore increasingly felt in the state that much of the government expenditure is concentrated on such projects that satisfy the interests of the elite in the cities<sup>1</sup> and consequently while urban development is being accelerated, the development of the rural areas has been remarkably slow.

However, a crucial factor - geographical hazards - retards the general social and economic development of the State. Swamp and creek development is

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<sup>1</sup>Prestige projects like television, electricity and hotels are either located or earmarked for siting in the cities.  
See the 1st Development Plan '1970-1974' of the Rivers State.

by no means an easy task and this in itself is a serious constraint on development; yet these geographical hazards necessitate the mobilisation of resources for general development.

The Rivers State is predominantly rural. Apart from Port Harcourt, the State capital, and perhaps two other divisional headquarters (Bori and Ahoada), the remaining are rural communities. All these rural areas, covering over two thirds of the state territory and inhabited by over two thirds of the state population need massive development. Furthermore, two factors of production - capital and labour - are in short supply largely because of the ravages of the last civil war in Nigeria. Yet the two factors of production are necessary for the acceleration of extensive economic and social changes. To take an example, the launching of development projects in large numbers poses a serious problem. Many of the riverine towns, like Oporoma and Nembe are very distant,<sup>1</sup> and the routes are winding\* and tortuous from the State headquarters. The distance between Port Harcourt and Nembe is about 160 nautical miles and the tidal waves are often rough and so constitute a serious threat to small canoe paddlers. In the absence of adequate and fast sea transport, transportation costs of project materials to such places are exorbitant and inevitably far higher than similar transportation on land routes.

#### ECONOMIC

The major occupations<sup>2</sup> of the local people are fishing<sup>3</sup> and farming.

People in the riverine areas, like Okrika, Nembe, Kalabari and Bonny are

1 ~~It is a two-day journey~~

It is a two-day journey from Port Harcourt to Nembe, by hand-pulled canoe; and to several Ijaw villages it is a longer journey.

<sup>2</sup>Deduced from reports of an occupational survey of Eastern Nigeria in 1960; allowance being made for the increased employment of Rivers people in their own public and private sectors since 1967. See also Tilman and Cole, eds., The Nigerian Political Scene, London. 1962 pp. 171-176 for particulars about the economic and occupational breakdown of Eastern Nigeria. No corresponding survey has however been carried out in the Rivers State.

<sup>3</sup>In a 1950 assessment, about 75% and 77% of the tax payers in Kalabari and Okrika respectively were fishermen. See G.G. Robinson. Report of the Inquiry into the Okrika-Kalabari Dispute. Enugu. 1950. pp. 22 & 24.

predominantly fishermen, while those in the hinterland areas - the Ogbas and Ogonis - are farmers. Only about 7-10% of the people are employed in the public and private sectors. From this occupational break-down, it is clear that the geographical location of the different communities has considerably influenced the types of occupational practices in the state.

In the hinterland communities, especially in Ahoada division where farming is the main occupation of the people, the farm products - including food and cash crops such as yams, plantain, oil and kernel, cocoa, rubber, timber, etc., - account for approximately one-third of the farm harvest of the state. In Brass division there is some rice farming in the Abobiri and Ofoibiri areas. The bulk of these farm products are internally consumed (within the State) and there is not much commercial value for these products, as the farming is neither done on an extensive scale nor is production high because of the subsistence practices. These poor and subsistence occupational practices more or less confirm the old impression that the Delta has a soil too poor 'to produce a ton of oil';<sup>1</sup> there are however varying degrees of soil fertility ranging from moderate to poor. Nevertheless, some smoked fish and salt are exchanged<sup>2</sup> with the people of neighbouring states for bulk foodstuff and agricultural tools.

In spite of its economic value there is still not much fishing in the open sea, the bulk of the fishing being carried out on the bars of estuaries and creeks. Like the revenue from farming which is slim, the small catch from the government owned fishing trawlers does not really earn sufficient revenue<sup>3</sup> for the state. In terms of revenue, government reliance on fishing and farming is therefore bound to be of little significance. Notwithstanding

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<sup>1</sup>As Macgregor put it in 1832. Quoted in K. Dike. op. cit. p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>G.I. Jones. The Trading States of the Oil Rivers. London. 1963. p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter 7 for details of state revenue and expenditure.

these poor agricultural (fishing and farming) conditions, about 80% of the labour force in the state is still engaged in agricultural activities. Agriculture - including new prospects for mineral oil - constitutes about 75% of the source of the State's contribution to the national G.D.P. The heavy reliance on these sectors makes it almost imperative that the economic growth of the State will depend largely on improvements in fishing, farming and oil prospecting. Yet because of three primary factors; namely, the poor soil conditions, and the prevalent fishing and farming practices, the prospects for increased revenue and higher agricultural productivity are not very encouraging. And as long as the revenue yielding prospects are not very promising, the tools of deficit financing had (and have) to be used by the State government in meeting its needs. In recognition of these factors, government budgets (votes for community development projects) had to be 'cautious' in the early years of the State's existence.

The third factor, historical and political, which has contributed heavily to the state's importunate economic conditions, was the civil war in Nigeria. The civil war of 1967 coincided with the time when the state had been newly created and was in its years of survival. The war broke out in July 1967, barely two months after the state had been created. Because of economic and administrative difficulties, worsened by the political uncertainties of the time which threatened the existence of the State, the State administration operated in Lagos (outside its Port Harcourt headquarters) under 'exile' conditions. In such war circumstances, an 'on-the-spot' planning of the State economy was an impossible task. These factors also led to an increased dependence of the State on Federal revenue and facilities. The war period, above all, vastly disturbed and damaged the economy of both the Rivers people and their government. Yet the ruins of war needed a tremendous amount of resettlement of persons, as well as a reactivation of economic and social services - all these tasks required much money which neither the government nor the people could afford at that time. The problem therefore was to find

a balance between needs and resources without which a realisation of state objectives (economic, social and political) was difficult.

The grim economic portents have, however, been offset by new economic dimensions. Today, there are several oil fields in the state (discovered sometime in 1957 in Oloibiri regions; and the recent ones in Ogoni and Ahoada divisions) and at present the Rivers State is the richest oil State in Nigeria, producing about 60% of Nigeria's mineral oil.<sup>1</sup> The State therefore derives substantial revenue from these sources through the federal government. The tax proceeds from industrial and commercial activities which have been revived since the end of the war have reinforced the revenue from oil. It could be argued too, that the recovery of people from the ruins of the last Civil War and the resultant increased employment (which would enable people to pay more tax) in the state have improved the sources of private and state revenue. The recent establishment of a Pan-African Bank; (started with a capital of £0.5 million in 1971) a Lottery Board and commission and such other commercial enterprises, have as their major objectives, the stimulation of sufficient capital for development projects. It is probably premature to probe the results of these investments.

Against the foregoing background and conditions, the state government is looked upon as the prime mover, initiator, and stimulator of many local and state development schemes because as in almost every developing country, government is believed to have resources which are almost unlimited or at least richer than the local communities. There are virtually no limits to the services which the State government is called upon (or expected) to render or encourage. Yet the economic resources of the State government are limited. It will therefore be difficult for the state government to provide

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<sup>1</sup>In 1973, oil accounted for about 80% of the total value of Nigeria's exports. See West Africa, 8th April 1974, p. 399.

for the communities the range and quality of social and economic services required by contemporary conditions of rapid change especially in a society where the peoples demands and appetite for the 'good things of life' have increased.

In such situations of scarce or limited resources, the tendency has been for the different communities, such as the Kalabaris and Okrika<sup>asto</sup> to compete intensely using all kinds of political and administrative manouvres for getting more of these resources. In this network of competition, local dignataries - whom we shall call 'communal patrons'<sup>1</sup> in this study - have been involved (or believed to be involved) using their positions and influence in the public service for diverting public service resources to benefit their respective communities. It is in this respect that communalism in a Public Service context could be seen as a significant factor in, and as a pragmatic instrument for, developing the different communities in the state.

#### CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC

Until the recent Administrative Reorganisation Edict of May 1973 which divided the Rivers State into 18 Administrative units, the State was made up of five divisions, namely, Ahoada, Brass, Degema, Ogoni and Port Harcourt. Each of these divisions, peopled by groups with different cultural backgrounds, represented the broad framework of ethnic divisions; even though within this very framework a further subdivision is still permissible. While Brass and Degema divisions are inhabited by people of the typical Delta (Riverine) communities who are commonly referred to as Ijaws, the principal inhabitants of Ahoada divisions are the Ikwerres, Engennis, Ekpeyes and Ogbas. At the other pole, Ogoni division is principally inhabited by the Ogonis and Elemes (Mboli); while Port Harcourt division by virtue of its cosmopolitan status is

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<sup>1</sup>The concept of patronage will be discussed in Chapter 3.

inhabited by people from all ethnic groups in the State. However, its (Port Harcourt) principal inhabitants are the Ikwerres and Okrikans who live in the outskirt villages and towns of Port Harcourt city.

Therefore, the Rivers people do not constitute one ethnic group. Like other similar groups in Africa which live together as a result of sheer geographical and political necessity (other than reasons of cultural similarity) the Rivers people are not very easy to define or categorise in cultural terms. Using language as the major cultural criterion of definition, the Ijaws come closest to being the largest ethnic group in the state. However, language as a unit of definition has severe limitations<sup>1</sup> in this context because it is with some difficulty that one can identify a language called the Ijaw<sup>2</sup>. Secondly not all who are believed to be speaking Ijaw do admit that they are Ijaws - this is the claim<sup>3</sup> of Okrikas and Kalabaris in particular. A basic question therefore is: How can the Ijaw language be identified? What is perhaps more appropriate is to refer to groups of dialects within the larger network of what is usually called the Ijaw since most of the Riverine people identify their speech<sup>4</sup> as a dialect of Ijaw, the degree of mutual intelligibility between dialects varying widely.

<sup>1</sup>There are also some sub groups such as those on the fringe regions of the East, West and North of the Delta who consider themselves Ijaw (more on historical than ethnic basis) but at present speak non-Ijaw languages. See Kay Williamson's work on Ijaw dialects.

<sup>2</sup>The Ijaw language is also spoken by groups outside the Rivers State.

<sup>3</sup>Some Kalabari-Okrika debates on (a) 'Who are the Ijaws?' and (b) 'We are not real Ijaws in manners and outlook'.

For summaries of these debates, see the following:

(i) Nigerian Tide (The Government Newspaper) May-July 1974 editions  
(ii) Morning Star. Port Harcourt. July-August 1974 editions.

<sup>4</sup>E.J. Alagoa. A History of the Niger Delta. Ibadan. 1972. pp 14-17  
Compare with Kay Williamson's work ("Language of the Niger Delta" Nigerian Magazine, No.97. 1968. pp 123-30) on Ijaw dialects.

Although the Ijaw language has probably not been carefully and painstakingly studied<sup>1</sup> by many African linguists, the materials available confirm a linguistic heterogeneity within a broad circle of the same language - a kind of diversity in unity. According to Greenberg<sup>2</sup>, the Ijaw language forms a group within the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo family of African languages. And while earlier ethnographers, such as Talbot<sup>3</sup> divided the Ijaw into three groups: Lower, Western and Kalabari, contemporary ones like Horton<sup>4</sup> have divided them into Western, Nembe and Eastern. In all these, the classifications are apparently based on linguistic criteria (the major dialects being Okrika, Kalabari, Ibani, Brass and Kolokuma, and even within these there are several sub-dialects within each group) and these do not even correspond exactly with the present administrative division in the State.

In more recent times the complexity of the language map has been further recognised. For example, Professor Kay Williamson increased the linguistic classifications into seven sub-groups: South-Western, North-Western, North Central, South Central, South-Eastern, North-Eastern and North-Eastern-Central. In these there are some dialects which serve as intermediate bridge dialects between sub-groups. These classifications on the Ijaw alone, which is just one out of many other languages in the state, complex and multiple as they are, do not exhaust the possibilities of further break-down. Therefore even if it were possible to agree that there is the Ijaw language, some kind of heterogeneity would still be identified. Besides, there are also other major dialects in the State: Khana, Mboli and Gokana<sup>5</sup> (in the Ogoni group); Ikwerre and Engenni<sup>6</sup>. Yet all these do not limit the possibility of

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<sup>1</sup>E.J. Alagoa, however, writes of the antiquity of the Ijaw language and calculates it to be at least 500 years distant from Ibo, Yoruba and Edo - a calculation which accords with the geneological age of the Niger Delta itself.

<sup>2</sup>J.H. Greenberg. The Languages of Africa. Bloomington. 1963

<sup>3</sup>In G.I. Jones, The Trading States of the Oil Rivers, London, 1963. p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>In a work on Ijaw Art.

<sup>5</sup>Belonging to the Benue - Congo branch of the Niger-Congo.

<sup>6</sup>Belonging to the Delta Edo group of languages.



the existence of more dialects, and indeed of more sub-dialects.

These factors of language complexity and heterogeneity lead to several political issues and questions which this study would attempt to spotlight and possibly answer. The state may require able and diplomatic administrators - military and civil - who are capable of reconciling the tension and antagonisms which would ensue from the diverse ethnic and community demands. Such demands take three major forms: (i) local petitions for separate local administration; (ii) each group asking for a 'fair' share of social and economic projects (sponsored by government) to be located in its area; and finally, there is the awareness on the part of administrators that they are different people from different ethnic or language groups, who are at Headquarters to administer the affairs of the State. In managing the affairs of the state, a crucial question is then posed: Where does the loyalty of the administrator go - to his people or state or both - and in what circumstances, and with what consequences?

#### SOCIAL PRACTICES AND CUSTOM

By modern standards, the population of the Rivers State is largely illiterate. For example, in 1953, only about 16% of the population of Eastern Nigeria (the Rivers state being a part of it) was literate - literacy understood as the completion of a basic primary school education. Of the literate population, only about one twentieth had acquired an education equivalent to or higher than the secondary school level. In the same year only a quarter of those aged between 7-14 years were enrolled in primary schools. These figures when compared with the administrative unit known today as the Rivers State do not give a true reflection of the situation because there was an imbalance between the Ibo areas and those of the minorities - the Rivers State and South Eastern State were popularly known as the minority areas. The Ibo areas were far more educationally

advanced<sup>1</sup> than their Riverine and other minority neighbours. The Riverine geographical problems which helped to frustrate social and economic development, and the poverty of the people made it difficult for both the people and the government to establish many schools to enable people to acquire education on a large scale.

In an earlier work on the Rivers State, I had outlined some of these factors as follows:

"the establishment of educational institutions (schools and colleges) in large numbers poses a serious problem. Many of the Riverine towns like Nembe are very distant from the major cities. Teachers and students are therefore not likely to be attracted or lured to teach or attend schools in these areas because of inadequate and unsatisfactory transport on the rough seas and the absence of social amenities in most of these towns."<sup>2</sup>

With the creation of a separate state for the Rivers people, the educational backwardness has however been slightly improved because of a redoubled and conscientious effort by the people and the government in three major directions: (i) the establishment of more schools (see Appendix 1) and a liberal education policy which reduces the school fee burden on parents; (ii) the award of more scholarships to indigenes as a kind of incentive to people (see Appendix 2) and (iii) the intensification of public campaigns on the need and value for more education.

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<sup>1</sup>For example, until the creation of the Rivers State there was only one government owned post primary institution sited in the state and there were only a few mission and other voluntary agency schools compared with many in the Ibo areas. There is also a strong local belief that the Eastern Nigerian Government deliberately neglected the Rivers areas in matters of development - as a kind of reprisal measure for the political support which the majority of the people refused to give to the government. The matter is however, debatable.

<sup>2</sup>L.A.B. Iyagba. "Establishing the Rivers State Public Service, 1967-71" (MFA dissertation at the University of Ife, Nigeria). February 1972. p. 5.

However, though there has been a shortage of supply of functional high level manpower (see Appendix 3) in the state, old politicians, senior administrators and the local mass of the people have been aware that both human and physical capital are indispensable for the economic growth of the state. In support of this, there is also a long standing tradition among the Rivers people to prize and honour educational attainments in every community; and several communities like the Kalabaris and Okrikans refer to themselves as superior to others (for example superior to Bonny, the Ogbas and Ogonis) if they have more of their people educated and so occupying distinguished posts in the public and private enterprises.

This partly explains the Kalabari and Okrika claims for superiority and also the strong belief among the other groups that the Kalabaris, Okrikans and Nembes who hold most of the prominent posts<sup>1</sup> in the Public Service are using their positions and influence to secure more state benefits for their people in situations where several groups and communities are competing for limited resources. As far as these complaints<sup>2</sup> are concerned, the use of such influence for such purposes is an exercise of protective communalism. On the other hand, these factors of educational imbalance among groups (as they affect inter-community competition for posts and projects) and the great premium placed on education (because of its attendant advantages) do at present help to stimulate the interest of the different communities in schemes of general development.

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<sup>1</sup>For example, the Military Governor is a Nembe; the Head of the Civil Service a Kalabari, and more of the Permanent Secretaries and senior officials in government are Nembe and Kalabari people.

<sup>2</sup>Double standards. When a decision is in favour of a community, there are usually no complaints; if not, there are allegations of parochialism and nepotism.

There are also some other social and customary practices which have affected development efforts at the local level. Many communities in the state (especially in some parts of Ogoni land where the institution of clan headship is still highly respected by the people) could reasonably be described as republican and more or less egalitarian in nature. In such places local administration is principally carried out through locally organised family and clan Councils, hence traditional power is diffused among elders and Councils whose decisions and sanctions could hardly be enforced throughout the territory without the consent and approval of the majority of the people. This is not to deny, however, that there are local chieftaincies or councils as in Kalabari and Ogboland which exercise some considerable control over the lives of their respective villages in terms of the authority they exercise; but basically in these places the liberty of the individual to organise, plan and think for himself has not been sacrificed for the sake of the larger group or Council. Primacy has therefore been given to the contribution of every individual (as against people of ascribed status) to the political and social life of the community.

In essence then, paradoxically, both the community and the individual function as two separate units and yet they are not exclusive of each other. The individual maintains his independence, while the community still retains and enforces strong sentiments of community solidarity among its members. Both the individual and the community play their part in such an atmosphere so that each is given sufficient opportunity to develop and strengthen itself for the benefit of both. This is a result of the maximum advantage which each makes use of in situations of limited economic resources. Therefore, the willingness to work for the benefit of the group stems largely from these two mutual reinforcements. Furthermore, there is that general Rivers philosophy of group cohesiveness and pride in the vitality and strength of traditional institutions. This philosophy is also reinforced

by the Rivers peoples belief in the immediate good of the community even where such a belief involves sacrificing some of the interests of the individual for that of the community, such as when the individual disagrees with the development objectives of the larger community.

There are also local beliefs that the 'national spirits and gods' of the different communities (for example, Ogidiga for Nembe; Ikiba for Bonny; Feni beso for Okrika; and Akaso for Kalabari) are constantly protecting and helping 'good citizens' to make progress in all endeavours of life. Obviously, good citizens are those who work for the good of the community; and by implication the 'bad citizen' (the qualification is self-evident) would never be blessed, and in extreme cases they may be struck by thunder or by some evil forces invoked by the city deity. All these beliefs have a considerable impact on the life and attitude of many people including the highly educated. Hence in the state and provincial capitals where most of the educated people have migrated to, many people from the different communities irrespective of their status, still retain their strong bonds of togetherness. This has resulted in the formation of community unions and age grades, prominent among these are the Opu Nembe Union, Abonnema Improvement Union, Ilaye Ilame age grade, and Setari age grade of Okrika. Some of these Unions under the influence of their communal patrons have contributed heavily (as will be examined) towards the development projects of their respective communities, and members who have learnt new ideas and philosophies still graft these new elements onto their traditional custom of working for the development and benefit of the community. By contributing heavily for, and by being largely responsible for the wave of enthusiasm in local development, these Unions of 'sons of the soil abroad' have challenged their respective local Councils (often accused of incompetence and corruption) to live up to the expectations of the present day by being more positively involved in local development.

It is in the light of these that many citizens of the different communities still use and maintain traditional institutions and practices not simply as romantic relics of the past but for performing modern development functions to surmount the difficult periods through which their communities pass in the development process. From the traditional background given, a major conclusion which could be drawn is that in most parts of the Rivers State the social system and practices are favourable to community development, and this atmosphere in which people are predisposed to community development schemes would be (indeed, it is) regularly exploited by group leaders for group benefits - and occasionally for individual benefits too.

#### POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE

Before the advent of Europeans in the coastal areas of the Rivers State (and until contemporary conditions prevailed) the communities in the Rivers State divided broadly into two main political groupings: the Monarchies and the Republics. The petty monarchies and ~~Re~~publics (and other political groupings) which are not easy to define, fall between these two main typologies. Bonny and Kalabari best illustrate the petty monarchies, while Brass, that is Nembe, represent the republics. While the monarchies exercised considerable political authority over all villages and settlements within their domain (the SE) hence earlier writers<sup>1</sup> referred to them as despots or autocrats, the republics constituting the majority were essentially mono-trading 'states' with divided political authority. Among the monarchies, Bonny was about the most significant economic<sup>2</sup> and political centre in the 19th century.

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<sup>1</sup>A European observer, Adam, in 1790 referred to the King of Bonny as an absolute ruler. And as far as can be ascertained, Bonny had from very ancient times been a monarchy, obviously having a monarchy older and more respected than the others.

<sup>2</sup>An important wholesale market for slaves and a centre of commerce in the Atlantic trade.

In the language of the political anthropologists the republics were the stateless organisations where the SE was more of a cultural than political unit. The component parts of the SE were bound together by cultural and ethnic similarities. The SE was therefore a reflection of a loose political organisation.

In matters of central administration, especially in the monarchies, the highest authority in these communities was the Amānyanabo (owner of the town, otherwise called King)<sup>1</sup> who took precedence over the other chiefs in central administration and in social and ritual affairs. Speaking strictly in terms of division of labour, the Orualabo (supreme commander of Ritual affairs, that is, the High Priest) performed the most significant rituals although he liaised with the Amānyanabo. But political matters of prime importance to these communities were discussed by the General Council (on which representation was made by the Ward Chiefs, Priests of Cults and other local dignitaries) over which the Amānyanabo presided. On the advent of the Europeans, the Amānyanabo represented his kingdom in external relations (matters of peace and war) and negotiated trading treaties.

In every SE, there were other forms of more localised administration. The tradition of larger communities like Okrika, Kalabari and Bonny clearly indicate a division into wards which were more or less similar to little villages or quarters with component households and househeads. To a large extent, these wards were groups of patrilineal kins. But in all these political groupings, and basic to both monarchies and republics, the smallest political and social unit was the WARI<sup>2</sup> (House) system which comprised those who lived together as a corporate group.

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L. Mitchison in Nigeria: Newest Nation, London. 1960. p. 56 remarked that these were only elder chiefs whom the English traders by way of flattery called Kings. However, Ijaw oral tradition confirms that they were real Kings.

2

Corresponding with the corporate kin group which among the Ibos is referred to as the family or lineage.

An important trader, his slaves and his family formed the nucleus of a house; hence on grounds of economic and military necessity the bond and free could become members of one House. In political terms, the WARI which was primarily the unit of local government was also a kind of democratic unit in which the Head or Chief had to consult with other family sub-heads, all of whom were elected to office by the majority of the house members. But when rivalry became intense, the strength and status of each WARI were measured largely by its 'active' numerical strength, by the wealth of its members, and by the fighting might of the household.

Similarly, with the intensification of trading activities in the late 18th and 19th centuries, political turbulence and rivalry among sub-chiefs, chiefs and communities became common. The Nembe/Kalabari/Okrika wars of 1858 and 1863 serve as examples of inter-community feuds; these confrontations arose because of clash of interests among the communities with regard to the use of trade routes and new markets for the trade in palm oil especially. Consequently, many communities and house chiefs blocked commercial sea route passages against their rivals, such as Nembe blockading Kalabari sea passages in 1865. Not only were there inter-community feuds but there were also internal conflicts among chiefs especially at Bonny where in economically weak houses were merged with stronger ones after bitter squabbles. This trend also gave rise to more wealthy men and their households seceding from their parent houses to establish their own independent households.

Such a period of intense warfare, and the primary concern for each house or community to survive on its own economically, ushered in the 'Canoe House system' which was a modification of the traditional House. The Canoe House was a compact and well-organised trading and fighting unit, and to survive as a unit it had to be capable of manning and maintaining a war canoe.<sup>1</sup> So strong and deep rooted was this House system that it was

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<sup>1</sup>It was customary for houses to have 10-20 war canoe chiefs depending on the size of house; the royal house usually had greater strength over the others.



a common practice particularly in Bonny that on a chief's election to office, his confirmation by the Amanyanabo was dependent on his being found capable of equipping and manning a war canoe. Furthermore, the Chief was to have sufficient resources to maintain the house. In short, a chief was expected to be both a war leader and the manager of the House's trading and economic activities. Partly because of these new economic dimensions of the time, and partly because of the other political and military circumstances, the qualifications needed to found a house or succeed to the chieftaincy of an existing house were changed. They ceased to be based on royal or chiefly descent from the line of the free born<sup>1</sup> citizen as was the case before, and were rather based on economic and military prowess alone. Hence even those of slave origin could have the rare honour of becoming house or community leaders, including being free from the stigma of slavery. Indeed, the wealth produced by slaves liberated them from that stigma of slavery if they gave proof of their leadership qualities by being able to man and maintain war canoes.

As Kingsley put it, one of the very interesting things about this House system "is that it gives to the poorest boy who paddles an oil canoe a chance of becoming a King."<sup>2</sup> It was under this changed social and political order that Jaja who started his life as an energetic Bonny slave later became the Amanyanabo of Opobo (Opobo is believed to be founded by those of Bonny origin). Thus one of the real factors which appears to have weakened<sup>3</sup> the cohesiveness

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Dike argues that at this time, because of the slave trade in which mostly people in the hinterland, the Ibos, were sold as slaves in the Niger Delta, in the peopling of the Rivers communities, the slaves most of whom were Ibos outnumbered the free born. Dr. E. Alagoa and several other recent writers and historians have since rejected Dike's submissions.

<sup>2</sup>M.H. Kingsley, West African Studies. London. 1899. p. 427

<sup>3</sup>Until the present day, this still persists.

of the trading house or group was the displacement of a more communal organisation by the rise of individualism. This spirit of individualism was fostered by the new era of economic and social conditions. Essentially then, economic strength and perhaps military might therefore dictated which chief or community was superior to the other because it was the primary interest of every house or community (or settlements of other kinds) to promote and increase the trade and status of its people.

Other historical<sup>1</sup> factors and connections between these communities have most probably been significant in shaping or influencing their present day political and administrative relationship. The 1863 and 1865 military confrontations which have already been discussed form only a part of these confrontations. For example, in 1877 Okrika and Bonny had allied to fight against Kalabari in matters connected with sea route passages; in 1876, 1880/81 Bonny also had similar encounters with Kalabari - these leading to the October 1877 and November 1879 peace treaties between Kalabari and Bonny. The Bonny-Kalabari rivalry had been particularly intense for three major reasons:

- (i) Bonny lay directly to the south of Kalabari and both shared common territorial waters.
- (ii) Bonny's advantageous position in her proximity to the coast in the overseas trade (more ships called at Bonny and so she had more trade with Europeans) provoked the jealousy not only of Kalabari but also Okrika, and
- (iii) Kalabari's resolution to bar most direct routes which Bonny took to the hinterland for trade.

The Okrika-Kalabari antagonisms also predate modern times. The first serious clashes were in late 17th and 18th centuries and even as recent

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<sup>1</sup>A. Fombo (a respected and renowned local historian at Bonny) and Dr. E.J. Alagoa (an authority in oral tradition of the Rivers State) provide most of these historical data. Interview with Fombo and Alagoa, August 1973. See also E.J. Alagoa. op. cit.

as 1950 these two groups had fought bitterly over the use and ownership of fishing territories. In the 18th and 19th centuries Bonny had also on several occasions barred Okrika from coastal outlets. Similarly, because the Ogonis are at the immediate north of Okrika (the distance between Okrika island and Eleme, an Ogoni territory, is 4 miles on sea, and Okrika is about 10 nautical miles to most Ogoni settlements) the Okrikans and Ogonis regarded each other as a threat to each other's settlements and economy.<sup>1</sup> Each group sought to bar the other from the use of fishing ports, and for communities whose major occupation is fishing, these hostilities adversely affected their economy. Often the results of these threats was war. In commercial terms, the Ogoni territory provided Okrika its markets for food (the Omono and Ekpuruba markets) and other products because the Ogoni practised a more extensive farming and their soil was more fertile than Okrika's. Most of these encounters strained their relationships and often led to feuds. In these feuds Okrika had always been believed to have had the protection of its national god, Fenibeso, whose supernatural prowess is also believed to be stronger than any of the other national gods. In fact, inter community feuds of this nature are legion, some of which are either beyond comprehension or have escaped the records of oral tradition and written history.

The relationship between these communities has not only been on economical and political bases. In ancient times these communities did not have equal status, Bonny had more claim to fame and glory and because of the advantages she enjoyed in the slave trade and in the overseas trade, these increased her wealth, status and power in relation to other groups. She also has had a dynasty older and far more respected than any other. These factors have largely accounted for Bonny's present day insistence to

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<sup>1</sup>Both groups use the same fishing waters and live together in fishing settlements.

be given her old place (at least as first among equal communities) - something which other communities have refused to concede to her because of the changed political and economic circumstances whereby other communities have surpassed Bonny both economically and politically. In the present day, the Kalabaris, Okrikans and Nembes have produced most of the educated men and administrators in the Public Service, and secondly their representation in the Executive Council (the supreme political body of the State) is stronger than Bonny's. Besides, among the educated class, respect for traditional chieftaincies has not only been diminished but the power they enjoy has been considerably reduced. At present each community struggles for its own good, mobilising every possible political 'consensus'<sup>1</sup> - such as reconciling factions in the community to achieve rapid development. This brand of politics has been more common in Okrika<sup>2</sup> which has more of these internal political divisions than their neighbours. Yet in uniting these different factions for the good of the community, it is not uncommon for each community to reassert two basic things:-

- (i) the past glory and achievements of its ancestors which could still be preserved and improved upon by the present-day generation;
- (ii) the historical inter-community antagonisms, and therefore the need for each group to surpass the enemy communities.

From the background given, it is difficult to conceive how these historical situations and the kind of political relationships which they have helped to foster between these communities cannot influence the policy-making machinery of the administrators, who to a considerable extent, are both representatives of their communities and the state. In such traditional societies the memories of old antagonisms may not, and in fact

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<sup>1</sup>The desire for unity.

<sup>2</sup>The Tuboniju-Koniju factions over Chieftaincy matters. The chieftaincy disputes will be discussed in Chapter 5.

do not, fade away so soon, for in spite of recent political and social changes which have enhanced the educational attainments of the State Administrators and other elites (modern and traditional) it is true, although paradoxical, that among the former Eastern Nigerian communities the Rivers people while changing the most have to some extent changed the least.<sup>1</sup> And even if these memories do fade or have faded, the desire for the people and their respective administrators<sup>2</sup> from the different communities to improve (in terms of local development projects) on their past or present may not be given a secondary place so easily in spite of existing local political, social and economic differences even within the same community. The presumption, as I argued in Chapter 1, is that the administrators are social beings, and so despite their reputation (real or assumed) for impartiality and inscrutability, they are susceptible to a variety of human weaknesses. Some of these weaknesses and foibles relate to, and are derived from, their cultural environment. It therefore follows that the administrators in the Rivers State would entertain community loyalties to some degree, or would cherish the political values and interests of their people in local development. As long as these considerations influence their official judgements, the interests of their people cannot be very secondary - more especially because the traditional political and administrative rivalries and tensions have also helped to fan the embers of factionalism in the state.

In summarising this chapter, it is necessary to qualify my account and analysis. In terms of what issues have been discussed I have rather been selective for two major reasons. In the first place this is a study on community development, and so I have examined three key areas (instead of dealing with the whole structure of the environment and the people):

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<sup>1</sup>The military Governor, realising this has often appealed to the different communities to forgive and forget the past. See Take off Stage, Port Harcourt. 1969. pp. 20-24.

<sup>2</sup>Twelve out of nineteen permanent Secretaries and eight out of twelve commissioners in the State did say that even though they strive hard to administer the affairs of the State as impartially as possible, it is difficult to deny that policy matters connected with their communities are also given primary attention. (Interviews, August 1973)

geographical, economic, and political; because the conditions here apart from being interdependent could almost be described as the principal factors which generate the 'felt-needs' of the Rivers people. Therefore, these form the axis around which issues on community development are generally seen and discussed in the state. Here I am also applying the principle of 'felt-needs' as a major explanation for the 'why' of local development. Furthermore, the conditions generated by these three have brought together both the communities and the central government into a concerted participation in improving the existing harsh physical conditions in the State. In this respect, these factors constitute parameters to political and administrative action. Secondly, these three key areas largely explain the influence of the ecological and historical setting on the nature of local development projects and the reaction of both local and central government administration to these problems.

I have also looked at some aspects of custom - as applied in this study - and community practices for two major reasons. The features here also encourage the communities into taking action for improving the communities. Therefore it is hereby argued that custom (when tuned in this way) stimulates and strengthens the will of the people in pooling their resources together for the good of their communities. An inevitable conclusion from this is that where people believe strongly in, or have strong attachment to (or respect for) a particular custom or philosophy, contemporary trends of social and economic changes do not severely alter their basic attitudes and beliefs. At best tradition may in such circumstances be modified (not altered) to suit modern ends (such as for local development). In such circumstances, those ends and goals would be pursued more by the communities because they are more felt at the local level and less at the central government level. Central government is led to intervene when these aspects of local politics and practices, including pressures from local dignitaries, eat deep into the framework of central administration. Generally, this trend is part of the rationale and

philosophy for most community development schemes in the Rivers State.

Several examples will be given in this study and possible conclusions drawn to elucidate these contentions and arguments.

CHAPTER 3LOCAL PARTICIPANTS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The primary objective of this chapter is to trace the paths to power, influence (including manipulative ability) and the leadership of people as they affect policy-making in matters of local development. These paths are both traditional and modern in their levels of functionality. The relationships involved in these are twofold:

- (i) those between local dignitaries whom I shall call Bipiberelapu (literally meaning those whose 'mouths',<sup>1</sup> are important and so deserve respect) and the ordinary citizen.
- (ii) those between different types of local dignitaries - especially the relationship between the traditional elites and the leaders of recent (modern) creation. In the two types of relationship, the central issues relate to the manner in which either the ordinary people or those who are less important locally are influenced by local dignitaries in the task of achieving the goals of local development.

There is a special method or an art in the relationships between these dignitaries and the local people in the task of community development. This chapter will analyse this art. It is in this respect that I shall also be concerned with the analysis of the goal-getting mechanisms of the local dignitaries.

My analysis will also show in some detail that the distinction between some categories of local dignitaries and central government officials is very thin. So also is the distinction between local and central because some of those I shall identify as the big men in the locality are central government officials who act in this context as local people, and not strictly in their capacities as government officials. Yet in a sense, if they are a

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<sup>1</sup>In Okrika dialect the 'mouth' in this sense refers to the entire personality of the individual. The important 'mouth' is the important personality.



kind of local ambassador (as I maintained in my last two chapters) at the centre, and are involved with community development matters both at the State level and in their localities<sup>1</sup>, then it is difficult to see them strictly in either a local or national (State) context. At best they may represent both. This will be the major line of my argument in this chapter. In this chapter, and the next, I shall try and establish that it is possible for these dignitaries to perform both roles (local and state) almost simultaneously; and that a workable pattern of relationships in this 'role and status differentiation' will necessarily take into account the effective use made by these local dignitaries of the local and state government resources at their command. This is the point where it will be very appropriate to discuss manipulation, the use of influence and pressures in local as well as central politics and administration. I use manipulation in the sense that in their relationships with the ordinary citizens and the junior state government officials - those officials who are responsible for community development matters at the local level - those dignitaries are able to establish a respectable image of themselves both in Port Harcourt and in their localities. They achieve this skilfully and there is a method in doing this. In establishing their local images, some of the methods they apply rest on their ability to draw on the traditional respect which the average villager and junior government officers have for the educated and for those highly placed in society. I also refer to 'influence and pressures' because all that is achieved<sup>2</sup> by these dignitaries in these relationships is not entirely based on people's willingness and cooperation. Some of these achievements are induced. The dignitaries are successful in some respects partly because of the changed nature of their traditional

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<sup>1</sup>As members of their community development unions and their active participation in local community development meetings.

<sup>2</sup>A discussion of their achievements will follow later.

societies where there are now some core power centres (a situation which admits that some people are more powerful and influential than others) and partly because the machinery for central and local decision making is not ideally Weberian; but rather comes closer to the conditions prevalent in a 'live and let live bureaucracy.' This is the kind of bureaucracy in which both the governors and the governed concede that the loyalty of the policy maker to his community is not necessarily subordinate to that of the State. This probably fits into some of the conditions in what Riggs calls administration in the 'transitional model'<sup>1</sup> where the rules of the game may be modified or altered as the need arises. In this context it is the administrator who determines the need and how it may be met.

As will become clearer later, since the horizons of the local dignitaries and the ordinary citizens are different because of their different social and cultural backgrounds, this will lead to some differences in what both or each of the different groups in these communities consider as models of local development. The bases for these differences and the method for reconciling them will also be discussed in this chapter. The kind of differences which arise may be seen as concerning issues of strategy and priority, in the sense that these differences are primarily not so much about fundamentals as about whether the different groups consider the type of projects to be undertaken as necessary.

I shall now look at the network of social and political relationships as they affect community development in the rural areas. In these six traditional societies which are rapidly subjected to recent economic, political and social changes, it is possible to identify certain social and political action groups in the sense that in the execution of community development projects, some groups assume a greater responsibility than others.

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<sup>1</sup>A discussion of this model will be found in Fred Riggs. Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society. Boston. 1964.

Similarly, the responsibility for achieving these goals does not fall squarely on all persons or groups in the community; hence some groups are more functional than others. Therefore, some bear or are expected to bear a greater responsibility than others by virtue of the roles they play. In examining the links that bind these local communities to the central machinery for decision-making at Port Harcourt, the group basis for influencing decisions becomes much more evident. Port Harcourt is definitely the arena in which the forces of communalism penetrate the administrative fabric. Hence it will be discovered that when local dignitaries who are also state government officials at Port Harcourt take active interest in executing the development projects in their localities, the social and political dimensions of assuming responsibility in these matters become much wider. This may be explained by the fact that the influence of these 'official' local dignitaries is stronger - for reasons to be examined later - than those of their counterparts at home.

Viewed from these perspectives of differential influence, leadership and participation in the execution of local development projects, four categories (or groups) of people may be generally identified in each of the six communities under study. These are:

- (i) the Chiefs (Alapu)
- (ii) the Elders (Seniapu)
- (iii) the Youth; (Asemeni) and
- (iv) the Communal Patrons (Bipiberelaapu)

These are the four groups that may be referred to as the back bones of each of these communities.

Each of these groups plays some distinct roles in community affairs. Their status, roles and functions will now be discussed separately, and I shall start with the chiefs.

Chiefs, in the Rivers State, may be defined as persons duly selected and appointed under customary law and practices, by a household, ~~ward~~, quarter, village or village groups for the purpose of performing administrative and political duties as heads of those units. They are also such persons vested with certain traditional powers and functions according to customary law. By this definition, an important question arises. Are there unrecognised or false chiefs as distinct from real chiefs? Though this is arguable, if the question were thrown open to these communities, an obvious answer is a 'yes'. Some chiefs in Kalabari areas who acquired their titles by virtue of their wealth or by some other means of social distinction are therefore excluded from the category of real chiefs (as against false or unrecognised chiefs) because they are entitled to no traditional allegiance from any section of the local community. Neither do they command the traditional respect accorded to the other chiefs. As may be implied by the foregoing distinction, the difference between a real chief and the other lies in the fact that the former is by tradition vested with powers and functions customarily recognised and accepted by the people; whereas the latter's powers and functions do not have a traditional base. However, as will be demonstrated soon, it is misleading to argue that chiefs are only cultural brokers performing traditional functions alone.

In discussing the real chiefs it could be said that in the Rivers State the institution of chieftaincy has deep roots. In ancient times there were different classes<sup>1</sup> of chiefs, especially among the monarchies, some superior to others by traditional classification. Such superior categories of chiefs, excluding the ritual or war chiefs who officiated only in special circumstances, therefore exercised greater powers and were more politically significant

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<sup>1</sup>The terminologies are derived from the Okrika dialect. It may however be observed that in these terminological usages, the emphasis may differ from community to community; yet the model of application is broadly the same.

in their communities. Broadly, these were the Amanyabo (King of city state or town), Opuiwomaalabo (big village head), Wariyanaalabo (House head) and Odoalabo (Compound head). These categorisations correspond with a tripartite classification of chiefs which existed under the House system of the Coastal States: Opumumbu alapu (Senior grade chiefs such as the Amanyabo) Ogobirimumbu Alapu (middle grade chiefs such as village heads) and Kalamumbu Alapu (junior grade chiefs). The status, influence, and powers exercised by these chiefs were in that descending order. In general, chiefs combined different political, judicial and social functions. In judicial terms, they organised the native courts (including private sessions in their premises), and dispensed justice and order. In this respect, they acted as the custodians of public order, hence they helped to create a political atmosphere conducive to local development. Politically and socially, they were the leaders of their communities or some part thereof. It was largely in this respect that colonialism affected in several ways the institution of chieftaincy. For example, the Amanyabo<sup>1</sup> of Okrika and Nembe fought against colonialism by being actively engaged in leading the campaign<sup>2</sup> against the colonial form of government. These political involvements of these highly placed traditional rulers culminated in the British deportation of the Amanyabo of Okrika in 1896 and the withdrawal of recognition (deposition) from King Koko of Nembe in the same year. From oral sources, it is believed that in these incidents these Amanyabo had the support of both their junior chiefs and the people. Even in recent times, these traditional elites have played leading roles in the agitation for the creation of the Rivers State. The 1957 London conference in which Chief Harold Biriye<sup>3</sup> of Bonny participated and the special representations

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<sup>1</sup>The plural form of Amanyabo

<sup>2</sup>Okrika: 'Diary of Events' (Political and Historical) 19th and 20th centuries.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter 6.

to the Willink<sup>1</sup> Minority Commission (1957) on similar state issues also exemplify the high esteem<sup>2</sup> for, and the significant role of, chiefs.

#### RECENT CHANGES ON STATUS AND ROLE OF CHIEFS

Though the traditional importance of chiefs and the respect which they earned among their people is receding in recent times (see Chapter 2), most chiefs are still able, and are asked, to play an important role in the present day development affairs of their communities. In carrying out these tasks, they have mobilised some elements of the past traditional sentiments - respect, dignity and obedience - accorded to the institution of chieftaincy. The different communities still appreciate the importance of chieftaincy, as a case study will soon illustrate, and in recent times, the Rivers State government recognition of the chief's role and importance also reinforces the people's faith in this institution. Here I shall quote some of the important remarks and addresses of the Military Governor of the State which outline the government's impressions of the Institution. "Respected Chiefs and traditional rulers" ... "Fathers of the State" ... "Guardians of all the virtues that the Rivers man is reputed for - honesty, purposefulness and hardwork".<sup>3</sup> About its functions and significance, the Governor said as follows:

"the institution of chieftaincy is rooted in the tradition and usages of our people ... the institution will ever remain a cherished institution in our midst ... it is in this regard that I expect the maximum contribution from you as natural rulers of this State."<sup>3</sup>

These extracts identify the significance of the institution, and even if some flattery or exaggeration surround them, the salient fact still remains:

<sup>1</sup>Henry Willink: Report of the Commission to inquire into the Fears of Minorities in Nigeria. London. 1958. ~~Card.~~ 505, HMSO

<sup>2</sup>The Government of the former Eastern Nigeria also recognised their importance; hence it agreed to establish a House of Chiefs in 1957, comprising 80 members, 7 of whom were chiefs from the present Rivers State.

<sup>3</sup> ~~...~~  
Address by His Excellency, Commander A.P. Diete-Spiff, Military Governor of the Rivers State to the Chiefs Conference. Friday, 18th May, 1973. Municipal Hall, Port Harcourt.

chiefs occupy significant positions in these communities as distinct from other groups.

In the light of the changed circumstance (Chapter 2) today, it is now necessary to examine the functions and duties of chiefs in the community in accordance with the wishes and attitude of the communities towards chieftaincy. Okrika will serve as a case study. Materials from oral sources confirm that Okrika people still cherish the Institution and want it to continue to perform certain functions in matters concerning community development. Local people have always cited the case of late chief Oju-Daniel Kalio<sup>1</sup>, paramount chief and Amadabo (president) of Okrika, through whose guidance and inspiration the St. Peter's Anglican Church (valued at over £180,000 at that time) of Okrika was built by community effort.

It is told by the elders that the chief personally supervised the entire building process which involved contribution of local labour, house levies, and negotiations with building companies. It is highly possible that in the first quarter of this century when there was forced labour and slave trafficking, the chief might have resorted to some arbitrary means in the way he was reported to have compelled people to contribute labour and money towards the project. Oral tradition which credits him as being despotic and high handed, yet energetic, of a disciplined character, and patriotic, might have had this background (the church project) in arriving at these conclusions and impressions of him.

Nevertheless, even in most recent times, Okrika chiefs are still labelled the fathers, guardians, and leaders of their houses and communities. In short, they are of the people and live with the people. In matters of community development however, the chiefs do not generally initiate self help schemes, except in isolated circumstances as in the case of chief

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<sup>1</sup>Died 1928. An unofficial and uncrowned Amanyanabo during the colonial interregna that followed after Amanyanabo (King) Ibanichuka had been deported by the British Authorities in 1896.

Allison Ibuluya<sup>1</sup> who initiated the building of a motor park at Ibuluya village, Okrika. If chiefs do not generally initiate self help schemes, what then do they or can they do to promote community development?

This question revolves on the issue of house (WARI) organisation in Okrika as well as in other coastal areas. A chief does not hold office or title 'in vacuo'; every chief has a house or a unit of the village or town of which he is the leader. Contributions - labour and money - for community development projects are usually organised on the house basis. The usual practice is for each house to be asked to contribute its own quota as the general assembly of the town (presided by chiefs) decides. Proclamation concerning any local project is usually made to people through the town-crier (Ekere) and it is the chief, and only the chief, who must authorise the use of the town-crier for such purposes. It is therefore an offence under customary law for anyone to communicate to people, through the town-crier, without the chief's consent and permission. Even in very recent times, this tradition is still strongly upheld. To confirm this, Mr. Dada of Okrika, aged 35, a former councillor<sup>2</sup> recalled how he was arraigned before the chiefs and elders because he made public proclamation through the town-crier without obtaining permission from the chiefs. It is also true that with regard to labour and levies (money) for local projects, it is the chief who is responsible for ensuring that the quota for his house is contributed and only he may authorise the imposition of sanctions on any person who may refuse to cooperate in the execution of projects. Such sanctions often involve the seizure of property belonging to these non-conformists; albeit arbitrarily, yet unquestionable because these sanctions are ~~hardly~~

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<sup>1</sup>Ibuluya Development Committee, 1973.

<sup>2</sup>He was also reprimanded for equating the office of councillor to that of a chief, something regarded as insulting to, and a spite on, the chieftaincy institution.



hardly challenged by any in the locality. Such property confiscated at the order of the chief may only be released if and when the victim pays a fine. Unclaimed property is usually auctioned and the proceeds are treated as the house or community fund.

A recent case in Okrika will throw more light on the role chiefs play in local development. In 1973, the Setari Age group (comprising mostly people of the patron class, prominent among them were Messrs Ateli, a permanent secretary and Oruene, a civil commissioner of Cabinet rank) suggested that a Girls' Secondary Grammar School be built in Okrika by community effort. In principle, this was accepted and popularly acclaimed by the Okrika Community, and in fact the idea was regarded as a grand plan and a challenge to other age sets and groups who are interested in the progress of Okrika. In October, 1973, the contributions of Setari towards the project amounted to about £1000. The Setari Age group promised to spearhead the building of the school in the hope that the entire Okrika community would contribute labour and cash to execute the project successfully.

Yet despite the goodwill and enthusiasm which followed this project, present developments indicate that the project may never be completed unless certain procedures are followed. Setari are either unwilling to go through the chiefs or they have refused to recognise<sup>1</sup> the importance of the chiefs in the whole process of execution. This is the conclusion of the chiefs, and the greatest exponent of this view is chief Jamabo, the President of the Okrika Council of chiefs. The Okrika community is therefore not fully involved in the project because apart from a few individuals and one other Age grade that have donated money for this project (for example, the Ilaye Ilame Age set had donated £100 as at October 1973), there has been very

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<sup>1</sup>Personal talks with chief Jamabo of Ogoloma, and chief Rowland of Ogbogbo.

little response from the community. The general assumption, especially among the illiterate population, is that Setari will single-handedly build the school for the community. By implication, the understanding is that the school will be gift to the community by Setari.

The Setari want community participation (in money and kind) in the scheme as they do not have the resources to execute the project alone. Yet Setari cannot impose levies on houses or on the town without going through the traditional procedures and channels. Setari have been repeatedly reminded by the citizens that even though the majority of their members are modern (educated) elites, they belong to houses and they are therefore subjects of the chiefs.<sup>1</sup>

In short, whatever their status and attainments, Setari must go through the chiefs. This is the message to them. ~~Against~~ Against this background, almost every citizen of Okrika expects Setari to fulfill their promise to the town unassisted. The argument is that if Setari cannot carry on the project alone, they should go through the chiefs in order to enlist cooperation from the community. Because of this insistence on following the traditional procedure, there has been no contribution from houses or the community as the Setaris have not yet conformed. The chiefs wait anxiously for Setari to make atonement for the neglect, and until this is done the Girls' School project may never be completed by community effort. There is however no guarantee that if Setari make amends, the chiefs will compel their people to cooperate, but what is obvious is that the traditional administrative machinery for community work will be set in motion.

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<sup>1</sup>R. Nisbet has also drawn attention to the crucial and pervasive nature of authority in the traditional community. He argues that "authority is closely woven into the fabric of tradition and morality ..." See R. Nisbet The Sociological Tradition, London. 1967. p. 107.

The issues involved in this case study do not merely centre on power conflict, though there is an element of it between communal patrons and the traditional elite. Neither is it necessarily an attempt by chiefs to sabotage programmes of local development. Nor is it a mere case of a particular tradition opposed to accelerating the pace of community development. Perhaps the issues embrace elements of the two views, but beyond these they are also primarily connected with the importance of certain traditional practice and customs which must be enforced by the traditional elite. The issues in this case encompass the whole area of why certain traditions should persist in particular circumstances, and how these very traditions, if upheld and respected, can help to hasten and lubricate the machinery for local development. It also explains the necessity for cooperation between traditional and modern elites if they are to work towards achieving the same goals - goals on which they are all agreed in principle.

Beyond these customary functions, the chief is still an important rallying point in the community because he also represents the medium through which the people can express their feelings of local dissatisfaction, or satisfaction, with what the communal patrons or other privileged groups in the communities are doing in respect of local development. The average fisherman or farmer is closer to the chief than he is to either the elders or the communal patrons, because in the every-day administration of the house, it is the chief who is often the centre of consultation. The house meetings are usually held in his premises. A chief can therefore, use this and other media to mobilise the support of his people for any project. Some of the local conflicts over the execution of plans stem from this background. In matters of local development, the chiefs - especially the illiterate ones - are sometimes suspicious of the aims, objectives and strategy of the privileged (education) men. They entertain fears that the dominance of the privileged class, accentuated by the high status and offices which these people occupy, may lead to the overthrow of their chiefly class

or that it will lead to the diminution of their powers, prestige and influence. In these circumstances, they consider it dangerous to allow members of the privileged class to carry on community projects without going through the traditional channels stipulated. Perhaps if there is nothing more the chiefs can do to reduce the influence and dominance of this privileged class, they can at least enforce the traditional ethos which requires other classes to work through traditional elites so that the individuals to be associated with the successful completion of projects will embrace both the traditional and the modern.

It is therefore evident that these chiefs who are of the people are much more than ordinary local dignitaries. They are also agents, though not sole agents, who may assist in the community development programmes because chieftaincy among these communities is a kind of sacred office, an office in which the local people place a high premium on such traditional circumstances. In this sense, if chiefs do not initiate development projects, it appears they are important persons to be consulted as fathers and leaders of their people in matters of local development. They command considerable loyalty among their people. They and the elders are regarded as the most competent in the telling and interpretation of oral tradition, history, and custom. As long as their people have confidence in them in these respects they will instill in their people the need to respect chiefs, and if the people respect and listen to their chiefs (as this case illustrates) it is difficult to see how any local project can be successfully executed if the chiefs are either ignored or are given a place which underrates their traditional status.

In concluding this section on the chiefs, I am reminded of one local Okrika proverb which says: Alapu na wengi bo alabo e, meaning "he who associates with a chief deserves to be treated as a chief." The significance of this saying is that a chief is important and that others, not of their class, may and do aspire to belong to their class.

THE ELDERS

I use the term Elders in a sense slightly different from its traditional usage in West African literature where reference is usually to the most senior and oldest members in the community. I am rather applying it to indicate the significance of certain persons in these communities who occupy key positions in their houses (Wari), not as chiefs, but as 'unofficial' deputy chiefs. They are unofficial in the sense that there are no officially appointed deputies, yet certain persons, by virtue of their wisdom in local affairs, do act for, or deputise as, chiefs on certain occasions. These are not necessarily the oldest or most senior members of their houses. On the other hand, they are not usually very young people but they are persons who are believed to be very knowledgeable in the oral traditions of the community. The elders are usually people who are capable of inspiring the younger generation and instilling in them a civic pride.

In Okrika, the type of Elder I am referring to is known as the Ikasi Olobo, literally meaning 'holder of the chair.' The elder is the leader of a section (Wari Kubu) of the house. Among members of the house, he is regarded as the chief's Councillor and as a member of the chief's executive council. In a house where the chief is either too old<sup>1</sup> (as at Dikibo village Okrika) or he is an absentee chief (contrary to local ~~tra~~ traditions that chiefs must live with their people) the leadership and day-to-day administration of the house devolves on one of the elders in the house. This situation has arisen because in recent times, many chiefs are literate and are government officials who reside at Port Harcourt (away from their homes) where they are employed. In other cases they are resident in Port Harcourt, and are engaged in private business of their own.

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<sup>1</sup>In Dikibo village, Okrika, where the chief is over 85 years of age. He (the chief) is only a chief in name, not in deed; the bulk of his job is done by the elders.

They choose to live there because Port Harcourt is the major centre of industrial and commercial activities in the state. In these cases of 'absenteeism', deputies are needed to perform the role of the chief hence the elder has come into prominence in recent times. The primary function of the Elder therefore is to provide a link between the chief and other members of the house. Because the elder provides that vital link (especially in houses which are too large for any effective administration by only one chief), other members of the house who have ideas on how to develop or improve the house or the community must approach him in the first instance and convince him that they have useful ideas or guidelines to offer.

It is this link which the elder provides that gives him the advantage of being nearer the people than the chief. The elder in this respect is very influential because to a large extent he determines what to tell the chief, how to tell it convincingly, and whether it should ever be told at all especially in instances where he disagrees with the views of the younger ones. Again whereas a chief may live away from his people, as I have already illustrated, and will not therefore maintain effective communication with his people, the elder is always with, and by, the people because his occupation (fishing) is almost invariably practised within the locality. Generally, the elders are so frequently in communication with their people that the most energetic and diplomatic among them can overshadow the image and status of their chiefs as is evident in the Dikibo village case. Even in a situation where an elder does not constitute a threat to a chief, it is the duty of the elder to advise the chief in general matters concerning the interests of the house. In situations where the chief is very young or inexperienced, the advisory role of the elder assumes a greater dimension.

In the house meetings, the common practice is for the elders to introduce the subject of discussion. Hence the elders can select what items should be included on the agenda for discussion. Similarly, in summarising the views of the house on any subject-matter (more especially if they too share these views),

they use their privileged positions as spokesmen to appeal to members of the house on the desirability of embarking on specific development projects in the town - the house as the basis for collective action. These appeals are usually directed to the younger ones who may be recalcitrant or insubordinate to constituted authorities. In mobilising labour, or in the collection of money, for local projects, the elders are also the principal agents (with permission from the chiefs) who enforce the decision of the house. It is they who take the pains to go round from 'door to door' appealing to people to cooperate and where they meet with hostility or opposition they remind people of the wish of the ancestors saying "let everyone seek the success of this project for the sake of our ancestors and the city deity."

In performing these functions, it will be seen that for a successful execution of any decision or project, a chief should be able to count on the cooperation of the elders. Where there is any disagreement between them, as happened between Chief Allison Ibuluyu and his four elders in June 1973, a house may be unable to contribute its quota to local development and will therefore be fined by the general town assembly. What is evident from this report is that the position of the chief is strengthened by the cooperation of the elder. Secondly, although a chief is the popularly accredited leader of the house, yet in comparing the role and status of the elder with others in the house, the elder is at least first among equals and perhaps his position is much stronger than this description implies.

#### THE YOUTHS

The term 'youths' is being used here in an all-purpose sense. It does not necessarily refer to young people.

So many categories of people are called, or prefer to be called, by this name. Some of those who are addressed or wish to be addressed as youths are chiefs who are in their prime of youth (late thirties). Others are public servants of all ranks and employees in the private sector. The rest who constitute a fairly negligible minority live in their localities and

are employed as fisherman, farmers and petty traders. But, whatever their professions or ages, they share two main attributes. They are people who consider themselves young, and so their understanding of 'youth' is not purely in terms of age. Youth to them refers to all those whose ways of thinking and attitude to life are characterised by modern (as distinct from the traditional) styles of speech and dress. In fact, all those who do not think or act like ancient or uneducated men are youths. Youthfulness, then, is an attitude of mind. The second index refers to such people in the first category who are articulate and therefore take an active part in promoting the welfare of their localities. They are a kind of local pressure group who project the interests of their community both in the locality and in Port Harcourt, the seat of the state administration.

As discussed above, the youths constitute a complex body of people who could be found both in the local communities and in the big towns. They are neither a completely disorganised group - because they are to some extent cohesive in terms of their unity of purpose in promoting the interests of their fatherland; nor are they a very well organised group because they are scattered in the rural and urban areas, and they are found in all walks of life. Yet it is that common purpose which unites them and thus makes it possible for them to take active interest in local development.

The primary function of the youths is demonstrated by the activities of one of the age grades in Okrika.<sup>1</sup> The following articles of Association of the Ilaye Ilame (meaning: what affects one member of the community affects the other) age grade illustrate certain major objectives and functions of the youths.

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<sup>1</sup>Okrika features prominently in most illustrations because there are similar reflections of these case studies in the other three riverine communities.



- (i) To bring about unity in Okrika
- (ii) To protect the interests and rights of the Okrika people.
- (iii) To educate the citizens on the need for concerted action in matters concerning the fatherland.
- (iv) To hasten the pace of development in Okrika and assist any agency charged with, or interested in, the improvement of Okrika.

It should be observed that the last article, by implication, assigns to the age grade the responsibility of helping the local government machinery (in the area) in planning local development.

The political situation in Okrika is a somewhat peculiar one which is not commonly found in other communities. Okrika is torn by chieftaincy disputes<sup>1</sup> between two factions: the Konijus (the fisherfolks) and the Tubonijus (the traderfolks); each faction claims it has the right to provide the Amanyanabo of Okrika. These sectional rifts with their attendant political disturbances and riots have resulted in the death of several people in the town. Though the Nigerian Supreme Court judgements of 1965 and 1972 gave the right of Amanyanabo to the Tubonijus, the dissatisfied Konijus, embittered by these memories of old antagonisms, are unwilling to cooperate with the other faction even in matters concerning the execution or promotion of local development projects.

These facts on the political conflicts underlie the major objectives and Articles of association of the Ilaye Ilame age grade. They recognise that local development projects cannot flourish amidst such political turbulence, and that unless Okrika was united she would stand to lose, as no other community will do for Okrika what her citizens cannot do for themselves. They also recognise and emphasise what Okrika has lost in the field of local development because of the attitude of her citizens who do not cooperate in the

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<sup>1</sup>These disputes will be discussed in Chapter 5. I shall, however, ignore the Nembe (Bassambiri-Ogbolowabiri) chieftaincy disputes because compared with Okrika, the Nembe disputes are less politically significant.

execution of local development projects. What could be deduced from all these is that while other communities were making progress in local development, Okrika was lagging behind.

Ilaye Ilame is in these respects acting as the conscience of Okrika and it has recently become a propaganda unit educating people in the need for development through the principle of unity. Like many other organisations, such as the Nembe Senocratic society, Port Harcourt branch, it has therefore become a pressure group at home. Its contribution to the proposed Girls' Secondary School for Okrika is perhaps an eloquent testimony of its intentions and ambitions. Among several other roles, as a pressure group, it has also led delegations (in 1971 and 1972) to the Military Governor on issues concerning Okrika's claims in the ownership of Port Harcourt. In these ownership claims it expects some compensation from the state government on the use of its (Okrika) land for administrative purpose.

In the light of these activities and objectives, it may also be said that generally the youths are among others, the 'watch dogs' of community interests. As has been shown, their part in local development is not always, and not necessarily, through financial contributions alone. It is the pressure they exert and the influence they have over the ordinary citizens through their enlightenment programmes (on unity, peace and progress) that make them significant and distinguish them from other groups. Their distinction therefore lies much more in two things: their influence as a pressure group and their particularly active role in matters of local development. Their power and influence have no traditional base (unlike the chiefs and elders) but stem from their experience of present-day social, political and economic developments, such experiences which demand a change of the old order (some of which are appeals for progress and unity) for the new.

## THE COMMUNAL PATRONS

This last group is about the most complex to analyse. As their name suggests they are the patrons of the communities, while the ordinary citizens are their 'clients', the clients in 'want'. They constitute a fairly large body comprising mainly: some chiefs of the Amanyabo class, senior military officers (especially in an era of military government in Africa), civil commissioners of cabinet rank (as members of the Executive Council), top Public Servants, more especially of the Permanent Secretary cadre, and business executives. These constitute the cream of their society by virtue of their educational attainments (thus forming part of the Intelligentsia), the eminent positions they occupy in their respective jobs, and the influence which they wield at local and state levels through these positions.

They are popularly known, and like to be addressed, as the V.I.P.s (Very Important Persons) or at the least as local dignitaries of the first order; but they prefer the former to the latter title. As their title implies, those who are not of their class are either unimportant or not as important as they are: this is one of their claims to prominence in their localities. They are usually the chairmen of important public gatherings or committees who usually occupy the special seats marked 'V.I.P.s' These are some of their status symbols.

Yet of the V.I.P. class some are more important than others; if not more important, some are 'more equal' than others. This distinction shifts the focus to the three main ranks among them. First, the senior military officers. These are men who have attained prominence because of military rule, and in an age where the men in 'uniform' occupy key posts in government (such as the Military Governor of the State who is a Nembe citizen) have displaced former civilian politicians. These are the men who are believed to have made fortunes from the last civil war in Nigeria and from the high salaries and other perquisites which accrue to them by virtue of their posts.

Because it is locally believed that they are 'men in money' and are in big positions, they are the focus of attention in their localities - in such localities where there is abject poverty and very few men climb to senior posts in government.

The case of the Military Governor, Commander Diete-Spiff, provides an interesting example. In Nembe his home town, he is addressed as the 'first citizen' - as a mark of high esteem. In Port Harcourt, beside his array of official cars, he owns three private cars, including an expensive special Citroen car which bears the plate number<sup>1</sup> RN1, understood as first citizen of Nembe. In Port Harcourt the plate numbers ranging from 1-10 are reserved for very important persons, the first number is almost exclusively reserved for the most prominent man in the locality. These car numbers attract attention in Port Harcourt because of the kind of special men who own them; and in the case of Diete Spiff, even if he were on a private mission, all other cars on the road are expected to give way to his special car.

In Nembe too, Diete-Spiff's mansion, built after he had been appointed Governor, faces the Nembe waterside on which most of the houses of Nembe's prominent citizens can be seen. It is this waterside which first attracts the attention of visitors to Nembe, and of course the best houses for the number one citizens are situated there. As I found out, it is not unusual to see official boats used to carry building materials and other goods for the Governor's use, even in his unofficial capacity.

In three respects therefore, the military men, as exemplified by Spiff's case, are the focus of attention. Beyond these foci of attention, Diete-Spiff is addressed as 'His Excellency', even in his private dealings with people at Nembe. Who else could attract greater attention in the locality?

In the ranking of these V.I.P.s, the Civil Commissioners come second. These are the men who have been chosen by the military men to run the affairs

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<sup>1</sup>The letter 'R' stands for Rivers State, and 'N' for Nembe.

of State in partnership with them. They constitute, with some of the military, the Executive Council which is the highest policy-making body of the State. They have therefore risen to such eminence as their civilian predecessors (the ministers) enjoyed in those circumstances where the local politician<sup>1</sup> (now his counterpart) who represented his people in the larger political setting was the envy of many in the locality. As policy-makers they are believed to control the destiny of many, especially in the locality, where central government benefits are expected as of right (as they say) at all times. The civil commissioners, whose salary is about £3100 per annum, are also believed to be rich people and are therefore usually expected to contribute larger sums of money than the ordinary man for local development projects. The Permanent Secretaries, who follow the two groups of 'political men' (political, because they perform political functions at the state level), come last; but they are by no means inferior to the others. As civil servants of the highest class, they are also the envy of many in their communities where a Civil Service career is generally the ambition of many educated people, because in the same localities most parents dream of the day when their sons would become such eminent 'government workers' (as they are popularly called to distinguish them from those in the private sector). The background to the attitude is not hard to find. These are communities where even the illiterate man understands that a government worker is more influential than workers in other professions - more influential, because most of the things which touch the life of the average citizen are demanded from the government, and it is the man who works for that body that may be looked to for procuring those services or amenities for his community.

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<sup>1</sup>Politicians from the community who represent their constituencies at the Regional (now state) level. I do not refer to the local councillors.

It could be seen from this outlook that in the final analysis this is only a question of the predominance of one career pattern over the others. In the localities, it is also commonly known that the highest grade of government worker is the Permanent Secretary (or such other officers of contiguous grades) who deals directly with, and participates in, the bureaucratic labyrinth. And as local ambassadors (Permanent Secretaries) at the centre, they occupy positions as leaders or representatives of their communities. It is in this sense-as mediators and ambassadors-that they are major channels of communication between the state government and their local communities.

In discussing these communal patrons as local ambassadors at the centre it will be found that there are certain major issues in local and state politics which really invite these patrons into taking certain decisions or actions at the Port Harcourt level. It is their participation in these that they become more significant and important than other personalities. These are the issues which I shall now mention to clear the background for further discussion.

In the Rivers State almost every act of the State government is a political issue from the greatest to the smallest - the location of projects in agriculture, subsidies and loans to farmers and fishermen; the location of transport, education and health projects; rural water supply and electrification; and awards of all types of government contracts. The list is nearly endless. These issues, as minor and unimportant as they may appear - especially to the man in the Western world - to observers, mean almost life and death to the average Rivers man. They are the issues which are also of great concern to the patron because they affect the interests of his community, and the competition for these things is more intense at the Port Harcourt level where the desire of all communities to benefit from the State government's resources is most positively expressed.

The hunger for government assistance should be seen in the context of a low level of average income and of general poverty, the underdeveloped infrastructure of the different communities, and the common environment of scarcity in which people live. Anything which the average citizen thinks will minimise or eliminate his suffering as well as improve his standard of living and that of the community is of fundamental importance. There is also the problem of inter-community competition and rivalry and the desire of every public servant (the big man or patron) who may perhaps live in a situation of affluence in Port Harcourt to appreciate this background of his people. In the first place, as an ambassador of his people these issues also mean 'life and death' to him because he might lose the goodwill of his people if he fails to show sufficient interest in their economic and political survival. Secondly, the development of his community depends largely on his efforts, because there are very few 'big men' like him in the locality who can be looked to for the improvement of local conditions so that in the long run his community may be given an advantage over others in the overall scheme of development.

Beyond these issues and their scales of importance, the general economic framework is also important. The private sector is weak and the local councils have few funds - a situation worsened by the crisis of 1967-70. To a large extent these Councils depend on State government subsidies and grants<sup>1</sup>. For each community to develop itself, unassisted by government, is an impossible task. Hence every community has only one major reliable source of help: the state government. It is the patron who is regarded as the local agent at the state level and it is he who is expected to defend and protect the interests of his people. It is in this respect that the people and the respective communities inevitably see politics as the surest way of improving, through government action, the very many aspects of individual

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix 4.

and community life. Considering the prevalence of such attitudes, it is to be expected that most government decisions will be affected by local political influences or at least that attempts will be made to influence them in two ways - by pressures and by administrative manipulation

If there are important persons in these communities then the point has come at which to suggest or deduce that the Rivers State (as represented by its communities) society is certainly something besides a completely open-ended network of social, political and economic relationships. In arriving at this conclusion, one factor is evident: that for each community to define itself (and its wants) and protect its interests in relation to the bigger administrative world of Port Harcourt, the different communities recognise certain important persons who must or should be largely instrumental in the achievement of these objectives.

If these are important persons and they can be distinguished from the rest of the ordinary people, then they must play a significant role in local development affairs to justify their distinguished positions in the lives of their communities. How do they play that <sup>role</sup> and why do they play it with a large degree of success? Are there consequences (at local and state level) of playing such parts? These are the major issues I shall turn to now, choosing a case study for illustration - the 'patron-client' relationships.

#### PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS<sup>1</sup>

One thing is clear at this point. It is the factor of need<sup>2</sup> that predisposes the individual or the community (or both) to accept and recognise

<sup>1</sup>It is necessary to give this case study in order to understand some aspects of the politics of parasitism. In order to understand these aspects of politics, some repetition of some of my earlier findings in this chapter (particularly, the eminence of the patrons) is inevitable.

<sup>2</sup>It will be recollected that the basic determinants of eminence in the Rivers State are: (a) position in life - especially in the public service. A big man in the locality must necessarily occupy positions of power and influence in the government and (b) wealth - which may also be derived from that position. The wealthy man is also expected to contribute the highest amount in executing self-help projects; he should also feed his hungry 'brothers' in demonstration of his affluence and charity.



the importance of the communal patrons.<sup>1</sup> These are the needs which are expected to be satisfied mainly by the government. I repeat, it is because the average patron is a highly placed public servant - either in a political, quasi-political or administrative capacity-that he is instrumental in satisfying these needs. Added to this is the fact that the patrons are regarded as the saviours of their people and are therefore expected to satisfy these that they command power and influence in the locality. Essentially, to achieve local power and influence, the patrons need and gather local followers around them by making the best use of the State Government's resources and facilities at their disposal.

The case of Tsaro Wiwa, a former Civil Commissioner of cabinet rank who represented the Ogonis, illustrates the patron-client relationship (and dependence) in these communities. A discussion of the general attitude of the Rivers man to, and their impression of, an Ogoni (and vice versa) will help to explain the circumstances in which Tsaro Wiwa held office.

In the Rivers State, the Ogonis are believed to constitute the most backward communities. It is often claimed by the Ogonis that their representation in the administrative cadres of the Public Service is inadequate and that, because of this, Ogonis have 'no voice' at the policy making level in the State. In local parlance, "having no voice" is synonymous with the absence of 'spokesmen' (ambassadors) for a community. In terms of their personal and physical surroundings, other communities regard the Ogonis as dirty and underdeveloped. In the other cultural dimensions, it is generally felt in the State that the culture of the Ogonis - their style of dressing, speech and manners - is inferior to those of others (though there does not exist, even in these localities, any generally acceptable yardstick for measuring cultural superiority). Ogonis are regarded as unrefined, timid and servile.

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<sup>1</sup>The patrons are, to some extent, a meritocratic, not just a self-reinforcing elite. Their people believe they are 'men of ability'.

Most of these impressions<sup>1</sup> of the Ogonis are however highly contestable. For their part, the Ogonis are silent on the cultural claims of other groups, but they believe very strongly that other groups (especially the Nembes, Kalabaris and Okrikans) are interested in dominating them in the Public Service distribution of personnel and in the distribution of amenities to groups.

During the Nigerian civil war, Bonny was the first Rivers State town to be liberated by the Nigerian federal navy from the Biafran secessionists. The Rivers State Government appointed Tsaro Wiwa as the first Administrator for Bonny in November 1967; later he relinquished the post of Administrator and was appointed one of the first Civil Commissioners of cabinet rank in January 1969. Among the Ogonis, these two appointments of Tsaro Wiwa were significant - considering the fact that they were held in low esteem by the others. Tsaro Wiwa was Ogoni's first representative in the Executive Council. Besides this, he was the first Rivers State citizen to be offered a political appointment as Administrator for Bonny at a time when Bonny was the seat of the Rivers State Government - apart from Lagos where the government operated under exile conditions. Most of the refugees from the war-affected areas in the three Eastern States were also resettled at Bonny. The town served as the Eastern headquarters for distributing national and Red Cross relief materials to the victims of the civil war.

It was Tsaro Wiwa's administration that was responsible for handling all the work of administration in the Rivers State, including making contacts with foreign organisations, such as the International Red Cross. Therefore, at the State, national and international levels, Tsaro Wiwa was widely known. Many of those who needed resettlement and rehabilitation from the ruins of war turned to him for help, partly because it was believed that he understood the needs of poor<sup>1</sup> people and partly because his official assignment was to minister

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<sup>1</sup>The Okrikans and Kalabaris are foremost in holding these opinions.

<sup>2</sup>It is argued that the son of a poor man understands the problems of poverty more than the rich.

to the needs of the war victims. Among the Ogonis in particular, it was generally felt that an Ogoni (despised by others) was in a position to help his people in need.

At this stage it is necessary to give a background picture of Tsaro Wiwa in order to understand the nature of demands when he was in office. Tsaro Wiwa, aged 34 (in 1974) was born at Bane, in Khana, Ogoni. He is of poor parentage. His father was a clerk in the local government service until he retired, while the mother is a petty trader. According to Tsaro Wiwa, he might have had a low level of education if he did not get scholarships for his secondary and university education. Many of his primary school colleagues who were less fortunate in getting scholarships for higher education are farmers and fishermen at present. He might have become a farmer if the opportunities for modern education were not open to him by accident.

Between 1954-1961, Tsaro Wiwa attended one of the well known secondary schools in Eastern Nigeria: the Government College, Umuahia. Between 1962 and 1965 he attended Ibadan University and took an Honours degree in English. In the University, he took a keen interest in politics. In 1964 he was elected Chairman of his hostel, Mellanby Hall, and President of the University Dramatic Society.

Prior to his political appointments in the Rivers State he had taught at Stella Maris College, Port Harcourt, from June to December 1965; and shortly after this teaching career, he went back to Ibadan University for a research degree. He later abandoned postgraduate work because he lost interest in it, and took up University teaching appointments, first at Nsukka University (January-September 1967) and later at Lagos University until his appointment as Administrator.

Tsaro Wiwa says that because of his political interests and appointments, he has made many contacts with people from all walks of life: farmers, fishermen, businessmen, teachers, clerks and senior administrators in both private and public sectors. It is also true that because of these connections,

while in office, the demands on him were great. As will be shown later, these connections helped to increase his clientele.

One thing is clear. By 1969, Tsaro Wiwa was an important man, and in fact he was generally regarded by Rivers people as a V.I.P. But to the Ogonis, he was more than a V.I.P. Indeed he belonged to the modern elite class in his area. If one were to discuss the different status sets of Tsaro Wiwa, it should be said that first and foremost he belonged to the highly educated class. Secondly, he was a patron, having occupied one of the highest political offices. He was therefore expected to be Ogoni's distinguished ambassador at the national level. It was natural that by virtue of his high level of education and position in government, he was expected by his people to project their image and culture, a people generally believed to be inferior and backward. How could he have failed his people?

It was in order to fulfil these objectives that he wrote his pamphlet captioned Ogoni Nationality, Today and Tomorrow - a book dedicated to Ogoni's cultural richness, and rejecting the old impression about the Ogonis. As he said, he had promised<sup>1</sup> his people when his administration was based at Bonny and Lagos that he would restore the 'dignity of the Ogoni'; he was to restore what had been lost as a result of the inferior status which others assigned to his people.

#### IN OFFICE

While he was in office, Tsaro Wiwa commanded considerable influence and power among his people. He was always an advocate of distributing State scholarships on the twin principles<sup>2</sup> of merit and need, believing that the communities which are educationally backward should be encouraged to catch up

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Tsaro Wiwa, 7th September 1974. Port Harcourt. It is necessary to add that Tsaro Wiwa's pamphlet was widely read in Nigeria, and it was given wide publicity by the Nigerian press and radio. He has a list of other publications, including the following: (i) Tambari (Longmans, 1974); (ii) Two plays entitled: 'Transistor Radio' (Heineman, 1973) and 'Bride by Return' (B.B.C. 1974)

<sup>2</sup>Scholarship Division, Ministry of Education, Port Harcourt.

with the more advanced ones. This policy earned him considerable fame and respect among his people. He also had a large following among the literate people in his area, such people who saw in his policy a solution to their problems.

Again, Tsaro Wiwa's people praised him for the location of the following government projects in Khana in 1972: a poultry farm at Baen, a health centre at Nonwa, and a canoe carving factory at Kalaoko. In my discussions with Tsaro Wiwa, he did not accept sole responsibility for influencing his government in the siting of these projects. Nevertheless, he agreed that, whenever it was necessary, he discussed his people's problems with his colleagues in the Executive Council. Fortunately, he said, some of his colleagues in the cabinet appreciated the needs of the Ogonis. Tsaro Wiwa asked me: 'What is wrong if a Commissioner presents his people's problems to the government'?

As Commissioner for Education his people also believed<sup>1</sup> that he did a lot for them by stimulating an awareness of the great value of modern education. At that time, it was rumoured in his ministry that Tsaro Wiwa carried communalistic<sup>2</sup> attachments to his people too far. It is often cited among several other cases that, in 1970 most of the UNICEF equipment (mostly school furniture and science apparatuses) for schools in the Rivers State were distributed to the Birabi Memorial College, Bori, (a first class college in Ogoni). Though Tsaro Wiwa often refuted such contentions, a majority in his ministry and in the State<sup>3</sup> held strongly to these impressions.

<sup>1</sup>Discussion with Bane (Tsaro Wiwa's village) people, August, 1973.

<sup>2</sup>Discussion with the Senior Inspectorate Staff, Ministry of Education, Port Harcourt, September 1973.

<sup>3</sup>(a) Okrika 67 Club; 1970-75;  
(b) the Nembe Senocrats, and  
(c) Abonnema Union, 1973.

RECIPROCITIES IN CLIENTELISM

Apart from Tsaro Wiwa's ministerial position which enabled him to minister to his people's needs, what other aspects of the Ogoni political environment (and culture) strengthened the formation of clientelistic ties? What special benefits could be derived by a patron in his relationships with the client partners? Or does the patron get nothing in return for his services to the clients?

The basic social and economic relations of the ordinary Ogoni man are directly related to an environment characterised by extreme scarcity (as elsewhere in the Rivers State). The rural Ogonis are predominantly an agricultural people (see Chapter 2), their economic productivity is extremely low due to limiting factors such as capital (including credit) and technology. Only a few outlets for productive labour employment are available to the Ogonis (in both private and public sectors) because of the high rate of illiteracy<sup>1</sup> in Ogoni society.

Besides, several Ogoni fables<sup>2</sup> feature themes of vulnerability and helplessness: the ordinary man is depicted as a victim of poverty and misfortune. The Ogonis are therefore inclined to believe that though the good things of life<sup>3</sup> do exist in abundant quantity, only the big men can have

<sup>1</sup>No official survey has been conducted in the Rivers State to determine the rate of literacy. But Tsaro Wiwa's personal assessment (September 1974) is that about 90% of the Ogonis have received no kind of formal education. It will also be recalled that even for jobs in which unskilled labour is required, most advertisements emphasise that applicants should be literate.

<sup>2</sup>The titles of well known Ogoni fables which feature these themes include (i) 'God created Poverty'; (ii) 'Blessed are the Rich'; (iii) 'What a Difficult World!'

<sup>3</sup>Compare with George Foster's point about how peasants generally view their environment as one in which all of the desired things in life (such as land, wealth and respect) exist in finite quantity and are always in short supply as far as the peasant is concerned. See Potter, Diaz & Foster, eds. Peasant Society : A Reader Boston. 1967. p. 304.

direct access<sup>1</sup> to the available goods. For the Ogonis, differences in wealth and position in life are obvious forms of social differentiation. In comparing the rich with the poor, many Ogoni people say that social inequality<sup>2</sup> is largely a natural phenomenon. Inequality, they say, is ordained by God and there is very little they can do on their own to modify or alter this fate. It is therefore clear that even in the Ogoni fables, there is a recognition that the wealthier class (the big men) have certain advantages (social and economic) over the poorer class. Inevitably it is not surprising that the poorer class of people (the clients) adopt a kind of fatalistic attitude to life.

It is evident therefore that the association (a personalised<sup>3</sup> relationship) which develops between the patron and the client is a special one. As Powell puts it, there are certain basic factors<sup>4</sup> which "define and differentiate it (clientelism) from other power relationships which occur between individuals or groups."<sup>5</sup> Firstly, the patron-client tie develops between

<sup>1</sup>For an interesting discussion about the social arrangements by which people attempt to build some security in the face of their perceived environmental threats, see J.D. Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelistic Politics." APSR. Vol. 64. 1970. pp. 411-425.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of the Yoruba view of social inequality, see P.C. Lloyd. Power and Independence : Urban Africans' Perception of Inequality. London. 1974.

<sup>3</sup>In their paper, "Political Clientelism and Development : A Preliminary Analysis" in Comparative Politics. Vol. 4. No. 2. January 1972, René Lemarchand and K. Legg provide a similar definition of clientelism: a personalised relationship "between actors or sets of actors, commanding unequal wealth, status or influence based on conditional loyalties ...." It will be observed that in relation to the factor of inequality, this definition fits with Powell's model as seen below.

<sup>4</sup>In Powell's analysis, there are three factors (i) inequality in status, wealth and influence; (ii) reciprocity in the exchange of goods and services, and (iii) face-to-face contact between the two parties. See J.D. Powell, op. cit. In this chapter I shall discuss the first and the second factors only because the third factor is an obvious fact.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. p. 412. However, though Powell argues that the patron-client relationship is between unequal partners, he stretches the argument by adding that patron-client ties are different from other ties which might bind parties unequal in status and proximate in time and space, but "which do not rest on reciprocal exchange of mutually valued goods and services - such as relationships based on coercion, authority, manipulation ...."

two parties unequal in wealth, status and influence. For example, the patron is either a Commissioner or a permanent Secretary (or officials in contiguous grades) who possesses tremendous powers in the Port Harcourt administration - as will be seen in Chapter 4. On the other hand, the client is either a farmer, a teacher or a junior officer in the Port Harcourt Service. Since it is the patron who is the principal negotiator for the goods which the client requires for his welfare, the client is subordinate (socially and economically) to the patron. It is therefore obvious that in the relationship between the patron and the client, the former is the senior partner -- a "a lop-sided friendship".<sup>1</sup> Secondly, in maintaining the relationship between the two unequal partners, it is inevitable that both parties would expect some benefits from each other - in Powell's terminology, an interchange<sup>2</sup> of goods and services. This element of reciprocity<sup>3</sup> is important since any association (between two parties) will collapse unless there are 'tangible profits' which accrue to both parties. In short, the patron client relationship is based on reciprocity, yet by virtue of the different positions (in the use of power and influence) of the two parties, while the client partner is a low status actor, the patron is a high status actor.

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<sup>1</sup> Julian Pitt-Rivers, The People of Sierra. New York. 1954. p. 140

<sup>2</sup> Powell argues persuasively that in the relationships between the patron and the client, an interchange of non-comparable goods and services is of profound importance. His argument is that this form of relationship is important not only because it has consequences for the particular political system; it also provides the premises for the understanding of a wide range of political behaviour - behaviour which some political scientists consider to be either pathological or deviant. See J.D. Powell. op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> However, I realise that since the relationship between the client and the patron is an unequal one, the reciprocity expected is one which should be compatible with the statuses of the parties involved. In short, 'complete reciprocity' in exchange cannot be expected. Yet I have tried to discuss and 'measure' what is exchanged because in the local areas it is common for people to talk in terms of 'balance of profits' in any kind of association.



In Ogoni society, the eminence of the patron -- as a high status actor-- predates the Usaro Wiwa era. Of importance is the manner in which the Rivers State administration<sup>1</sup> operated after the liberation of Port Harcourt in May 1968. As already shown in Chapter 2, the Rivers State administration faced enormous problems of rehabilitation and resettlement of the victims of the civil war. Hence in June 1968, the military authorities in Port Harcourt established the Interim Emergency Administration. Lt. Colonel Abubakar was appointed the Sole Administrator for the State. Partly because the army was unaccustomed to civilian administration and partly because of the need to establish a bureau for civilian complaints (complaints such as the molestation of civilians by the soldiers), Lt. Colonel Abubakar appointed a six-man advisory committee<sup>2</sup> of civilian controllers to administer the six quasi-ministries<sup>3</sup> in Port Harcourt.

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The Bonny administration was succeeded by the Interim Emergency Administration based in Port Harcourt.

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In this quasi public service, there was an administrative partnership between civilians and soldiers. Junior military officers (Warrant Officers) liaised with the Controllers in matters of routine administration, but decisions involving high level policy were taken by the Sole Administrator or his Deputy. In fact, the Sole Administrator was the first unofficial Military Governor of the State.

3

At that time the ministries were called "Services". The six ministries were: (i) Health and Social Welfare; (ii) Communication and Information; (iii) Public works and Transport; (iv) Education; (v) Food and Agriculture; (vi) Labour Exchange. During the interim administration period, the functions of these ministries covered the basic social and economic needs of the people.

The Controllers (later replaced by Permanent Secretaries) acted as political and administrative bosses of the ministries. As would be expected the major responsibility of the Controllers was to restore basic social and economic services to all parts of the State. Besides their ministerial responsibilities at Port Harcourt, the Controllers were also responsible for reactivating essential economic and social services in their communities - in liaison with their people.

An Ogoni, Mr. L.L. Loolo was appointed the Controller of Public Works and Transport. As Controller, Mr. Loolo liaised with the Ogonis in restoring electricity and water works (services which had been disrupted by the civil war) in their area. In Ogoni areas the rehabilitation materials were distributed in liaison with the Loolo administration. In short, Mr. Loolo was the Ogoni representative (and a mini patron) in the interim administration. Therefore when normality returned to Port Harcourt and an Executive Council was formed, <sup>Tsaro Wiwa</sup> ~~Ikoro~~ (as a minister of cabinet rank) merely replaced Loolo in high office.<sup>1</sup> Tsaro Wiwa also inherited the responsibilities of Mr. Loolo in terms of what services Ogonis expected of their patrons. Besides, the local-central relations<sup>2</sup> established under the Loolo regime were maintained by Tsaro Wiwa.

But the needs of the Ogonis are not periodic. Rather, since the establishment of a normal administration, they have competed with other communities in order to get their share of the state resources. (See Chapters 4 and 7). Like other communities, the Ogonis want to develop their area. Hence, in 1972, when the 'Bomu explosion'<sup>3</sup> caused considerable damage to crops and property in Ogoniland (resulting from the operations of oil

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<sup>1</sup>In discussing offices, I have described Loolo as a mini-patron in order to distinguish him from other patrons who have been offered higher political appointments in the post-war administration in Port Harcourt.

<sup>2</sup>These relations concerned the rehabilitation problems and other normal administrative linkages in the Tsaro Wiwa era.

<sup>3</sup>Bomu is the name of the village in which the explosion occurred. Therefore Ogoni people often refer to the incident as the 'Bomu explosion'.

prospecting companies), the Ogonis negotiated with the Shell BP and AGIP oil companies for compensation for damages. Tsaro Wiwa, as an Ogoni patron and their representative in the Executive Council, was one of the people who negotiated with these companies on behalf of his people and the government. In these negotiations, Ogoni villages received about £50,000<sup>1</sup> from the oil companies as compensation. Part of this amount was, and is, reserved by the Ogonis for general development purposes in the 1975-80 Rivers State development plan period.

Therefore both in the periods of rehabilitation and the post-war era, the most valuable patron was neither the elder nor the occupant of high chieftaincy office, but the one who had the capacity and position to negotiate effectively for the Ogonis in Port Harcourt. In the process of getting their benefits, it is also evident that the Ogonis were forced by circumstances to look up to their patrons for providing the leadership in the negotiations with outside parties.

From the foregoing, it is evident that Ogoni patrons (Tsaro Wiwa in particular) have been community assets. One is therefore inclined to ask whether the clients have reciprocated<sup>2</sup> the gestures of the patrons. What have been the obligations of the clients in these relationships with their patrons? What reciprocities have been, and are, involved in clientelism in the Port Harcourt administrative setting?

Though in an informal sense, certain things are expected of the clients by the patron. The clients are under some moral obligation to hold the patron

<sup>1</sup>An account is kept by the Development Committees in Khana and Gokana. The records of these committees show that no specific projects have yet been earmarked for execution.

<sup>2</sup>A kind of reciprocity related to Powell's discussion of an 'interchange of services and goods'. In Alex. Weingrod "Patrons, Patronage and Political Parties" Comparative Studies in Society and History. Vol. 10, July 1968, pp. 376-400, can also be found an interesting discussion of corruption (in machine politics) as an element of reciprocity.

in high esteem (see Chapter 7) and to shower praises on his name - even though the norm of reciprocity is somewhat indeterminate in terms of what it implies in totality.

It is significant that even under a military government, the community (SE) has remained an arena in which the patrons build their network of supporters and friends - in the struggle (among patrons) for power in the Port Harcourt administration. Again, in the competition among communities for state benefits, there still is, and has always been, a political cleavage<sup>1</sup> between individuals in the community. These arguments will be pursued in chapters 6 and 7. Hence as an ambassador, the patron can expect some support or services from his people. For example, there exists a Tsaro Wiwa 'fan-club'<sup>2</sup> which protects the 'good name' of the patron. Members of the club also profess loyalty to the patron in time of crisis.

When it was alleged that, as Commissioner for Education, Tsaro Wiwa was communalistic in the distribution of scholarships and UNICEF equipment, Mr. Nado, President of the fan club, described Tsaro Wiwa as an Ogoni patriot. In short, Tsaro Wiwa was not communalistic. In Bane, Tsaro Wiwa's village, most of the local people I talked to in September 1973. spoke about Tsaro Wiwa's

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To some extent, in this chapter I have emphasised on the integrative model of the community. For a discussion of this model, see Max Gluckman, Custom and Conflict in Africa. Oxford. 1963

2

Nado, an Executive Officer in the Government Service, is the self-styled President of the club. There are no elected officials of the club. Nado, an Ogoni, claims that membership of the club is about 800, comprising mostly teachers and junior officers in the government. In September 1973, Nado spoke to me about why he organised the club: to protect the good name of their big men who may be blackmailed or despised by others - more especially as Ogonis are a despised people. He argued that the Kalabaris, Nembes and Okrikans had always protected the good name of their big men - even when these big men were corrupt. Nado described Mr. W.P. Dan-Kalio (a former Head of the Civil Service) and W.E. Tienabeso (the present Head of Service) as communalistic, but he argued that the Okrikans and Kalabaris often dismissed these accusations (of communalism) as baseless - apparently because Dan-Kalio and Tienabeso hail from Okrika and Kalabari respectively; In short it was necessary to protect Tsaro Wiwa's good name because the Kalabaris and Okrikans had set a precedent.

(Nado is a pen name)

efforts to quicken the pace of local development. I was informed of Tsaro Wiwa's contribution of £200 for the proposed Bane library project and his proposal to launch a Scholarship fund for the education of the Ogonis. To put it precisely, Tsaro Wiwa was <sup>also</sup> described by his people as one of the foremost Ogoni patriots. Therefore, to some extent Tsaro Wiwa's people<sup>1</sup> could be described as members of the fan-club.

The fan-club is still in existence. What generalisations or conclusions can one draw about the formation and the activities of the club?

In the Rivers State, there are areas of compatibility between traditional<sup>2</sup> and modern forms of clientelism - even though it is misleading to overstress

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In this chapter, I am not suggesting that there are 'client communities'. Rather my argument is that an able patron will have a large personal following and extrabureaucratic connections among his people partly because his people see him as a benefactor and partly because his official position is a kind of client creating asset. Again, even if many people in the community are seen as clients - as this discussion suggests - one could still draw a distinction between the "core and the periphery of a patron's following" (See James Scott "Corruption, Machine Politics and Political Change". APSR Vol. 63. 1969, pp. 99-100.) As will be shown later in this chapter, changes in the political tide - such as dismissal from office - are very likely to be reflected in the size of the patron's clientele. As clients would always look for a promising leader, most of the patron's clients are likely to be "peripheral clients". This chapter covers mostly these peripheral clients.

2

According to ~~the~~ Cohen, even in recent times, patron-client relationships are still of great importance in the Emirate system of Northern Nigeria, and people continue to utilise their associations with important 'superiors'. See Current Anthropology, 8, 1-2, 1967, p.105. In discussing the differential impact of colonial policies on traditional forms of clientelism, René Lemarchand also argues that "feudal clientelism" was preserved in Northern Nigeria because the European officials regarded it as a necessary adjunct of Indirect Rule. (See APSR, Vol. 66, 1972, p. 78)

the compartmentalisation between the two forms of clientelism. In the traditional setting, the chiefs commanded considerable respect from their people; they had a large following, comprising mostly the poor and under-privileged subjects. Therefore it could be argued that when the traditional patrons were the most eminent persons in the locality, situations were congenial to the maintenance of 'dependent clients'. By virtue of their 'political ability' in the Port Harcourt setting, when the modern patrons emerged, to some extent they also sought a homage of popularity (and dependence). The poorer classes showed deference to the big men who enjoyed it.

Conditions of recent social, political and economic changes must have intensified the clients needs (and desire) for something or somebody to depend on. It is not unusual that for the clients to get ahead in life, they need 'god-fathers', who would 'push forward' their case. In order to maintain the goodwill and support of the patrons, the clients must have considered it important to render certain services to the patron. Such services include political support and the formation of fan-clubs for projecting the image of the big man. Thus the large following which the chiefs commanded by virtue of their eminence created the conditions for a similar following for today's patrons.<sup>1</sup> Therefore there were precedents that the big man has always desired to have a large following.

It is also suggested that clients are under some kind of moral obligation to patronise their patrons even when the latter are dismissed from office. As will be discussed later, when Tsaro Wiwa was relieved from office, some old clients patronised his business.

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<sup>1</sup>Because some of the people think that the patron works "consistently in the interests of the poor" and focuses "attention upon their concrete needs" (Murray Edelman. The Symbolic Uses of Politics. Urbana. 1964 p. 118) one could argue that compared with the traditional patron, the present day patron commands a larger following by virtue of his position in the administration. Since clients (like patrons) are profit seeking, they would be attracted to those patrons who distribute the state resources. Besides, because most of the patrons nurse political ambition, they would need a large following so as to achieve victory at the polls.

The picture of patron-client reciprocities so far presented does not fit with the postulate that the patron ought to expect some more concrete material benefits from the clients - since the patron offers concrete benefits to his clients. Are we then to do away with the concept of reciprocity in patron-client relationships? The answer is that one ought to examine their relationships in a slightly broader perspective: the association is indeed a 'lop-sided' one. In the process of 'give and take', the high status actor gives more to the clients (in the materialistic sense) than he receives from them.

In these lop-sided relationships, besides the material benefits, it is also necessary to investigate what other social<sup>1</sup> and political benefits the clients get. The benefits<sup>2</sup> derived in any association are not necessarily, or purely, materialistic.

Mr. Nado was very proud that Tsaro Wiwa was, and is, an Ogoni patriot. As it also appeared to the chiefs and elders, Tsaro Wiwa projected the image of the Ogonis in Port Harcourt. The people were confident<sup>3</sup> that, as a superior, Tsaro Wiwa would also offer political protection to his people.

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<sup>1</sup>In these relationships, it is argued that because there is a difference in the locus of power, and one partner is wealthier than the other, the poorer partner will gain more from the association. I am also assuming that it is more beneficial for the client to continue to maintain this association because of the greater advantage he derives. I do not, however, deny the fact that both parties derive some advantage from the association.

<sup>2</sup>I have implied that in the relationship between the patron and the client, one could gauge - even if arbitrarily - the exchange involved in reciprocity. As I have said before in this chapter, I am aware that the statuses of the client and the patron are not comparable, yet in most relationships between two parties, there is a natural tendency for the parties concerned to gauge their share of benefits from the association.

<sup>3</sup>Interviews with Nado, Chiefs and elders. September. 1973.

In launching Ogoni Nationality, Tsaro Wiwa appeared to have fulfilled one of the major political objectives of the Ogonis: the projection of Ogoni culture.

The expressions of Nado, the elders, and the chiefs about the good works of Tsaro Wiwa also suggest that they derived some psychological satisfaction from their association with Tsaro Wiwa. One gets the impression that in their association with Tsaro Wiwa, the clients were offered a chance of becoming important, and therefore "of being lifted from the ignominy of a commoner's life into the sphere of rank and importance."<sup>1</sup> In fact, while speaking to me, Nado and the traditional patrons were confident that Tsaro Wiwa would always 'listen' to their complaints and help them whenever necessary. In short the people expected, or had, some psychological rewards<sup>2</sup> - some kind of externalisation of the super-ego. This observable externalisation of the super-ego is strengthened and supported by the common Ogoni saying: 'there is dignity in associating with the D.O.'<sup>3</sup> - a saying which originated in the colonial times when the D.O. was the highest government official in the locality.

What is clear or may be deduced from the Tsaro Wiwa case study is that he enjoyed considerable influence at the local level because of what he was believed to have done or would be able to do for his people. He was high in the local ranking system because he was a big man, and as a big man he had a large following.

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<sup>1</sup>Siegfried Nadel, A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria, London. 1965, p. 123.

Writing in a similar vein, René Lemarchand ("Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa: Competing solidarities in Nation-Building" APSR. vol. 66, 1972, p. 71) observes that "whether the motive happens to be a quest for protection, for material assistance, or for personal mobility, integration at this level stems from an exchange of psychological and material rewards between a superior and a subordinate."

<sup>2</sup>The question of some other affective components which enter into the patron-client relationships is persuasively discussed by Abner Cohen in Custom and Politics in Urban Africa. Berkeley & Los Angeles. 1961. p. 91

<sup>3</sup>Translated into English by Chief Kpago of Bori. 10th September 1974.



But Tsaro Wiwa was dismissed as Commissioner in March 1973. As he put it, he was dismissed because he often criticised the government for maladministration.<sup>1</sup> He recollected that prior to the formation of an Executive Council, he had been appointed a member of the Rivers State Advisory Council. He had resigned from that council because of frequent disagreements with the Governor over policy matters. Tsaro Wiwa was therefore surprised that in spite of his earlier disagreements with the government, he was later offered the more important posts of Administrator and Commissioner. According to him he did not reject these later appointments because 'there was no time to show dissension openly'. Nigeria was in a state of emergency and loyalists were expected to help build the nation from the ruins of war.

Tsaro Wiwa further observed that the Executive Council had no powers. The Council was impotent, and the Governor often exercised his veto powers in many policy matters. A Council agreeable to him (the Governor) was needed. It was unfortunate that Tsaro Wiwa should belong to such an impotent council. These are Tsaro Wiwa's recollections.

At present there are two Ogonis in the Executive Council. These are Mr. Edward Kobani and Chief Nzidee. In relation to these three men (Tsaro Wiwa and the present two Ogoni Commissioners) there has been a considerable shift in the ranking among the Ogonis as regards which personalities control greater power, prestige and influence. According to ministerial sources, in 1970, when he was Commissioner for Education, Tsaro Wiwa attended on to, on average, about twenty visitors per day in his office, most of whom were poor Ogonis who wanted his help either in his official or private capacity. Most of these clients were people he had known prior to his appointment as a Commissioner. These were mostly school mates, kinsmen and friends employed

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<sup>1</sup>Maladministration was neither defined nor discussed by him because he considered it a confidential matter.

in both the private and public sectors. After his dismissal as Commissioner, the calls at his house for such help fell to the barest minimum.<sup>1</sup> The present two Commissioners from Ogoni have taken over the lead<sup>2</sup> from Tsaro Wiwa in local calls for help. Chief Nzidee (who did not complete a primary education) and Kobani (who holds a University degree) have become Ogoni dignitaries and patrons.

An explanation can be offered for Tsaro Wiwa's 'loss of clients' and his apparent fall in Ogoni social rankings today. There has been a change in the political fortunes of Ogoni big men, a change in the favour of the present two Commissioners.<sup>3</sup> Throughout my discussions (August to September 1973) with the Ogoni communities (for the purpose of this research), only very few talked of Tsaro Wiwa. The names commonly on the lips of the average Ogoni are their present two Commissioners. Tsaro Wiwa is more or less a name from the past. He has become a forgotten hero.

At present Tsaro Wiwa is self-employed - a business man. Since April 1974, he has been engaged in the 'supply and retail trade' selling manufactured goods and food items. In his trade, he is still patronised by some of his former clients and colleagues. In his present business he offers employment to about a hundred people in his offices at Port Harcourt, Bori and Eleme. According to him, he is happier and richer today than he was as a Commissioner, admitting that he makes a profit of at least N 4000 per month compared with a Commissioner's annual income of about N 6200.

<sup>1</sup>Tsaro Wiwa. Personal communication. September 1974.

<sup>2</sup>Ministry of Rural Development and Social Welfare, Port Harcourt. (This ministry was 'bossed' by Chief Nzidee at the time this information was received).

<sup>3</sup>However, at present there is no fan-club for any of the two Commissioners.

Why is Tsaro Wiwa a forgotten name today? He is no longer the person who negotiates terms and treaties with the oil companies whenever there are damages to land, crops and other Ogoni assets affected by oil company operations. The present two commissioners are the key negotiating personalities. In short Tsaro Wiwa is no longer in a position to attend to, or satisfy, the private and public needs of his people. Ogoni people talk of what their present commissioners should do for them, and also of what they have failed to do (the usual economic and social services which Ogonis think they are entitled to from the State Government).

The shift in the ranking system (Tsaro Wiwa, Kobani and Nzidee) is probably best illustrated with the following statement made by one of Ogoni's prominent chiefs. "My pickin, we no de talk of Tsaro Wiwa. Him time don pass. Na Kobani and Chief Nzidee we fit sabi today. Na dem de for goment", meaning: "my son (in reference to me), we do not talk of Tsaro Wiwa at present. His is a forgotten era. Mr. Kobani and Chief Nzidee are those we know and can count on because they are our representatives in the government."

Five main features may be deduced from the changed statuses of these three Ogoni men in relation to the concepts of power and influence. First, the occupants of cabinet posts have changed. Secondly, a communal patron commands greater local respect, prestige and following while he is in office to minister to the needs of his people, and that a fall in the political or administrative fortunes of a patron corresponds with a fall in the local ranking system. Thirdly, that the big man in the locality is not necessarily the most educated. This is demonstrated by the fact that Chief Nzidee who now ranks high in Ogoni political circles (as this discussion suggests) has lesser academic achievements than Tsaro Wiwa. While one has fallen (Tsaro Wiwa), the other has risen (Nzidee) because the state government has elevated Nzidee by the new Cabinet post. In this context, the local people elevate whomsoever the State Government elevates. Promotions in Port Harcourt therefore correspond with 'promotions' in the local area.

As the press and radio carry news about new official appointments, the local people make adjustments in their local rankings to reflect events in the Port Harcourt arena.

It can <sup>also</sup> be observed that the wealthiest man is not necessarily the biggest man. Perhaps this is difficult to understand in a society so obsessed with money. The point is that wealth, though important, is not the only index of ranking in the locality. A wealthy man is ranked high if he has power and influence as well, especially in government circles. At least nothing in the life patterns of Chief Nzidee (and probably Kobani) and Tsaro Wiwa suggests that Chief Nzidee is richer<sup>1</sup> than Tsaro Wiwa.

It is also significant that a man's academic attainments such as Tsaro Wiwa's, are more functional in so far as he occupies a position in which he is of greater help to his people. Hence in spite of Tsaro Wiwa's academic attainments which are highly prized in the locality, his fall from power has led to a fall in the local assessments of his educational achievements. It is not argued that Tsaro Wiwa is less educated today than he was as a Commissioner but that he is less noticed at present in his community. His educational attainments are seen to be of greater use to his immediate family than to the community. Such achievement (education) is more significant if it can be of immediate and direct use to the people.

The fourth point which is a corollary of the third, is that men with the same basic educational attainment (such as between Tsaro Wiwa and Kobani, who are both first degree holders) or others who occupy the same social status in the traditional setting do not necessarily enjoy the same social status in the overall ranking system of the local people. What is rather of paramount importance in the local overall ranking system is the dominant position which the individual occupies in the Public Service or related enterprise.

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the incomes of the two.

Fifthly, these communal patrons are centres of power and influence because of what they can do at the local level; and in this respect their social and political relationships with the average citizen are like those between the elephant (the patron) and the grass<sup>1</sup> (the average citizen).

#### DIFFERENTIAL STATUS AND PARTICIPATION

##### SUMMARY

In examining the participation of these four major categories of people (and even within each of these there have been subdivisions) certain facts and conclusions are outstanding. Each category plays a distinct role but in attempting a division of these into role or functional categories it is necessary to make some generalisations. Either some categories are subordinate to others, or some are more central and functional in the parts they play in local development.

In matters of traditional and customary procedure, at the core of the local communities are the chiefs, followed by the elders without whose consent and sanction the general machinery for executing local development projects may either be frustrated or come to a halt. They are therefore at the apex of 'functionality' and are at the core of local influence in these matters. But enough has been advanced to prove that in the domain of politics, certain personalities other than those deriving their power from the traditional base are of greater importance in getting benefits to their people. This is more true when there are several competitors at the state level and at a level where the significance of traditional authorities recedes. Then follow the youths who constitute another significant point of pressure, besides initiating and arousing local interests in development. Because most of their characteristics - such as pressure group tactics - are similar to the last category (communal patrons), I shall treat this group (the youths) together with the latter (patrons).

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<sup>1</sup>Considering the power asymmetry in these patron-client relationships, it is evident that the client partner is often at the 'receiving end'.

The communal patrons are of recent creation, people who take advantage of recent social and political manipulation techniques at the local level. The creation of a new State and the establishment of a new Public Service have brought them into prominence partly because of their senior positions in government and partly because these positions have been converted into political currency at the local level -- a 'conversion' which Huntington<sup>1</sup> would perhaps have referred to as corruption. The basis of their eminence is understandable for three reasons:<sup>2</sup> the local people recognise their importance as government officials; there are very few of their kind in the localities and so they constitute a powerful and privileged group; and the patrons themselves are aware that their communities are status conscious and so they (the patrons) have happily accepted the status assigned to them by their people.

This state of affairs is also indicative of the fluid character of relationships between local communities and the state government. It further stresses the political nature of state government administrative machineries which are to some extent responsive to local political idiosyncracies. This responsiveness arises partly because the government is interested in building a good image of itself in the eyes of the local people and partly because it is inevitable that since the policy-makers :

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<sup>1</sup>In discussing corruption in Brazil politics, he argues that it is most prevalent in states which lack effective political parties, in societies where the interests of the individual, the family, the clique or the clan predominate. See S.P. Huntington. Political Order in Changing Societies. Yale. 1968. pp. 99-100. (In the case of the Rivers State it has already been argued that the interest of the community is of great importance.)

<sup>2</sup>Behind these reasons is the obvious fact that at the local level, the distinction between tradition and politics (making and influencing decisions at the state level) has of recent become very faint or non-existent. Therefore, much prominence has been given to the patron as a faster goal-getter, more so as the process of getting government benefits has become a very sensitive and highly political affair.

are both local and official dignitaries, their loyalties will be divided between satisfying state and local interests. It is the milieu in which most of the local dignitaries who are also high government officials have either a control of, or greater access to, the central administrative machinery. Perhaps it is this factor above all which leads to the conclusion that the man who is nearer to the seat of government decision-making bodies and may ultimately influence or manipulate these decisions more positively (positive if his community is a beneficiary) is a greater dignitary than the others. Hence the patron ranks the greatest of the four.

#### CONCEPTS AND TYPOLOGIES - REDUCING AMBIGUITIES

The four groups (chiefs, elders, youths and patrons) exist though I have reduced them to two types of important personalities - one traditional and less functional in the Port Harcourt arena, while the other is more recent, highly privileged and more politically influential both in the locality and at Port Harcourt. Yet another theme is evident from my classification. I have attempted a generalised two-fold typology of local people as benefactors and beneficiaries in local development - in some sense similar to Bailey's description of a 'lord' and his 'dependent'. In this I have both implied and suggested that there are patrons (big men) and clients (small men) in the Rivers State.

The following explanations are offered to clarify the patron-client typology. This patron-client relationship is not easily definable and perhaps the term may not be legitimately applied except in a loose sense. I do not use the word client to describe a typical and highly ~~institutionalised~~ <sup>institutionalised</sup> feudal<sup>2</sup>

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"The basic relationship in the Oriya political system", argued Bailey, "was between a lord and his dependent." In a ~~different~~ <sup>different</sup> context from mine, Bailey added that "the Kingdom continued in existence .... so long did the King have the power to compel (coerce?) allegiance from his feudatories." See F.G. Bailey, Tribe, Caste and Nation: A Study of Political Activity and Political Change in Highland Orissa. Manchester. 1966. p. 165. My analysis of the situation in the Rivers State does not, however, cover these feudalistic relationships between master and servant. I refer to the patron as a lord in order to illustrate his position in relation to the commoner.

'master-servant' relationship. There are no hereditary 'patron classes' in the Rivers State. The term is not indicative of a political or social protection offered by a dignitary (patron) to his inferior (the client). In the situations described, no party contracts<sup>1</sup> an agreement with the other to become a patron or client. These are political and social conditions in which people find themselves because of the accidents of differential opportunities and status in life. Most of these conditions are generated by the circumstances of new statehood which have brought the patrons into the political and administrative control of the affairs of their locality and the State. It may also be observed that in the Rivers State the basis of power and prestige lies around them, the patrons. Both groups accept and recognise this unequal relationship because it is believed that it is in their interest if only this mechanism enables the community to compete with the others favourably. It is probably immaterial to both groups whether this relationship is justifiable or will continue; what they consider is important is that it forms one of the bases for getting individual or community benefits - with every community seeking to act directly on the 'centres of profits'. But there are no institutionalised or clear cut 'rights and obligations' of either party, except such as arise from the skill with which the patron makes use of his official position in manipulating people and events in his locality. Indeed the patron-client 'contract' is

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Eric Wolf also makes a similar point about the informal nature of the contract; he however stresses the point that this relationship can "occur in dealings which border on the illegal or the extra-processual".

See Eric Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies" in M. Banton., ed., The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies. New York. 1966. p. 10.



an unwritten and informal<sup>1</sup> one - a situation of private, personal accountability.

The 'Big Man - Small Man' conceptions which the patron-client relationships represent are deeply rooted in the local communities, and some of these attitudes which recognise the power and position of each group are partly or totally explicit in the traditional system in the sense that the local man expresses some of these very consciously. They are mostly observable attitudes which are indicated by the deference shown to the big man class.<sup>2</sup>

The current usages of the following words from the Okrika dialect illustrate the context in which I use the terms. 'opubo' means the man who is worthy of respect, capable of inspiring and influencing others and a benefactor - he who also receives personal service<sup>3</sup> (for example, deference) from the poorer class. These are the patron class I refer to. On the other hand 'Papatombo' means not only a commoner or a poor man but those who are less fortunate, less privileged and therefore more dependent on a dignitary for getting things done for the community. These are the people covered by the term 'client' and they are those locally seen as subordinate or inferior

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Eric Wolf also argues that the relationship between the low and high status actors is private, informal and unwritten. See Eric Wolf "Kinship, Friendship and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies" in M. Banton. ed. The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies. New York. 1966. p. 10.

2

In discussing the existence of social classes in the 'new nations' (Africa, Asia and Latin America) Peter Flynn criticises writers (such as Alfred Stepan and Philippe Schmitter) who neglect class analysis as a key to understanding political processes in these countries. Flynn stresses that "far from being an alternative to class analysis, an approach to dependent economies which emphasises clientelism can greatly help to understand some of the mechanisms of class control which help to maintain dependency." See Peter Flynn "Class, Clientelism and Coercion: Some Mechanisms of Internal Dependency and Control". Conference Discussion Paper (Dept. of Politics, Glasgow University, November 1972. p. 2) In this chapter, considering the eminence of the patrons, their manipulative techniques, and the mechanisms of dependency (since the poor people are greatly dependent on the big men) it is suggested that a class analysis could be made of the political and social relationships between patrons and clients.

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There is an illuminating discussion (of personal service) in Peter Blau, Exchange and Power in Social Life. New York. 1964.

to the big man. Therefore I refer to the people who are either politically and socially (and by implication economically) subordinate or inferior to the dignitary (patron) as clients on two main grounds. First, the inequality in political and social positions suggested in their relationships with the patrons; and secondly, but primarily, the role of the patron as the major benefactor (among other benefactors) of the community while the others are more or less the beneficiaries from the craft and 'benevolence' of the patron. My conception of the client as a beneficiary draws its major elements and logic from a popular Okrika saying which asks: if one is a big man, is it not necessary or fitting for the ordinary man to draw advantages from the big man's position. The local answer to the question is 'yes' though it cannot be argued that this kind of expectation is exclusive because there are other expectations of the other classes of chiefs and elders. But in grading these expectations, greater demands are made from the patron class<sup>1</sup> - an account somewhat similar to Lande's<sup>2</sup> concept of leaders in Philippine politics. This is explained by the fact that the inequality of the different groups considered covers the three realms of politics (power and influence), economic (money) and social status - areas in which the patrons outclass the others and these are the relations which constitute the main texture of social life in the Rivers State.

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<sup>1</sup>Scott (James Scott: "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in SouthEast Asia" APSR. Vol. 66. March 1972, pp. 91-113) also notes that patron-client structures are commonly found in Latin America and in Africa - in the sense that the big man (Opubo) is a key figure in the society. Yet Scott plays down the relevance of class for an understanding of clientelistic politics.

<sup>2</sup>My concept of Opubo could be properly understood in Carl Lande's account of Leaders, Factions and Parties: The Structure of Philippine Politics. New Haven. 1964.

In this context, even those of the traditional chiefly class, in spite of their local status and power, are included in the client terminology because in recent times the balance of power has shifted more to those who take or influence<sup>1</sup> major decisions at Port Harcourt. This has already been argued. These are decisions which have a very important bearing on the fate of the majority of the local people who are heavily dependent on the sharing of state benefits. Nevertheless, the patrons are only one class of personalities out of several other people. Even if the four groups are examined separately, the patrons<sup>st</sup> still constitute a very powerful and influential class. These aspects of the power they wield, the position they occupy, and what they do with these assets strongly suggest the use of the title 'patron', at least in a flexible sense.

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<sup>1</sup>For a stimulating discussion (and a similar study in Thailand) on, and the impact of, clientelism and factionalism in decision-making, see Fred Rigg's study of Thailand: The Modernisation of a Bureaucratic Polity. Honolulu. 1966.



CHAPTER 4OFFICIAL PARTICIPANTS AND POLICY MAKERS

It will be seen in this chapter (as in the last chapter) that some categories of local dignitaries - notably, the patrons - are participants in the decision-making processes and machinery in Port Harcourt. These patrons are not only 'participants' in decision-making, they are the key policy makers who are at the apex of the policy-making body.

Though there are key personalities in the decision-making body in Port Harcourt, this chapter will discuss three main things, namely:

(i) the major official participants in community development (this part deals with government functionaries, both in the rural areas and in Port Harcourt, who are responsible for the administration of local affairs and community development projects); (ii) the relationship between these officials, and the lines of command in official matters, and (iii) official and local assessments of policies, especially with regard to the administrative performance of the officers in the rural areas.

CATEGORIES OF OFFICIALS AND FUNCTIONS

In broad terms, there are four categories of official policy makers and participants in the development affairs of the localities. These are the (i) Rural Development Officers, (ii) Sole Authorities - recently called Divisional Officers, (iii) Permanent Secretaries and (iv) Commissioners. Other official participants whose role will be discussed in later pages, work through, or liaise with, these four main categories of officials.

In order to ensure effective planning, implementation and management of local development projects, the Field Administration and Rural Development Division of the Military Governor's office (which in April 1973 formed the nucleus of the newly created Ministry of Rural Development and Social Welfare) is responsible for the general execution and coordination of community work at three levels through its agencies:

- a) Village or Town Development Planning Committee;
- b) County Development Standing Committees, and
- c) Rivers State Rural Development Standing Conference.

Local representation on the village or town planning committees is on a geographical basis. The geographical area is either the ward, quarter, or a section of the village or town. Their functions, among others, include:

- i) the selection of local projects;
- ii) laying down priorities (of projects) in relation to popular wishes; (the popular wishes as expressed through the village or town assembly) and initiative,
- iii) examination of the economic implications of projects - such as availability of funds and land; and the consideration of these factors vis-a-vis government policy.

Beyond the village or town Committees are the County planning committees comprising the following officers:

- a) The Sole Authority and/or the Divisional Officer,
- b) The Divisional Rural Development Officer and his Assistants,
- c) The Divisional Agricultural and Fisheries Officers,
- d) The Divisional Cooperative Officer, and
- e) A Representative of each local government unit in the area.

The functions of these Committees, which are carried out under the direct supervision of the Divisional Rural Development Officer, include the following:

- i) interpretation, dissemination and coordination of government policy in respect of community development programmes affecting rural communities; and
- ii) the determination and provision of financial and technical assistance; and to ensure effective utilisation of all available resources for successful implementation of plan projects.

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#### I . . . . .

Policy Paper on Community Development: ('Guidelines and Objectives')  
 Military Governor's Office, Field Administration and Rural  
 Development Division. Port Harcourt. March, 1973.

While the functions of the village or town planning committees are carried out under the supervision of the Rural Development Officer in charge of the County, those of the County Councils are supervised by the Divisional Rural Development Officer. Because of inadequate personnel, Senior Rural Development Officers are located only at the county headquarters; while under them, the Rural Development Organisers oversee community work at the village level. And in order to ensure an even distribution of postings of Rural Development personnel - arising from personnel shortages in the higher professional cadres - the counties are at present, divided into seven zones,<sup>1</sup> each zone having its own zonal officers.

At the last and highest layer is the State Rural Development Conference, which is principally an inter-ministerial rural development committee. Its composition<sup>2</sup> shows that almost all the 'professional ministries' are represented by senior officials - to ensure that in its discharge of official functions, the Conference is advised by competent 'professionals' whenever matters concerning their departments arise. As would be expected, the conference is 'directed' by both the Permanent Secretary and the Commissioner responsible for field administration and rural development.

The main functions of the Conference cover the following:

- a) to advise the Commissioner responsible for rural development and field administration on all rural development matters;
- b) to provide the liaison between government and rural development projects and other relevant agencies on community development, and
- c) to deal with all matters of procedure on rural development training and other matters that may be referred to it for determination from time to time.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See ~~Table~~ overleaf (Postings)

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 5

<sup>3</sup> 'Policy Paper on Community Development', Op. cit.

MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL  
WELFARE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

P O S T I N G S

A. HEADQUARTERS STAFF

NO.	OFFICERS	DESIGNATION	RESPONSIBILITIES
1.	Mr. J.H. Wright	C.R.D.O.	Head of Division
2.	Mr. J.W. Owhonda	Ag. P.R.D.O.	Personnel Matters, General Administration Division. Matters concerning Zones and Divisions including Planning Committees.
3.	Mr. G.N. Nwala	Ag. S.R.D.O.	Self-Help Projects. Works Service Unit.
4.	Mr. P.E.A. Kuromiema	R.D.O.	Training Officer i/c Zone 'D' Rivers State Young Volunteers.
5.	Mr. L.T.S. Pepple	Ag. R.D.O.	Rural Water Supply. Transport Officer.
6.	Mr. J.K.D. Briggs	A.R.D.O.	Community Industries and Craft Centres.
7.	Mr. W. Deeker	R.D. Org.	- ditto -
8.	Miss N. Bob-Manuel	R.D. Org.	Women Activities.
9.	Mr. A. Jinn	Asst. Works Superintendent.	Works Service Unit.
10.	Mr. W.A. Akaninwo	Senior Plant Supervisor	- ditto -
11.	Mr. L. Harry	Store Keeper	in-charge Rural Dev. Stores.

B. FIELD STAFF

ZONES	OFFICERS	'PRESENT POSTING'	NEW POSTING
<u>ZONE 'A'</u>	Mr. E.A. Abrakasa (A.R.D.O.)	i/c Brass Div.	Nembe i/c Zone 'A'
Brass Division	Mr. J. Daniel (R.D. Org.)	i/c Nembe C.C.	Twon i/c Brass Div.
Oporoma Division	NIL	NIL	Oporoma i/c Oporoma Div.
Kulama Division	Chief J.B. Bazigha	i/c S. Ijaw (WEST)	Ukubie i/c Kulama Div.



FIELD STAFF CONTINUED

ZONES	OFFICERS	'PRESENT POSTING'	NEW POSTING
<u>ZONE 'B'</u>	Mr. M.W. Wejinya (A.R.D.O.)	i/c Ikwerre C.C.	Yenagoa i/c Zone 'B'
Yenagoa Division	Mr. E.K. Igbe (R.D. Org.)	i/c S. Ijaw (EAST)	Yenagoa i/c Yenagoa Div.
Ogbia	Mr. A.D. Okrinya	i/c Ogbia C.C.	Ogbia i/c Ogbia Div.
<u>ZONE 'C'</u>	Mr. G.I. Amoni (A.R.D.O.)	Headquarters i/c Craft Centres	Degema i/c Zone 'C'
Kalabari Division	Mr. G.G.J. Igani (Ag. A.R.D.O.)	i/c N. Ijaw C.C.	Degema i/c Kalabari Div.
Bonny Division	Mr. C. Nwauzi	i/c Bonny C.C.	Bonny i/c Bonny Div.
<u>ZONE 'D'</u>			
Ahoada Division	Mr. S.E. George	i/c Ekpeye/ Engenni C.C.	Ahoada i/c Ahoada Div.
Ogba/ Egbema Division	Mr. G.S. Princewill	i/c Ogba Egbema C.C.	Omoku i/c Ogba/Egbema Division
Abua/Odual Division	Chief T.F.G. Deezim	i/c Abua C.C.	Abua i/c Abua/ Odual Division
<u>ZONE 'E'</u>	Mr. J.S. Sangha (R.D.O.)	i/c Ogoni Div.	Bori i/c Zone 'E'
Tai/Eleme Division	Mr. J. Sibor (R.D. Org.)	Headquarters	Nchia i/c Tai/Eleme Div.
Bori Division	Mr. M. Ighor	i/c Gokana C.C.	Bori i/c Bori Division
<u>ZONE 'F'</u>	Mr. G.K. Gbarabe	i/c Degema Division	Isiokpo i/c Zone 'F'
Ikwerre Division	Mr. G. Ogbondamati	i/c Ikwerre (NORTH)	Isiokpo i/c Ikwerre Div.
Etche Division (WEST)	Mr. T.A. MacPepple	i/c Etche C.C. (WEST)	Okehi i/c Etche Div.
Etche Division (EAST)	Mr. B. Igwe (R.D. Org.)	i/c Eleme C.C.	Eberi i/c Etche Div. (EAST)

FIELD STAFF CONTINUED:

ZONES	OFFICES	'PRESENT POSTING'	NEW POSTING
<u>ZONE 'G'</u>	Mr. G.W. Kalagbor (A.R.D.O.)	i/c Obio C.C.	Rumuogba i/c Zone 'G'
Okrika Division	Mr. Woluchor (R.D. Org.)	i/c Etche C.C. (EAST)	Okrika i/c Okrika
Obio Division	Mr. B. Elemele (R.D. Org.)	i/c Okrika C.C.	Rumuogba i/c Obio Div.
P.H. Division	Mr. D. Whyte (R.D. Org.)	i/c Kalabari County Council	P.H. i/c P.H. Div.

Source: Ministry of Rural Development and Social Welfare.  
Port Harcourt. April, 1973.

The composition and functions of these development committees show that direct governmental participation in local development is broadly at two levels and through two types (or grades) of government functionaries. There are the village (or town) and county levels of participants - these constitute the agencies responsible for accelerating the pace of rural development. The other is the Port Harcourt level of decision-making - the level at which very important decisions are made and communicated to the plan or policy executors in the rural areas. At each of these two ends, two types of government functionaries feature distinctly. The Sole Authority and the Rural Development Officer represent the first type. These are the officers who represent, and are the embodiments of, the state government at the rural level. These are also the officers who supervise and coordinate community work in the interest, and on behalf, of the State government. All other government or local officials and Committees work through, and are subordinate to, them functionally and in status. The second type comprise the Commissioner and the Permanent Secretary who are the symbols of the state government, and from whom emanate key policy decisions. That precisely marks the formal hierarchy of function, power and prestige in decision making. It will soon be established that this is indeed the pattern of decision-making in the Rivers State rural development affairs. I shall turn now to examine the emergence of the divisional and county bosses and their role in local administration and community work.

#### LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

In the Rivers State, two factors made it imperative for an establishment<sup>1</sup> of local administration responsible for effecting change in the rural areas. The first is the unique problem of communication,<sup>2</sup> a problem which made the interpretation of government policies to the people difficult. The second

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<sup>1</sup>Military Governor's Office, Political Division, Port Harcourt.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter 2.

derived from the first, is a consideration based on political control.<sup>1</sup> The fear of local antagonism to the state government in Port Harcourt, which might result if the government policy had been indifferent to the people's problems, was to be averted by a governmental decision<sup>2</sup> to establish a local administration system which would, among other things, convince the people that a new government was in existence. These two facts and considerations will be made clearer soon.

#### THE DIVISIONAL AND COUNTY ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM: 1969-73

Basically local administration in the Rivers State is both an adaptation and a modification of the system which prevailed in the former Eastern Region of Nigeria, prior to the creation of states in Nigeria in May 1967. Changes which have taken place since 1967 have placed an increasing emphasis (at least in the eyes of the government) on community development through local participation even though both the local people and government officials are members of the development committees. The government officials act as 'managers of change'. It is clear therefore that the introduction of local planning (development) committees has increased only the supervisory role of government officials in community development. The officials are not the initiators of development schemes.

In 1969, seventeen<sup>3</sup> interim county councils and five divisions were created.<sup>4</sup> These councils were to exercise two main functions: assuming responsibility for local administration, and supervising community development work in the council areas. In the former Eastern Nigeria, local councils

<sup>1</sup>Political control? This will be discussed later.

<sup>2</sup>Captain E. Amadi, Permanent Secretary, Military Governor's Office. Port Harcourt, July 1971. 'Why we introduced the Sole Authority System.' (A Communique). See also F.J. Ellah, The Duty of a Sole Authority, Port Harcourt, 1971.

<sup>3</sup>Prior to military rule, there were 17 County Councils in the present Rivers State territory.

<sup>4</sup>Edict No. 5, 1969. Councils were to perform those functions contained in Local Government Law, 1960 (Cap 70, Laws of Eastern Nigeria) and were empowered to make bye-laws in accordance with Section 85 of the Law.

exercised the former function (local administration) while the latter (community work) function was mainly the responsibility of local people; government officials were not county council bosses as in the present Rivers State Administration. In the Rivers State, military rule had made it imperative for government officials to assume greater responsibilities in local affairs because when the former councils were abolished and new ones created, neither Presidents nor Councillors were appointed to direct the management of the councils. Obviously, the tasks previously performed by local politicians fell on government officials.

Initially the councils were handicapped by an acute shortage of suitably qualified personnel, a problem which was aggravated by two main factors. First of all, the state government deployed some former local government staff into the main stream of the Public Service - as a temporary measure to combat staff shortages in the general administrative cadres. At this period, the government had also just transferred from its exile base, Lagos, to its Port Harcourt headquarters. Following this, administrative priorities were obviously in favour of establishing and consolidating a Public Service in Port Harcourt. Therefore the establishment of divisional administration was not given a priority. Secondly, as a result of the disorganisation and destruction of the Nigerian civil war, there were neither staff records nor other documents to serve as guidelines in the deployment of staff in the right places and jobs. In fact, technically, it may be argued that almost nothing was bequeathed to the Rivers State government by the former Eastern Nigerian government.- this was conditioned by the peculiar circumstances of the civil war and its aftermath. As a result of these factors, the administration of County Councils faced tremendous difficulties and presented enormous challenge.

At that time, faced with these personnel problems, government officials in the localities were the four Divisional Officers in each of the divisions, excluding Port Harcourt which continued to be administered by the resident

government as a municipality. Besides serving as the Sole Administrator in their areas of jurisdiction, the Divisional Officers were about the only officials who were given limited powers mainly in the fields of executing and administering minor social and economic projects - such as the construction of local market stalls and feeder roads. Yet in a strict sense, considering the size of territories under them, the Divisional Officers were far too removed from the centre of social, economic and political activities. For example, while Ahoada division alone constituted about 75 per cent of the Rivers State territory, Brass division accounted for 60 per cent of the State population. The riverine communication problems contributed significantly to these administrative difficulties. In this respect, it was difficult to describe the Divisional Officers as county officials, much less was their presence felt in the villages which were the main centres of community development work.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND REORGANISATION

Partly because the problems of personnel shortages were reduced in later years - as a result of a more intensive staff recruitment policy and the establishment of more schools in the State - and partly because the old local administrative arrangements were found unsuitable for purposes of close and effective local government in the administration of local development projects, a new phenomenon in the administration of local councils was introduced in April, 1971. For the first time in the Rivers State, Sole Authorities (most of whom were administrative officers) were introduced<sup>1</sup> as the Sole Administrators of their county councils. Seventeen county councils were created. Sole Authorities became council bosses and were vested with powers and functions of the council. In principle and practice, these officials were responsible for the day-to-day administration of their councils.

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<sup>1</sup>The new 'Interim Local Government Councils' Edict No. 4, 1971.

In the words of the Rivers State Government, the objectives of introducing this new system were threefold; namely:

- i) to bring government very close to the people;
- ii) to strengthen the staff position of the county councils by providing them with responsible staff of very high calibre, and
- iii) to improve the performance and efficiency of county councils.<sup>1</sup>

The reasons for the changeover to the Sole Authority system of local administration were therefore related to the inherent weakness (and problems) of the old local government system which was not only unsatisfactory because it was too removed from the local people it served. It could not also serve as an effective machinery for accelerating the pace of social and economic development in the remote villages and towns.

However, at the time this new local government system was introduced, the name Sole Authority was somewhat vague and artificial to the uninitiated in the real sense of what the name meant and the functions of the officials though in every day communication most of the people understood both the name and the function of the official to mean 'close and good public administration.' But the Sole Authority was (and is) in practice the embodiment of the council, local government, and indeed the State government as he was the closest representative of government at the local level. The government also expected Sole Authorities to be more efficient<sup>2</sup> than the erstwhile local councils and councillors who, it was believed, placed too much premium on politics and therefore neglected, to some extent, the primary objective of their existence - the improvement of the welfare of their people. It was also hoped that since such administrative heads of the councils were the politically neutral civil

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<sup>1</sup> A memorandum on 'Local Government Administration in the Rivers State'. Military Governor's Office. Field Administration and Rural Development Division, Port Harcourt. September 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Induction course by the Head of Service to Sole Authorities. "Outline of Duties and Functions", (Section 13) May 22, 1971. Port Harcourt.

servants, the new system would - if given a fair chance - attract almost all citizens in the county who had hitherto been excluded from participation in local government, and in the planning committees because of their diverse political persuasions.<sup>1</sup>

This expectation of 'mass involvement' in community projects and local administration was a reasonable one in the eyes of the government because of the military government's belief that issues in local politics often divided the people,<sup>2</sup> and therefore local political differences were obstacles to community development. But as events in Chapter 5 will show, this expectation was too optimistic because even under military rule in which county council administrators are civil servants, it has been difficult to unite the people by official intervention (appeals for unity), not even the promulgation of an edict. This turn of events discussed in Chapter 5 demonstrates one obvious fact: that only a people's willingness to unite can bring about unity, assuming that unity is always necessary to foster community development.

However, like their predecessors<sup>3</sup> in the 1940's, Sole Authorities were invested with wide powers in the administration of their county areas to enable them to carry out their task of local development as effectively as possible. That they were (and are) given wide powers is demonstrated in this policy paper which is quoted below:

Though Sole Authorities were expected to contact the various ministries in policy matters which concern them (the different ministries) it is the Sole Authority who usually takes the first step by deciding on a course of action (sometimes through bye-laws). The Sole Authority may thereafter contact the Military Governor's Office which is the supreme administrative organ in the State ... Such decisions which affect the local communities are, at this stage, conveyed in writing either by the Military Governor's office or the Sole Authority (or both) to any ministry which may be concerned in the matter.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. Section 19.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter 5.

<sup>3</sup>At that time, the Sole Authority for Port Harcourt was named 'Local Authority'.

<sup>4</sup>Office of the Head of Service, Military Governor's Office, Speech extracts. Induction Course. November, 1971



It could be seen from this policy that major decisions of local interest are taken either by the Military Governor's Office or the Sole Authority before they are communicated to the different ministries for their guidance and implementation.

Furthermore, the status of the Sole Authorities, and the wide powers they exercised in matters of local development, are demonstrated by one major administrative decision they could take - indeed a rare step allowed in administrative procedures. Usually in the administrative service, junior officers are expected to route their decisions, or recommendations, to their immediate superiors in the administrative hierarchy for approval or vetting. But in the case of the Sole Authorities, they were empowered - though in exceptional circumstances only<sup>1</sup> - to communicate directly<sup>2</sup> with the Head of Service, thus by-passing<sup>3</sup> other ministerial heads both in the field and in Port Harcourt. In exceptional<sup>4</sup> cases, they were also empowered to deal directly with, and advise, the highest political authority in the state, the Military Governor. This procedure was aimed at limiting the bureaucratic delays inherent in routing decisions through many superiors: delays which were believed to have frustrated<sup>4</sup> Sole Authorities in accelerating the pace of rural development.

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<sup>1</sup>To a large extent, the Sole Authorities determine these circumstances, as such circumstances are not usually formally laid down.

<sup>2</sup>Induction Course to Sole Authorities by the Head of Service. Op. cit. (section 13).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. (Section 15)

<sup>4</sup>~~cases~~  
Sole Authorities for Nembe and Ogba/Egbema. Interviews. August, 1973.

SOLE AUTHORITIES AS ASSETS.<sup>1</sup> FOR WHOM?

Sole Authorities, it has been seen, enjoy certain administrative privileges - such as direct contact with the Governor - and exercise wide powers and discretion so that rapid results could be expected in the new local government system. Therefore it is necessary, at this stage, to evaluate their performance.

In doing so, it is clear that one of the greatest assets of the new local government system is its closeness to the local people and the 'satisfaction' the people derive from the direct presence of these state government officials - in contrast with the former divisional officers who were not close to their counties and villages. This assessment was very evident in my interview with local people at Nembe and Bonny. The Nembe chiefs I met expressed their satisfaction in this way, 'Our Sole Authority is everything to us. He is our government, capable of representing the Governor. Please tell (pleading with me) the Port Harcourt Government that we are very happy with him (the Sole Authority) because Nembe has turned to be a city as a result of improvement he has brought to us'.<sup>2</sup> Nembe people ale/jettile references to their new town hall, the new community School and the/jetties as the significant contributions of their Sole Authority. Almost every community project was attributed to the efficiency of their Sole Authority.

As regards official communication, some of the bureaucratic delays in communicating official policies to the people have been limited because as soon as official policies affecting the county councils are made, these decisions are transmitted to the Sole Authorities through the 'Telex Service System' in the Governor's Office. 'Telex Sets' were recently installed in most of the county council offices so as to facilitate communication

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<sup>1</sup>My assessment of community work will deal more with the performance of the officials, than with the mechanics of community development. This line of approach will be seen not only in this chapter, but throughout this work.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Nembe Chiefs. September, 1973.

between Sole Authorities and the Port Harcourt government. Sole Authorities have therefore become the torch bearers of government policy which affects the local people.

In assessing this new system in terms of 'administrative gains and losses', the comments of some of the Sole Authorities provide a useful guide. These comments<sup>1</sup> are summarised as follows. Our presence in the locality has helped to reduce possible local antagonisms to the state government, especially when government grant<sup>2</sup> (for community projects) to some communities is considered by the people as either unfair or inadequate.

The Rivers State is under military rule. The rulers are not elected. Agreed. Yet from the above account of the Sole Authorities, one wonders whether Sole Authorities are not being used as instruments of political control. It is difficult to erase this impression of political control, because even if it is argued that military rulers are not answerable to the people as civilian governments are, it could also be argued that every government - civil or military - is keen on building a good image of itself before the people. Generally, governments would prefer averting any possible local uprising (or riot) to quelling it. Generally, apart from the problem of mobilising troops to deal with such uprisings, there will be local dissatisfaction with a government that resorts to using force on defenceless civilians. It may therefore be argued that the good relationship between the people and the government is fundamental to the existence of any government - the Rivers State Government cannot be an exception.

It can also be argued that Sole Authorities have facilitated<sup>3</sup> a more direct and quicker interpretation of local feelings<sup>4</sup> to the state government, and vice versa. Sole Authorities have also served as channels for developing and stimulating increased understanding, cooperation and participation

<sup>1</sup> A synthesis of interview responses by Sole Authorities. September, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>3</sup> For evidence and examples, see the later sections of this chapter - "Take-over of county council roads."

(in the relationship between the local people and the State government) in the diverse state programmes of economic and social development. This is evident in the typical riverine areas where, among other factors, the harsh geographical conditions do frustrate the execution of some of the local development projects. In situations where almost everything is of political interest to the local people, the importance of the successful execution of local development projects, attributed greatly to the efforts of the Sole Authorities, cannot be overemphasised.

In terms of revenue<sup>1</sup> collection, most of the councils, especially the Port Harcourt Council, have been able to raise revenues by way of levying market dues, licences and other fees. This matter of revenue collection is important because an essential criterion in creating a local council is its viability and ability to provide basic social and economic services for its people. The councils have therefore been less dependent on state funds than their predecessors; and in this respect they have been able to accelerate the pace of economic and social development of their county areas. The State government has, however, assisted these councils in the discharge of their functions, by increasing its grants. For example, in the 1971/72 financial year, State government grants to all councils totalled £350,000 - an amount which reflected an overall increase of £50,000 over the previous year's grants. In accounting for the numerous self-help projects<sup>2</sup> which have been recorded in the State in recent years, it can be established<sup>3</sup> that part of the financial encouragement and stimulus has been provided by these government officers and their councils.

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix 6.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter 7.

<sup>3</sup>An overall assessment - an assessment which is also supported by the Rural Development Officers.

It may also be added that in an attempt to improve<sup>1</sup> on the 'sole authority experiment', the former 17 county councils were dissolved in the 1973/74 administrative reorganisation<sup>2</sup> in the State. In the place of the old councils, 18 new divisions and 130 town/community councils, (excluding Port Harcourt which was given a city status) were created. Official propaganda<sup>3</sup> emphasises one point - that the new councils will be given a large measure of responsibility to facilitate the rapid development of the rural areas.

While it may not be necessary to query what truth there is in the official propaganda about the responsibility of the new councils, the question is: how are the capacities and resources of the councils being strengthened? Two things are significant in answering this question. Firstly, even in the reorganised councils, the Sole Authority is still the Sole Administrator. Secondly, the old official expectations still prevail: that the Sole Authority should collect more local revenue to help the councils finance more social and economic projects.

The final question about the Sole Authorities is: are they real assets? Obviously they are assets to the government, because of the character of official expectations concerning their functions. They are also assets to the people because the local people associate almost every local project with the efficiency of their Sole Administrators. There is also that psychological satisfaction which the people derive from the presence of these officials in the rural areas, a satisfaction which is taken into some account in local assessments of the popularity of their government.

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<sup>1</sup>Both the Wey's Commission which was appointed to examine the possibility of an administrative reorganisation in the State, and the State Government's terms of reference to the Commission use this expression 'improve'.

<sup>2</sup>Edict No. 3, 1973. In spite of the edict which calls the new divisional bosses 'Divisional Officers', most of the official circulars and the local people still refer to these officials as Sole Authorities. Moreover, no edict has defined the powers and functions of the new councils. In the circumstances, I shall call these officials, Sole Authorities.

<sup>3</sup>See Nigerian Tide (the Government newspaper), Saturday, 5th May, 1973. p.1.

If it were really necessary to assess the Sole Authority system in pure mathematical terms of 'plus and minus', the general feeling in the localities is that, considering the records of past civilian local government councils which were believed to be stinking in corruption and little concerned in promoting local development, the presence of state government officials at the very local level has helped considerably to reduce corrupt practices in the award of local contracts and in the execution of development projects. Perhaps it could be argued that generally Sole Authorities are rarely bribed because of local fears that military governments and their officials do not accept bribes. Moreover, Sole Authorities have no councillors in their councils, though they were supposed to have Advisory Councils which have not yet been formed, and in fact there is therefore no problem of dealing with corrupt councillors or councils, except the corruption of Sole Authorities if that arises. And the big question is: who deals with a corrupt Sole Authority when he is a local boss and where there are very few local people who can ever probe his conduct critically?

On the credit side too, the difficulties of local councils in respect of funds and personnel could be more easily transmitted to the Port Harcourt government official who has immediate access to the bureaucratic hierarchies in Port Harcourt. Furthermore, the mere fact that in the history of local government in Nigeria, this is the first time that central (or regional) government officials are being used directly to administer and supervise the affairs of local councils gives some psychological satisfaction to the people that <sup>this</sup> is a government 'in the interest of the people'. This is strengthened by local belief that a state government official is better - less corrupt and more efficient - than the local councillor type of officials.

#### COMPARATIVE STATUS AND ROLES

In reviewing the role and performance of the Sole Authorities, certain facts may be reiterated at this point. Before Rural Development Officers

were appointed and posted to serve in the rural areas, it was the Sole Authority who performed the dual roles of a local administrator and a rural development Official. The administrative officer was the first to arrive in the field; and under him local development projects were initiated and executed. The post of a rural development official, created in 1971, in the Rivers State is in this context of recent creation compared with their administrative counterparts.

With the appointment and posting of rural development officials in the rural areas, both officials (the Sole Authority and the Rural Development Officer) work as a team in the field. While the Sole Authority assumes responsibility over local government administration, the Rural Development Official assumes responsibility over community development projects in the locality - as the professional head - though he operates under the administration of the Sole Authority. However, the Rural Development Official occupies a position more distinguished than any of his other professional counterparts because he is believed to be a greater expert in community work than the others. Again, the Rural Development Official is closer to the people because he is often an adviser to the community on community work. He is therefore well known in the locality. His status is improved because in the eyes of the people, he is the direct local representative of government in the allocation of grants to communities.

But there is team work in the field. In this team work, the Sole Authority is at least 'primus inter pares'; and in actual fact he is much more than that because of the special distinguished position of the administrators in the Public Service. The eminence of the local administrator - the Sole Authority - is largely derived from this background. If one were to examine the status and role analogy (in local administration and development affairs) between the Sole Authority and the Rural Development Official, it is obvious that the Sole Authority enjoys greater powers and prominence.

In terms of services and developments - social and economic - required

or demanded in the local areas, there are invariably no limits to what the local people expect the State government to do as the sole or major instrument of accelerating social and economic changes. These expectations are rife principally because of the alleged (how genuine?) accusations that the parent region (Eastern Nigeria) from which the Rivers State was created neglected<sup>1</sup> the social and economic development of the ethnic minorities who form the present Rivers State. Hence the state government's objectives - as expressed in government policy papers referred to in earlier sections of this work - in this respect have centred on assuming responsibility for the direction and utilisation of high level manpower and natural resources with a view to creating and maintaining a climate conducive to widespread economic and social wellbeing, particularly in the rural areas. In administrative terms, it is however argued that the success or failure in the realisation of these objectives (of local development) will depend greatly on the efficacy of the common denominator of administration, or rather the personnel deployed in the management of these services and projects. It is further argued in general administration, that in an age of rapid change and increased responsibilities of central government, if the Public Service is to be efficient, it should be staffed by people whose qualifications, experience, outlook and training fit them for the planning and management involved in government.

#### THE PERMANENT SECRETARY AND THE SOLE AUTHORITY

The status and role differences between the Sole Authority and the other senior administrators (especially the Permanent Secretaries) will be examined against this foregoing background. In spite of the fact that the Sole Authority is equipped with wide powers in the administration of his county, generally the Sole Authority in the Rivers State is a junior administrator compared with officers of the Permanent Secretary cadre. The postings<sup>2</sup> of

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 6.

<sup>2</sup>See a) Rivers State of Nigeria, Staff List. No. 1. April 1972  
 b) Rivers State Office and Quarters List. No. 15. April-June 1974



Sole Authorities, as in May 1973, clearly demonstrate this fact: of the seventeen officers, twelve were in fact the most junior grade of administrators (excluding the officer for Port Harcourt who was the most Senior of them all - a Group 8 officer) while the rest were in the executive officer cadre; these Executive Officers are in the grade of general duty administrators who are usually considered junior to the most junior administrative officer. The Sole Authorities for Kalabari and Okrika counties belonged to this most junior category of officers. In administrative assessment, this meant that in terms of qualifications (not necessarily academic), outlook and experience, a majority of the Sole Authorities were inferior to other senior administrators in the planning and management work covered by their administrative duties. It therefore follows that these officers are subordinate to other senior administrators; and in the administration of their county councils, they must take a reasonable number of policy directives from senior officers at the Port Harcourt headquarters. This procedure is usually followed to ensure greater success in the realisation of state development objectives. The major reason behind this order of procedure lies in the assumption that the Senior Officers can take higher level decisions with less risk (and greater certainty) yet with greater success because of their superior qualifications and experience which enable them to examine decisions in greater details.

This problem of the right relationship between a junior and senior officer is aggravated in the Rivers State by the peculiar<sup>(1)</sup> situation in which most of the civil servants found themselves quite unexpectedly (because of personnel<sup>1</sup> shortages) in relatively senior<sup>2</sup> positions without adequate training and experience. The new statehood was attained without

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See L.A.B, Iyagba, 'Establishing the Rivers State Public Service - 1967-71.' M.P.A. dissertation, University of Ife, Feb. 1972, Chapters IV and V in which the Public Service personnel problems are discussed in greater detail.

sufficient political and administrative preparation on the part of the citizens. Creation of states was effected in Nigeria in the wake of the civil war - generally, the war conditions and circumstances made planning very difficult.

In spite of general administrative contentions about the relative efficiency of the senior administrator as against the junior administrator, it cannot however be argued convincingly that the decision making capacity of a senior officer is greater (and more successful, by implication) than that of a junior officer at all times, because seniority does not always carry with it superior intelligence and wisdom. It could also be argued that the administrative capacity of some senior officers may decline in the later years of their career especially if they receive no further adequate professional training to cope with their increased and complex responsibilities; or old age may render them redundant. It is, however, equally difficult to assess decisions and management capacities in terms of negatives and positives - in view of the value judgements involved in making any such assessments. Similarly, while a particular administrator, senior or junior, may succeed in a particular circumstance and locality, he may fail in other situations even if his administrative capacities remain constant. Failure or success in such circumstances may depend not only on factors of seniority and experience, but on the particular administrative problems and issues involved, and such other forces extraneous to the officer. Some problems are perhaps less or more difficult to tackle than others. As McGrath<sup>1</sup> contends, first and foremost the Administrator must be a problem-solver; in this context, it may be argued that the better or more successful administrator is the one who takes decisions with minimum delay and costs, but with maximum results - input and output measurements - in terms of the number and type of problems he solves.

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<sup>1</sup>F.D. McGrath, 'The Role of the Administrator' in Readings in Public Administration, Institute of Administration, University of Ife, 1971, p. 6.

LINES OF COMMAND AND EXPECTATIONS

However, whatever problems or difficulties are inherent in assessing administrative efficiency or in determining whether a senior officer is a better and more competent problem-solver than the junior officer, there are clear lines of command in the Rivers State Public Service. Two factors determine<sup>1</sup> who is subordinate to the other: seniority and experience; hence the Sole Authority is subordinate to the other senior officers in the administrative hierarchy, and especially to his Permanent Secretary.

In the official relationship between the Sole Authority and his Permanent Secretary, the role of the former is therefore advisory. Ultimately, it is the Permanent Secretary who takes final decisions and accepts responsibility for these decisions. Even though the Sole Authority is a boss in his county council, it is this factor of inferior and junior status which mainly accounts for the limited powers and influence exercised by the Sole Authority in the Port Harcourt administration - a situation which demands that the county council boss must take directives from his Port Harcourt bosses.

Besides this factor of differential status between the Sole Authority and other higher officials, it is the policy of the Rivers State government that in the postings<sup>2</sup> of field administrators, no Sole Authority will be appointed to serve in his county or community of origin. The main reason underlying this policy is to prevent Sole Authorities from identifying with the interests and local politics of their people, and also to make these officials more amenable to higher officials in Port Harcourt. The official assumption is that while defaulting Sole Authorities could be disciplined, it will be difficult for these officials to be detached from the politics

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<sup>1</sup>Official policy.

<sup>2</sup>See Port Harcourt Office and Quarters List. No. 12, 1973, p.83.

of their native communities if this policy were not pursued. Besides, it is argued that this question of communalistic attachments of the official cannot be resolved by official disciplinary action, and so 'preventive actions'<sup>1</sup> are better than 'punitive or disciplinary actions.' Furthermore, the official expectation is that Sole Authorities who serve in places other than their native areas will be more impartial and less sentimentally involved in dealing with the problems of their counties.

It could be deduced from this policy that the State government recognises the fact that it is difficult for officers serving in their localities to be divorced from the politics of their people because of the traditional loyalty and obligations to one's native place (see Chapter 1). Yet there are other social and administrative problems which may be associated with this matter. The office of Sole Authority in any community or county is not a permanent one. They could be transferred to any locality, or posted to a ministry in Port Harcourt, at any time. In such circumstances, government may perhaps succeed in weakening or reducing the natural ties which bind the Sole Authority to a particular native community. But on the other hand, the office of a Permanent Secretary - or Commissioner - in Port Harcourt is a more permanent one. Though a Permanent Secretary could be transferred from one ministry to another, he is the key official who will always be intimately involved with important state decisions and policies - decisions and policies which affect the interests of all communities, including his own. In effect then, a Permanent Secretary has some advantages over the Sole Authority and other junior officials. First of all, he is senior to them and he will therefore be responsible for giving and enforcing most of the 'administrative directives'. Secondly, he is more intimately linked with the making of important state decisions.

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<sup>1</sup>As reflected in the official policy on postings.

Thirdly, by virtue of his seniority and experience, it is believed that he is a more effective instrument for accelerating local development - by the type of mature decisions he is capable of taking at Port Harcourt, before he may delegate his responsibilities to the field officers.

#### THE PERMANENT SECRETARY AND THE COMMISSIONER

The Permanent Secretary is not, however, the most senior in the lines of administrative command in policy making on community development. This point is particularly significant when one examines the highest policy making body in rural development: the Rivers State Rural Development Conference. Though this Conference is headed at the administrative level by the Permanent Secretary, it is the Commissioner who is the political boss, and is accountable only to his colleagues in the Executive Council and the Military Governor. Above all, a Commissioner can request the Head of Service to transfer a Permanent Secretary to another ministry, if the Permanent Secretary's administrative leadership of a particular ministry is not in the best interests of the ministry. It is the Commissioner who also decides when it is not in the best interests of a ministry to retain a particular Permanent Secretary.

Beside these status differences between the Permanent Secretary and the Commissioner, whereas there is no standing committee of Permanent Secretaries, the Rivers State Executive Council could be described as a standing committee of Commissioners because this council meets regularly and is responsible for taking final decisions on applications for community grants. (See Chapter 7). By the principle of collective responsibility, the Executive Council also accepts responsibility for the general administration of rural development. Therefore, the Rural Development Conference is subordinate to the Executive Council, and the role of the former is advisory.

It is also evident, from these different roles and positions of the officials that at the highest state level, the officials who are primarily responsible for rural development affairs are those in the patron class, even though those who directly administer these affairs in the rural areas

are not necessarily the patrons. The direct administrators are the Sole Authorities and the Rural Development Officials. An interesting question can therefore be asked: how powerful can the Rural Development Conference be if these patrons occupy positions of power superior to the Conference? The answer is an obvious one. Firstly, the Conference is powerful in so far as these patrons accept its advice, subject to agreement between the Conference and the patrons on policy matters. Secondly, the Conference is powerful if the interests of the patrons do not supersede overall state interests. Ironically, the patrons determine what constitutes an overall state interest.

The following administrative case-study on the take-over of county council roads by the State government elucidates the political and administrative relationship between the Conference and those of the patron class (notably, the Commissioners of cabinet rank). As will be shown in what follows, for certain reasons, the case-study is important for an understanding not only of the political and administrative relationship between the Conference and the patrons, but also of the relationship between the local authorities and the Port Harcourt administration.

Firstly, the case-study shows that at the official level, there are certain inconsistencies in policy-making. Though the initial policy of the Rivers State administration was to strengthen the capacity of the local councils, yet because of local pressures for an increased participation of the central government in the development of the county councils, the Port Harcourt administration abandoned its initial policy.

Secondly, communities in the Rivers State are powerful 'pressure groups' in state politics. The communities can effectively threaten the government to redeem their promises to the people. Indeed, a promise is a debt to be redeemed.

Thirdly, in policy-making, the field officers (notably the Sole Authorities) serve as effective links between the local authorities and the state government. In spite of the junior status of the field officers and

the high premium which the government places on 'seniority' in the administration, the government greatly relies on junior officers for advice regarding the social and economic conditions in the County Councils.

Furthermore, it is clear that in spite of the administrative decentralisation<sup>1</sup> in the state, there are, and must be, areas of cooperation (in community development) between the field officers and the other senior administrators in Port Harcourt. A sound partnership<sup>2</sup> between the field officers and their superiors in Port Harcourt is necessary for an effective administration and management of local affairs.

#### TAKE-OVER OF COUNTY COUNCIL ROADS

##### BACKGROUND

During the rainy season, most of the roads in the county council areas are marshy. The roads are also impassable during this season; and even in the dry season; the condition of the roads is very poor. (See Chapter 2). On their own initiative, the local people therefore mobilise labour for clearing these roads both in the dry and rainy season. In Obuburu area (Ogba) the people work on their roads twice in a year - during the local festival in August (rainy season) and in the Christmas period (dry season).

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<sup>1</sup>The concept is well analysed by Ronald Wraith in his book, Local Administration in West Africa. London. 1972. pp.13-26.

<sup>2</sup>The concept of partnership is fully discussed in the Report of the Committee on Decentralisation of South Eastern State Governmental Functions. Calabar. 1973. pp. 20-51

Generally, the poor communication network has harmed<sup>1</sup> the economy of most of the rural areas. To take an example, the villages in Northern Khana (Ogoni) and Ogba produce the bulk of the palm oil, yams and palm fruits in the Rivers State. There are market days for selling these products; and local trade between these agricultural communities and the other communities in the State is extensive. But during the rainy season, trade among the different communities is disturbed because the roads are impassable - the local markets are closed for some weeks in the year. In short, the exchange of goods is disturbed at certain periods of the year.

Therefore, in 1971, most of the villages in Ogoni and Ogba areas (particularly, Baen, Luubara, Akabuka, Obuburu, and Omoku) petitioned the Rivers State Government to improve the condition of these roads, arguing that "the existence of a good transport network forms a vital part of the basis for a worthwhile economic activity in any country". These villages further argued that "besides making communication easier, the construction of good roads will help to increase the size of existing markets and create new ones"<sup>2</sup>. It was implied in these petitions that the community councils could no longer provide adequate resources (money and labour) for the

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<sup>1</sup>Interviews with farmers in Ogoni and Ogba areas. 15-20th Sept. 1973  
In Ogoni areas I discovered that three villages - Baen, Duboro and Luubara are 'trading partners'; there is a central market at Luubara. Most of the farmers use bicycles for carrying their goods to the market. But during the rainy season, most of the farmers and traders in Baen find it difficult to travel to Luubara (a distance of 2 miles) to sell their food crops. Most of the farmers complained that, on the average, the market is closed for about 4 weeks during the rainy season - because of the poor communication network. There are similar problems about the use of the market at Obuburu which serves the three villages in Egi West.

<sup>2</sup>R.S.G. file - MGO/LG/C/25.



maintenance of these roads. The government was therefore invited to assume responsibility for the maintenance of these roads. Had the government the resources to assume this responsibility?

In January 1972, the Field Administration and Rural Development division of the Military Governor's Office delegated the Sole Authorities to examine the complaints of these communities. The Sole Authorities and the Rural Development Officers inspected roads in all county council areas and sent an interim report to the Military Governor's Office. Thereafter, the Military Governor's Office advised the cabinet: county council roads were in a deplorable condition and government should take responsibility for the maintenance of these roads as soon as possible. Therefore in March 1972, the Cabinet "decided in principle that government should take over all such (county council) roads."<sup>1</sup> In April 1972, the cabinet appointed a 4-man Committee (representatives of the Rivers State Rural Development Conference) to study and make detailed recommendations on the take-over of council roads. The composition of the Committee was as follows:

- i) The Permanent Secretary, Field Administration and Rural Development -Chairman
- ii) The Controller of Works - Member.
- iii) The Surveyor General - Member
- iv) The Chief Rural Development Officer - Member.

In May 1972, the Committee instructed all the Sole Authorities to provide more detailed information regarding county council maintained roads -

- (i) the general condition of roads (for example, whether the roads are sandy, water-logged or tarred);
- (ii) the social and economic importance of the roads
- and (iii) recurrent expenditure in the maintenance of council roads.

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<sup>1</sup>Cabinet Division, Military Governor's Office.  
Executive Council Conclusion EC.7(72)3.

Generally, the reports<sup>1</sup> of the Sole Authorities confirmed that the condition of the roads was poor (most of them were water-logged and marshy) and so inter-village trade was declining. The reports further confirmed that most of the roads were of economic importance to these communities.

#### LABOUR COSTS.

For its part the Committee found that the sixteen county councils (excluding Port Harcourt) maintained about 1635<sup>2</sup> miles of road. The total labour force for the maintenance<sup>3</sup> of these roads was 824, while the councils spent about £118,711 annually on recurrent expenditure for the maintenance of roads. On the average, six councils (Khana, Ikwerre, Etche, Ekpeye, Obio and Kalabari) spent about three-quarters of their budgets on the maintenance of roads, while the other councils, spent about three-fifths of their budgets for the same purpose. In particular, Khana and Kalabari councils were in deficit in their road budgets.

Considering the social and economic importance of the roads, the Committee<sup>4</sup> found that neither the labour strength nor the recurrent expenditure (for labour) was adequate for the maintenance of the roads. The economic resources of the councils were inadequate because the revenue of the councils was derived chiefly from motor park and market fees, but market fees had declined because most of the markets were closed during the rainy season.

The committee felt that, on the average, it was necessary for councils to deploy one labourer per mile of road, if the councils were to ensure a maximum utilisation of the labour force to optimum advantage. The committee therefore recommended that at least 1635 labourers should be deployed for maintaining 1635 miles of road.

<sup>1</sup> M.M. Awi. 'Report of the Committee on the take-over of county council roads'. (Annexure 1) Military Governor's office. Port Harcourt.

<sup>2</sup> 577 miles of road were maintained by the six communities covered in this study and about two-thirds of these road mileages were maintained by the hinterland communities. See table overleaf.

<sup>3</sup> See Table 1 overleaf.

<sup>4</sup> Cabinet papers - RSG/CM/72)62 of July 1972.

TABLE I  
PARTICULARS OF COUNCIL MAINTAINED ROADS

County	Number of Roads	Combined Length of Roads (Miles)	Number of Labourers	Total Cost of Labour £ : s : d
1. Eleme	6	42	42	5,388: -: -
2. Gokana	5	25	27	4,676:13: 4
3. Khana	34	271	104	20,991:17: 4
4. Okrika	11	28	28	3,963: -: -
5. Bonny	4	23	20	2,851: -: -
6. Kalabari	16	103	78	12,885: -: -
7. Ogba/Egbema	18	106	47	5,806: -: -
8. Ogbia	2	38	16	2,268: -: -
9. Northern Ijaw	15	63	7	959: -: -
10. Southern Ijaw	9	88	15	2,129: -: -
11. Nembe	4	31	11	1,496: -: -
12. Ikwerre	35	279	125	18,057: 7: 4
13. Etche	40	238	101	14,749:10: -
14. Obio	12	51	94	6,476: -: -
15. Ekpeye/Engenni	38	205	88	13,608: -: -
16. Abua	11	44	21	3,057: -: -
Total:	260	1,635	824	118,711: 8: -

Summary:

Number of Roads: 260  
 Combined Length of Roads: 1,635 miles  
 Number of Labourers: 824  
 Cost of Labour: £118,711: 8: -

Source: Field Administration and Rural Development Division  
 Military Governor's Office, Port Harcourt. September 1973.  
 (R.S.G. File MGO/LG/C/25 p. 5).

On recurrent expenditure, it was the view of the committee that the councils would require about £257,508 (based on the existing wage rate of 8/9d per labourer per day) for the maintenance of the roads. If this sum were incurred on recurrent expenditure, an increase of £138,797 would be required in council budgets to meet the operational cost of road labour - considering the fact that at that time the recurrent expenditure on road services was £118,711 (see Table 1). Furthermore, it was the opinion of the committee that £257,508 was inadequate for maintenance purposes. Members argued that about £303,026<sup>1</sup> was the minimum amount required to maintain 1924 miles of road (including 289 miles of what the Sole Authorities referred to as 'feeder roads').

#### COST OF MATERIALS

The Committee maintained that the cost of materials should be related to the condition of the roads in each county council. Therefore the cost would vary<sup>2</sup> from one council area to another. It was decided that the work of assessing the cost of materials (for maintaining the roads) should be assigned to expert engineers. Hence the Committee recommended that a firm of engineers and staff of the Ministry of Works and Transport should be commissioned to carry out a survey of the roads - a job which involved both the assessment of the cost of materials and a classification of major and feeder roads.

As an interim measure, the Committee recommended that for each mile, the sum of £150 should be provided for the purchase and maintenance of

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<sup>1</sup>In the maintenance of the feeder road, the Committee took into account a similar wage rate of 8/9d per labourer (for 289 miles of feeder roads.)

<sup>2</sup>For example, consider the condition of roads in the riverine areas where the roads are generally swampy during the rainy season while roads in the hinterland areas are a little better - by virtue of their geographical location - than those in the riverine areas.

materials - in accordance with the conventional practices in the former Eastern Nigerian Civil Service. If this interim recommendation were accepted, about £245,250 would have been required annually for 1635 miles (excluding feeder roads).

But shortly before the Committee held their last meeting, they were under pressure from two villages - Baen and Bane. In a joint petition<sup>1</sup> sent to the Committee, these villages remarked that "the government only paid lip service to the policy of maintaining and reconstructing roads in the State" - apparently referring to the official decision to take over roads 'in principle'. These villages declared: an effective take over should be done soon, and "soon must be soon". In summarising their demands, the villages further declared that if the decision to take over roads (not only in principle but in practice) was not taken soon, the government would have itself to blame for whatever actions they (the villages) took to ventilate their grievances. Was this a threat?

Shortly after the petition had been received by the Committee, the Committee made their final recommendation<sup>2</sup> to the cabinet. They recommended that all the major roads in the councils should be taken over by the government, - that is, the government should assume full responsibility for the maintenance of the roads both 'in principle and in practice'. On the question of expenditure, it was recommended that about £503,000<sup>3</sup> would be required for maintenance services (labour and materials) on major county council roads.

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<sup>1</sup>The petition entitled "Soon must be soon" (dated 15 June 1972) was signed by ten chiefs from the two villages.

<sup>2</sup>R.S.G. files - (i) MGO/LG/C/25 pp. 5-10 and (ii) MGO/PA 242 Vol. 11.

<sup>3</sup>This amount included £257,508 for labour and £245,250 for materials. At that time, considering the current annual expenditure (£118,711) of the councils, and their current labour force (824), it was necessary to increase both expenditure and the labour force by £384,289 and 811 respectively - if £503,000 was recommended for the regular maintenance of the roads.

In the 1973/74 financial year, the cabinet accepted<sup>1</sup> the recommendations of the Committee and took over the maintenance of major county council roads. The amount (£503,000) recommended for the maintenance of the roads was also approved -- as an interim measure. Furthermore, county council roads were upgraded<sup>2</sup> to 'Trunk B' roads and the Ministry of Works and Transport was instructed to determine the cost of materials and machinery required for upgrading the roads.

No doubt, by transferring local council responsibilities to the Port Harcourt government, the latter would incur considerable expenditure in the maintenance of the roads. Besides, when the new local government administration introduced the Sole Authorities, it was the intention of the government that these officials should be largely responsible for the development work in their councils. Sole Authorities were expected to perform the functions of 'development administrators'.

Two major questions arise at this point. Why did the government accept the recommendations of the committee in the light of the foregoing implications (particularly in matters relating to increased expenditure) of such a policy? Didn't this decision on take over of roads detract from the government's policy that Sole Authorities should become 'development administrators'?

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<sup>1</sup>See Rivers State of Nigeria : Budget Speech. 1973/74.  
Port Harcourt. p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Executive Council Memoranda - (i) RSG/CM/(72) of July 1972,  
and (ii) RSG/CM (72)37-A.

Five possible answers are suggested. Firstly, local demands for a take over of these roads were persistent; and these demands stressed the economic importance of these roads. It was difficult for the government to ignore these demands; more so as the direct representatives (Sole Authorities) of the government in the councils confirmed - in their report to the ministry - that council revenues were declining because of the poor conditions of the roads. Of greater importance was the fact that without good roads, the markets could not function.

Perhaps, one would also imagine that the petition from Bane and Baen ("soon must be soon") might have forced the government - to some extent - into taking immediate action in taking over these roads - more so as the government was accused of not redeeming its promises. Therefore one could speculate<sup>1</sup> that the decision to take over roads might have been an attempt by the government to tighten its 'credibility base' - to show that it was interested in redeeming promises.

Secondly, the economic and manpower resources of the councils were inadequate: this fact was emphasised by the Committee in their recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup>After the take over of the roads, Sole Authorities were instructed to assure their Councils that the government would always listen to local demands. (Interview with Sole Authorities. September 1974).

Therefore in view of the economic importance of these roads, it was necessary that the Port Harcourt administration which had more resources should take over the maintenance of these roads - in order that as a long term measure the councils could become more self-reliant if they derived adequate revenue<sup>1</sup> from the use of these access roads.

Thirdly, the 1972/73 financial year had been declared a "Rural Development Year" (See Chapter 7) by the government. In that year, the government voted ₦ 2 million for rural development projects. It was therefore implied that the government was prepared to meet increased responsibilities in rural development matters. This policy was outlined (by the government) in the budget speech that year:

"it (rural development) will be pursued with still greater vigour this year. Development in these communities will be extended, diversified and consolidated ... so that, side by side with the urban areas ... a happy, prosperous and virile state may be achieved."<sup>2</sup>

Fourthly, for the first time in the history of the state, in the 1972/73 financial year, the government budgeted for a surplus of ₦6,306,000. Furthermore, in the following year, 1973/74, the expenditure for recurrent services totalled ₦45 million - a level of expenditure<sup>3</sup> which was 25 per cent higher than that of the previous financial year. Considering these brighter economic prospects, the government could afford to meet up increased responsibilities.

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Revenue from market fees. It has already been argued that market fees constituted a significant portion of council revenue. Of greater importance was the fact that the markets were closed whenever the roads were impassable.

2

Rivers State of Nigeria Budget Speech. 1973/74. Op. cit. p. 12.

3

In 1973/74, revenue collection achieved an increase of 25 per cent over the previous year's figure. However, in spite of the improvement in the state's revenues, the estimated recurrent expenditure indicated a deficit of ₦3 million (on the recurrent budget). In 1974/75 there was an estimated total revenue of ₦110,668,830 - ₦2 million higher than that of the previous year, See Rivers State Budgets - 1973/74 and 1974/75.



Fifthly, it was the intention of the government to strengthen the capacity of the councils in the development of their counties. Yet it appeared that because the economic resources of the councils were slim, the councils could not have assumed major responsibilities in community development. What could have been done by the government when local demands for a take over of council roads were persistently made? If council roads were not taken over by the government, the conditions of the roads would have depreciated since the councils did not have adequate resources for maintaining the roads. On the other hand, if the councils were given adequate grants by the state government for maintaining these roads, in the long run the councils would probably become more 'management oriented' - assuming that there was an improvement in their revenue collection.

One would imagine that the government was faced with a dilemma. However, the decision to take over council roads did not appear to be consistent with the official desire to strengthen the capacities of the councils - even though it appeared that the decision to take over council roads was taken not only because of the economic importance of the roads, but because the economic resources of the councils were slim.

Although the decision on the take over of roads was not consistent with the official plan to strengthen the capacity of the councils in community development, yet the relationship between the Sole Authorities, the Conference and the Cabinet is clearly defined. The Sole Authorities are important agents of the government in the field, and though Sole Authorities are junior officials compared with officials in the patron class, both the Conference and the Cabinet rely on them for information in matters pertaining to their counties. This fact suggests that there is a strong delegation of responsibilities to field officers and that at the official level there exists some kind of pyramidal structure (the councils, the Conference and the Cabinet) in community development.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the functions, positions and roles of the different officials and committees, one may reach certain conclusions in this chapter. The first is a very obvious conclusion. It need not be overemphasised that the patron is a very important personality because his position is not confined to his locality<sup>1</sup> alone. He constitutes one of the key power centres in Port Harcourt; indeed the most important power centre in rural development affairs. The functional relationship between him and the Rural Development Conference bears out this fact. This Conference is a supreme body, yet it is dependent on the patron for final answers to questions, hence its supremacy is a limited one.

Secondly, it is clear that possible communalistic inclinations of the patron and other officials have been recognised by the state government. This is reflected by the official policy in posting field officers to communities other than their own. The state government's awareness that communalistic inclinations of the official are strong inclines one to argue that whereas in a military regime, political parties may be banned (as in Nigeria), it is doubtful if political practices such as protection or advancement of sectional interests in the public service can be banned or stamped out. In particular, a patron will remain a patron. My assumption in this chapter is that to some extent, even the boss in the field - such as the Sole Authority and the Rural Development Officer - is a patron because of his superior position in the field, like the colonial District Officer. If this is true, as I believe, the extent to which the Rivers State Rural Development Conference performs its functions at the State level will be limited by the nature of interests protected by any official or patron.

There is a further assumption underlying the second conclusion. This is the strong belief in the State that the principle of local interests plays

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 3.

a significant part in the decision making processes. Scientific data are not needed by local people to prove their belief; not even academic philosophies and explanations can dispel these impressions. This conclusion will be pursued further in Chapter 7.

Thirdly, in matters affecting the interests of all communities (as seen in the take over of roads) one is inclined to observe that whenever official decisions are favourable to all communities, local complaints about the parochialism and the nepotistic inclinations of the officials do not arise. For example, the official decision to assume responsibility for the maintenance of all county council roads appeared to be satisfactory to all the communities. One would imagine that if roads in some county councils were not taken over by the government on the grounds that such councils were economically viable, local complaints from dissatisfied communities (as will be discussed in Chapter 7) would have been legion.

Fourthly, the people believe that administration has no purpose other than to serve the political goals<sup>1</sup> of the different communities. This can be seen in the people's assessment of their Sole Authorities; the objectives of the government in establishing the Sole Authority system also bear out this fact. The senior civil servant has therefore come to assume a very important position in his locality; he is the government that ministers to the political goals of the people. It therefore follows that despite the lure of commerce and industry in recent times, the public service, which is the main arena for distributing benefits to the people, will have a great appeal to the people. I arrive at this conclusion because given the uneven level of development among the different communities, there will be a basic desire on the part of many communities, especially the less developed ones, to see to the

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<sup>1</sup>That other goals such as efficiency and effectiveness are sub-goals which are in fact underscored by the political goals.

advancement of their interests in the public service. The local rationale that such interest can only be effectively advanced if there is some 'communal balance' in the public service reinforces this conclusion.

Finally, two factors may stimulate certain fears of group domination in community development. The first is the numerical strength of senior administrators and commissioners from any particular community, while the second is the position of power and influence exercised by officials from any particular community. These two factors will therefore be the definitive facts which will express the personnel imbalance in the senior grades of the public service; in fact fears of a political domination may be inflamed by related fears that a situation of economic domination may result from the political domination of one group.

A RESUME.

In Chapter 1, I discussed how political scientists have shown an increasing concern with central-local relationships in African countries. Furthermore, I examined how the two key concepts - community and communalism- were to be applied in this work. In Chapter 2 I dealt with the ecological setting. I also discussed the circumstances in which the Rivers State administration operated in the early years of its existence.

In Chapters 3 and 4 community development in both the local and public service arenas was discussed. Of the different participants in local development, it was observed that the patron was the most eminent, not only in the locality but also in the public service. The two chapters further explained the relationship between politics in the local areas and Port Harcourt.

In Chapter 5, I shall deal with how far chieftancy disputes have affected community development in Okrika. It will also be observed how far some of the segments in the community (as seen in Chapter 1) are in conflict with one another, thus affecting the pace of local development. It will be further observed that even within the community, there is some kind of pluralism. The major observation is that the community is not like a folk culture in which there is widespread consensus about political interests and values among people. In Okrika the congruence is much less perfect, and is produced by power struggles; and attempts are made to resolve the conflicts by compromises so that the machinery for community development can function effectively. Compromise, it will be seen, was hardly achieved, largely because of the vicious role of the patrons - patrons who are believed and seen to be vindictive.

In Chapter 6, I shall discuss four themes: the agitation for a Rivers State; the emergence of patrons from the State movement; the general pattern of expectations in a new state; and the agitation for a Port Harcourt State. To the Rivers people, a new state was to provide the main platform for accelerating community development. In Chapter 7, the main discussion relates

to the role of the cabinet in the allocation of grants to the communities and how far the policies of the Cabinet are acceptable to the people. Finally, Chapter 8 provides the major findings and conclusions in this study.

CHAPTER 5CHIEFTAINCY DISPUTES AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Okrika, Nembe and Bonny are the three riverine towns where chieftaincy disputes, and other connected political rivalries have seriously affected development efforts at the local level. However, of the three towns the Okrika disputes have been most violent in the sense that more human lives have been lost in these disputes. Regional and state government involvement is more noticeable in the Okrika troubles. Also behind these chieftaincy disputes, there are several other local political controversies (with historical and contemporary bases) which have given wider dimensions to the nature and significance of these disputes. In Okrika there has also been more material destruction - houses burnt and looted - as a result of these disputes.

Yet basically, in each of these three towns, the nature and causes of the disputes and their effects on local development are the same. The disputes differ only in magnitude. But since the political dimensions of the unrest at Okrika assume the greatest significance at the local and state level, I shall concentrate on Okrika in this chapter to give an insight into how such political problems and issues hinder local development efforts in these riverine towns.

THE INSTITUTION OF AMANYANABO : HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES:WHY DOES AMANYANABOSHIP MATTER?

If chieftaincy disputes have persisted, and have been associated with intensive political rifts, in Okrika for so long, it is necessary to ask why the Institution of Amanyaboship is of fundamental importance to the people.

Okrika - speaking people comprise over thirty villages and nine towns. Each village or town has its own head chief, and even within the village or town, there are several house or compound chiefs who are politically subordinate to the head chief. But an Amanyabobo is the supreme commander; all other chiefs, including the head chiefs, are subordinate to him. He is also

regarded by the people as the living embodiment both of the ancestors and of their successors. In ancient times, the political supremacy of the Amanyanabo's council was demonstrated by two facts. The Amanyanabo's Council was responsible for the general administration of the clan - settling land disputes and other political disputes between villages and towns. It was also his Council which negotiated<sup>1</sup> trading treaties with foreign merchants and vessels. As I have shown, the Amanyanabo was undisputedly superior to the other local chiefs and therefore he was entitled to greater power and respect in the clan.

#### DIRECT AND INDIRECT RULE

Even under both Direct and Indirect rule in Nigeria, though the office of Amanyanabo lost some political<sup>2</sup> value to both the government and the people (because the District Officers exercised some of their executive powers) the power of the Amanyanabo vis-a-vis the ordinary chief was not greatly diminished. The Amanyanabo was a member of the local government council; and comey duties were still paid to the Amanyanabo (as in the past) if he was the powerful political head in the locality. The Amanyanabo in his judicial capacity still presided over the Native Courts where so many local disputes were settled and fees paid. Besides these areas of influence, under the 'Warrant Chief System', the Amanyanabo was responsible<sup>3</sup> only to the colonial government, and those who elected him had little or no power to dethrone him even if he lost popular support. In this sense, even if his powers were diminished by the colonial government he exercised as much power as he could in his area, more especially as those who elected him could not dethrone him at their will. The role of Chief Daniel Kalio who mobilised community labour in the building of St. Peter's Church, Okrika, testifies to this fact - as it was reported<sup>4</sup> that the Chief did

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on their loss of power, see G.I. Jones 'Chieftaincy in the former Eastern Nigeria' in M. Crowder and O. Ikime, eds., West African Chiefs. New York. 1970. pp. 312-324

<sup>3</sup> For example, the case of the deporation of King (Amanyanabo) Ibanichuka of Okrika.

<sup>4</sup> Version of the Okrika elders.



apply some force, compelled even the unwilling to contribute towards the church building project.

#### THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

In the post-colonial period, the office of Amanyanabo did not lose its importance altogether. In 1956 when the Eastern Nigeria government created the House of Chiefs, there was an official categorisation of Chiefs, ranging from first class to fourth class Chiefs. The Amanyanabo was not only a first class Chief and so superior to the other Chiefs; he was a member of the House of Chiefs - a House which was symbolic of prestige, and most members, especially the Presidents of County Councils (the Amanyanabo) became salaried officials. Later, when a Ministry of Chiefs and Customary Courts was created, the government was also responsible for grading and recognising Chiefs. In this respect, Chieftaincy became a highly politicised matter in which government was believed to have manipulated Chieftaincy appointments by recognising mostly those Senior Chiefs who were NCNC party supporters. Clearly, the impression was strong in the local areas that Chieftaincy appointments had become matters of regional political rackets. In Okrika in particular, this period coincided with Chieftaincy disputes and rivalries.

It is against the foregoing background that the importance<sup>1</sup> of the Okrika Amanyanabo stool could be understood, as well as the interest shown in the disputes over succession to the throne. Because an Amanyanabo is, and was, a Supreme political leader, and he could influence political events, almost every family, village or town has become an interested party (as will be shown later in the chapter) in recent Amanyanaboship disputes. Furthermore, the local understanding is that Amanyanaboship brings with it both political and

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<sup>1</sup>For a discussion on the importance of Chiefs, see Chapters 3 and 6. The institution of chieftaincy has also become more important in recent times because of the creation of a Rivers State Conference of Chiefs which is considered the nucleus of a House of Chiefs on return to civilian rule. Many chiefs are therefore eager to be elected Amanyanabo in order to become first class chiefs - a matter which is believed to have intensified chieftaincy rivalries in the state.

economic benefits to the incumbent and his supporters. Who does not desire to ascend the throne (even if one has no genuine claims) given the chance, especially when the matter of its recognition in the past has become highly politicised? In fact recent economic and political changes in the Rivers State have also helped to give Chieftaincy disputes wider dimensions and complexities in the issues involved.

#### QUALIFICATIONS FOR AMANYANABOSHIP

The question arises as to the nature of qualifications for Amanyaboship. If the qualifications are well defined, why do succession disputes arise?

The office of Amanyabobo is an elective one within the ruling house or lineage. It is also hereditary, though it is not passed on from a father monarch to a son or daughter, but in the sense that only members of the ruling house or lineage are eligible to be elected. Yet within the ruling house, candidates for the office must also be descendants of the free-born line (as against those of slave descent); they must also trace descent from particular ruling sections.

In spite of the foregoing specifications about the rules of succession, the major problem about the qualifications for Amanyaboship is that the rules of recruitment<sup>1</sup> to the office do not appear to be very clear. There are also difficulties in assessing the credentials of the different contestants to the throne. Because of these difficulties, the election of an Amanyabobo has become both problematic and highly political.

#### RECENT AMANYANABO DISPUTES<sup>2</sup>

In spite of these succession problems, until about 1958, the Ado house was generally regarded as the ruling house. Kings and rulers of local

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix 7. 'The Pattern and Rules of Succession to the Throne'.

<sup>2</sup>Most of the accounts given are the versions of the elders and chiefs from both the Ado and Oputibaya families. (Personal Communication with Okrika elders and chiefs. September 1973).

historical fame, such as His Highness, King Ibanichuka, and Paramount Chief Daniel - Kalio, were all members of the Ado house. It is believed in Okrika that successions to the throne were also peacefully done in the past. Those who hold this view attribute recent political unrest (arising from the Amanyanabo disputes) to the political machinations of some of Okrika's communal patrons.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, from 1958, an Amanyanabo 'palaver' started in Okrika. The Oputibeya family and house, regarded by the Ado's as the next most influential house to them, started to challenge the previously exclusive right of the Ado house to the throne. At that time, the head chiefs of Ado and Oputibeya houses were Chief Ogan and Chief Oputibeya respectively.

The major claims and arguments of the Oputibeyas<sup>2</sup> were as follows. Firstly, that in the past they too had their own Amanyanabo, such as Oputibeya and Ibopo. Secondly, that in the light of these historical records, they had as much right as the Ado's to the throne. Thirdly, whether they or the Ados could lay distinct and legitimate claims on their exclusive rights to the throne, the office of Amanyanabo could be rotated between them and the Ados.

In essence, then, and by implication too, the crux of the Oputibeya argument was that the Amanyanabo throne does not (and should not) really belong exclusively to either of the two rival families; or if it did so, it was not the Ados whose claims and right had not been questioned for a long time.

For their part, however, the Ados did not admit that any Amanyanabo of Okrika had even been associated with, or hailed from, the Oputibeya house. Amanyanabo had always been Ados, and Ados alone. All other chiefs and citizens of Okrika were (and are) therefore subjects of Ado kings.

<sup>1</sup>Their roles will be discussed later.

<sup>2</sup>There are also 'Oputibeya Amanyanabo plates' which show a brief history of the Oputibeya dynasty. These 'plates' are found in their Amanyanabo shrines at Okrika.

These Ado and Oputibeya arguments and counter arguments have two different sources. Whereas the Ados (of the Tuboniju faction) have always cited both Tuboniju oral traditions and local history books written by eminent historians<sup>1</sup> of Rivers State origin to give greater support to their claims, the Oputibeya claims appear to be solely based on oral tradition, the authenticators of whom are Koniju (Oputibeya's faction) elders. The Ado's interpret this as Oputibeya admission of weaker claims to the throne because the Oputibeya versions are mainly oral (an oral version which is rejected by the Ados) and without strong support from written sources.

Yet the Ado and Oputibeya versions and claims are credible within their different sections. Though the credibility of local history books and oral traditions are often questioned in Okrika, two things stand out clearly in these claims. Since 1958 the Amanyanabo issue has permeated the politics of the entire town, and indeed the politics of Okrika clan. While in ancient times, an Amanyanabo of Okrika town ruled mostly the Okrika town and its environs because there were very few village settlements outside Okrika island; in recent times, the Amanyanabo's influence and power as a supreme political leader has spread to all Okrika - speaking people in the clan. The Okrika clan (as distinct from Okrika town) which comprises the nine towns of Kirike, (Okrika town, being the biggest in size and population) Ibaka, Ogbogbo, Ogu, Abuloma, Bolo, Isaka, Ogoloma and Ele is therefore the area where the Amanyanabo rules. Though each of the other eight small towns has its paramount chief or ruler, the fact that the Amanyanabo is the greatest political authority has involved the whole clan in the disputes and the Amanyanabo issue has become the focus of Okrika's politics. The Amanyanabo is in these respects associated with all community development efforts in Okrika.

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<sup>1</sup>See E. Alagoa. A History of the Niger Delta. Ibadan. 1972.

It is clear that though the Amanyanabo politics involves all Okrika speaking people, there are two main families or houses whose interests are directly affected by the disputes. But these two families belong to two divisions or factions in Okrika town: the Tubonijus (the traders section) and the Konijus (the fisherman section). The Tubonijus are the trader folk and as their name implies, in ancient times, the principal occupation of majority of their ancestors was trading; while the Konijus are the fisher folk whose occupation was fishing. While the Ados belong to the Tuboniju stock, the Oputibeyas are of the Koniju stock. At present, every Okrika citizen is identified with, or traces descent from, either of the two factions, depending on the occupation of his ancestors. This pattern of family (and house) identification along factional lines, inclines one to describe the political chieftaincy disputes as the "Tuboniju-Koniju" crisis.

#### RIOTS, COMMISSIONS AND CORONATION

Since 1958, this chieftaincy dispute has become the major political issue in Okrika, and almost all families have been deeply involved in the disputes. There have been several political disturbances, resulting in riots. The first and second major political disturbance occurred around March 1961 and December 1961, the latter lasting for about eight days. These two disturbances took the form of riots in which people from the two factions attacked each other with knives and guns. Several houses belonging to people from both factions were also looted and burnt.<sup>1</sup> In the second riot, which was more severe than the first, about three people were reported killed,<sup>2</sup> while several others were severely wounded. These victims were taken to Port Harcourt General Hospital for treatment. A few months later, because of the same issues, similar

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<sup>1</sup>In December 1961, the estimates of the Okrika Police Post showed that 100 houses were damaged. Property looted could not be assessed because of unreliable and conflicting valuations.

<sup>2</sup>Source: Police Post, Okrika. January 1962.

disturbances took place in Okrika. Casualties in these later disturbances were also considerable: as usual several houses were looted and burnt.

As a result of these political disturbances, rooted in the chieftaincy disputes, the former Eastern Nigerian Government instituted the Graham Commission of Enquiry in 1962 to inquire into the nature and significance of the political unrest - an enquiry into its 'why and how'. The Commission was also to advise the government on the merits of the claims of the different contestants (the Ados and the Oputibeyas) to the throne.

The major finding<sup>1</sup> of the Commission was that the Ados (and, by Okrika political implication, the Tubonijus) had the sole right to the throne. The government agreed with and accepted these Graham findings. As a sequel to this, chief Uwakwe Ogan, of the Ado family (Tuboniju) was crowned the Amanyanabo of Okrika on 24th April 1964, followed by a religious coronation on 26th April 1964 at Saint Peter's Anglican Church, Okrika.

Later on, the Amanyanabo selected his council, as was customary, comprising a committee of some elected Okrika town chiefs and other local dignitaries. The local dignitaries in the Council were as follows:

(i) the Chairman of Okrika County Council. At that time the Chairman was Mr. J. Jarnabo, an Ogoloma man; (ii) Dr. I. Fiberesima, a Tuboniju, and M.P. in the Eastern Nigerian House of Assembly; (iii) Mrs V. Egeonu (a woman representative), a Tuboniju; (iv) Mr. Joe Fiberesima (as legal adviser), a Tuboniju and Dr. Fiberesima's cousin.

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R. T. Graham. Report on the Okrika Chieftaincy Disputes, Enugu. 1964. It is reported that the Graham findings were based on interviews mostly with chiefs and elders from both factions in Okrika. In addition to these, the commission also received written evidence from other groups of people, mostly Efik and ~~Ibibio~~ chiefs in the former Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs. The commission's findings were, and are, however rejected by the Konijus.

Understandably, the Koniju reaction to these selections and appointments was that the most important and influential members of the council - especially the parliamentarian and the legal adviser - were either of the Tuboniju faction or they were people who had much sympathy for the Tuboniju cause. As would be expected, too, the coronation of an Ado Amanyano from the Tuboniju faction, was not taken in good faith by the other contenders from the Koniju faction because the choice of a Tuboniju Amanyano meant that the Oputibeya and Koniju claims to the throne were baseless. If this was so, there would never be a Koniju Amanyano for Okrika. This in effect also implied that it is only a Tuboniju Amanyano who would always rule and take political decisions for all sections and factions in Okrika. Above all, it was understood by the Konijus that a Tuboniju ruler would always be more inclined to protect the interests of his faction; and that embittered by the memories of the Tuboniju-Koniju rivalries, he and his influential councillors might take reprisal measures against the Konijus. In Okrika politics, one thing that is greatly feared as a political reprisal is discrimination in the location of all or major development projects in a section. Another is a calculated policy or practice whereby people from one section are denied access to senior government jobs. A third, which is similar to the second, is discrimination in offering jobs (mostly unskilled and semi-skilled jobs) to people in general. Of these, the first and the second were Koniju's main fears if Tuboniju hegemony was left unchecked or unchallenged.

#### LOCAL FEARS AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

The fears and suspicions which arose from the above incidents have been expressed in several political undertones in recent times. Since the Rivers State administration was established in Port Harcourt in 1968, there have been rumours<sup>1</sup> at Okrika that the Konijus would attack the Tubonijus as an

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<sup>1</sup>In October 1968, June 1969, September 1971 and March 1973, these rumours were widespread at Okrika and Port Harcourt.

expression of their dissatisfaction with the decision of the former Eastern Nigeria Government on the chieftaincy matter. There have also been counter rumours that the Tubonijus were planning to attack the other faction in order to demonstrate their political superiority over the Konijus. Such an alleged attack would also subjugate and silence the Koniju people for ever, so that there would be no further political rivals and rivalries. Whenever such rumours were peddled, it was characteristic of Okrikans to remove their valuable property at Okrika for safe keeping in Port Harcourt. After that, each party usually showered abuse on the other and threatened to overrun the other militarily.

It is pertinent to point out at this stage that whatever may be the elements of truth or falsehood in these rumours, several other communities in the Rivers State believe<sup>1</sup> that the political unrest in Okrika is now a perennial problem, and that riots (or threats of riots) have become a common feature of Okrika's political history. In short, riots are now part of Okrika's custom and 'festive occasions'. Okrika people are therefore generally described by other Rivers people as the warriors of the Rivers State. They are easily irritated and ready to fight at the least provocation. At the State level, records of Okrika's quarrels and wars with other groups - they fought the Kalabaris in 1950 - are indeed numerous. Though offenders in these quarrels and wars are rarely named, yet the fact that Okrika is always a party in these disputes inclines people to believe that Okrika people are warmongers. Even within the Okrika clan, the natives usually refer to their love of riots as the 'pugnacious spirit of our people'.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Oforiokuma, whose name will be mentioned in later sections of this chapter, also refers to the Okrika people

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<sup>1</sup>The Kalabaris and Ikwerres on (a) 'Riotous Okrika' and (b) 'Okrika and its Troubles'. These opinions have also been expressed in local newspapers - the Nigerian Tide (June-October 1973 editions) and the Morning Star (May-November, 1973 editions)

<sup>2</sup>Edmund Orupabo's contribution in the 'Oforiokuma Unity Talks'. This theme recurred in almost all speeches made in the talks.



as the most 'politically disorganised'<sup>1</sup> in the Rivers State. The local and state government attempts to bring about peace in Okrika also demonstrate that both the local people and the state government realise that political disturbances have adversely affected the pace of community development at Okrika.

In recognition of Okrika's political problems, several efforts have also been made in recent times to identify and solve these problems. In 1971 Captain E. Amadi, a Permanent Secretary in the Military Governor's Office, Port Harcourt, summoned prominent Koniju and Tuboniju chiefs and other prominent Okrika citizens to a 'peace and unity' conference. In that meeting, the Permanent Secretary had appealed to both factions to forget their past political differences, and work together for the good of their community. In the same year, and in 1972, the Okrika Students Union, consisting of college and university students from both factions, also summoned chiefs and Okrika citizens to unity conferences. Such unity conferences have been frequent, the most recent is the 'Oforiokuma<sup>2</sup> Unity Conference' held in the Court Hall, Okrika, on 14th and 15th July 1973. In all these conferences the theme has remained the same, and the Oforiokuma group aptly summarises it as:

- (a) Unity through propaganda and enlightenment - a programme of enlightenment for the average citizen.
- (b) Okrika's progress (development) through reconciliation and unity.

The outcome of these meetings and appeals in pursuit of peace and unity still remains to be seen; but the general speculation in Okrika about these

<sup>1</sup>Oforiokuma's address to the Okrika Divisional Council of Chiefs. Okrika Town Hall. 7th July 1973.

<sup>2</sup>Mr. Oforiokuma holds a University degree in Arts. He later qualified as an Accountant. He is one of Okrika's distinguished businessmen. Because of his elite status and success in business, he is very well known and respected at Okrika. Besides, he claims attachment to neither the Konijunor Tuboniju faction.

efforts is pessimistic because in the past several peace talks had been held without much success. In 1971 and 1972 Okrika chiefs and elders had assembled at the Okrika market square to take traditional oaths for keeping the peace. That was in keeping with traditional rites. Representatives of both factions had also made declarations of non-belligerency. To the Okrika people, these were (and are) the highest and most sacred traditional pledges chiefs and elders could make. It is believed that failure to keep these pledges will result in the sudden death of the violator.

However, it could be observed that in the search for peace, there were two motives. First, there was the argument by peace-loving Okrika people that Okrika's riotous history is a barrier to effective and organised community development. Secondly, through prophecy and native occultism, the chiefs understood and feared that the souls of the dead<sup>1</sup> (who were peace lovers in their days) at Opuama (Okrika's main cemetery) were angry with the Okrika people for the incessant conflicts at Okrika. The souls of the dead therefore needed to be appeased. Yet despite these vows and pledges, in later months there were several threats of riots; chiefs, elders and members of the elite were believed to be inciting their people against those of the other faction. It was therefore a disappointment to peace-loving Okrika people that these dignitaries - ~~most~~ of whom had participated in earlier peace talks and oaths - should fan the embers of factionalism.

A new interpretation therefore emerged: that each faction had used the search for peace as an opportunity to label the other as uncompromising. The peace talks had also been avenues for scoring more political points. Assessment of present peace efforts have been subjected to comparisons with the past. Hence, except in the composition of ~~these~~ 'peace ~~teams~~' comprising more distinguished participants such as Civil Commissioners and Permanent

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<sup>1</sup>Chief Afipulu on the 'Ofonokuma Peace Talks'.  
15th July 1973. Okrika Court Hall.

Secretaries, there is really nothing new or unique in the recent unity talks. Like their predecessors the objectives are basically the same: the search for peace and progress in Okrika. There is no disagreement of any nature that both factions want peace; rather the areas of disagreement concern two questions: (i) What are the ways and means of achieving lasting peace and progress? (ii) Which faction should make the greater contribution and sacrifice in the search for peace and progress? Indirectly, the second question also asks: If there should be peace, at whose expense should it be achieved? In political arithmetic it is evident that the major problem here is who loses or gains if the right of Amanyaboship is conferred on one faction, and what would be its political and economic implications? Therefore, in the negotiations, what has created the greatest obstacles to peace revolves on fears expressed as 'why must the Tubonijus or Konijus gain or lose in the search for peace?' It is obvious that no section wants to lose. It has become a battle of profit and loss.

#### THE PRESENT NATURE AND DIMENSIONS OF THE CONFLICTS

The Tuboniju-Koniju conflicts and their divisions in the Amanyabobo chieftaincy affair have certainly become a serious political problem for Okrika people. Yet these conflicts cannot be understood purely in the context of native politics. Though the institution of chieftaincy is highly respected and valued by the local people, native people do not destroy themselves or riot just for the love of it. Neither do they riot for the sake of acquiring, or being associated with, chieftaincy titles. A logical argument therefore follows that when local conflicts assume such bitter proportions for so long, there are complex issues which underlie them. I will now turn to an analysis of these issues.

#### ELECTIONS:

The first such issue to complicate the climate of local rivalries is election to the two former parliaments - the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly, Enugu, and the Federal House of Representatives, Lagos.

The most recent electioneering experiences in Okrika were the 1961 and 1964 elections to the former Eastern Nigeria and Federal parliaments respectively. There were two major contestants in the 1961 Regional election. One was Mr. Kalada Kiri, aged 50, and a graduate of an American university. The other contestant was Dr. Fiberesima, aged 58. He was a medical practitioner and a graduate of Dublin University. Mr. Kiri is a Koniju, while Dr. Fiberesima is a Tuboniju; both were (and are) very important personalities in their respective sections in Okrika.

Prior to the 1961 elections, Mr. Kiri had represented Okrika in the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly. He also represented Degema East constituency. As a member of the NCNC which was the dominant political party in Eastern Nigeria, Mr. Kiri had been an M.P. for about eight years (prior to 1961). He was a regular nominee of the NCNC. It was locally believed that Mr. Kiri was specially talented in politics -- as if politics was his profession -- and that he was indispensable as Okrika's parliamentary candidate. Furthermore, because he studied in America, it was believed that he was versed in American politics. In short, in the locality it was difficult to question the superiority of his political talents.

The results of the 1961 elections showed that neither the NCNC nor its official candidate, Mr. Kiri, was indispensable. The other rival, Dr. Fiberesima, who contested the elections as an independent candidate, was elected in the place of Mr. Kiri and the NCNC party. To the average Okrika man, this result marked the collapse and unpopularity (or declining popularity) of all personalities, factions and political parties which identified themselves with the old political order represented by Kiri and the NCNC party. It was therefore a victory for the new order<sup>1</sup> and all those personalities and factions associated with it.

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Fiberesima chiefly represented the new order. It was a new order in the sense that the old NCNC brigade had been rejected at the polls.

In the 1964 Federal elections, the pattern of victory for Degema East Constituency (Okrika constituted about three-quarters of the population of Degema East) was similar to the results of the 1961 regional elections. There were two contestants. The first was Mr. J. Jamabo, an Ogoloma man from Okrika clan. Mr. Jamabo was fortunate that Ogoloma was not directly involved in the sectional conflicts of the Okrika Amanyano politics. Mr. Jamabo was (and is) a pharmacist by profession, and a one time chairman of the Okrika County Council. At that time he was comparatively new to the main Okrika political scene. He was also new to regional politics.

The other contestant was Chief Harold Dappa Biriye,<sup>1</sup> a Bonny man and leader of the minority based political party, the Niger Delta Congress. That party is the oldest political party in the present Rivers State and it has been in the forefront of the campaign for the creation of states for the Eastern Nigeria minority ethnic groups. Chief Biriye's participation and involvement in the Nigerian political scene dates back to the early 1940's. He is popularly acclaimed as one of the most talented - and in fact the most distinguished - politicians of Rivers State origin.

In the 1964 Federal Election, it was Mr. Jamabo who won. Chief Biriye, despite his political experience and maturity, lost.

Since these new political victories were recorded at Okrika, certain questions have been asked and discussed at Okrika. Both the elite and the fishermen have participated in the debate. Why and how did Dr. Fiberesima, and Mr. Jamabo, who were less politically experienced, win the elections? Why and how did their rivals lose? Was anything surprising or unique about their victories? Who were their supporters and followers in the match to victory?

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<sup>1</sup>Chief Biriye's political profile will be discussed at length in the next Chapter.

Several explanations<sup>1</sup> and answers appear tenable. First of all, there was a general complaint (particularly among the Tuboniju people) that Mr. Kiri had been too long in parliament, without achieving anything very significant for his people. If a politician or M.P. secured no material benefits for his people, it was (and is) usual for Okrika people to refer to such a candidate as a 'good for nothing' politician. Such were 'political scraps'. The most important needs of Okrika at that time were a General Hospital and a Girls' College. Mr. Kiri had not been able to influence his NCNC government to site such projects at Okrika. This led to conclusions that Mr. Kiri had achieved nothing for Okrika in his political career. Mr. Kiri's 'nil returns' as a politician were also associated with, and interpreted as, the unpreparedness of his NCNC party to cater for the political and economic interests of Okrika. The general accusation<sup>2</sup> was that the NCNC, which drew the bulk of its support<sup>3</sup> and members from the Ibo-speaking people, was much more interested in, and concerned with, the economic development of the hinterland Ibo communities; therefore, the NCNC was bound to treat their minority neighbours as stranger communities. As stranger communities, they were bound to receive less government benefits than the Ibo communities.

In such circumstances it was not surprising that the people rejected the NCNC and its candidate. Mr. Kiri was the victim of anti-NCNC sentiment at that time. Therefore any candidate, other than an NCNC sponsored, was to be preferred.

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<sup>1</sup>A pre and post election observation. These explanations are particularly tenable in Tuboniju quarters.

<sup>2</sup>a) Chief Rowland, an influential NDC member.

Personal communication. August 1973.

b) Interview with fishermen at the Okrika Market Square. August 1973.

<sup>3</sup>Chief Biriye's views on this will follow in the next chapter.

It is necessary at this stage to digress a little to deal with the case of Mr. Jamabo. Whereas this explanation of the Okrika 'Kiri - NCNC' rejection may hold good for Dr. Fiberesima's victory in the Regional elections, it is striking that Mr. Jamabo, the NCNC candidate in the 1964 Federal elections was preferred to chief Biriye. Four factors account for this change of political attitude on the part of the Okrikans.

The first was that in Eastern Nigeria, local people usually preferred, (and voted for) native candidates rather than 'stranger contestants' (people from outside the particular community) because it is believed that native politicians are more likely to bring greater government benefits to their people. Inherent in this is the assumption that the loyalty or attachment of a native politician to his people is stronger than that of the stranger contestant - that is, an M.P. would be communalistic as already discussed in Chapter 1. Of the two contestants, Chief Biriye of Bonny, was the stranger contestant; while Jamabo, though an NCNC candidate, was an Okrika man. He was therefore most likely to have a greater political following among his people. Secondly, at that time, there was speculation about the prospects of an NCNC/NPC coalition at the federal level. It was hoped that, if that coalition materialised (and luckily it did), an Okrika politician - who would be a partner in the coalition - could represent Okrika's interests in the central government. Okrika would, thus, be placed on Nigeria's political map in keeping with the ambitions of all local communities which desired to have ambassadors at the federal level. In terms of political profiteering, it was therefore senseless for Okrika to vote for a candidate who suffered two disadvantages: his stranger nationality and the fact that he would not be an influential partner in the main coalition government in Lagos. Thirdly, Mr. Jamabo was much liked by Okrika people because of their impression that when he was the Chairman of the Okrika County Council, he worked tirelessly in the interest of Okrika. It was assumed that as a federal politician he would also work relentlessly

and do 'good things' for his people. Above all, he was acceptable<sup>1</sup> to the Okrika Clan Council of chiefs, as Okrika's only candidate. The chiefs therefore appealed to their houses to support Jamabo's candidature.

Fourthly, Mr. Jamabo, an Ogoloma (a minority and neutral group in Okrika's Amanyanabo politics) was believed not to have taken sides with any of the two factions in the Amanyanabo disputes. In fact Jamabo was preferred to any other candidate from either of the two factions whose political neutrality would have been doubted. These considerations about Jamabo's minority status, and political neutrality made him acceptable to the majority of Okrika people. Hence Jamabo was triumphant when Koniju-Tuboniju political tensions were high because he was the stabiliser. It was also assumed by the people that in his political career, neither Koniju nor Tuboniju interest was to be neglected as would have been feared if any candidate from either of the factions was elected.

In these circumstances, if the interest of either faction was seen to be neglected, it was most likely to be pardoned, as it would probably be interpreted as inadvertent. Things worked well for Okrika. Mr. Jamabo was appointed a junior minister in the 1964 NPC/NCNC coalition government. However, Mr. Jamabo did not stay long in ministerial office, because of the 1966 military coup, to confirm or repudiate his people's impressions and expectations.

I shall now come back to the main issue of the Kiri/Fiberesima political tussles. Of the warring factions at Okrika, the Tubonijus were in the majority. In terms of population, they constituted about one-third of the clan population,<sup>2</sup> outnumbering their Koniju counterparts whose population was about two-thirds

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<sup>1</sup>Chief Uwakwe Ogan, ex-Amanyanabo of Okrika.  
Personal Papers.

<sup>2</sup>Based on the 1963 Nigerian Census figures.



of the Tubonijus. This gave rise to a new awareness that a candidate from the smaller Koniju group should not represent Okrika in the regional parliaments. The question was: how could the minority represent the majority,<sup>a</sup> majority who were also the ruling section. These two considerations: their numerical superiority and royal status: therefore conferred on one section the right to political representation. If the Koniju minority ruled or their candidate was chosen, this was regarded as a disgrace and insult to the Tubonijus who also thought of themselves as more enlightened<sup>1</sup> and educated than their rivals.

It could be concluded from the foregoing analysis that the Amanyanabo disputes and the K & T<sup>2</sup> rivalries/jealousies of the 1960's were making an impact on parliamentary representation at Okrika. It is evident that Mr. Kiri's continued stay in parliament could therefore be interpreted by the Tubonijus as disturbing the political balance at Okrika, in fact a balance which the Tubonijus had for some time seen as being in favour of the Konijus because Kiri was a Koniju.

However, Dr. Fiberesima who was Kiri's rival had some other advantages over Kiri. These were advantages which were not directly connected with the K & T factional rivalries. Dr. Fiberesima was Okrika's first medical practitioner; during his practice as a doctor his name had become common and popular in many households. In a rural community where it was (and is) a rare achievement to qualify as a doctor, he had attained an almost impossible feat. His case was also unique because he had graduated at about the age of forty five, an age when many rural people would not have ventured into academic life. Having graduated at a late age, it also meant to the people that

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<sup>1</sup>See later analysis of the conflicts/jealousies within the elite 'class'.

<sup>2</sup>From henceforth 'K & T' will be used to refer to the Konijus (K) and Tubonijus (T). This has come into recent political usage at Okrika.

he was a man of exceptional<sup>1</sup> talents. To the local man, he was the 'healer' believed to be capable of healing or diagnosing every illness. Therefore what he had been reputed for as a medical practitioner could also be credited to him as a politician. Some of the Konijus and other political opponents were swayed by these exceptional considerations which helped to pave the way for his political success.

The third most important factor has already been scantily dealt with in reference to other discussions. This is the overwhelming support which the Tubonijus gave to Dr. Fiberesima, their son. The Tubonijus also formed the nucleus of Fiberesima's campaign team. This version is strongly believed by the Konijus; the Tubonijus do not deny it either. Whereas the Konijus interpret this as Tuboniju parochialism, the Tuboniju see it as patriotism. In this sense, what is a patriotic act to a Tuboniju is parochial to the Koniju (and vice versa). Here lies the conflicting political values of the K & T.

Considering the political situation in Okrika at that time, the interpretation that Fiberesima's victory was mainly due to Tuboniju support is difficult to reject. The Amanyanabo issue had divided Okrika sharply along the K & T axis. Local people thought and spoke along factional lines. At the Okrika Market Square, people from the two factions occupied different sections whereas in the past all local traders had transacted business together and at the same place. But from the 1960's market women organised themselves into factional camps and occupied different sections of the market. With the intensification of factional politics the Iria ceremony (a traditional ceremony which girls must go through on reaching puberty and adulthood before marriage) which was also formerly organised on Okrika group basis was conducted along the same factional lines.

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<sup>1</sup>Kiri, his opponent, also respects Dr. Fiberesima for his exceptional achievement in qualifying as a doctor at such an age. Kiri made this clear when Okrika students met him in 1972 for a discussion on peace efforts at Okrika.

Besides, there emerged different welfare and improvement unions for the two factions, each charged with the political and economic development of its faction. Many prominent Okrika citizens, such as the Amanyanabo of Okrika, His Highness, Chief U. Ogan, Dr. Fiberesima and Kalada Kiri were members of their different factional unions. Young men were encouraged to join these Unions. Sectional identification became the politics of the day.

It was also observed that prominent NCNC supporters such as the Amanyanabo of Okrika, preferred Dr. Fiberesima to the NCNC official candidate, Kiri. It could be argued, from these instances, that when political party supporters reject their party's official candidate, the reason for their rejection of such candidates must be traced to fundamental issues - such as stronger attachment or loyalty to an ethnic group, town or any section thereof.

Hence one may also argue that if it was possible for people to riot and destroy themselves (such things as mark the climax of local conflict) because of the Amanyanabo issue, several other things could be done by such people in support of their political candidates, especially when the political and economic development of their different factions was linked with the political fortunes of the different politicians and ~~MPs~~.

Finally, the records of chief U. Ogan, ex-Amanyanabo of Okrika, some of which are quoted below, help to confirm these impressions of Tuboniju support for Dr. Fiberesima.

(i) Despite your (referring to Dr. Fiberesima) overthrow by Mr. Kalada Kiri on the NCNC nomination table, yet I was vocal in assuring you of success at the polls against Mr. Kiri who was the darling of the NCNC.

(ii) I (chief U. Ogan) and other Tuboniju notables, including you, entered into an agreement with our political colleagues of ..... that we the Tubonijus will recognise the identity of the minority sections named above and shall from time to time allow them due chances to top political scene in the Okrika clan and outside .....

(iii) I (chief Ogan) bluntly told chief Akomas, Deputy Mayor of Port Harcourt - and also Divisional Chairman of the NCNC in Port Harcourt - that my people and I were bent on throwing out Mr. Kiri for his ignoble role in the Amanyabo dispute, against the Royal family.

#### THE ELITE AND PATRONS

There is another major issue which has deepened the differences among Okrika people. This is the issue of elite patronage. The Okrika concept of the elite refers to the highly educated people (mostly university graduates and others who have obtained the equivalent of a college or university diploma) who have distinguished themselves in politics, the civil service or private business. These are the men who can entertain visitors on a lavish scale with a large quantity of beer, whisky and other drinks. They are the people who are expected to donate generously when local development schemes are launched. They are also identified by their high standards of living and by their flowing 'jumpa' and 'dona', the local dresses which the affluent possess.

#### 1. ELITE

Chief U. Ogan's Personal Papers entitled "A Chronicle of Retrospection into our (chief U. Ogan and Dr. Fiberesima) Relationship." Dated 18th July 1973. It may be recalled that after the civil war in 1970, the relationship between the ex-Amanyabo and Dr. Fiberesima was strained because of allegations that Chief Ogan was on the Biafran side during the civil war, while Dr. Fiberesima was on the federal Nigerian side. Chief Ogan was dethroned as Amanyabo because of these allegations and Chief Ogan believed that Dr. Fiberesima whom he had once helped to political victory was instrumental to his (Ogan) dethronement. The portions just quoted are part of an epistle written by chief Ogan to Dr. Fiberesima in recollections of the past. Copies of these were distributed to some eminent Okrika men.

The common saying is that the majority of Okrika patrons and elite are Tuboniju. Their proliferation is traced back to the early settlement patterns and occupational categories at Okrika. The Tubonijus were in ancient times the trader folk, while the Konijus were the fisher folk. At the time of the Delta trade in palm oil and slaves, the trader folks were believed<sup>1</sup> to have made more money than their fishermen counterparts, because, compared with fishing, the palm oil trade was a more prosperous one. It is not disputed that the economic and social history of the Okrika fisherman has been that of abject poverty and inferior social status. Hence over the several decades, the trader folk became wealthier and more aristocratic in their life styles. Subsequently, their children and descendants were afforded greater economic and educational opportunities. Politically too, though chieftaincy disputes have disturbed Okrika in recent times, the Tubonijus claim that from time immemorial, the Amanyanabo and Royal families hailed from their section. Therefore the Tubonijus claim to be politically superior to the Konijus - despite the fact that the politically sensitive Konijus contest these Tuboniju claims.

These claims of inequality or superiority in the K & T relationships are based on three premises: the political, economic and social. They are the claims which have inflamed the existing tension regarding chieftaincy, yet the Tubonijus repeatedly make such claims to irritate the Konijus.

The historical argument about the origin and bases of inequality are not generally convincing to the majority of Okrika people because no very reliable or extensive data are available to support them though there is no dispute about the occupational classifications of the K & T. That the average Okrika trader is richer than the average fisherman is also not contested.

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Chief W.W. Nyenengiye 'Occupational Divisions in Okrika Clan'. (Lecture delivered to members of the Okrika Students Union in December 1965). The chief who supports these claims is a well known local historian whose views are highly respected. Until his death in 1974, he was the chairman of a local committee responsible for translating the English bible into the Okrika dialect.

Rather it is the historical linkage between occupational patterns on sectional lines and the present-day proliferation of the elite and patrons that is the subject of controversy at Okrika. Yet these do not invalidate the original argument and assertion that the majority of the elite and patrons are Tubonijus. Both factions admit this.<sup>1</sup>

In Okrika politics, the fear which is expressed by both the K's and T's is that the patrons will always use their political and public service positions and influence to the advantage of their people. It is also significant that in recent times, it is the faction (K or T) which constitutes a people, not the town. Tubonijus and Konijus are therefore 'different people'; Okrika island, in this sense, consists of these two political divisions which exist in the minds of its citizens. These arguments are also strengthened by the fears and suspicions of each faction. Okrika people express the fear that the factional interests of the patrons will be supreme. These fears are associated with the bitter Amanyanabo disputes which have divided the town into the two political blocs.

#### THE PAROCIAL PATRONS AND ELITE

There are two main factors which account for the manner in which fears about factional elite domination are expressed. The first is the numerical strength of the elite from the Tuboniju side. Of the nine people referred to in the table, six are of Tuboniju stock. To the Konijus, this in effect suggests that in any political or public service matter concerning them (the K) there are at least six people who will either kick against or refuse to protect their interests. This may result into Koniju victimisation. Tuboniju fears are the same. These fears are in consonance with Okrika local fables about the tortoise who never forgave his enemies; if anything, he always sought vengeance.

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<sup>1</sup>See Table overleaf for evidence.

TABLE 2

KONIJU AND TUBONIJU PATRONS AND ELITE(A) KONIJU

NAME	ACADEMIC OR PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION	OCCUPATION AND CAREER (Past & Present)	BASES OF EMINENCE
1. Mr. Kalada Kiri	B.Sc. (Econs)	MP, Eastern Nigeria. Senior Civil Servant, Rivers State.	The most distinguished Okrika politician before 1961.
2. Mr. S.N. Dikibo	B.L.	Legal Practitioner. Politician in the Biafran Regime - Administrator for Degema Division, 1967-69.	Okrika's first Lawyer and Biafran Politician. Liaison officer between Okrika and Enugu in the Biafran regime.
3. Mr. Wariboko Oruene		Former Nigeria Tobacco Company Executive. Rivers State Commissioner for Works and Housing.	Okrika's only Civil Commissioner in the Rivers State Cabinet (1973-present)
(B) <u>TUBONIJU</u>			
4. Dr. Chief I. Fiberesima.	MB.BS.	Medical Practitioner. MP, Eastern Nigeria. Former Chairman Rivers State Development Corporation.	Okrika's first Medical Practitioner. First Tuboniju MP. Leader of Thought, Rivers State Movement.
5. Mr. W.P. Daniel-Kalio	--	Civil Servant. Former Secretary to the Rivers State Military Government and Head of the Rivers State Civil Service.	The most senior and distinguished Civil Servant in the Rivers State (1970). Son of Chief Dan-Kalio, late Paramount Chief of Okrika.
6. Dr. W.T. Wakama.	Ph.D., B.Sc.	Former senior civil servant. Former Civil Commissioner. At present Principal Lecturer at the College of Science & Technology Port Harcourt. (1973-present)	One of Okrika's most highly educated men. First Okrika Commissioner in Rivers State Cabinet before his resignation in 1973.

NAME	ACADEMIC OR PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION	OCCUPATION AND CAREER (Past & Present)	BASES OF EMINENCE
7. Mr. F. Ateli (an Ogoloma but associated with the Tubonijus)	B.A.	Permanent Secretary	The only Okrika Permanent Secretary
8. Mr. L.A. Iyagba	B.A., LL.B., B.L.	Legal Practitioner. At present Rivers State Director of Public Prosecution.	Okrika's most distinguished lawyer in the Civil Service. Chairman, Rivers State Government Lottery Commission.
9. Mr. J.A. Jamabo (an Ogoloma, but in Okrika politics of today, he is associated with the Tubonijus. He has many Tuboniju friends).	Dip. Pharmacy.	Former Chairman Okrika County Council. A Pharmacist, MP, Federal House of Representatives.	Respected as one time local politician. Okrika's first Federal MP.

NOTE

- (a) On the column 'Academic or Professional Qualification' only university degrees and equivalent diplomas are recorded. A dash (i.e. --) indicates qualifications lower than a degree or Diploma.
- (b) The table is not a very comprehensive one. It is drawn for purposes of a sketchy illustration only; and only those whose careers and occupations have a direct bearing on politics and the public service have been included. This is in accordance with some of the submissions in Chapter 3 which testify that influence and position in state politics and in the public service are of primary importance in these communities. Outside these, there are several persons (mostly from the Tuboniju faction) who are successful and well known as business executives. Such names are not included in the table.
- (c) I use the term elite to refer to a category of persons - not to mean that they act together all the time.



The average Okrika elite is in local understanding like the tortoise. In everyday understanding, what this implies is that the pattern of local disputes and the K & T misunderstanding in Okrika will always be implanted in the public service where these elite are both officers and officials. Each faction will therefore seek to destroy the other with all the available political and public service weapons.

The second is the local belief that some of these patrons and elite are more influential than others; and in political assessments the more influential ones, numbering four, are those of Tuboniju stock. In Okrika, the first in these ratings is Mr. W.P. Daniel-Kalio, son of a one time Paramount Chief who is both an aristocrat and at one time (1968-70) was the most senior and distinguished Civil Service executive in the Rivers State. His powers as Head of the Civil Service, and chief Civil Service Adviser to the Military Governor of the State, were almost unlimited. The Konijus believe that while in office he threw the weight of his official position to secure more amenities and positions for the Tubonijus. He is cited as having been instrumental in the appointment of Dr. Wakama as commissioner. The Konijus drew their inference from two related considerations. Dr. Wakama was a senior civil servant, an Under Secretary, when W.P. Daniel-Kalio was the Head of the Civil Service; both people became familiar and friendly at that time. When Dr. Wakama resigned as Under Secretary in 1969, he was almost immediately appointed Commissioner, which was taken to imply that he had been advised to resign his civil service appointment for a higher and more profitable political post. Since the two (Wakama and Kalio) were friends, Kalio was believed to have been the brain behind Wakama's new political appointment.

In the same way, Daniel Kalio and the Governor were also close associates, each working with, and consulting, the other in their official capacities. Normally, a Governor would consult his Head of Service in making cabinet and other political appointments. This is especially true in a military regime where the Governors are less familiar with local customs and personalities

and will therefore consult their aides who know more about these localities. It is therefore highly probable that the Governor sought Daniel Kalio's advice in this matter. Hence, in the opinion of the Konijus, Daniel Kalio was the man who influenced his Governor to appoint Wakama as Commissioner. They often argue that whatever were Wakama's merits, there were several other Konijus who could also have been appointed, if factional considerations were not primary at that time.

An important question arises at this point. Under what circumstances were these Koniju beliefs nurtured?

In 1970, both the Konijus and Tubonijus<sup>1</sup> petitioned the Governor about Okrika's representation in the Executive Council. Prior to that time, Okrika was not represented in the Executive Council. In their petition to the Governor, the Tuboniju chiefs nominated Dr. Wakama as a suitable representative for Okrika. The Tubonijus considered Dr. Wakama as the most eligible for the post of Commissioner because it was felt that Wakama was the most learned Okrika man at Port Harcourt - apparently because of Wakama's academic qualifications. Besides, it was felt that intellectually Dr. Wakama would compare favourably with other members of the Executive Council most of whom were highly educated people.<sup>2</sup> In a personal memorandum, Mr. Daniel Kalio also nominated<sup>3</sup> Dr. Wakama for the post.

In their petition, the Koniju<sup>4</sup> chiefs nominated ~~Evans~~ Papabo<sup>5</sup>. Why was Papabo nominated by his people? In their petition, the K's argued that Papabo

<sup>1</sup>Chief Ngeri Rowlands. Personal Papers. The petition was signed by ten prominent Tuboniju chiefs.

<sup>2</sup>For example, in the Executive Council, Dr. Graham Douglas (PhD), Dr. Ekpebu (PhD), and Dr. Obi Wali (PhD) represented the Kalabaris, the Northern Ijaws and the Ikwerres respectively.

<sup>3</sup>Ministerial papers entitled "Appointment of Commissioners: Internal Memoranda" (November 1969-February 1970) Produce House, Port Harcourt.

<sup>4</sup>Chief Oputibeya (Leader of the 'K' chiefs) Personal Papers. The petition was signed by eight prominent 'K' chiefs.

<sup>5</sup>He holds a B.A. degree. Papabo is his 'political name'.

was sociable, educated and intelligent. At that time, Papabo was a senior civil servant - a senior assistant secretary.

Dr. Wakama is a Tuboniju, while ~~he~~ Papabo is a Koniju. It was therefore clear that both the K's and T's nominated people from their own faction. But of the two nominees, Dr. Wakama was appointed Commissioner. The Konijus were therefore angry that their nominee was rejected. Mr. Daniel Kalio, it was said, was instrumental in the rejection of Papabo - apparently because Mr. Daniel Kalio took sides with the T's in nominating Dr. Wakama.

It is a known fact that commissioners are not expected to possess superior academic qualifications (such as a PhD degree as Dr. Wakama has) before they are eligible for such political appointments. It is, however, expected that commissioners should be literate persons. Therefore one could argue that both Dr. Wakama and Mr. Papabo possessed the basic qualifications for appointment - literacy. Besides, even if one of the prerequisites for appointment was political experience (for example, former parliamentarians and local councillors could claim to have had political experience) neither Dr. Wakama nor ~~he~~ Papabo had any advantage over the other because neither of the two men had had any previous career in politics. Both men were senior civil servants when they were nominated. In view of these facts, it was not surprising that the K's complained<sup>1</sup> about the rejection of their candidate - particularly because though both Dr. Wakama and ~~he~~ Papabo were considered suitable for the post, the former who is a Tuboniju (and a friend of Daniel Kalio) was appointed. It is against this background that one can understand how and why the K's expressed their feelings about Dr. Wakama's appointment.

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After the appointment of Dr. Wakama, the 'K' chiefs and youths petitioned the Governor's office to express their dissatisfaction. (MGO file - SM/TAB/Vol. II). In these petitions, Mr. Daniel Kalio was named as the enemy of the Konijus.

It is in the Executive Council that Commissioners decide on state policy matters as chief executives. As the observations in Chapters 3 and 4 show, commissioners and permanent secretaries are very powerful people, at least as the political and administrative bosses and as the highest officials. Dr. Wakama and the other 'T' patrons (notably Mr. Ateli, a Permanent Secretary, and Dr. Fiberesima, the former chairman of the Development Corporation) are therefore named and rated as superior patrons. In fact the appointments of Dr. Fiberesima and Mr. Ateli are also believed to have been influenced by Daniel-Kalio because both Daniel Kalio and the two men are Tubonijus. Hence these appointments have also excited Koniju fears of Tuboniju domination.

The Konijus further argue that these public service executives are capable of 'moving mountains'. In particular, the K's believe<sup>1</sup> that Dr. Wakama moved all the 'Rivers State mountains' to his Tuboniju side when he was Commissioner for Rural Development in the Governor's office. For example, the Konijus believed that in the location<sup>2</sup> of a government health centre at Wakama village and a market at Obuworima/Opuado in the 1972/73 financial year, Dr. Wakama, as Commissioner for Rural Development, influenced his government in these locations. Coincidentally, these projects are located in the Tuboniju quarters of Okrika. Though Dr. Wakama denied these Koniju allegations and described these projects as 'Okrika projects' (as against K & T), Koniju views about his use of influence are still strong.

However, very little is said about the appointments of Oruene and others of the Koniju group because the Konijus argue<sup>2</sup> that these constitute a minority

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The alleged communalism of Dr. Wakama is contained in a 'K' petition dated 10 July 1972, entitled 'We know our enemies' (MGP File - LOC/RDE/ Vol. II).

<sup>2</sup>The chief exponents of these views are Chief Oputibeya and ~~Mr.~~ Papabo. While on a peace mission, representatives of the Okrika Students Union called on these dignitaries in 1973 and 1974. In their meeting with the students, the dignitaries expressed these views - these views are recorded in the Okrika Students Union Minutes Book, 1970-74

of the appointments, and that these appointments were made either from considerations of exceptional merit or the appointees were only lucky. It is also speculated that the enemy (Tuboniju) might have influenced these few appointments on second thought in order to appease the angry Koniju.

Once more one may argue that it is difficult to see anything unusual about promotions or appointments to senior political civil service posts. In every society, certain people must occupy such positions if and when vacancies occur. The same applies to the Rivers State; yet the fact is that because the Rivers State is a very status conscious society, the people place high premium on promotions and senior political appointments. The people also love the appurtenances of office. Besides, high political or civil service status is closely associated with power and influence. The patron is also regarded by others, who may not benefit from his office, as self-seeking, parochial, selfish and vindictive. Furthermore, the political boundaries between rural communities and Port Harcourt are very thin; activities and influences in one influence the other. It is this aspect of rural-urban politics that makes the local man vulnerable to Port Harcourt politics, especially when the major participants in Port Harcourt administration and politics are the local vindictive patrons and elite.

Similarly almost every political or civil service appointment is a subject of local gossip. Interpretations are often made that nominations or promotions to senior positions in Port Harcourt are seriously influenced by some political "god-fathers", and that those without "god-fathers" can never or rarely be so lucky as to benefit from such appointments. In local gossip, names must always be associated with certain appointments. No evidence may be required to give credibility to a tale or story. To a large extent, the personality and the status of the informant determine the credibility of the tale or story. For example, if the informant is a well known chief or a senior government official, many people are likely to believe him. The informants in this trade start their stories by asking and answering such question

in the usual question tone: Have you heard that Gogo is now a Commissioner? Do you know that Daniel-Kalio is instrumental in this latest appointment? Do you know that Daniel-Kalio likes his people? In this way, rumours and tales spread fast.

At Okrika, it could hardly be imagined or argued that people can ever be appointed to senior posts, or projects allocated to villages or quarters, on merit or that sectional inclinations do not influence appointments or project allocations. There must always be vested interests. After all, local political battles at Okrika are waged in terms of sectional interests and those with a higher and stronger bargaining power will always make the best and highest bargains for themselves.

#### POLITICAL INTERESTS AND LOCAL INEQUALITIES

There have been several kinds of disputes and rivalries at Okrika. The discussions in this chapter have made this clear: the Amanyambo disputes and riots; the election rivalries; and the local beliefs about the vindictiveness and parochialism of their patrons and elite. It will be seen that there are other matters concerning social, political and economic inequalities which have helped to create further tension in the climate of political unrest at Okrika. It is necessary at this stage to examine these inequalities.

It is clear that those directly concerned with the Amanyambo disputes are the two rival Ado and Oputibeya families; and even within each of these families - especially the Ado - there are recognised royal lineages (normally of the free born line) whence vacancies to the throne may be filled. These groups and lineages constitute less than one-twentieth of the population of either the Koniju or Tuboniju section. When both K & T factions go to war, it is difficult to find an explanation or justification solely in terms of the cohesiveness of each faction - as if it were a 'united nation' at war. Neither will a faction fight the other simply because it wants an Amanyambo. Privileges, economic rewards, honour and high social status accruing from the office of Amanyambo are rarely enjoyed or shared by a whole faction which is

a large collectivity of people. Principally, these direct and indirect benefits of office are enjoyed by the immediate relations and family of the incumbent. In a discussion on the Amanyanabo disputes and riots, a group of Okrika fishermen made this point clear when they said; 'don't think (referring to me) we are fools when we fight each other, on factional lines, over the Amanyanabo stool. We know that an Amanyanabo will do nothing for us if we are not his brothers. We fight against imbalance (K & T), inequality and injustice'.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore inevitable to conclude that the Amanyanabo disputes, riots and the divisive tendencies which they have created in Okrika have far greater dimensions than can ordinarily be noticed.

The political conflicts at Okrika take slightly different dimensions at different times, depending on the immediate issues which generate them. In times of chieftaincy disputes and riots, when lives and property are destroyed, the major impelling factor is that each faction feels threatened or dominated by the other. This feeling or fear is greater on the side of the minority. Konijus, although the Tubonijus also entertain similar fears. The Koniju men believe<sup>2</sup> that if the Tubonijus are recognised as the ruling section, they (the K's) will remain economically and politically suppressed, since the ruling section will perpetuate itself by appointing their supporters (who are their kith and kin) only to strategic positions in the locality and in Port Harcourt. The other attendant fear<sup>2</sup> is that more jobs will be given to their loyalists and supporters; these same conditions will apply in the allocation of development projects/amenities and other state benefits for the people, and that this will widen the already existing factional economic and political inequalities. Each faction is therefore suspicious of the other.

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<sup>1</sup>Discussion with Okrika fishermen at Borokiri, Port Harcourt, September 26th 1974 (Translated into English from the vernacular version).

<sup>2</sup> Okrika Students Union, Minutes Book. 1970-74.

The appointments of Dr. Wakama, Dr. Chief Fiberesima and Mr. Ateli which have provoked considerable local gossip have this frame of reference.

The Ado and Oputibeya houses in the T & K factions respectively are very influential and highly respected families because each faction regards each of these families as the ruling family. Both families have links with the dignitaries - patrons and elite - from their own factions. For example, though neither Dr. Chief Fiberesima nor Kalada Kiri is of Ado or Oputibeya family/origin, each of these personalities is closely associated with the ruling family in his faction. Family meetings in which matters of succession to the throne and election strategies are discussed, are attended by these dignitaries who act as political advisers. Besides, many local chiefs and elders trace descent from these ruling houses in order to establish their claims of higher status in comparison with their counterparts of no royal descent or association.

Two main categories of 'status-seekers' may therefore be identified at Okrika: the politician and the elite on one hand and the chiefs and elders on the other hand. It is this connection between ruling houses and influential politicians and other dignitaries which is also largely responsible for some degree of factional homogeneity in the disputes because these dignitaries have a large following in their different factions. The loyalty and service of these followers could be of immense benefit and advantage to the politicians/dignitaries in times of local rivalries and disputes.

There is also another sensitive aspect of the political disputes which helps to deepen the conflict between K & T. This is the notion of 'privileged' and the 'underprivileged'; in clearer terms it refers to a relationship between 'husband and wife'. The Tubonijus think of themselves as the developed group, and by implication they are the Okrika husbands, because the former Eastern Nigeria government gave the right of Amanyanabo to the Ados of the 'T' stock. The 'T' dignitaries are the most vociferous in making these claims, not necessarily because they really have much respect for chieftaincy



( if anything, their respect for it has declined in recent times) but because they regard this as an argument on the higher social distinction of their group (the dignitaries) as compared with their 'K' counterparts. Also this is rather used as a machinery for playing on the intelligence of their rural folks who understand and see most claims of superiority along the K & T division. The victor is superior to the vanquished; and in this text the victor is the T man who is the 'husband' and the vanquished is the K man who is the 'wife' - a wife who must always lose in any fight with the man while the husband remains supreme. That is their (K & T) relationship in Okrika's politics and disputes. Koniju argument,<sup>1</sup> based on the above, is that the basis for unity at Okrika is not there; or it is very badly shaken as long as they (the K's) remain, and are treated as, politically underprivileged.

By implication, the Koniju version of these inequalities makes a demand: that the existing political inequality will obviously encourage further economic inequality between K & T. The assumption, as I have stated, is that the politically privileged - either as a group/faction or as individuals - will advance both the political and economic interests of their kinsmen and faction. They therefore demand an end to these inequalities, an end which the T's will obviously not accept because they also believe that a Koniju hegemony will produce no better, and perhaps worse, results for Okrika.

Four major conclusions may now be drawn from these factional claims, assertions and arguments. Arguments about group/factional superiority are always controversial in nature, though in local, national and international contexts, these are a familiar arguments and claims. Therefore the K & T factional claims along this line are by no means new; not even within the Rivers State or the Okrika community.

These claims are not new, yet in communities which are 'politically explosive'<sup>2</sup>, people are generally particularly sensitive to any kind of argument

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<sup>1</sup>Okrika Students Union Minutes Book. op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>By the nature of their riotous political history and their degree of political super-sensitivity.

which affects their interests. Arguments need not have a political base before they assume political dimensions since politics is one of the few effective weapons the local politician who needs support can mobilise against the opponents and rivals. In such communities, politics is also one of the surest means of inciting one group/faction against the other. Arguments about factional superiority are therefore best understood in local idioms.

Secondly, for their part, the Okrika dignitaries understand the mentality of the local people. The average Okrika fisherman is very emotional; he is also very readily provoked. He can therefore be easily incited either to fight or give support to his dignitaries. The Okrika dignitaries do not fight among themselves as it is considered undignified to do so, but the fishermen who believe in, and support, the dignitaries can fight for, and on behalf of, them. The role of the local dignitaries is to incite the fishermen, and provide money for the purchase of local arms and ammunition.

These characteristics of the fishermen have earned for the Okrika people that notorious appellation 'Warriors'. Viewed along this perspective, there are mainly three levels at which local political battles are fought.

(i) The illiterates (from both K & T) the majority of whom are fishermen and market women - the level at which the issues in local politics are not very clearly understood (except in terms of violence) and the reactions are largely based on emotionalism.

(ii) The dignitaries who could be described as the men who instigate the riots and disputes.

(iii) The people. This is the level at which the forces generated at the first two levels meet and the political situation is so tense that outside parties<sup>1</sup> are invited to take sides with one of the main warring or disputing factions. It is the level at which the appellation 'warrior' is an apt description of the Okrika man.

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<sup>1</sup>People who are neither of K nor T stock; for example, citizens from the neighbouring villages and towns like Ogoloma, Ogbogbo, Ibaka, etc.

Thirdly, the main factor which aggravates these political conflicts is the question of interests. Both fishermen, market women and dignitaries are interested parties. While the main interests of the fishermen and market women are the benefit they can procure from the Okrika dignitary, the interests of the dignitaries are focussed on the acquisition of higher social status and prestige. The rural people whose support and following they cherish, are the instruments by which they achieve these. It is because there are several interested parties that there is some factional homogeneity in the disputes and rivalries.

Fourthly, in a status-conscious local community where there are many 'status-seekers' even though the opportunities for social distinction are few, there are bound to be several claimants to prominent local chieftaincy titles or connections with them. Hence in the absence of acceptable claims based on achieved status, an ascribed status is important, and in fact the latter (ascribed status) may often be used as a greater political bargaining weapon in the locality.

Furthermore, within the locality, an ascribed status<sup>1</sup> is highly rated because the people recognise<sup>2</sup> that the incumbents of chieftaincy offices are

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<sup>1</sup> The importance of ascribed status has parallels in other parts of Nigeria and Africa. For example, in discussing the different patterns of authority in the traditional Yoruba political system, P.C. Lloyd ("The Traditional Political System of the Yoruba" in R. Cohen and J. Middleton, eds., Comparative Political Systems. New York. 1967. pp. 269-292) observes that "the most important component parts of the political structure are the descent groups, with their own internal structure and organisation, the various forms of age grade ... with or without an associated grade of chiefs ... the title societies ..., the Council of chiefs ... and Kingship." Lloyd further observes that the Yoruba King (Oba) was more than a King; he was a divine King and the personification of the whole town. Realising the importance of ascribed status in West African Societies, Paula Brown ("Patterns of Authority in West Africa" Africa 21, 1951, pp. 261-78) also discusses the governmental role of age grades, titled societies and chiefs councils in Yorubaland, Ashanti and Dahomey.

super ordinate<sup>1</sup> authorities. After all every society must have some systematic allocation of power and authority to make final political and administrative decisions. It is this political relationship between the people and the traditional authorities that reinforces the importance of ascribed status - similar situations exist in other African Societies.<sup>2</sup>

RECENT POLITICAL INFLUENCE/IMPACT ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

The Amanyanabo disputes, the divisions at Okrika along T & K lines, and the other political rivalries have generated much bitterness in the minds of the Okrika people. As I have argued before, people are forced by these political disputes to think and act along 'factional lines'. Within these premises it is inevitable for one to conclude that people's loyalties will be built along the different political axes at Okrika: the factional division; and loyalty to, and support for, different politicians and chiefs. It is only in exceptional circumstances that people's loyalties cut across these lines. It is therefore necessary to discuss this divisiveness and its impact on Okrika local development schemes. Can a politically divided people work together for their county or clan?

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<sup>1</sup>E.E. Evans-Pritchard's and M. Fortes's, (African Political Systems. London, 1940.) classification of African societies into two types of governmental systems makes for interesting reading - even though these classifications have either been modified or rejected by other scholars, such as P.C. Lloyd. Pritchard and Fortes argue that in one type there are superordinate (centralised) authorities in which power corresponds with wealth and status (such as the kingdoms of the Southern Bantu). According to them, in the second type, exemplified by the Nuer and Tallensi, there is no government because there is no centralised authority; besides, in the society there are no sharp distinctions in rank, status or wealth. It will, however, be observed that in this chapter the governmental system discussed fits more into Pritchard's and Fortes's former typology.

<sup>2</sup>Paula Brown. op. cit.

Before the political tension in Okrika assumed so great a significance, the Okrika people worked together as one people. The evidence in support of this claim, which is often given by Okrika people, cites previous instances in which there was 'group solidarity' in the execution of local development projects. St. Peter's Anglican Church, Okrika, Okrika Grammar School and the Okrika Joint Hospital - just to name a few - were community projects. These projects have become Okrika's source of pride and achievement. Visitors to the island are usually shown these projects or told about them to demonstrate that the Okrika people were once a united people.

The projects cited above now belong to history. Either at the local or state level, there are no arguments to refute Okrika's claim about these past achievements. So present day debates and arguments are therefore focussed on Okrika's achievements since 1958 when the politics of disunity and destruction ~~were~~ vigorously introduced.

Since local planning Committees were introduced in the Rivers State (see Chapter 4) the Okrika county committee has never functioned. In the words of the Divisional Officer for Okrika, 'people are rather more interested in improving their individual families'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Okrika people have become more interested in building their own houses - more emphasis is laid on 'cement houses' as against thatch houses - and sending more of their children to school. At the group level, people are also more interested in contributing money for the smallest quarter/village projects (the level at which the group political differences are minimised) where the pace and symbols of development have greater significance to the rural people. In this sense, the need for development at the larger community level has been 'de-emphasised' while greater priority is given to individual and small group development. These perhaps indicate that Okrika's new belief is that the sum total of individual and small group development efforts is synonymous with the development

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<sup>1</sup>Mr. Deko, Divisional Officer. Interview at the Divisional Office, Okrika, 2nd August 1973.

of the larger Okrika community since the parts (the individuals and the smaller groups) make up the whole (the Okrika clan).

Several factors are responsible for this new spirit of individual and separate development. The primary factor is the people's identification along the K & T axis, with the attendant divisive tendency which it generates.

Chieftaincy disputes and other political rivalries are indeed of primary importance in the new political history of Okrika. Two important questions which most Okrika people ask when the idea of embarking on Okrika community projects is mentioned are:

- (i) Whom (which faction, quarter or group) will this benefit?
- (ii) Where (K or T) will it be sited?

The significance of these two questions can be seen in one, among several others, recent development effort. In 1972, some non-politically partisan Okrika citizens (the 'Ibisiki' group) suggested a rural electrification project for Okrika. All factions and groups in Okrika agreed that it was a good and worthwhile project, a project which if implemented would displace the use of 'bush lamps' and lanterns on the island.

A chairman and a committee charged with the execution of this project were appointed. Money was to be contributed so that work would begin. But the major argument which most of the citizens put across to the committee was that while in principle the project was a necessary and useful one, it was certain that most of the beneficiaries of the scheme would be the local dignitaries and elite ('elite' used in this context to refer to all who are highly educated). The logic behind this was that these (the elite) were (and are) the people who own most of the modern houses where electricity would be needed. The majority of these probable beneficiaries were also identified as the Tubonijus where a higher proportion of Okrika's big men belong. It was therefore further argued that if implemented, the electricity project would be a Tuboniju (rather than an Okrika) project. In those circumstances, the committee was unable to persuade the citizens to continue

with the project. The project was abandoned.

There are also other factors which account for the recent divisiveness, and its impact on local development, in Okrika. The chieftaincy disputes and other shades of political rivalries are of recent creation. Hence in the past the sermons on group solidarity and unity advocated by age groups, the elite and other local dignitaries had a stronger appeal to Okrika people. Many Okrika people were also resident on the Okrika island, and so local development schemes could benefit all residents. But at present about half of Okrika's population live in villages and quarters outside the Okrika island. Local development which embraces all citizens of the Okrika clan has therefore a weaker appeal to the local people because each village, quarter, or faction has its own problems of development — problems which the Okrika island cannot cope with alone. Consequently, sectional and village loyalties, loyalties which supersede that to the Okrika clan, have developed; each living in some isolation as is typical of island dwellers who are politically divided.

The chieftaincy politics of the Okrika town has also divided the different quarters and villages; and even those who were politically neutral in the past are compelled to take sides with either of the two Okrika town factions. This situation has arisen because these factions are regarded as Okrika's super powers who have to act as 'god-fathers' of quarters and villages which are their political allies. Therefore, Okrika's divisive politics and the recent growth in quarter/village patterns of residence have compelled each village or quarter to think of itself as a 'development area' while sharing sympathies with one of Okrika's chieftaincy factions. Limited development schemes such as building of small bridges and footpaths are therefore executed on village/quarter basis; and in fact since 1960 no central Okrika community project has been embarked on (except the proposed Okrika Girls School<sup>1</sup> by Setari Age group).

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 3. There is a stalemate in the execution of the project.

One is therefore inclined to argue that apart from political heterogeneity, the main theme of Okrika politics, which has inhibited Okrika county community projects, the new sectional or village solidarities which have displaced the larger group loyalties have stimulated the execution of smaller group development schemes. It is true however that this same factor has also led to separate planning and development at the county council level. No village/quarter or faction wants to be led by the other, each determines for itself what it considers good. Hence to some extent the notion of priorities on development, has become contextual in Okrika.

While there are group or factional rivalries in Okrika, there is also some rivalry in leadership among Okrikas politicians and local dignitaries. They have produced two main types of rivalries: 'factional' and 'personal', and these two types of rivalries have resulted in the absence of a leader generally acceptable to, and respected by, all Okrika people. The influence of the different leaders are therefore confined to their factions. Kalada Kiri and Honourable Commissioner Crucene are as much Koniju leaders as Dr. Fiberesima and Daniel Kalio are to the Fubonijus. Besides, no one leader, even within the same faction, considers himself inferior to the other. Each leader has his own title conferred on him either by his people to credit him for his 'good works' or 'popularity' or it is a chieftaincy or political title of distinction. Among these different 'men of titles' (for example, chiefs, doctors, and the Honourables)<sup>1</sup> no one regards the other title holder as a superior. Honourable Commissioner Crucene is as important as Mr. Kiri because local people are often reminded of the past glories of their politicians. The former politicians still live in, and on, their past.

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<sup>1</sup>An address for commissioners, chairmen of Corporations and others who specifically demand that they be addressed as such.



Within the Tuboniju camp, Pikibo Kalio whose claim to distinction is his aristocratic birth (as son of a late paramount chief) and his former status as Head of the Rivers State Civil Service, is as important as Dr. Chief Fiberesima. All titles are regarded as emblems of distinction. Therefore in their own eyes, all are leaders, while no one is a leader<sup>1</sup> of the other. Okrika is in this sense, a community of several leaders without a leader in any local development project. This is part of the price Okrika people pay for their status consciousness and the premium placed on titles. Furthermore, this is a situation which the political conflicts and the degree of political sensitivity in Okrika have helped to foster because each faction, in order to frustrate any attempt by the other to dominate, prefers to deal exclusively with its own leaders. Yet within each camp, some degree of absolute power and prestige enjoyed by each leader inclines each of them to become an independent lord, a lord who sees himself superior to others; and if not superior, considers himself not inferior to any other. This situation is best summarised by the questions: who does not desire to lead the other? Who does not desire to be a local lord if he is not one in Port Harcourt where there are several lords?

In analysing the political conflicts in Okrika, and their impact on local development efforts, it is tempting to argue that the issues involved are complex. It is also inevitable to draw certain conclusions or inferences from these.

In the Rivers State in general, and Okrika in particular, economic issues though important, are less contentious than political ones. Behind these, there is that vaulting love for power, status and prestige. The nature of political interests and sensitivity also makes politicking unavoidable.

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 3, the conflict between Setari age group and the chiefs.

Every matter, however trifling or unconnected, must be closely associated with the K & T disputes so that it can have more significant political dimensions. K & T are the names and labels which spell the 'untogetherness' of Okrika as well as the essence of Okrika's untogetherness in local development: K & T have become identification tags for leaders and ordinary citizens alike. The two names (K & T) have become a twentieth century political idiom. The names have become the commonest language for transacting almost all kinds of business. Like every other language, it has become the most effective means of political communication.

Compared with the past, the institution of chieftaincy has also become less important in recent times. Its symbolic significance has therefore been diminished; yet interested parties and local dignitaries can always mobilise, or appeal to, local sentiments on the K & T axis in order to gain their own ends. Hence no matter how anachronistic an institution may be, it may be 'functional'<sup>1</sup> to some people in time of local disputes.

There is some element of class conflict in the T & K disputes, in relation to contribution for local development. Disputes in recent cases, such as the rural electrification project, clarify this point. The K & T divisions, and disagreements on the question about location (either at K or T) of projects, no doubt, helped to frustrate project implementation. The question of beneficiaries also raises two issues. While one aspect of it relates to K & T beneficiaries, the other aspect of it relates to differences between the 'Elite' and 'Fishermen' beliefs and values. The Okrika elite and local dignitaries are not politically united, no doubt. Yet the fishermen regard all elite, notwithstanding their factional identities, as one class; while they (the fishermen) think of themselves as constituting another class. The elite, in this terminology, are the 'privileged' whereas the fishermen and all others of their kind are the 'under privileged'. In local terms, the 'elite-fisherman'

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<sup>1</sup>It is functional in so far as some people can achieve their own ends; even if this is not in the interest of the larger group.

distinctions are synonymous with 'privileged - under privileged' classes.

Finally, it is clear that consensus of opinion on the need for community development is not lacking in Okrika. The major questions relate to the strategies, priorities and beneficiaries at any point in time.

It is a reconciliation of the latter (strategies, priorities and beneficiaries) with the former (the need for community development) that is seen to delay or frustrate action in the execution of clan development projects; and it is this which is the pivot of Okrika's local development politics.

CHAPTER 6'STATISM', EMINENCE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT.

This chapter is devoted to one principal character, chief Harold Dappa Biriye, who is principally identified with the political struggle for the creation of the Rivers State. To many Rivers people, Biriye is also the leader of the Liberation Movement<sup>1</sup> in the sense that the Rivers people who constituted a minority in the former Eastern Nigeria were freed from 'Ibo bondage'<sup>2</sup> by him. Biriye is therefore the foremost politician of Rivers State origin. He is a man very well known both in Port Harcourt and in other localities for two main reasons. First, his eminence arises from the part which he played in the Rivers State movement at a time when it was not 'politically safe' to champion such a minority cause in Eastern Nigeria. As a result of his political involvements, he was labelled a saboteur by the neighbouring Ibos, a term which described his agitation for splitting Eastern Nigeria into two or more autonomous states. At the time of these agitations, the liberation movements were described by the NCNC governing party as disintegrating forces. Secondly, Biriye is well known because he was given a top cabinet post when the Rivers state was created.

If one were to understand political development<sup>3</sup> as the emergence of a minority people into new and autonomous statehood as the Rivers minorities understand it, the principal character in this chapter would be seen, in the broad sense, as the man who has been most actively involved in the political, economic and social development of the Rivers State. Yet in narrower perspective, he is the man who is also identified with community politics because his participation in state politics has a local foundation.

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<sup>1</sup>This is a term commonly used by the Rivers people in referring to their former political status as minorities. They believe they were in bondage before they were liberated.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>This will be discussed in later sections of this chapter.

The roles played by him in these political struggles aimed at one goal: the creation of the Rivers State in which present development efforts are made. Claims about his achievements hinge on the same point. In order to avoid repetitions concerning his contributions to Rivers State politics, I shall discuss the main features of the political struggle without associating his name with any specific role. Thereafter, I shall deal with the special part he played before, and after, the creation of the state. In discussing these two political phases, I shall also stress the relationship between eminence and local development efforts, and as one would expect the main arguments for political autonomy were directly related to the general welfare of the Rivers people.

#### THEME

Before dealing with the Rivers State movement, it is necessary to argue why the political background of the movement is important in the present Rivers State politics.

First of all, it was through an identification with this movement that most of the Rivers State patrons have emerged, notably, Chief Biriye and some other important personalities.

Secondly, as a Cabinet, the V.I.P.'s that emerge from this movement will be seen to be identified with the development programmes at the state level - as against the local level. To the ordinary citizen, this suggests that a political leader has the potential for hastening the pace of local development.

Thirdly, it will be evident that people's status, especially the patrons, arising from this movement is somehow in conflict with the source of other local reputation. Whereas the chiefs and elders are prominent in the localities, as I argued in Chapters 3 and 5, the Rivers State movement has only identified one principal category of local dignitaries, thereby relegating other traditional leaders to the background.

The fourth is the obvious relationship between the patron and the client, especially in Biriye's election contests. The patron, as usual, is very much

dependent on the client<sup>1</sup> for support, at least in electoral victories. This relationship between patron and client suggests that whereas a patron could harm a client if the latter refused to support the former (as seen in Chapter 3), whenever the patron is dependent on the client for political victories, the client is a kind of 'master' (as against the 'servant') because it is the principle of need (who needs the votes?) which determines who is master or servant. As Scott put it, with the introduction of popular elections, "the client gained a new political resource, since the giving or withholding of his vote affected the fortunes of aspirants for office". Obviously, faced with other competitors, electoral patrons who hope to maintain their local power are bound to offer their clients more attractive terms than their rivals. Again, voters have also realised that their political resources "could be turned to good account" since their votes were, and are, often sufficient to "secure the continuous assistance of a local politician"<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, it is from this movement that has emerged the present division of the state into supporters and non-supporters of the Rivers State. This has to a great extent influenced internal politics in the State since 1967, especially on (i) allegations that certain V.I.P's are victimising other V.I.P.'s who were not supporters of the movement; (ii) demands that State benefits should be shared on the principle of contribution to new statehood; and (iii) the agitation for a Port Harcourt State.

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<sup>1</sup>In his examination of the party states of West Africa, Aristide Zolberg discusses the bargaining character of the parties. He explicitly suggests that in order to secure the votes of the people, most of the parties have often responded to the electoral demands of the clients. See A. Zolberg. Creating Political Order: The Party States of West Africa. Chicago. 1966.

<sup>2</sup>James Scott "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in South East Asia". APSR Vol.66, 1972. p. 109.

## THE RIVERS STATE MOVEMENT

The struggle of the Rivers people in the creation of their own state belongs to the realms of political history, yet it is necessary to recall these events because it is obvious that several political struggles led to the creation of the Rivers State by a decree on May 27th 1967. The military had followed the currents of the past political tide.

For a long time, all Rivers people in Eastern Nigeria claimed one identity,<sup>1</sup> distinct from the other ethnic groups in the same region. Even the Ibo neighbours referred to the Riverine people as Mba miri meaning, the inhabitants of the 'water zone'. This name, Mba miri, was an acceptance of a separate identity of the 'water people' - a pejorative description.

For their part, claims of a separate identity formed the basis of their earlier demands by the Rivers people for political autonomy. Rivers people believed that if they were politically autonomous their economic and social welfare would be improved. In addition to this, they also believed strongly that the Ibos who constituted the major ethnic group, and supported the dominant political party in Eastern Nigeria, were more interested<sup>2</sup> in developing the Ibo communities with government resources. This formed the main axis of the politics of self-rule. Rivers people also argued that their areas were neglected and it was only a government of their own that could be relied upon to correct the imbalance in development schemes between Ibo and Riverine areas. As will become clearer later in this chapter, this second argument about Ibo domination with its economic consequences (the underdevelopment of the Riverine area) was the principal weapon which the agitators for a separate Rivers State mobilised in advancing arguments for independence from Eastern Nigeria. In the early forties too, the commonest

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<sup>1</sup>They were known as the coastal people. For arguments on this matter, see E.D.W. Opu-Ogulaya (J.P.) History of the Creation of the Rivers State of Nigeria. Primer One. Port Harcourt. 1973.

<sup>2</sup>See election issues in Chapter 5, especially the Kiri/Fiberesima/Jamborivalries.

pattern of appeal to minority people in Nigeria was based on this concept of 'independence and political profits'. Hence, even after the creation of the Rivers State, the Military Governor of the Rivers State, Lt. Commander A.P. Diete-Spiff, had emphasised this aspect of the argument when he said "that inquiry (referring to the Willink Commission of 1957) found the Rivers area absolutely neglected by the government of then Eastern Nigeria; the Rivers people dominated and oppressed by the Ibos who controlled that government."<sup>1</sup> It was implied in the Governor's address that it was only under an indigenous government that the millenium could arrive.

Agitations for a separate Rivers State have been many; and several important personalities and cultural/ethnic groups have played leading roles in these agitations. This is the aspect I shall deal with at this stage.

#### CULTURAL GROUPS AND THE RIVERS STATE MOVEMENT:

The Ijo Rivers' People League was formed by Rivers people in 1942 to fight in the first instance for a distinct Rivers province. The League argued that the problems which arose from the peculiar nature of their riverine territories were not properly understood by a government based in the hinterland (Enugu). The Presidential address<sup>2</sup> delivered to a meeting of the League at Port Harcourt in August 1949 emphasised the same theme: Ibo domination and the underdevelopment of the minority areas. The demand of the League was partially met, resulting in the creation of a Rivers province in 1947 - from the former Owerri and Calabar provinces. Though the new provincial status marked an important administrative landmark, the Rivers people saw no far reaching improvements in their social and economic welfare. Further demands for a larger and more autonomous administrative set-up (a region or state) were therefore intensified in later years. The League's understanding of

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<sup>1</sup>Address of welcome to the British Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson, on the latter's visit to Port Harcourt, March 29th, 1969.  
See: Our Case: The Rivers State of Nigeria. Lagos. 1969. p. 13

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix 8.



a provincial administration was that it was a half way measure since it had not the full status, powers and economic resources which a Region or State needed to accelerate the pace of local development.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES:

From 1953, after the Constitutional conference when Nigeria moved towards a parliamentary democracy and formal federalism, the fears of Rivers people about Ibo domination were expressed more bitterly. This led to the formation of stronger and larger organisations charged with the same responsibility: agitation for statehood. The Council of Rivers Chiefs was formed in July 1953, and this replaced the earlier league. In December 1954, this Council was enlarged to accommodate both chiefs and ordinary citizens, and so the Council changed its name to the Rivers Chiefs' and People's Congress. From July 1956, the Congress<sup>1</sup> became known as the Conference. In the resumed constitutional conference, 1957, the Rivers Chiefs and Peoples Conference, in presenting their case, and that of its predecessors, summarised their arguments in detail as follows:<sup>2</sup>

- (a) that the people in this area (i.e. the Rivers territory) shared a way of life dictated by the physical circumstances of the country in which they lived, and that they were united by fear of neglect at the hands of a Government who did not understand their needs, and who in any case put the needs of the interior (the Ibo areas) first.
- (b) that when the British first came to this area, they made treaties of trade and protection with local chiefs; these were of a special nature and differed from the treaties made with other chiefs inland. The British Crown undertook to provide protection and to deal with foreign powers, but the treaties did not provide that the chiefs should deal with foreign powers, and the treaties did not provide that the chiefs should surrender to the British Government a sovereignty which could be transferred to any other authority. If Her Majesty's Government saw fit to end these treaties, then the chiefs of this area were morally entitled to their original status.

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes of the Minority Commission, Eastern region and S. Cameroons. Port Harcourt Sessions, 18th and 20th January, 1958. CE/W3C, vol. 7. National Archives. Ibadan.

<sup>2</sup>See Our Case, The Rivers State of Nigeria. Lagos. 1969. p. 7.

These arguments of the 1950's in support of separate statehood could be examined within the context of Nigeria's constitutional developments at the time. This era was identified with responsible self-government in a federal system. It was also the days of 'regionalism' and in each region there was one dominant ethnic group and political party. The dominant party and ethnic group were therefore basically the same, each fused with the other. This was also a time of increasing violence in Nigerian politics. In Eastern Nigeria the Ibos and the NCNC party which controlled the government were instruments of the 'dominant group'. The NCNC was seen by the minorities in general, and the Rivers people in particular, as an instrument of political victimisation by a dominant ethnic group from which the party drew the bulk of its support. It was this political set up which reawakened their fears of economic and political neglect because of their suspicion that political self-interest would incline the Ibos to cater only for their own interests. Under such conditions, the interest of the minority people would neither be considered nor protected. Hence any confidence which the Rivers people had in the Ibo people and government was further undermined.

#### THE COR CONCEPT

The minorities, especially the Rivers people, later discovered that with increasing political violence and victimisation (of non party supporters) in Nigerian politics, it was difficult for them to agitate for separate states unless they presented a united front. In December 1953, this appeal for a united front, led to the formation of a COR<sup>1</sup> (Calabar, Ogoja, Rivers) movement whose membership comprised most of the minorities in Eastern Nigeria.

However, to most Rivers people, the COR movement soon lost its appeal for several reasons. It was realised that a minority movement was not likely to succeed unless it had a political base and allied itself to one of the dominant

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<sup>1</sup>COR will be discussed briefly - only in relation to its direct relevance to the Rivers State movement.

political parties in Nigeria though not to the NCNC, which saw COR as a threat to regional unity and solidarity. COR's strategy therefore was to ally itself to the Action Group party in 1954, hoping that the A.G. would support the creation of a Rivers State. This alliance also sought to frustrate the alleged NCNC manoeuvres aimed at stifling support for the new state movement. The NCNC saw the alliance as a threat to the political solidarity of the East, especially as other Regions were not very much threatened by similar minority agitations. This attitude of NCNC led to the victimisation<sup>1</sup> of COR supporters, labelling COR men as saboteurs because of their withdrawal of support for the NCNC.

Dr. Okpara's<sup>2</sup> election appeal and address to the Calabar minorities, in 1961, had this same political overtone. In the regional election campaigns he had told the people of Calabar: "I will give you all the amenities you require. But you must vote for me. Booty of war is always shared after the war."<sup>3</sup> Dr. Okpara's speech also suggested that non-NCNC supporters should not expect to be treated as loyalists; if they were not loyalists they were obviously saboteurs who deserved nothing other than political reprisals. It was also true that only very few (if any) of the minorities were prepared to incur the displeasure of the majority party for a cause whose future was unknown and uncertain.

Under such conditions of political victimisation, and alliances with the A.G., which was the only rival opposition party in Eastern Nigeria, the COR movement lost some support. Also to most Rivers people, the COR movement,

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<sup>1</sup>E.D.W. Opu-Ogulaya. op. cit. pp. 6-11.

<sup>2</sup>As NCNC leader.

<sup>3</sup>J.P. Mackintosh, "Electoral trends and the tendency towards a one-party system in Nigeria" in Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, vol. 1, No. 3, Nov. 1962, p. 203.

which lumped together all the Eastern minorities in spite of their separate identities, was a threat to their distinct cultural identity. They were distinct from the Efiks and Ibibios who constituted a majority within the minority. In short, in a COR state, the Rivers people would constitute another minority and in competition for public service resources they would stand at almost as much of a disadvantage as they were in the Eastern region. It was in these circumstances of a waning COR popularity that a separate Rivers State movement began to gain more ground in the late fifties, especially when the Nigerian Constitutional Conference of 1957 recommended a Commission to ascertain the facts and allay the fears and anxieties of the minorities in the different regions. Advocates of a Rivers State movement, when COR's popularity waned, saw in this Commission (The Willink Commission) an opportunity to present a separate case for creating a Rivers State.

#### WILLINK COMMISSION AND ITS FINDINGS.

Although the Willink Commission was empowered to recommend the creation of new states only as a last resort, yet Sir Henry's<sup>1</sup> stand at the outset set severe limitations on what the Commission was prepared to do. The Commission was neither a boundaries nor a judicial commission. Yet technically the creation of new states involved both elements; listening to evidence (judicial) and adjusting existing boundaries if necessary. In this respect, it was the understanding of the minorities that the Commission had ruled out the possibility of creating new states. Therefore, only other safeguards for allaying minority fears appeared to be the major concern of the Commission. Yet there was no doubt that evidence<sup>2</sup> given by the minorities to this Commission was overwhelmingly in support of the creation of new states. Few people spoke in favour of a COR state, and more were in support of separate states within the COR fold.

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Henry's statement at Uyo. 14th December 1957.

<sup>2</sup>January 1958. Port Harcourt Sessions of the Commission. Cmd. (London, HMSO. 1958)

The Rivers people were therefore disappointed at most of the recommendations of the Commission which concluded that it (the Commission) was 'unable to recommend any new states in this (Eastern Nigeria) region'<sup>1</sup>... arguing, among other reasons, that:

- (i) the creation of a Rivers State "would be sharply resented by the Ibos of the central plateau",<sup>2</sup> and that
- (ii) "to sever themselves (the Rivers people) from the wealthier parts of the Region is surely not the way to get the schools and floating dispensaries they (the Rivers people) want."<sup>3</sup>

The unwillingness of the Ibos to concede the creation of a Rivers State is an open secret. Rivers people have always known this and one of the reasons for antagonism<sup>3</sup> between the Rivers people and their Ibo neighbours originates from this fact. However, besides these conclusions, the Commission fully recognised the fears of the minorities when it observed that 'the desire for the creation of new states in part arises from the fears of minorities.'<sup>4</sup> Yet other decisions reached by most of the delegates at the 1957 Conference provided little scope for creating new states. The following conclusion of the Commission testifies to this fact. "It would be impracticable to meet all these fears (the fears of the minorities) by the creation of new states. There are many different ethnic groups and peoples in Nigeria .... it would therefore be the task of the Commission to propose other means of allaying these fears and to consider what safeguards should be included for this purpose in the Constitution."<sup>4</sup>

The conclusion and recommendations of the Commission did not deny one fact -- that the Rivers people wanted a separate state. They did not want

<sup>1</sup>See Our Case, the Rivers State of Nigeria, Lagos. 1969. p.7.

<sup>2</sup> ~~ibid.~~  
Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>See later parts of this chapter for details.

<sup>4</sup> ~~ibid.~~  
The Nigeria Constitutional Conference. 1957. *CMND*. 207.  
London. HMSO. 1957. p. 10.

constitutional safeguards alone because in their view, it was only in the context of a new state that the pace of local development schemes in their area could be accelerated.

In the matter of institutional (as against constitutional) arrangements, the most significant recommendation made by the Commission to correct the imbalance in local development between these minority and hinterland areas, was the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board<sup>1</sup> (NDDB). But NDDB's area of operation comprised only the Yenagoa, Degema and Ogoni districts and their environs, and the Western Ijos of the Mid West area. Port Harcourt, which was the Board's headquarters, was outside its jurisdiction, as the Rivers people had expected and demanded. Again, a Rivers State was without any real political and economic significance without Port Harcourt which was a growing industrial/commercial city. Port Harcourt would also have been the only city of importance in the proposed Rivers State, yet it did not fall within the NDDB's area of control. Besides, the NDDB had no authority to implement survey plans (even though it could undertake survey plans) without the approval of the Federal, Eastern and Mid Western Regional governments.

Under these circumstances of dissatisfaction with the limited executive capacity of the Board, and also its limited area composition, agitations for a separate state did not subside even after the 1960 Nigerian Independence. Rather the agitators<sup>2</sup> intensified their demands, as will be seen in the narration of Biriye's role.

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<sup>1</sup>In August 1959 an Executive proclamation gave effect to the NDDB, yet its Act came into real effect after independence in April, 1961.

<sup>2</sup>I shall not discuss the Boro declaration of a Delta Republic because it has no direct link with Biriye's struggles discussed in this work.

### THE STATISTS AND STATISM

In achieving this recent political goal (political autonomy) in 1967, there were some agitators and leaders who became prominent. Those who were actively involved in the state movement and have attained eminence through it are therefore identified by Rivers people as the statistas. Who were (and are) these distinguished men? What part did they play in these movements? How did they play that part? What were (and are) their connections and supporters? What is the relationship between their past and present status and what have they done in their positions of influence in the new State? These are the major questions I shall deal with later.

### BIRIYE AND STATISM

As I shall argue later, among those who have contributed significantly to the creation of the Rivers State, Chief Biriye is the most distinguished. Hence the politics of Rivers State movement has become the politics of Biriye. Biriye's background and the bases of his eminence will therefore be discussed at this stage.

Chief Biriye (formerly known as Mr. Harold Wilcox) is about 58 years old, (in 1974). He is a citizen of Peterside, Bonny. By local standards, he is of aristocratic descent. He is the son of the late chief Magistrate, R.T.C. Wilcox, who was a school master before he qualified as a lawyer. In his youth, there were very few children whose parents had respected professions such as Law and Medicine. Therefore being the son of a lawyer, Biriye had the privilege of attending two of Nigeria's top public schools.

Biriye<sup>1</sup> attended the Bonny Government School, the first government school in the Rivers area, for his primary education; while between 1937-41 he had his secondary school education at King's College, Lagos, which was Nigeria's

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<sup>1</sup>Personal discussion with Chief Biriye at his residence, 36 Forces Avenue, Port Harcourt. 9th September 1974. Most of the details about his personal life were gathered in this discussion.

premier public secondary School. At school, he took an interest in those games (cricket and hockey) which appealed mostly to those of upper class background. At present, Chief Biriye is married with five children. His hobbies are music and 'hard work'.<sup>1</sup>

Biriye refers to the Rivers State movement as a *Liberation* movement; he believes that the minorities needed to be liberated from the rule of the major tribes. This is how Biriye accounts for his staunch commitment to the political survival of the Rivers people, believing that without him the Rivers people might have 'perished'. Nevertheless, he believes that for the Nigerian minorities (especially the Rivers people), attaining new statehood does not in itself amount to a solution to all their political and associated problems. He says people must work hard to sustain these new states.

The bases of Biriye's eminence in local politics are not, however, confined exclusively to the background already mentioned.

In the struggle for creating a Rivers State, Chief Biriye has been entrusted with several responsibilities. These responsibilities illustrate more clearly the bases of his eminence. He was either a party leader, chief delegate or a key official in most of the early associations and Conference which were specifically charged with the responsibility of agitating for a separate province or state.

The part played by Biriye in the Rivers State movement can be divided into three 'functional categories'. The first category was his role as an official in the unions and conference to which mention has been made in the early parts of this chapter. The second covers his role as the Rivers people's chief delegate or spokesman in the conferences, while the third deals with his role as party leader or key official in the separatist political party, the NDC.

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<sup>1</sup>Biriye's hyperbole.



I shall now deal with these functional categories in the same order, as above, listing the offices he held in the different unions. He was secretary of the Ijaw Union in Port Harcourt in 1951; member of the Working Committee of the Council of Rivers Chiefs in 1953; Secretary of the Rivers State Congress in 1955; and Principal Secretary of the Rivers Chiefs and Peoples Conference in 1956.

The objectives and achievements of these Unions have already been discussed. Biriye was only an official in these unions, and so it is difficult to credit him with any particular achievement of the unions because of the collective responsibility which any team work of union officials involved.

Besides Biriye's official role, he was also a delegate or principal spokesman in the following conferences or assemblies: chief spokesman before the Lt. Governor at Enugu on official matters pertaining to the inclusion of Rivers State affairs on the agenda of the 1957 London Constitutional conference; chief delegate of the Rivers Chiefs and Peoples Conference in the 1957 London constitutional conference. When the political future of Nigeria was being discussed after the Nigerian military coup in 1966, Chief Biriye was also one of the principal delegates to the Enugu consultative Assembly in August 1966. Like their predecessors, the main argument of this delegation was that in the light of the tragedies<sup>1</sup> of January and July 1966 the creation of a Rivers State was one of the bases for further political association in Nigeria. Also at the federal level where these constitutional debates continued in September 1966, Biriye was the principal spokesman mandated by the Rivers Leaders of Thought to make representations to the Head of the Federal Military Government on the issue of a Rivers State.

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<sup>1</sup>The counter coup of July 1966 in which thousands of Eastern Nigerians (both military men and civilians) were killed.

In the later stages of the Rivers State movement, there was a belief in the Rivers area that it was necessary for the leaders of the state movement to seek alliance with some major political parties in Nigeria such as the A.C. This strategy was also advantageous to the Rivers people because at that time the lone voice of the minorities could not make much political impact in Nigeria. Therefore in the third functional category, several attempts were made by the leaders of the Rivers people to contract alliances and coalitions with some major political parties.

It was obvious that the NCNC was ruled out from any alliance because of strong allegations that it was opposed<sup>1</sup> to the creation of a Rivers State. The other two major parties were the Action Group in the West and NPC in the North. Since the Action Group was a southern based party, it understood more of the problems of the Southern minorities. The Rivers people therefore preferred an alliance with it. In 1954 Chief Biriye was the principal Rivers people's delegate in a meeting with Action Group officials to discuss the terms of an 'Action Group-Rivers People's Alliance'. This party agreed to support the Rivers State movement. It was in this matter of political support that the Action Group was introduced to the Rivers province for the first time, and Biriye became the party's principal organising secretary in the area. But the Action Group preferred a COR to a Rivers State because in terms of area (territory), population and natural resources, a COR state would be a more viable political entity. Therefore, to most Rivers people, the AG approach was unpopular. The idea of a separate Rivers State was not negotiable.

The Action Group lost much of its support among Rivers people at this stage, and in 1959 the Niger Delta Congress (a political party based solely in the Rivers area) was formed. Biriye was elected the President and leader of the NDC. In the 1959 contests, the NDC's manifesto was devoted mainly to the

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<sup>1</sup>See election issues in Chapter 5.

Rivers State question. Nevertheless, it was clear at that time that the Northern People's Congress was the most powerful party in Nigeria. An NDC-NPC alliance was therefore considered necessary in settling the Rivers State matter. In August 1959, the NDC-NPC alliance was contracted for the same purpose: support in the creation of a Rivers State.

#### THE FOUNDING FATHER;

It is clear at this stage that for a long time the creation of the Rivers State was the political priority of the Rivers people; and indeed it was an issue of paramount importance to them. Politicians whose careers and interests have been centred mainly on this major political issue can therefore be seen as the pillars of Rivers state politics. In Rivers people's terminology, such politicians are the 'founding fathers' because the political foundation of the new State is credited to their hardwork and patriotism.

In Rivers' State politics, local and central, Chief Biriye is therefore generally rated as the founding father of the State, and the doyen of state politics. He is also known as the chief commander - that is, commander-in-chief of Rivers State politics.

Why is Biriye given such a rating? What were his exceptional achievements and how did he gain them? These are the questions which will now be answered.

Biriye is a very sociable man, yet proud. He is interested in reading law. His book shelves are filled with books on law. According to him, his father's career influenced his career and priorities in life. Biriye is also well read. He is a gifted orator and it is often said of him that he can 'reduce an audience to tears' by the power of his speech.

Moreover, at the time of his early involvement in politics, there was a common local belief that lawyers, or men inclined to reading law, made good politicians. Law was politics and politics was law. All these gave Biriye the relevant qualifications for politics.

These interests and talents of Biriye were not acquired recently. As

early as the 1940's he had built up a good public image. Personally, Biriye claims that he was very much instrumental to the creation of the Rivers State. He maintains that his political sagacity and talents (as already mentioned) were (and are) political assets, hence he was very often the people's choice for chief delegate. In those conferences and delegations no Rivers man spoke as often and as persuasively as he did. Above all, no other Rivers man was granted an audience with Colonial dignitaries as was Biriye. In effect, this led many Rivers people to conclude that among Rivers people it was only Biriye who could be granted an audience with both the colonial authorities and the Nigerian leaders who succeeded them after independence.

The most outstanding political achievement of Biriye can be traced to the third functional category. In the Rivers area there were very few politicians at this time; and of the few, there were indeed 'very few leaders'. Politics among the minorities was not a very safe game because of the victimisation inherent in a political system, like that of Nigeria, where the majority ethnic group in any region formed and controlled the majority party and desired to rule forever.

All those who did not move along with the political tide of the time were regarded as 'enemies' opposed to the system. Politics at that time provided only one of two answers to most questions. It was either yes or no. Those who said no were the men of opposition who could expect no friendly gestures from those who ruled in a system where political tolerance was almost totally absent. In those circumstances only men of exceptional courage and determination ventured into politics. Most of the minority people who went into politics were either reluctant or afraid to lead the minority movements, fearing that the axe of the rulers would fall on them. It was under these conditions that Biriye emerged not only as a politician but also as chief spokesman of his people. His high political rating therefore results not only from the fact that he was 'politically minded' but that he was exceptionally courageous in championing his people's cause. As the old 18th century

saying goes, 'he belled the cat.'

Prior to 1954, agitation for the creation of a Rivers State was mainly confined to activity at the League level (such as the Ijaw League, Councils and Conferences). Though these unions assumed responsibility for political matters, they were not real political unions and so they lacked sound organisation and tactics to fight for the political issues of the time. It was Biriye who first solicited support from a major political party. The Action Group was for the first time introduced to the Rivers area by him. At that stage the Rivers State affair was formally introduced to the Nigerian political party arena. Later, when the Action Group strategy failed, it was Biriye who formed and led a new political party, the Niger Delta Congress (NDC) an ally of the NPC.

The NDC was the first political party in the Rivers area, and it was also the first party to be led by a Rivers man. Hence in four respects, Biriye was (and is) described by most Rivers people as the first 'political citizen' of the Rivers State: the first to introduce the state affairs to party politics (on the Action Group platform); the first to form an indigenous political party (NDC) for the purpose of political agitation for Rivers people; the first to lead this party; and for political gains, the first to contract an alliance of the party with Nigeria's strongest political party, the NPC.<sup>1</sup> In a society where political achievements are assessed in such functional terms, it cannot be contested that there is no other person who stands as Biriye's rival. In this context, the 'first man' at four different levels also becomes both a founding father and chief commander.

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The question arises: What did the NPC get from its alliance with the NDC? Perhaps one could argue that its (NPC) influence was further extended to the South at a time when the dominant parties were confined mostly to their regions.

### BIRIYE'S POLITICAL STRATEGIES

It is at the stage of active party involvement in Rivers State affairs, especially with the formation of the NDC, that the politics of Biriye can be said to have made great impact in the Rivers area. The dynamism of the NDC party leader, and the political currents of the time are also interesting features of the 'NDC-Biriye' political strategies. Yet the questions are asked: If Biriye was dynamic, was he also successful as a politician? Is success in politics not a function of dynamism? Lastly, in what political circumstances did Biriye operate?

Under Biriye's leadership, the NDC contested the 1959 federal elections. The election issue with which the NDC was primarily concerned was the creation of a Rivers State. This was the subject of NDC's appeal to the Rivers people, and the party's major promise to Rivers people was that if their candidates were voted into the federal parliament, the creation of a Rivers State would become a reality. The NDC relied on the support of the NPC and as allies of the NPC, the NDC was confident of the establishment of a Rivers State, against the wishes of the NCNC<sup>1</sup> and its predominantly Ibo supporters.

At that time, considering the ~~dedication~~ <sup>dedication</sup> of most Rivers people (and their Unions) to a Rivers State, NDC's appeal to Rivers people was of primary interest to many. Considering the Rivers people's political values, a new state was synonymous with accelerated development of all the communities. A party which promised to champion this cause was therefore most likely to be preferred to any other. The political interests (on the state matter) of a majority of the Rivers people therefore made NDC's victory almost certain. Above all a politician unable to understand the values, priorities and mentality of his electorate could rarely succeed in the Rivers State. The NDC leader knew what the people wanted: their wants were therefore the main subject of his promises.

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 5. Why was Kalada Kiri rejected in 1961 as an NCNC candidate?

These were political autonomy and the accelerated development of all communities in the Rivers area. But these promises were only to be fulfilled if the NDC won the elections. Again Biriye's sweet tongue helped to attach great importance to these issues.

In these circumstances, the NDC had expected victory in 1959, but victory eluded it. In that election, of the eight NDC candidates who contested, only one of them, Mr. M. Okilo<sup>1</sup> (in Brass Division), was elected. Surprisingly even the party leader, Biriye, lost in the Degema East constituency.

Certain questions are therefore posed by Biriye's failure. How could a popular, dynamic, sweet-tongued politician (and party leader) lose in an election in spite of the ideals he stood for and promised? Was Biriye really popular and did he stand for a popular cause?

Some of the answers to these questions have already been discussed in the previous chapter, the 'Biriye-Jamabo' contest. To understand the pattern of political leadership and support in the rural areas of the Rivers State, one must take into account certain aspects of the traditional social structure, notably the kinship and 'brotherhood' system in the village together with local political values and priorities. These are the points I shall discuss briefly at this stage.

As will be argued later, in politics (especially in the voting pattern) the basic units of interest aggregation and support are found within the village, town and SE (see Chapter 1). Each of these constitutes the local political arena, because each of these units (or in combinations) coincides with the voting wards in the different constituencies in district, Regional/federal elections. In each of these mini-polities, the kinship ties are strong and widely extended. Though descent or inheritance in the Rivers State is largely patrimonial, matrilineal claims are not uncommon. In recent times, the people's

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<sup>1</sup>When the Rivers State was created, Okilo was given a ministerial appointment as Commissioner. A reward for support of the Rivers State movement?

acceptance of both patrilineal and matrilineal claims has encouraged the emergency of double unilineal patterns of descent. The extended family system is further sustained by this pattern of descent claims. Beyond these kinship ties, within the village or town, virtually everyone is a 'brother', 'sister', or 'neighbour' of the other. A philosophy of village or town 'brotherhood' has therefore developed. In terms of descent, villages are linked with towns and towns with the SE. Patterns of political cleavage in the locality have therefore been considerably influenced by these kinship ties and beliefs in brotherhood. It is in this sense that many communities have become mere constellations of kinship groups. In elections, these constellations coincide basically with the political cleavages between groups.

It is not however being suggested that there is no social change in these communities (see Chapter 2) but that no transformation completely eliminates traditional patterns of behaviour. For example, the arguments in chapters 3 and 5 suggest that though the influence of chiefs has declined, the institution of chieftaincy is not completely relegated to the background.

Also, the modern elite have become a dominant group. Their social values and outlook have changed; nevertheless, they are still defenders of local or sectional interests. These two arguments suggest that the old and new still persist side by side. Moreover, the persistence of particularisms and localism is still remarkable. Hence paradoxically, Rivers people while changing fast have also changed little.

In the former Eastern Nigeria, as in the Rivers State, these political particularisms and parochialisms were of two kinds: voting either in the interest of the locality or of the dominant party (or both). However, voting behaviour was not always predictable though the voter's choice depended much on his interest at any point in time. Interests therefore shifted from time to time and from one circumstance to the other. Again, the fact that the



interest<sup>1</sup> of the community - which sometimes coincided with that of the party - was primary was not often in dispute. In situations of political competition among different communities, the welfare of each community is always a matter for primary consideration, even if the community was politically divided.<sup>2</sup>

Biriye's constituencies in the elections comprised Bonny and Okrika, Okrika constituting about two-thirds of that constituency. In the localities, elections are always understood as competitions between candidates (not parties) or communities and each candidate is also a representative of a community.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, in any major political contest between Okrika and Bonny, Biriye's chances of victory were slim since he was (and is) a native of Bonny, a minority unit in the Okrika/Bonny (Degema East) constituency. In their own interest, Okrika people would obviously have voted for their own candidate (Jamabo - chapter 5) though they believed in the major issue of a new state for which Biriye's party stood. The Okrika riots and demonstrations in January 1967, in support of a Rivers State, confirm that the people were committed to the Rivers state issue. Therefore their rejection of Biriye in the elections could only be understood in the context of the different Bonny and Okrika community interests. The election issues were not centred only on the question of new states. There were also some other important issues on local development projects which either the NDC or the NCNC (Jamabo's party) was believed to be capable of financing. Okrika and Bonny beliefs about the 'how and who' of this political development differed. In this sense, it is difficult to ignore one fact: that Biriye was a victim of the different political

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<sup>1</sup>This is subject to how interest is understood. Both the individual and the community may think that they share similar or irreconcilable interests; but in the local communities, the political interests of both are often identical.

<sup>2</sup>Okrika is an example. See Chapter 5: Jamabo Vs Biriye.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Dahl (Who Governs? New Haven, 1961) and Raymond Wolfinger ("The Development and Persistence of Ethnic Voting", APSR Vol. 59, <sup>1965</sup> pp. 896-908) have also observed that in several countries ethnic factors have continued to make themselves felt in elections. In short several political systems continue to rely upon 'ethnic strategies'.

interests and circumstances of the time. One must inevitably conclude that popular and sweet tongued politicians only succeed if the majority of the electorate share similar interests with them. Outside this, the popularity of a politician is of little appeal to the people because politics is about sharing benefits. Whosoever can be the community's benefactor is the popular choice of the people.

On the other hand, considering the limited area in which the party contested the election, it is difficult to argue that the NDC sought to control the machinery of government in Eastern Nigeria. The NDC was a minority party which operated only in the minority Riverine area. In the words of Biriye,<sup>1</sup> its principal aim in contesting the 1959 election was to establish its presence in the Rivers area and to enlighten its people on the separate identities of the Rivers people and the other neighbours (especially the Ibos), contrary to the NCNC propaganda that Eastern Nigeria was homogeneous, politically and ethnically.

Furthermore, in the situations considered, election results were not necessarily sufficient indicators of support for the parties or candidates. Dominant or majority parties had a reputation for rigging elections. In the views of Biriye, the possibility of a rigged election was not remote in the NCNC/NDC rivalries. Politically, too, the NCNC majority party was better organised to contest elections; its 'wooing tactics' were sounder. It could therefore manipulate local support, no matter how unappealing its policies were. Above all, to many people the dominant party was the major source of political rewards. This was well known. It was also the 'god of the day'<sup>2</sup> which decided the fate of the communities, and so the NCNC demanded political conformity from the people as a condition for rewarding its supporters. In this sense.

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<sup>1</sup>Personal Communication. 9th September 1974.

<sup>2</sup>The dominant party.

Dr. Okpara's address to the people of Calabar during the 1961 regional election campaign also applied to the Rivers people. Indeed, everyone wanted the booty (such as development projects) - far more than was available.

The NDC was a minority party, and for fear of political reprisal from the NCNC party and government, a majority of the local people often preferred to vote for the party of the day. To most people, voting for a minority party meant a waste of vote, even if they would have liked to support that minority party. It was better and more advantageous to take sides with the majority. This was the pattern of political behaviour to which most people became accustomed in the process of political socialisation. The poor tax-payers money which the dominant party and government controlled must be shared by all communities - but only by the political conformists. In this need for political conformity, the NDC's defeat could not have come as a great surprise to many, even though the extreme desire of the Rivers people for separation can hardly be reconciled with the NDC's defeat. Perhaps Rivers people wanted both a separate state and profits which the NCNC could give - preferably they wanted the latter until the former materialised.

At this stage, three main conclusions must be drawn from the NDC/NCNC contests in relation to the political priorities of the Riverine communities. First of all, in local politics the rule of the game is largely defined by the clients. They define the 'politics of benefits'. Promises are the major sources of appeal to the clients yet the clients determine<sup>1</sup> and decide which party or candidate is capable of fulfilling its promises. But since there are different prizes or benefits which the different communities aim at, victory is more or less the preserve of the dominant party which has a better reputation, (real and imagined) and credibility for distributing more prizes. After all, in this case, local politics are about the extraction of benefits from the central government or party.

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<sup>1</sup>The client as a 'Master'.

Secondly, the firmer the grip of a dominant party over the electorate, the better its bargaining position vis-a-vis a minority party. Competition in this situation is bound to be unequal because of the different statuses of the contesting parties. Hence the struggle between two unequal partners results in victory for the stronger party because while the majority party can be seen to give political prizes, the minority can only make promises. Local people cannot, and do not, live on promises which are made by a party which has little chances of fulfilling its promises.

Thirdly, politics within and beyond the locality is largely particularistic and parochial. This is the basis of protective communalism which defines the politics of self-interest.<sup>1</sup>

#### BIRIYE'S POLITICS AND PRESENT DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Perhaps it may surprise an outsider that a man (Biriye) who was unsuccessful as a 'candidate' has come to the limelight in the present Rivers State. This is the interesting development I shall now deal with: Biriye's present political career in relation to development efforts in the State. Since the creation of the Rivers State, Biriye appears to have been rewarded with certain ministerial posts. It is the thinking of many Rivers people that Biriye's cabinet appointments are in recognition of the part he played in the Rivers State movement. In Dr. Okpara's words, (already quoted), the war<sup>2</sup> is now over and booty is being shared.

Chief Biriye has served in several executive capacities as commissioner since 1969. He has been Commissioner for Agriculture, Fisheries and Natural Resources; Works and Housing; Establishment; and Information. But in late 1974 he had a disagreement with the Governor. Indirectly, Biriye accused<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Again, party ideologies were of relatively little importance in the working of the political system.

<sup>2</sup>In this sense, it is a war of survival in which the Rivers people have emerged triumphant, having been freed from the NCNC/Ibo government.

<sup>3</sup>As will be discussed later, in a Conference of Rivers State Chiefs, Biriye spoke against the Governor for misappropriating government funds. This was considered too direct an attack on the Governor, intended to bring the Governor to public disgrace.

the Governor of corruption and of being, therefore, unworthy to hold the high office of Governor. Understandably, Biriye lost the favour and goodwill of the Governor, resulting in his dismissal from the Cabinet in November 1974. The official reason given for Biriye's dismissal was that 'the loyalty of the Commissioner to the government was questionable'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, 'loyalty' meant support for a government no matter how corrupt it might be. Considering Biriye's political status and outstanding contributions to Rivers State politics, many Rivers people are disappointed at his removal from office, though the reasons for his dismissal do not come as a surprise, especially when it is known that there is very little political tolerance in Nigeria. Who can ever challenge a god (Governor) in public, without facing unpleasant consequences, more especially when a commissioner holds office at the pleasure of the Governor?

However, until Biriye's recent dismissal, he was the Commissioner for Information. Despite the past failure of the NDC and Biriye in the elections and their inability to procure development projects for the Rivers people (because of their failure), Biriye in particular and the NDC in general, are held in high esteem by many Rivers people. They are often referred to as 'the heroes of the Rivers State', believing that they are responsible for initiating several local development projects in the State.

However, at an official level, the preparation of development plans and the execution of these projects is not credited to any particular group of cabinet ministers. The principle of 'collective responsibility' demands that the Executive Council should accept responsibility for the making and implementation of all government policies and plans. Yet in the local areas, as in Port Harcourt, government plans and policies, whether implemented or not, are associated with particular regimes. By the same token, there are also

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<sup>1</sup>West Africa. 18th November 1974. p. 1417.

certain key officials in any regime whose tenure of office is associated with plan/project failure or successes. Local people are also more interested in knowing the names of important personalities or political parties in whose regime certain development projects were executed. The name 'government' is a 'blanket term'; even when people talk of government it is a government of personalities they have in mind. It is in this sense of a government of personalities that many Rivers people talk of Biriye not only as a 'founding father' but as the initiator of several road development projects in the Rivers State, as listed below.

To many Rivers people, the following road projects in the State First Development Plan<sup>1</sup>, 1970-74, which are either under construction, survey or completed, are credited to Biriye and his former NDC party:

- (i) Yenagoa - Nembe Road
- (ii) Bonu - Bonny Road
- (iii) East - West Road

So also is the new Okrika causeway<sup>2</sup> which links the Okrika Grammar School village and Okrika island, considered as Biriye's brainchild. These four major development projects link important commercial towns and villages in the state. In undertaking the construction of these roads, the Rivers State Government describes them as projects which will ensure the 'quick evacuation of produce from the hinterland to the ports ; direct road link between the State Headquarters and the Divisional headquarters;'<sup>3</sup>

It is pertinent to ask, at this stage, why these four major development projects are credited to Biriye and his NDC. The answer is not far fetched. In a discussion<sup>4</sup> on what development projects were urgently needed in the

<sup>1</sup>See Rivers State, First Development Plan, 1970-74. pp. 55-58

<sup>2</sup>The length of the bridge is estimated at about half a mile and its width, 15 yards.

<sup>3</sup>Rivers State, First Development Plan, 1970-74. Page 55.

<sup>4</sup>Political debate on 'The Rivers People and their Needs'. Public Debate. Port Harcourt. July, 1952.

Rivers area, Biriye had in 1952 proposed the construction of the Okrika Causeway. The other three road projects were also included in the Biriye/NDC manifesto<sup>1</sup> for the 1959 federal election. Biriye had also spoken about these projects in earlier debates, arguing that these constituted some of the most urgent economic and social needs of the riverine people. As a member of the Rivers State Executive Council, it is therefore felt by many people that he has influenced his government to accept responsibility for executing these projects. Fortunately for Biriye, his plans are reaching fruition not only under a government in which he was one of the chief executives but also in a state which he has more or less created by himself. Therefore, these two political circumstances - Biriye's cabinet post and his direct involvement in the creation of a Rivers State - inevitably lead many Rivers people to associate him with these projects. To most people, what is particularly impressive is that none of these road projects leads to, or connects, Biriye's village<sup>2</sup> directly. There is therefore no accusation that Biriye is parochial in his development proposals.

Biriye himself admits that he had once made these suggestions on development. He does not, however, wish to accept sole responsibility for their present plan or execution. Nevertheless, he agrees that he has persuaded the present government to take sufficient interest in these projects. He is also proud that these plans are reaching fruition in his regime. Above all, when asked what he would like to be remembered for in his contribution to general development in the State, he listed the main things he has done.

- (i) Fighting for the self determination of the Nigerian minorities in general, and the Rivers people in particular, and
- (ii) A Rivers State committed to economic, political and social development in general, and the development of the transport system in particular.

Biriye is very conscious and proud of these two contributions, a consciousness

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<sup>1</sup>Biriye's personal papers. 'The NDC and the Federal Election Strategy, 1959'.

<sup>2</sup>Though Peterside, his village, is in Bonny county covered by the road network.

which also suggests that he is aware that many Rivers people hold him in high esteem. Nevertheless, he expects no personal reward or gains for these contributions. Yet he asserts that his rewards lie in two things:

- (i) the success of these development programmes;
- (ii) that 'the Rivers State has come to stay'.<sup>1</sup>

#### INTERNAL STATE POLITICS AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES:

At this stage, it is pertinent to ask some questions about the kind of internal state politics which has emerged from the Rivers State movement.

Biriye, it is known, fought hard for the creation of the Rivers State. At the time of his political battle, he did not win the support of some groups and people in the state. Have these political differences between Biriye and the other non-supporters of a Rivers State movement continued? Since the attainment of political autonomy, what has been the politics of distribution of resources?

#### SUPPORTERS AND NON-SUPPORTERS

Even though Biriye did not win any parliamentary seat on the NDC platform, in terms of relative support, he named the following groups as political supporters of the NDC: (i) Southern Ijaw, (where Mr. Okilo was elected into the federal parliament in 1959); therefore it is not surprising that Biriye considers the Souther Ijaws as the most prominent political supporters; (ii) Bonny; (iii) Okrika; (iv) Nembe; (v) Ogbia.

Certain things are striking about Biriye's observations on the political support of groups. He said he observed that the groups listed above supported him. How did he observe these? He claimed to have interviewed most of the local people, especially chiefs and young men, prior to the elections.

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<sup>1</sup>An expression which has become a popular slogan among Rivers people in recent times - this expression defines the Rivers State as a political reality, contrary to the wishes of all those who were opposed to the concept of political autonomy for Rivers people.



The people assured him that they would support him. He had no cause to doubt them, he said. Most of the people sang in praise of him and his party.

The local people assisted him by providing canoes and paddlers, taking him from one village to another for his political campaigns. Besides, they entertained him lavishly with beer and food; local hospitality was striking.

What else, he asked me, could constitute greater signs of support?

Personally, I have no cause to disbelieve Biriye's account. But the fact is that the results from the ballot box were different. Biriye lost the elections, contrary to his expectations. Perhaps there was more to political support than the indicators used by Biriye.

These elections referred to are over. A Rivers State has been created and so it is difficult to examine most of Biriye's claims. Nevertheless, at present there are two political blocs in the state. The supporters of the Rivers State movement, which coincide with those communities named by Biriye as NDC supporters (notably the southern Ijaw, Bonny, Okrika, Nembe and Ogbia) constitute one political bloc, while most of the other communities - the Ogbas and Ogonis in particular - constitute another political bloc. Communities in the latter bloc are generally referred to as the non-supporters<sup>1</sup> of the state movement because they were not well represented in the leagues, councils and conferences which agitated for a state. These classifications of supporters and non-supporters have, to a great extent, influenced local demands (particularly among communities in the riverine bloc) that the profits of political independence should be shared according to the proportion of support which each group gave to the state movement. What difficult arithmetic to work out! The obvious rationale is that those who suffered greatly (and were allegedly victimised by the governing party at the time) in the political struggle should receive proportionate favours in the distribution of political prizes. Some of these local demands will be examined in Chapter 7.

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<sup>1</sup>See Dr. Obi Wali's case in Chapter 7. His people, the Ikwerres, belong to the opposition camp - the non-supporters. The question is: why was Obi Wali dismissed as a Commissioner? (See Chapter 7.)

No wonder, Biriye talked to me at length about certain groups and people who now reap where they did not sow - those who played the ~~fiddle~~ while the supporters languished in exile. For example, Biriye claimed to have sought refuge in Lagos when the NCNC party men ran after him. Therefore he asked me why the non-supporters of the state movement should benefit in the new state in spite of their opposition at that time.

Furthermore, what is significant about these two political blocs is that while the non-supporters of the NCNC party were called saboteurs, the non-supporters of the NDC are called saboteurs today. In effect then, the saboteurs of yesterday have become the loyalists of today, while the former loyalists have become the saboteurs today.

#### INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

Besides the group level, Biriye named certain personalities as prominent supporters of the state movement. These are: (i) Chief Nzidee who was once elected Chairman of the Khana County Council on the NDC platform; (ii) Chief Alamene Bobai (from Southern Ijaw); (iii) Chief Opurum (a former NDC candidate for Etche); (iv) Mr. M. Okilo (Southern Ijaw); (v) Chief William Onuboji (Ahoada); (vi) Chief S. Adoki (Okrika), and (vii) The Amanyanabo of Nembe, Mingi X. Biriye also named the following as sympathisers of the NDC: (i) Mr. K.B. Tsarc Wiwa; (ii) Dr. Graham Douglas; (iii) Chief Igbeta, and (iv) Chief Opu-Ogulaya.

It is most striking that of the list of prominent NDC supporters and sympathisers, Chief Nzidee, Chief Opurum, Chief Alamene Bobai, Mr. M. Okilo, Mr. Tsaro Wiwa, Dr. Douglas, and Chief Opu-Ogulaya are (or were) commissioners in the Rivers State. It appears to be a wonderful coincidence that former NDC supporters are commissioners in the present administration. These ministerial appointments have therefore inclined many Rivers people to believe that former NDC supporters are the rulers of the State, as a reward for their support of the State movement. Many Rivers people have the impression that Biriye influenced these appointments not only to reward his former NDC supporters, but also to

convince his detractors and opponents that even in future - under civilian rule - only NDC supporters would become state leaders. In short, even in future, the NDC would be the only 'party of the people.'

Though difficult to prove, it is Chief Biriye who is believed to have influenced these appointments because of his close association with the Governor. After all, the Governor appoints ministers at his pleasure, and has the right to consult whomsoever he likes for nominations to fill certain vacancies. Who else could the Governor consult, other than his friends and close associates?

However, Biriye denied that he was directly instrumental in these appointments, arguing that it is possible the Governor may have personal likes for those he may wish to appoint to high offices. Biriye's argument appears to be a reasonable one, in view of the possible considerations which may influence the appointment of ministers in any government. But a major question arises. Is the possibility of Biriye's influence on the Governor completely ruled out, if both were friends at the time appointments were made? Since Biriye supports the idea that people should not reap where they did not sow, he is likely to support that only those who sow should harvest -- at least by implication.

Besides these ministerial appointments, Biriye is also believed to have influenced the removal<sup>1</sup> from office of one V.I.P. in the State. In 1971, Mr. Kalada Hart, a Permanent Secretary (from Bonny) was removed from office by the Public Service Commission<sup>2</sup> on the grounds of abuse of office (a term which, more or less, has little meaning in the Rivers State because it is hardly well defined). At that time, Mr. Hart was Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Works and Housing. It was alleged<sup>3</sup> that Mr. Hart diverted some ministerial building materials for his personal use.

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<sup>1</sup>It is interesting to ask who influenced Biriye's removal from office, if he influenced the removal of Mr. Hart, for if Biriye himself had been irremovable, why was he dismissed?

<sup>2</sup>The Public Service Commission would normally consult the Governor before taking such major decisions.

<sup>3</sup>The Chairman and other officials of the Public Service Commission refused to comment on this matter. However, they agreed that these officers were dismissed on grounds of abuse of office.

Whether the allegations<sup>1</sup> are true or false, Mr. Hart was removed from office. It was believed that Biriye was a party to Mr. Hart's dismissal. But the difficult question is: how could Biriye influence the removal of Mr. Hart, his 'brother', another Bonny patron - given the common protective communalistic sentiments I have discussed in this work?

One may, however, trace the conclusions of the public about Hart's removal to three facts<sup>2</sup>. Mr. Hart was not a supporter of the Rivers State movement. In Biriye's NDC campaigns, Mr. Hart belonged to the opposition camp. In fact when the civil war ended and Mr. Hart returned to Port Harcourt, the Public Service Commission was reluctant in appointing him as a Permanent Secretary, because of allegations that he took an active interest in the Biafran movement. Mr. Hart was the Fuel Director in the Biafran regime - an important post at the time.

It was understood that Hart was later appointed as Permanent Secretary because of the personnel shortages in the Rivers State Service. Besides, his wife is an Ibo, hence it is believed that she might have persuaded her husband against supporting a Rivers State movement - characteristic of the alleged Ibo opposition to creating a Rivers State. Finally, as has been mentioned before, Biriye was the Governor's good friend at the time Mr. Hart was removed from office.

It is therefore believed that when Mr. Hart was accused of abuse of office, Biriye might have persuaded the Governor to dismiss Mr. Hart<sup>3</sup> because the old political rivalries and bitterness still persisted. The patron is believed,

<sup>1</sup> Interview with senior officials of the Ministry of Works and Housing. October, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> These were subjects of public debate at Port Harcourt Municipal Hall on 15th October 1973.

<sup>3</sup> At present Mr. Hart lives at Aba (in the East Central State) as a business man.

as we noted in Chapter 5, to be a vindictive man. The question is therefore often asked: why were other disciplinary actions, other than dismissal, not taken in the case of Mr. Hart, as was the case when some others (not named) were guilty of more serious offences, especially when Mr. Hart was generally considered a very efficient administrator? The general answer is that Mr. Hart was a victim of political vindictiveness. The general answer is traceable to the fact that soon after Mr. Hart's removal, Mr. H.H. Jumbo (a Bonny man), a supporter of Biriye, was appointed Permanent Secretary - as if Mr. Jumbo replaced Mr. Hart.

Yet in the midst of the communal rivalries in the state, one wonders what Bonny would have gained if it is really true that Biriye was instrumental in Mr. Hart's removal. On this question, no answers were given by my Port Harcourt informants. I shall therefore leave this question open, and draw some conclusions on it later.

I shall now digress from the politics of Biriye and examine what internal politics have emerged from the Rivers State movement.

#### THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES

Besides the foregoing issues about support for the Rivers State movement, there has been a major political development - agitation for a Port Harcourt State - since the attainment of political autonomy by the Rivers people. It is this political development which suggests that the political differences between Biriye and the non-supporters of the State movement have continued.

In September 1974, thirty chiefs and other prominent men from the hinterland bloc (the non-supporters of the Rivers State movement) agitated<sup>1</sup> for the creation of a Port Harcourt State out of the present Rivers State. In December 1974 the agitation for a Port Harcourt State was intensified. A petition<sup>2</sup> signed by seventy four local dignitaries (including three cabinet

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<sup>1</sup>See Nigerian Tide. (September-November 1974 editions)

<sup>2</sup>The Case for Creation of Port Harcourt State within the Federal Republic of Nigeria. (Petition addressed to General Gowon)  
Port Harcourt, 1975.

ministers, notably Messrs. N. Nwanodi, E. Kobani and S.A.J.Wachuku) from the hinterland bloc was forwarded to General Gowan in connection with the same matter. The petitioners, led by the three ministers, represented the complaints and wishes of their people.

There were three major complaints<sup>1</sup> of the petitioners. Firstly, that in the first development plan (1970-74), most of the projects were located in the riverine areas. Secondly, they accused the Governor of parochialism and maladministration. Thirdly, the agitators concluded that because the administrators from the riverine bloc outnumbered their counterpart from the hinterland bloc, the sympathies of the administrators from the riverine bloc lie with their people. Hence, it is argued, most of the projects are located in the riverine area. Therefore since May 1975 the demand for a Port Harcourt State has become more uncompromising, especially among the three cabinet ministers.

In their petition to General Gowan, the agitators drew special attention to road and inland water transport projects<sup>2</sup> in the development plan. The major criticism of the agitators was that, compared with the hinterland bloc, not only did the riverine bloc benefit more from the riverine transport project, but most of the road projects which ought to be concentrated in the hinterland areas were located in the riverine areas. In short, their argument was that if the riverine people should benefit more from the water transport projects, the hinterland bloc expected equal benefit from road projects.

Therefore in the opinion of the agitators it is only in a state of their own (a Port Harcourt State) that their interests would be adequately protected;

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>The petitioners also alleged that most of the other projects, namely, new schools and new hospitals are located in the riverine areas. See The Case for Creation of Port Harcourt State within the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Op. cit. p.5

besides, the pace of development would be faster in a new state. In short their argument was that the creation of a Port Harcourt State was the only cure for the relative underdevelopment of the hinterland communities.

However, in Nigeria (and in most parts of Africa) the agitation for new states is a common phenomenon. Among the different groups, allegations regarding imbalance in the distribution of resources are also common. No matter the number of states created - especially in Nigeria where there are several minorities - some groups will still consider themselves minorities and clamour for separate states of their own. In short there can be no end to the question of minorities.

Yet as will be shown in what follows, the demand for a Port Harcourt State is not just centred on the distribution of resources. There are other issues concerning (i) the 'location of power' in the cabinet, and (ii) good conduct in administration.

Firstly, it is implicitly alleged that an important military figure, notably the Governor, has placed the interests of his people (the Nembe) above State interest. It is alleged that particular attention has been paid to the development of Nembe in spite of the fact that all other areas need to be developed. Obviously, as will be seen in the next chapter, the people expect higher standards of political conduct from the military (compared with the civilians) especially as the military say theirs is an impartial and corrective government. The question is: if the military are as parochial as the petitioners suggest, which future civilian government would correct the ills of the former civilian administration? There is little hope that a civilian administration would do better than a military government - at least, the people think in this way.

Secondly, as shown already, the petitioners are led by three cabinet ministers. It is therefore clear that the three ministers (from the hinterland bloc) who form the 'opposition party' differ politically with their cabinet colleagues on an important political issue. But normally one

would have assumed that decisions about the execution of the development plan were taken by the cabinet acting as a team. In the light of the present open split in the cabinet - regarding the allocation of resources and the agitation for a Port Harcourt State - it appears that the principle of collective responsibility is weakly enforced or non-existent in the Rivers State administration. It will also be seen (both in this chapter and the next) that, in the cabinet, power is concentrated in the hands of some dominant figures.

Thirdly, regarding the distribution of resources, the allegations about injustice are complex. Certain questions arise from these allegations. Should, or can, each of the two blocs be developed in isolation from the other? If the two blocs are an integral part of one state, should resources be distributed on the bases of population statistics, need, or any other criteria? Generally it will be seen later on in this chapter that the political arithmetic is a difficult one to work out.

Finally, a major question is: as far as the hinterland people are concerned, would the promise of an equitable distribution of resources (as implicitly promised by the agitators) give the Port Harcourt State movement an appeal which the present Rivers State administration has allegedly lost? This question will be examined briefly in the later sections of this chapter.

#### EXAMINING THE COMPLAINTS

I shall now examine the question of injustice in the allocation of resources regarding transport projects in particular.

There is no doubt that in view of its "topography" (see Chapter 2), the Rivers State requires an effective coordinated road and water transport network, not only to ease the transport problems but for purposes of produce evacuation and facilitating internal trade among the various communities. Hence in the first development plan period, seven major state roads<sup>1</sup> (See Table 3)

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<sup>1</sup>The roads referred to are either Trunk A or B roads; they are therefore distinct from the county council roads discussed in Chapter 4.



TABLE 3

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON STATE ROAD PROGRAMME1970-71

<u>Name of Road</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>
1. Port Harcourt - Elele - Ahoada	£ 820,000
2. Elelenwa - Bori - Kono	800,000
3. Ahoada - Degema - Buguma	560,000
4. Ahoada - Yenagoa	720,000
5. Ahoada - Omoku - Okwuzi	440,000
6. Yenagoa - Cloibiri - Nembe	1,000,000
7. Igbogene - Polaku - Odi	450,000
* 8. Survey of new roads (in Riverine area)	500,000
* 9. Plant and Equipment	200,000
Total:	<u>£5,490,000</u>

NOTE: Names of roads do not go beyond item 7.

The mark \* refers to expenditure only.

TABLE 4

AREAS (Hinterland and Riverine) in which ROADS ARE LOCATED

<u>AREA</u>	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>
<u>HINTERLAND</u>	
1. Port Harcourt - Elele - Ahoada road	£ 820,000
2. Elelenwa - Bori - Kono road	800,000
3. Ahoada - Omoku - Okwuzi road	440,000
TOTAL	<u>£2,060,000</u>
<u>RIVERINE</u>	
4. Ahoada - Degema - Buguma road	£ 560,000
5. Ahoada - Yenagoa road	720,000
*6. Yenagoa - Oloibiri - Nembe road	1,000,000
*7. Igbogene - Polaku - Odi road	450,000
Survey of new roads	500,000
	<u>£3,230,000</u>

NOTE: i) The mark \* stands for new roads.

ii) The two roads, namely, Ahoada - Degema - Buguma and Ahoada - Yenagoa are grouped as belonging to the riverine areas because Ahoada (a hinterland town) serves only as the terminus.

TABLE 5EXPENDITURE ON INLAND WATER TRANSPORT

<u>ITEMS</u>	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>
i) Construction of Jetties	£ 500,000
ii) Purchase of Training Launches	300,000
iii) Rivers State Transport Corporation's Projects:	1,200,000
	<hr/>
TOTAL:	£2,000,000

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE

Hinterland Bloc Projects:	£2,060,000	(Roads)
Riverine Bloc Projects:	i) 3,230,000	(Roads)
	ii) 2,000,000	(Inland Waterways)

TOTAL:

Hinterland bloc Projects	£2,060,000
Riverine bloc Projects	5,230,000

SOURCE (Tables 3 - 5)

Ministry of Economic Development and Reconstruction:  
August 1970.

For data, see Rivers State First Development Plan.  
op. cit. pp. 54-59.

were either constructed or reconstructed. Of this number, only two roads were newly constructed all of which are in the riverine areas, namely, the Yenagoa-Oloribiri - Nembe road and the Igbogene - Polaku - Odi road. The other five roads were constructed prior to the creation of the Rivers State. Therefore, in the first plan period, these roads were only reconstructed. In the first plan period, the capital expenditure on these state road projects totalled £5,490,000. (See Table 3).

If one were to divide these roads strictly into their areas of location (hinterland or riverine), it will be seen that three roads were located in the hinterland areas, as against four in the riverine areas. (See Table 4) The capital expenditure on roads in the hinterland and riverine areas totalled £2,060,000 and £3,230,000 respectively. In short, about 40 per cent of the capital expenditure incurred on road projects was spent on the hinterland areas, as against 60 per cent for projects in the riverine areas. The capital expenditure on inland water transport projects totalled £2,000,000. (See Table 5). From these two sets of expenditure - road and inland water transport projects - it appears that projects in the riverine and hinterland areas claimed approximately 70 per cent and 30 per cent respectively of the total capital costs.

Again, if one were to take the population of the different communities into account in distributing the resources of the state, inevitably most of the projects will be located in the riverine areas since the riverine people constitute about two-thirds of the population of the state. Therefore, it will be seen that even if the agitators argued that population statistics should be one of the key indices for determining the proportion of group benefits, the percentage benefits received by the two groups appears to be an equitable deal. I am, however, aware that group benefits cannot be calculated in such strict arithmetical proportions. Nevertheless, as seen in Chapter 1, if a representative bureaucracy is sought, the benefits for each group must be determined partly by population statistics and partly by other considerations, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

However, a difficult question arises at this stage. How can one talk as if state transport projects belong exclusively to either the riverine or hinterland people? After all, roads, jetties and river crafts cannot be used exclusively either by the hinterlanders or the riverine people. Both groups benefit from the use of the projects. Nevertheless, by the nature of their geographical settlements, riverine and hinterland people tend to patronise and use such projects which have a direct bearing on the immediate transport needs in their localities. Hence one would expect people in the riverine and hinterland areas to benefit more from transport projects in their respective areas. However, in terms of the overall benefits derived from the use of transport projects, it is misleading to classify people into hinterland and riverine blocs - as if both riverine and hinterland people do not jointly benefit from these projects.

#### OFFICIAL REASONS

Contrary to the allegations of injustice in the distribution of resources, for its part, the government has given some reasons for the execution of the transport projects. According to the government<sup>1</sup>, the roads selected for construction or reconstruction are the main material roads in the state, and the projects were executed to ensure quick evacuation of produce from the hinterland to the ports. Furthermore, the roads were constructed or reconstructed to ensure direct road links between the state capital and the divisional headquarters, and also to facilitate the movement of heavy construction plants and equipment for the improvement of secondary roads and general development work in the rural areas.

Indeed, efforts have to be made in linking the various villages and towns in the State not only for economic reasons but also for purposes of facilitating communication. The transport network in either of the two blocs cannot be developed without considering the needs of the other. The need for

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<sup>1</sup>See Rivers State First Development Plan. Op. cit. pp. 53-57

improving the general transport network is self-evident, hence projects in the transport sector had the highest priority in the first development plan, with a vote of about £7.5 million. This sum of money accounted for about 22 per cent of the total expenditure on projects in the plan.

Besides, if the Rivers State is to exist as an integral part of the Nigerian Federation, the State will be linked with other states in the federation.

The Port Harcourt - Elele - Ahoada road and the Yenagoa - Oloibiri - Nembe road link the Rivers State with the East Central State and the Mid West State respectively. From the foregoing, it is misleading to give cash values to the projects in each of the two blocs as if the projects are exclusively the property of any of the two blocs. Therefore one cannot refer to the projects in terms of the percentage benefits derived by the people in each of the two blocs.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

There appear to be certain considerations inherent in the allegations about the maladministration in the State and the parochialism of the Governor. It is suggested that the Governor is parochial largely because Nembe, his home town, is one of the major beneficiaries in the road projects. Hitherto, Nembe was only accessible by water (see Chapter 2). For the Nembe people, the Yenagoa - Oloibiri - Nembe road reduces to a minimum the tedious journeys along the creeks, rivers and swamps. Therefore, the construction of the Yenagoa - Oloibiri - Nembe road, at a cost of £1 million (the costliest project in the plan), appeared to have angered the agitators who might possibly have preferred such a large sum of money to be spent on other projects in the hinterland areas. The allegations of maladministration appear to be directed at the Governor, possibly because of the supreme position he occupies - a position which, it is believed, has been exploited to the advantage of the Nembe people.

However, given the general need for improving the communication network in the State, it is difficult to prove that the construction of a road, or roads, in any particular locality reflects parochialism on the part of the policy-makers.

As I have argued earlier on, roads are constructed for the benefit of all towns and villages in the State.

QUESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS ON THE CASE FOR A NEW STATE

If the major reason for the agitation for a Port Harcourt State centres on imbalance in the distribution of resources between the two blocs, why should the three cabinet ministers<sup>1</sup> who are leading the new state movement not be able to sort out these questions of imbalance with their colleagues in the cabinet? If the three ministers are in positions of responsibility why have they petitioned General Gowon rather than sorting out their differences with their colleagues internally?

One is inclined to think that major political differences between communities or blocs are not easily resolved in the cabinet because first and foremost, most cabinet ministers see themselves as their people's solicitors. Therefore it would be difficult for ministers to be objective and impartial while discussing matters in which their communities are interested parties, especially in view of the communal frenzies which are characteristic of Nigerian politics. Because of the difficulties in formulating 'consensus politics', the three cabinet ministers might have considered it necessary to ask Governor Gowon to intervene in the matter. In federal constitutions, it is only a Head of State who can mediate when there are major political differences between regional/state cabinet ministers. Therefore by inviting General Gowon, the three commissioners appeared to have adopted a constitutional approach in the matter.

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In May 1975, the three commissioners were detained in Port Harcourt for alleged subversive activities - the demand for a Port Harcourt State. See West Africa. 2nd June 1975. p. 646.

Also in June and July 1975, the three commissioners resigned their cabinet appointments when the misunderstanding between them and the Governor deepened.

For details about Nwanodi's (Attorney General) resignation, see West Africa. 16th June 1975. p. 702; and for the facts about the other two commissioners, see West Africa. 7th July, 1975. pp. 793-94.

There is cause to believe that, to a great extent, the Rivers State Executive Council is an impotent body. The Governor appears to enjoy an unusual measure of autonomy in relation to his council whose members are his personal appointees. If the Executive Council were not an impotent body, perhaps the major political differences between the three commissioners and the Governor might have been resolved without showing open dissension. Both Tsaro Wiwa (see Chapter 3) and Chief Biriye had pointed out this fact: that the Executive Council is an *impotent* body, and that the Governor is not politically tolerant. In cases of political disagreement between the Governor and his commissioners, the frequency with which the former dismissed his cabinet ministers - notably Tsaro Wiwa,<sup>1</sup> Chief Oriji, Chief Biriye, Mr. Orike, and Dr. Obi Wali<sup>2</sup> - also inclines one to agree with the views that the Governor is politically intolerant and that the Council is a powerless<sup>3</sup> body.

At this stage, certain conclusions could be reached on the agitation for a Port Harcourt State. Firstly, like all politicians, most of the cabinet ministers<sup>4</sup> seek specific favours for their people, in response to local demands (see Chapter 7) for equity in the distribution of state resources.

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter 7.

<sup>3</sup>By the nature of their superordinate authority, military governments are perhaps in a stronger position (compared with their civilian counterparts) to reduce the powers of the cabinet ministers. Again, the Military Governors are powerful because they can only be removed from office by the Head of State, not the people. At least in the ~~Qwon~~ <sup>Qwon</sup> regime, the Governors have enjoyed such immense power. In fact, the Governors were believed to have ruled the states as their personal estates.

<sup>4</sup>As already discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, the patrons champion their people's causes because they are the key policy makers in Port Harcourt. For their people too, the patrons are often the main source of protection and security - for a discussion on this matter, see Scott's paper, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in S.E. Asia." APSR Vol. 66 1972. pp. 91-94.



Secondly, because the primary issue which has generated the demand for political autonomy concerns the distribution of resources - a matter which is of great interest to the people - the agitators for a Port Harcourt State can expect support from their people. After all, in such political matters, the patron<sup>1</sup> is the chief spokesman for the community, and to a great extent the patron defines and determines what constitutes the interest of his people. Besides, support for a new state<sup>2</sup> could be expected partly because of the millenium which the people would expect in a new state and partly because of the common local assumption that political autonomy paves the way for people to have full control of their affairs. At least it would be hoped that in a new state, there would be no more 'hand-downs' from Port Harcourt.

Thirdly, the recent political agitation shows that, for some time, the political relationships between the two blocs has been a delicate one. The relationship between the two blocs has been one of convenience and uneasy compromise. Obviously, the people in the two blocs cannot coexist peacefully unless the principle of equity (see Chapter 7) is seen to apply in the allocation of resources.

The fourth conclusion is related to the third. The cultural and political differences between the riverine and the hinterland people, coupled with the failure of the Executive Council to deal with matters regarding imbalance in the

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<sup>1</sup>It will be recalled that the patrons have become the manipulators of patronage offices, loans and contracts - resources which they distribute to their faithful followers.

<sup>2</sup>if it is hoped that political autonomy would pave the way for accelerated development and an even distribution of resources, some questions remain to be answered. How many of the masses really understand the issues involved in these agitations, and of those who understand, how many can make independence work? Or must independence be fought for just for the sake of it?

distribution of resources,<sup>1</sup> have undoubtedly stimulated feelings of bloc particularisms.<sup>2</sup> Therefore one can conclude that the greater the cultural differences between communities,<sup>3</sup> and the more these differences coincide with bloc particularisms, the greater the likelihood of violent communal strife, especially in conditions of rapid social, political and economic changes.

Having discussed the agitation for a Port Harcourt State, resulting from disputes over the distribution of resources, I shall return now to examine what Biriye<sup>5</sup> thinks about the future of the State he helped to create.

<sup>1</sup>In Nigeria, resource allocation has tended to reflect and reinforce the fragmented pattern of cultural loyalties. This fact is well discussed by K.N.J. Post in his book The Nigerian Federal Elections of 1959. London. 1963. p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Compare with Richard Sklar's study of 'The Case for Ethnicity as a source of National Integration'. See Sklar's work "The Contribution of Tribalism to Nationalism in Western Nigeria." Journal of Human Relations. Vol. 8, 1960. pp. 407-415.

<sup>3</sup>The relationship between ethnicity and nation-building in Africa is succinctly discussed by René Lemarchand in his paper 'Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa : Competing Solidarities in Nation Building.' APSR. vol. 66. 1972. pp. 68-90.

<sup>4</sup>Perhaps one can also argue that one of the effects of General Gowon's promise to create more states (a point outlined in his October 1, 1972 broadcast to the nation) has been to exacerbate communal tensions in most of the existing states. In recent times, there had been strong agitations by some groups to break away from their present states - the Rivers, Western, East Central and Mid Western States have been particularly affected by these agitations.

<sup>5</sup>Biriye made no comments about the recent agitation for a Port Harcourt State. However, having fought very hard for the creation of the Rivers State, obviously one would imagine that Biriye would be opposed to splitting his empire.

THE FUTURE

In spite of Biriye's contributions, his views about the political future of the State have become controversial in recent times. He is not very optimistic<sup>1</sup> of the future of the Rivers State. Why? He maintains that the implementation of development projects in the State is slow, and that the government is more interested in making promises to the people than in fulfilling these promises. Even before his dismissal, he often spoke about the government as if he was not a partner. He refers to the present military regime in the State as a 'government of promises'. He is also very worried that the present regime cannot sustain the State, because it has failed to infuse any political consciousness into the people.

To Biriye, the Rivers State has no 'political soul'<sup>2</sup> at present because it has no life. He does not believe that under a military government, the people could derive any political satisfaction. A military government is ruling at present, he admits, but the sense of values (the placing of priorities) of the present Military Governor is defective. He makes further allusions to the corruption<sup>3</sup> of the Military Governor, arguing that the Governor serves himself, not the people, contrary to the ethics of a good and popular government.

Biriye emphasises this point arguing that because of these corrupt practices, no audited reports of Government House (the office of the Governor) account has been issued since the State was created.

<sup>1</sup>It will, however, be observed that Biriye's pessimism does not appear to be consistent with what he said earlier on: that the 'Rivers State has come to stay'.

<sup>2</sup>This is Biriye's expression.

<sup>3</sup>It is alleged that recently Biriye made a public statement at Aluu, Rivers State, accusing the Governor of maladministration and misappropriation of government funds meant for building Customary courts in the State. Biriye is to appear in court soon to testify to these charges. See West Africa. 13th January 1975. p. 53.

Considering recent political developments in the state, Chief Biriye's allegations on corruption appear to have some foundation. Recently, some prominent Rivers State chiefs petitioned<sup>1</sup> the Head of State, General Gowon, emphasising that the Rivers State government had made financial provision in its annual budget for non-existent bodies such as customary courts. The chiefs further called on public organs and functionaries (apparently referring to the Military Governor) to accommodate 'fair comments' whenever public functionaries were criticised.

In a State where people, especially most chiefs who hold office at the sufferance of the Governor, fear political reprisals if they accused top public servants of corruption, one may reasonably infer that highly placed officials such as the Governor are being reproached in these allegations. Chiefs rarely participate in such public discussions, accusing Governors of maladministration and corruption, but when they openly defy the conventions of political neutrality (as in the recent accusations) it is difficult to dismiss these accusations as baseless. The chiefs must no doubt be aware of the implications of their accusations. Furthermore, diplomacy on the part of chiefs restrains them from mentioning names of corrupt officials. If the chiefs were not to exercise this restraint, it does appear that they were making implicit references to the Governor in these allegations.

In view of these allegations (on corruption) and lack of faith in the military, Biriye considers the worst of civilian rule better than the best of military regimes, arguing further that civilian rulers understand the needs of their people better and that civilian rulers also identify themselves more with the <sup>local</sup> political system. To Biriye, the military are alienated from the common people because of the differences between life in the barracks and in the villages where the common man lives. Therefore Biriye's suggestion is that if

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<sup>1</sup>See West Africa. 16th December 1974. p. 1538

the pace of social and economic development of communities is to be accelerated, the military should hand over power to the civilians in phases: starting with partial replacement, to a total disengagement of soldiers in government. These are views Biriye claims to have discussed with the Head of State, General Gowon.

One may infer from the foregoing account that Biriye is very much 'politically minded'. In terms of leadership, he considers civilians to be intellectually superior to soldiers. Biriye is, in this sense, the true representative of the superior civilian leader. He is also proud of his contributions to the general welfare of the people. It is suggested that no soldier can accomplish as much as he has done. This is the inevitable conclusion from Biriye's estimation of the military. It is also not very difficult to infer, as Biriye has expressed it, that he has little or no faith in the Rivers State government, much less its capacity for ministering to the important needs of the common people.

#### LAND-MARK

The politics of Biriye and the NDC have been the dominant theme of this chapter.<sup>1</sup> The politics of Biriye, since the creation of the State, suggests certain conclusions.

In the first place, as one would expect, Biriye's political struggles are understood by many Rivers people as another struggle for the social and economic development of the people. Biriye in this light, represents the NDC, and vice versa.

The second point deals with Biriye's perception of the military. I am inclined to believe that commissioners can serve in any regime even if they and the government (in which they are partners) are sharply divided<sup>2</sup> on policy

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<sup>1</sup>In this context, the agitation for a Port Harcourt State is regarded as a movement arising from the politics of Biriye.

<sup>2</sup>The recent agitation for a Port Harcourt State confirms the split in the Cabinet.

matters and strategies. This appears to be typical of military government where commissioners of different political persuasion may be chosen. The principle of collective responsibility in such a government is therefore bound to be loosely applied. Nor is the loyalty or the support of a commissioner to the government enforceable, not even by the promulgation of decrees or edicts.

The significance of this conclusion should not just be seen in the context of the degree of loyalty which military governments enjoy from ministers. Rather my argument is that there is intensive and divisive politics in a Cabinet which is responsible for accelerating the pace of community development. The major observation is that the Cabinet is divided because considerations of loyalty to a party are absent. Moreover, the Cabinet does not face the threat of losing elections. It appears they are accountable more to themselves than to the people they govern. If so, the question is how will a Cabinet which is politically divided on certain major issues (and not accountable to the people) quicken the pace of local developments?

Thirdly, as we would expect, most of the local people appear to be political opportunists. In the past when the NCNC government was in power the majority of the people identified themselves (at least in voting) with that government because of political gains in spite of their desire for political autonomy which the NDC stood for. In the present day circumstances of new statehood, most local people still hold Biriye and his NDC party in high esteem, apparently because the old political order (NCNC) has given way to the new (NDC and its policies and plans). It is striking that a change in the tide of political events corresponds with a shift in loyalties.

The fourth conclusion as to why, in spite of the group rivalries, a patron will seek the downfall of his 'brother' from the same place is indeed a difficult question to answer. While it is my opinion that protective communalistic attachments are strong, my observation is that within a community, personality clashes do arise if the patrons are of different political

persuasions. If so, because political victories are highly prized by patrons, it will be difficult for a patron to forgive his political enemy, even if they are 'brothers'. Patrons who desire to have a large following<sup>1</sup> are not accomodative of other political views; their interest is in building large clientelistic ties so that other competitors may not have a great following in the same locality. After all, as Powell has observed, at the level of the village er town, the patrons usually compete for votes and competition is an "essential ingredient in the process of aggregating clientele into a widespread network, and linking them to vertical patronage structures in the political system."<sup>2</sup> In the end, it is a question of the survival of the most able patrons. I draw this conclusion from my observation that there is very little political tolerance not only in Rivers State politics, but also in Nigerian politics in general.

Fifthly, either on the part of the politician, or the people, there is not much interest in statism per se. Statism is only a means to accelerating economic and social development of the different communities. The present division of the state into two political blocs of supporters and non-supporters of the Rivers state movement could be seen in one perspective.

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In discussing the political operations of brokers (in this case, I refer to the patron) Eric Wolf writes that their success "depends on the size and strength of their personal following." See Eric Wolf "Aspects of Group Relations in a Complex Society : Mexico" in D. Health and R. Adams, eds. Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America. New York. 1965. p. 97.

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Duncan Powell "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics" APSR vol. 64, 1970. p. 416. Adrian Mayer ("The Significance of Quasi-Groups in the Study of Complex Societies" in The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies. New York. 1966. p.103) also observes that the aggregation of clientele is a common feature of local politics.

During the Rivers state movement, one had the impression that there was some degree of unity among the different people to achieve political autonomy - because many people and groups were involved in the state-movement. Today the millenium is thought to have arrived, and the oil<sup>1</sup> profits are to be shared. Groups that were to some extent united in their demand for a separate Rivers state appear to be falling apart because of the oil profits to be shared. Relatively, there is therefore a transition from the politics of unity to the politics of disunity.

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<sup>1</sup>

One could imagine that in an oil-rich independent Scotland, a government possibly headed by the SNP might face similar problems regarding revenue allocation.





CHAPTER 7THE CABINET AND PROJECT GRANTS TO COMMUNITIES

In this chapter I shall discuss three main things: (i) the role of the Military Governor and the Commissioners (the Cabinet) in the allocation of grants to the different communities, (ii) the formulation of policy and other guidelines in these grant allocations and (iii) the local perception of these policies and the policy makers.

BACKGROUND:

As I have discussed in other parts of this work, the Rivers State, as an integral part of Nigeria, is under military rule. The Military Governor of the State, Commander Alfred Diete-Spiff is a naval man. Diete-Spiff was appointed the Military Governor in May 1967. In January 1969 after the Lagos-based Rivers State Administration had moved to Port Harcourt, Commander Diete-Spiff appointed civilian commissioners to assist him in the task of government and policy-making. Yet ironically, in the opinion of the military government, the appointment of civilian commissioners did not detract from the fact that the Rivers State was still under a military regime which was (and is) opposed to the civilian concepts of good government. At least this was the pretext for military intervention in Nigerian politics in January 1966.

During civilian rule, most of the local communities in the Rivers area often alleged that in the Public Service the distribution of grants and projects to communities was largely influenced by political considerations as opposed to the public service ethics of impartiality and merit. Patronage and nepotism, it was alleged, were primary considerations. As I have already discussed in the last chapter, the principal allegations of the minorities against the former Eastern Nigerian government and the reasons advanced by them in support of a separate Rivers State point to this fact. The Rivers State Governor and the Commissioners were fully aware of these allegations. Since the Governor and his Cabinet assumed office under these conditions of civilian complaints, it is pertinent to ask some questions about the military's new

role and policies. Throughout this chapter, I shall therefore ask several questions along these lines. Some attempt will also be made to answer these questions.

MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND ITS BELIEFS:

It is clear at this stage that essentially the military government in the Rivers State is a corrective one, like many other military regimes, intended to remove most of the abuses of the old regime - especially in grant allocations - and to create a healthier community for the people. This is the military version of their new model of administration - a new regime for a people in a new state with new expectations. I shall therefore argue that both the Governor and his Cabinet took office on the clear assumption that in the past the politicians in power violated certain definable principles of good government. I am also assuming that they (the Governor and his Cabinet) considered themselves as more determined and better qualified, by the level of their commitment to Rivers State interest, to govern than those of the old order. Indeed, when the Port Harcourt administration started functioning, the people, especially those in the rural areas, were led to believe that the Governor and his Cabinet would be the examples of good government, a government dedicated to fairness, impartiality, and justice. As good governors, they (the rulers) could also reconstruct the government in their own image, in accordance with the beliefs of which they were thought to be the model.

I shall therefore deal with five related questions in this chapter, namely, (1) What are the main features of the local political environment in the Rivers State? (2) Are the local communities not inclined to exert political pressures on the Cabinet in policy matters, and are the cabinet ministers themselves not inclined to look at administration from a political<sup>1</sup> viewpoint, -if they are to reconstruct both their government and their communities as they want in the military image? (3) What policies have been

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<sup>1</sup>Politics as the extraction of resources from government and sharing benefits - in a very competitive political atmosphere.

made in the allocation of grants and projects to communities in taking account of the Cabinet principles of good government? (4) Are there any differences in the concepts of good government as seen by both the governors and the governed? (5) From the policies which emerge and the local conception of these policies, what conclusions can one draw about the present Public Service in Port Harcourt? To what extent have local differences permeated the Public Service and what image of the Public Service has been created?

Most of the main characteristics of the Rivers State rural political environment have already featured prominently in this work. It will therefore suffice at this stage to mention only those aspects which are directly relevant to the present argument.

#### RURAL COMMUNITIES

The rural communities covered by this study do not constitute a homogenous society. As an initial formulation one can say that there are two groups of communities: the riverine and the hinterland people. But even this division into two would seem an oversimplification, nor is it indicative of any homogeneity within each of these two blocs of communities when one examines their political background and interests. Within the riverine camp, the ancient inter community rivalries and feuds still persist. These historical antagonisms still find expressions in the new administration of the State. For example, the Bonny people are angry with the Governor's recent dismissal of their only Commissioner, Chief Bariye, because they fear that without a Bonny Cabinet member, the dominance of other groups in the Cabinet will be further perpetuated. For their part, the Okrikans still regard the Kalabaris as formidable rivals (and vice versa) in the Public Service, especially in the appointment of Commissioners into the cabinet ranks.

While the Okrikans are unhappy that a Kalabari, Dr. Akobo, holds the distinguished post of Commissioner for Finance (a post ranked as second

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 2.

in command to the Governor), the other Riverine communities view the present Rivers State Administration as a Nembe administration because the Military Governor and Chief Kombo Igbetta, Commissioner for Trade and Industry (and Chairman of the State Tender Board),<sup>1</sup> are Nembe. Chief Igbetta is a cousin of the Governor and so it is generally believed that by virtue of their special relationship, Chief Igbetta belongs to the Inner Cabinet which is believed to be influencing the Governor in the distribution of amenities and grants to local communities. Also, it is often alleged that Chief Igbetta in his capacity as the Chairman of the Tenders Board awards<sup>2</sup> most of the contracts to his kinsmen, the Nembes. The Governor's position as the State's Chief Executive and the special official position of Chief Igbetta therefore incline local people to think that these two supreme positions of the Governor and the Chairman of the Tenders Board have been used to the advantage of Nembe, an advantage which is disadvantageous to all other communities. This is the subject of public gossip in Port Harcourt and its environs.

It can therefore be seen that within the riverine bloc, two levels of bitterness are generated. The first is among the different communities, while the second temporarily unites the three communities against the Nembe, who 'dominate' the top echelons of the State leadership. Yet what unites the three (Okrika, Bonny and Kalabari) against the fourth (Nembe) is that Nembe is a common enemy - even though the common front against the Nembes has in no substantial way reduced the antagonisms among Okrika and its clique.

On the other hand, the communities in the hinterland bloc live in fear of their riverine neighbours. They allege that the present regime is an Ijaw government because the Ijaws constitute the cream of the Rivers State government. (See Chapter 6). This is an obvious reference to the riverine (Ijaw) people who were first associated with the name 'Ijaw'. The special cabinet positions occupied by the Nembe form the basis of their generalisations.

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<sup>1</sup>The Board awards all major government contracts in the State.

<sup>2</sup>The Tenders Board Secretariat in the Governor's office is often besieged with such complaints. (File MGO. TBS 1973/74)

To the hinterlanders, the Nembes constitute a section of a homogeneous Ijaw clique, and they fear that an Ijaw clique would always act in concert against hinterlanders. 'Ijaw domination' has therefore become a theme which is current among the Ogbas, Ogonis and other hinterlanders. These fears have largely been responsible for recent agitations<sup>1</sup> for a separate Port Harcourt State, comprising the hinterland people, within the present Rivers State geographical boundaries. It is believed that the present dismissal<sup>2</sup> of Dr. Obi Wali, a prominent hinterland politician and socialist, as Commissioner was connected with the leading role Obi Wali was purported to have played in encouraging<sup>3</sup> political agitations for splitting the Rivers State into at least two states. Dr. Obi Wali has denied these allegations, yet these impressions have not been completely dispelled in the minds of many people. In his letter of dismissal issued at Government House, Port Harcourt, the government stated that it had "lost confidence in him and he could no longer be retained as a member of the Cabinet".<sup>4</sup> It is this loss of confidence in him by the government that Dr. Obi Wali relates to recent official allegations about his role in the agitation for more states.

Dr. Obi Wali<sup>5</sup> is one of the few intellectuals in the hinterland. No doubt he belongs to the hinterlanders modern elite class. Furthermore, his position as Commissioner reinforced his elite status; therefore in two respects he was a V.I.P.: a Commissioner as well as an intellectual. It is obvious that his dismissal as Commissioner has strengthened the fears of his people that the aim of the Ijaws is to dominate the hinterlanders, more so as

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<sup>1</sup>See West Africa, 13th January 1975.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>West Africa, 20th January 1975. p. 83.

<sup>4</sup>West Africa, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Dr. Obi Wali holds a PhD. degree in English. He was formerly a lecturer at University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Obi Wali was dismissed by an Ijaw Governor and no attempt was made to replace Obi Wali by another hinterlander. This is usually the pattern of local reaction to official dismissals or disgrace of local dignitaries. Local reaction is understandable because the fate of the community is tied up with the fate of the leader who is the ambassador in the Cabinet.

The foregoing discussion confirms my earlier argument that the Rivers State is not a homogeneous society. Apart from the historical community feuds, the present political relationships between the different communities is characterised by suspicion, fear, and conflict. No community trusts the other, the political divisions and antagonisms between the two blocs of communities and those within the Ijaw bloc point to this fact. This provides an understanding of the political framework of the present administration.

Turning to the second question, in this work, much has also been said about the individualistic interests of the different communities. This point does not need to be laboured. One can therefore draw an obvious and inevitable conclusion, as has been done before. Every community expects favours from its ambassadors in the Cabinet. Commissioners are expected to protect and promote the interests of their people. Local people do not see administration in accordance with the Max Weber and Herbert Simon models of administrative impartiality and rationality. State interests are secondary to community interests, unless both state and community interests coincide, because local understanding of politics is really in the direction of 'sharing benefits among communities'. There is no aggregate state interest, and at the local level discussions about state interests are clearly understood as the sum total of community interests. There are rarely any moral considerations of who loses in the allocation of projects and grants. What is more important is that as many as possible should benefit from the national cake. This is the political strategy of every community.

THE CABINET

In discussing the role of the Cabinet in administration, a number of general propositions and observations could be made on the relationship between the Cabinet and the local communities. The Governor has often reminded<sup>1</sup> his Commissioners that they are serving in a military regime and so they should endeavour to look at administration from a military perspective. In certain respects, the supposed military perspective differs from a public administration perspective. In terms of administration, the military views diverge sharply from Weber's<sup>2</sup> models which see bureaucracy as synonymous with governmental efficiency. The military would endorse those popular stereotypes which see bureaucracy as synonymous with governmental inefficiency - inefficiency arising from bureaucratic red-tape.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the military would describe the working of the Civil Service in the same way as Peter Enahoro did: "very elaborate steps have been carefully set down on paper amid a confusion of expert bureaucratic ambushes."<sup>4</sup> In short, there is excessive officialdom, and so the officials are 'bureaux crazy.' Furthermore, the military would confirm that most public servants are 'tribalists' even in their administration of public affairs. For the most part, the military tend to focus on their contributions which their training methods could make to the civil service. Tacitly, they claim<sup>5</sup> that they are superior to other forms of administration because of their reliability, impartiality,<sup>6</sup> prudence, rationality<sup>6</sup> and the calculability of results in their operations. Above all, they are trained to

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<sup>1</sup> Building from Scratch, a Rivers State Information Service Publication, Port Harcourt, 1969. pp. 8-9

<sup>2</sup> For an interesting discussion of the Weberian concept of efficiency, see Alvin Gouldner Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy. N.Y. 1954. pp.15-29.

<sup>3</sup> See Alvin Gouldner "Red Tape as a Social Problem" in Robert Merton, et al., eds., Reader in Bureaucracy. Glencoe. 1952. pp. 410-418.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Enahoro. How to be a Nigerian. Ibadan. 1966. p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> 'Military attitude to work' (Text of a Speech by Governor Diete-Spiff to representatives of the Rivers Community in Lagos) Lagos. October, 1967.

<sup>6</sup> ~~...~~  
Although civil servants claim to be impartial and rational in their administration, yet the military would reject these claims.



treat official matters with despatch. Therefore in view of their professional background, they believe that compared with the politicians and bureaucrats, they have more efficient techniques for realising their goals. Commissioners, more or less, have therefore been regarded as 'soldiers in plain clothes.' They are also 'civilians with military minds'; and as the Governor described them when they took their oath of office, they are men of 'ability and capacity.'<sup>1</sup> Even though Commissioners have had no military training, they have been expected to acquire these military attributes as speedily as the military supposedly did in their military establishments. I shall therefore argue that because of these military expectations from the Commissioners and the fact that they serve in a military regime, the Cabinet is - or was expected to function like - a military one with its own ideas of what constitutes sound administration (at least in theory).

Hence the Governor and his Cabinet's view of the proper conduct of administration may be summarised in the form of four sets of related distinctions. These are distinctions in the sense that they run parallel to the different local expectations of their Cabinet ambassadors, and each group (the Cabinet versus the local people) considers its views on administration proper, and reasonable. At least in theory there are two sharp divisions in the concept of what policies should be formulated in the allocation of grants and projects to the local communities.

These closely related set of distinctions<sup>2</sup> are: (i) impartiality versus favouritism; (ii) merit versus particularism; (iii) Rivers State interest versus the community interest and (iv) unity versus separatism. I shall discuss each of these sets briefly, and will relate them to relevant quotations (official speeches) from the Governor who speaks for both his Cabinet and the government.

<sup>1</sup>Building from Scratch. op. cit. p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>In each set of distinctions the model the military stand for is underlined. The local model and expectations are the other contrasts.

The Cabinet has always condemned, and made clear references to, the clannish and nepotistic<sup>1</sup> inclinations of former civilian politicians and administrators in relation to their local communities. The Governor in particular often referred to such groups as political profiteers who undermined the ethics of good government. The Cabinet, no doubt, shares the views of the Governor, believing that they have assumed full responsibility for the good government of the State.

The Governor in particular has always condemned 'clannishness, opportunism and nepotism',<sup>1</sup> stressing the importance of the principles of impartiality and fairness in any good government, especially in the distribution of amenities to communities. Like most other governments, the Rivers State Government also believes in the criteria of merit<sup>2</sup> as the principal basis of allocating grants to local communities.

As one would also expect, the Cabinet has also been emphatic in its condemnation of placing local interests above that of the State. Therefore to the Cabinet, cleavages expressed in the form of differentiation of the State into separate collectivities, or anything suggesting that the State was not one political entity, are not only undesirable, they are also evils which must be destroyed.<sup>3</sup> In short, state interest is superior to the medley of group interests - arguing that the Rivers State movement was, and is, essentially a movement in support of promoting the supremacy of state interests.

By the same logic - supremacy of state interests - the official sermon has always been: the unity<sup>4</sup> of all the people in the State is essential in order to maximise the realisation of State interests.<sup>4</sup> As the Okrika/Kalabari saying goes: 'Unity is strength.'

<sup>1</sup>Address to the Rivers State Students Union of Great Britain by His Excellency, Lt. Commander Diete-Spiff. London. 22 August 1969.

<sup>2</sup>See 'Major Issues' in Building from Scratch. op. cit. pp. 2-3

<sup>3</sup>It is necessary to ask: Why was Obi Wali dismissed?

<sup>4</sup>Progress and Developments in the Rivers State  
(End of Year Speech by Governor Diete-Spiff) Port Harcourt. 1968.

About these official appeals, one can say that neither the appeals of Diets-Spiff nor his Cabinet ministers to the people on the essence of 'impartiality, unity and primacy of State interests' is very unique - even if these appeals impress the local people. The officials are only echoing popular administrative doctrines<sup>1</sup> in other parts of the western world. After all the people need to be assured that they have a good government.

#### TESTING THE DISTINCTIONS.

In discussing these administrative principles of the Cabinet in relation to their communities, it is important to ask one question: are these Cabinet principles in tune with the political wishes and expectations of the local people? The answer is 'No'. The pattern of local expectation has already been discussed both in this chapter and in Chapters 3 and 5. We know that the Commissioner or Administrator must show special favour to his people if he is to continue to enjoy his people's goodwill and support.

Furthermore, the mere fact that in selecting the Commissioners sufficient account was taken of their divisions and communities of origin suggests that it is difficult to ignore the influence of the communities on their Cabinet ministers. In outlining these principles of selection, the Governor was also aware that almost every community wanted its own Commissioner to act as its spokesman in Cabinet. Hence he made it clear in his appointment that: "I have taken into consideration the administrative divisions of the State as well as the ethnic groupings within these divisions in making my selection in order to ensure that a fair representation of all groups is achieved."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A stimulating discussion of these doctrines can be seen in  
 (i) Ludwig von Mises Bureaucracy. New Haven. 1944; and  
 (ii) Ordway Tead, The Art of Administration. New York. 1951.

<sup>2</sup>'Principles of Selection' in Building from Scratch, op.cit. p. 8

It is evident that to the local man, a Cabinet minister or Commissioner, in any regime, is not different from his military Counterpart. In short, men in 'Khaki uniform' or in 'plain clothes' are the same. Neither is the Commissioner in the present military regime any less identified with his people in spite of military warnings to the contrary. Hence local expectations from Cabinet ministers are no less pronounced even in the present military regime. In these circumstances, it is difficult to expect that local people would not participate in the 'politics of demand'; so also would Cabinet ministers have important obligations to fulfill in the 'politics of supply'. The political importance of these cleavages will be seen in the local assessments of government policies in the allocation of grants. It is against this background that the applicability of these four sets of distinctions may be tested. I shall therefore examine below what policies have been laid down for allocating grants to communities.

APPROVAL OF GRANTS TO COMMUNITIES: POLICIES AND COMMUNITY FEELINGS:

Cabinet policies on the allocation of grants to communities embarking on local development schemes are clear and simple. In the words of the Cabinet, their concern for the welfare of the rural communities is primary. Chief Nzidee, as Commissioner for Rural Development and Social Welfare, represented the policy of the Cabinet when he said: "the establishment of a ministry responsible for rural development and social welfare is an indication of the importance which the State Government attaches to the general development and welfare of the rural communities."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Chief Nzidee stressed that "this self-help development strategy has been formulated in order to discover 'how far the felt needs of the local people can be catered for through closer coordination of both the local authorities and the State government.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Rivers State Quarterly Journal, April-June 1973.  
Port Harcourt, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Chief Nzidee. Personal Communication. August 1973.

However, in the absence of elected councils under military rule, the local dignitaries, comprising mostly the commissioners, constitute the local authorities for effecting development in their villages or towns because of their (Cabinet ministers) influential positions in the localities. (See Chapter 3). In essence, therefore, a member of Cabinet has two levels of responsibility in community development: one at the local level and the other at the Port Harcourt level. Hence these two involvements of Cabinet ministers encouraged an inflow of local politics into policy making in Port Harcourt.

This kind of local politics which penetrates into both the local and state administration of community development -- a two-tier model of local development -- has therefore become the principal machinery for community development. It is also significant that the Cabinet refers to this machinery as the symbol of 'good government in community development' because Cabinet ministers believe that this is the model which can stimulate positive action in community development, at both the local and Port Harcourt levels. Government concern for accelerating the pace of local development provides the background to its declaration of the 1972/73 financial year as 'Rural Development Year'.

#### POLICY-MAKING

The dawn of a Rural Development era in the State, dating from 1973, has also resulted in the reformulation of policies and guidelines affecting community development. Before examining these reformulated policies, it is necessary to state these new policies and consider how far they have worked to the satisfaction of the local people since 1973.

On the direction of the Cabinet, the Ministry of Rural Development and Social Welfare outlines the five main principles<sup>1</sup> of grant aid as follows.

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<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Rural Development and Social Welfare,  
Rural Development Division, Port Harcourt.

- (i) Only those projects which have already been started by the community will be considered for grant aid.
- (ii) Government assistance to approved projects will be in the region of about one-third of the capital outlay on projects that do not exceed N 6,000 (£3,000).
- (iii) A community may submit one project only for consideration during any one financial year.
- (iv) Joint projects (involving two or more communities), for example, roads, canals, bridges, health facilities, etc., will also be considered.
- (v) Communities which have previously received a grant must produce evidence that the project has been completed and that their accounts have been submitted for auditing before any further application will be entertained.

#### ASSUMPTIONS AND WEAKNESSES IN POLICY:

It will be seen that there are three major assumptions implicit in these principles. First, that any community interested in development schemes will start the project by themselves. This is the strategy of the governmental 'non-directive'<sup>1</sup> approach to local development. - based on the belief that in the execution of community projects, lineal communalism will act as the motivating force. Therefore, the official argument is that government should only stimulate, but not persuade, local communities to define and identify their own needs. Secondly, that every village or town has sufficient resources to raise at least two-thirds of the capital expenditure on any project they wish to embark on. This is inferred from policy (ii). Thirdly, policy (ii) also implies that the optimum resources of any town or village, in relation to the self help scheme, is about N4,000, because government aid amounts to only one-third of the capital outlay.

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<sup>1</sup>This approach is succinctly discussed by T.R. Batten in The Non-Directive Approach in Group and Community Work. London. 1967.

It is clear from these, especially policy (ii), that the government places great emphasis on the importance of citizen involvement and self-help. Yet it is not self-evident that every community interested in accelerating the pace of local development will start a development project in order to attract government aid because, apart from financial limitations, there are problems of selection (among a variety of projects), method and planning. On the other hand, there are still a few communities which have the potential for raising development capitals far higher than the maximum amount stipulated by the government. Therefore, it is also suggested that while richer communities will attract more grants, poorer communities will attract lesser grants because the amount of government assistance is also determined by how much any community can raise by itself. Nevertheless, several villages and towns are interested in development, but because of financial constraints, lack of directive and initiative (especially in those villages where there are few or no modern elites and big men) cannot start a project; or if they do, embark on very small projects. This was the main complaint of many villages in Okrika, Bonny and Ogoni areas in my discussions with them.

There are other weaknesses inherent in some of these principles of allocation. With regard to policy (i), it is clear that there are no restrictions on the type of projects which communities can initiate. In effect, this means that communities can initiate any project which they consider reasonable, even if such a project is considered bogus or unviable by the officials. Because this policy is an 'open-ended' one, a conflict<sup>1</sup> will therefore arise as to who (the people or the official) has the ultimate right to determine whether a particular project should be initiated or not, and if so, when will a decision on this matter of desirability be taken: is it before a project is initiated or after? If the decision or advice of the

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<sup>1</sup>For example, as will be seen later, many communities have built town halls. The officials have always persuaded the communities to take interest in other more 'profitable' type of projects.

official prevails, why must the people accept it, and vice versa? Yet it is clear that no matter the pretence that these projects are community projects and that the decisions are purely the responsibility of the people, the people, no doubt, will rely heavily on government for grants. Ironically, not every project will qualify for grant. Then one is inclined to think that since it is the official who gives the grant, the official decision or advice (on the desirability of a project) will in many cases prevail - even if it is in conflict with local wishes. The question is then posed: in situations of such possible conflict between local and official wishes, how far does the official principle of the 'non-directive' approach to local development apply?

It is also suggested by these Cabinet policies that equity is the goal - that is, fairness to all communities. But the problem is: what is equity in these policies or how is it seen? As I have already argued all communities do not have equal resources, nor is there even an equal desire on the part of all communities to initiate projects. If grants are given to the richer communities that initiate projects (and approved by the officials) it is difficult for poorer communities which receive little or no grants to consider government's policy in the light of equity as seen by the official. What can the poorer communities do to attract government grant when there are no official agencies to give credit facilities to poorer communities that wish to initiate projects? Therefore, equity in this sense is impossible to achieve - at least from the horizons of the local man.

What is further suggested by the policies<sup>1</sup> is that communities will compete with one another to attract government aid. Aid cannot therefore be given to communities as of right. Conscious and positive efforts must be made by local people to qualify for aid. Yet in localities where there are strong beliefs that only the local executive at Port Harcourt can influence

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<sup>1</sup>

For example, see policy (i)



government to approve and give aid to projects, it is clear, especially in the mind of the people, that communities without 'god fathers' will stand to lose in these competitions for aid even if they qualify. Inevitably, it is in this perspective that local communities will interpret many government policies in allocating grants. This will be the pivot of my arguments in the later pages.

#### PROJECTS.

Since the declaration of the Rural Development era, several communities in the State have embarked on self-help projects, so as to qualify for government aid. Appendix 9 shows the list of beneficiaries, the type of projects embarked on, and the amount of grant approved for each project. To some extent, these indicate the resources and enthusiasm of communities interested in development projects.

Depending on those needs identified by the local people, these projects range from the construction of feeder roads and bridges, town halls, latrines, markets, wells and local craft centres. The commonest and most popular project has been the village or town hall which many local people consider as the centre of civic pride.

Local people believe, with some justification, that certain weaknesses are inherent in some of the principles underlining the approval of grants. For example, in the application of policy (ii) there is no uniformity in the amount of grant which may be approved for any particular project. In the 1972/73 and 1973/74 financial years, amounts approved for town halls ranged from N 500 to N1,800. Hence, whereas the smallest amount may be approved for a particular project in one community, the highest amount may also be approved for a similar project in another community. These differences in amount approved also apply in different degrees to several projects in different villages and towns. These differences have also given rise to local gossip that certain communities receive special favours in the allocation of grants. Some difficult questions are therefore asked: besides the initial

amount which a community may raise for a project, is it the size, usefulness (to whom?) or the importance (to whom?) of a project that determines how much grant may be approved for any particular project? Or are there other considerations which depart from the notions (the distinctions) and principles of the Cabinet on the essence and nature of good government? Some of the answers to these questions abound in the local perceptions of policy.

However, the local communities, not the officials, finally decide which project is useful to them. Hence in spite of official advice<sup>1</sup> that the construction of wells and latrines should not be given priority by the communities in their development plans, in 1973/74 villages in Bonny still considered these two projects useful and important. As I have argued earlier on in this chapter, since the officials take final decisions in respect of applications for grants, they invariably determine how much grant should be approved for any community project. Therefore, since communities depend on official grants to enable them to execute their projects, one would imagine that communities which refused to heed official advice (as regards which project is useful or important) would get smaller grants<sup>2</sup> than those communities which are 'obedient' to the officials. In effect then, one could argue that both the local communities and the officials play important roles in determining the usefulness and importance of projects to be executed. While the officials persuade the people to get their priorities right, the people for their part, might also wish to persuade the officials to approve sufficient grants for projects which they (the people) consider important, in spite of possible official disagreement.

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<sup>1</sup>Personal communication with the Rural Development Officers for Ogba/Egbema and Bonny. August 1973.

<sup>2</sup>Regarding the approval of grants, in 1973/74 Bonny people alleged that they received smaller grants (especially in respect of wells and latrines), compared with others, because they were not an obedient community. (Interview with the members of the planning committees in Bonny area. September 1973).

Comparisons of the allocation of grants in the 1972/73 and 1973/74 financial years reveal certain facts. In 1972/73, when the Rural Development year was declared, the Ogoni area (Khana) received the highest amount of government grants for local projects. Thirty-two projects in Khana received grants totalling ₦ 30,200<sup>1</sup> while the Ogbas, Kalabaris and Nembes came second, third and fourth respectively, with a total of thirty-one projects approved for the Ogbas, twenty for Kalabari and nineteen for Nembe. Each of these three received grants totalling ₦ 29,100; ₦ 22,200 and ₦ 14,600 respectively. (See Table 6).

In the following year, 1973/74, Khana took the leading position again. Khana people had twenty-four projects approved and received ₦ 16,450. Kalabari, Bonny and Okrika came second, third and fourth respectively. Kalabari appeared to have competed keenly with Khana because it had sixteen projects approved and received ₦ 16,250. Bonny and Okrika which followed Kalabari had twenty and fourteen projects approved, while each of them received ₦ 13,700 and ₦ 10,350 respectively (see table 6)

In these allocations of grants, two themes are significant to the local people. These are: how many projects have been approved in any particular area; and how much grant has been allocated to each project or area? As I have already argued in my first chapter, these local communities are much more concerned with the numerical than the philosophical approach to local development. Therefore, government policy is often assessed in terms of numbers. Why must the Khana or Kalabari man receive more grants (or projects approved) than the Okrika or Bonny man and by how many or much? These are the central questions. As far as the local man is concerned, it is this kind of assessment of policy which affects not only the image of the Cabinet ministers who make policy, but also that of the public service.

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<sup>1</sup> ₦ stands for Naira. One naira is the equivalent of the old Nigerian ten shillings.

TABLE 6

APPROVED GRANTS FOR SELF-HELP PROJECTS  
in the 1972/73 and 1973/74 FINANCIAL YEARS

<u>SUMMARY</u>			
<u>1972/73</u>	<u>Communities</u> <u>in</u>	<u>Number of</u> <u>Projects Approved</u>	<u>Total Amount</u> <u>Approved (N)</u> <u>for Projects</u>
	Khana (Ogoni)	32	30,200
	Ogba	31	29,100
	Kalabari	20	22,200
	Nembe	19	14,600
	Okrika	10	9,800
	Bonny	14	7,900
<u>1973/74</u>			
	Khana	24	16,450
	Kalabari	16	16,250
	Bonny	20	13,700
	Okrika	14	10,350
	Nembe	18	9,800
	Ogba	7	6,600

SOURCE: Ministry of Rural Development and  
 Social Welfare, Rural Development  
 Division, Port Harcourt.

Local complaints<sup>1</sup> arising from policy (ii) are that Kalabari and Nembe in particular are being treated by the government as 'special communities'. These complaints are based on the allocation of grants. It is felt, especially by Okrika and Bonny people, that because both the Military Governor and one member of the Inner Cabinet, Chief Kombo Igbetta, are Nembe, projects in Nembe area have always been approved and grant aided. These local complaints also appear to have taken into account two factors: that the Governor exercises veto power in the Cabinet and that Chief Igbetta often deputises for the Governor when the latter cannot attend council meetings in which major decisions are taken. A similar interpretation is given to the allocations in Kalabari area. Another influential member of the Inner Cabinet, Dr. Nabo Graham Douglas<sup>2</sup> (Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice), is believed to be the brain behind Kalabari's large share of the grants. It is also believed that because the Ogonis are relatively backward communities in the State (see Chapter 3) they are being treated as 'special underdeveloped areas' which need to be encouraged to keep pace with the others in matters concerning local development schemes.

Complaints and gossip have therefore been mainly directed at the Nembes, Kalabaris and Ogonis as communities which are the principal beneficiaries of the Rivers State cake. These same communities have also been marked by others as privileged communities where large sums of money have been approved for all kinds of projects because there are 'god fathers' to speak for them in Cabinet.

It is further contended by the Okrikans and Bonny people that the Nembes contribute the least to government revenue and so they (the Nembes) should expect the least amount of grants. The thesis of the Okrika/Bonny argument is that the principle of revenue derivation should be a major determinant of how much benefit communities can derive or expect from the

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<sup>1</sup>Based on interviews with local chiefs and elders in these communities. September and October, 1973.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Douglas is at present Nigeria's Attorney General. He was replaced in the Rivers State Cabinet by another Kalabari, Dr. Akobo.

government. It is emphasised that the needs of the Nembes do not exceed those of other communities, more especially as Nembe, Bonny and Okrika are all riverine communities with similar needs in similar environments. They also argue that in the struggle for the creation of the Rivers State, the Nembes did not make the greatest sacrifice. In short, in the distribution of government amenities, government should take into account the contributions of the different communities in attaining the new statehood since the theme of new statehood is about the distribution of benefits.

It is, however, interesting that almost all communities, not only Bonny and Okrika, complain about injustice in these allocations. While the Okrikans and Ibanis (Bonny) stress that the 'principal beneficiaries' rejoice over their booty in the allocations, the Ogonis, Kalabaris and Ogbas argue in similar tones: that all others are principal beneficiaries. Nevertheless, Nembe, the Governor's place of birth, remains principally accused because of the supreme powers the Governor is believed to exercise in policy making.

It is ironical that despite the assessments of policy, Nembe has never had the largest share of grants at any time. Yet the belief is both strong and persistent that the bulk of the tax payers money and the State revenue from the oil resources are used for the development of the Nembe people in particular. It is a Nembe regime, and it is a blessing to be a Nembe. This is the popular saying everywhere in the State.

#### ASSESSMENTS OF THE COMPLAINTS:

In the preceding pages, I have discussed the principles of allocation and the widespread local complaints about the alleged irregularities and favouritism in these allocations. I now ask: have these complaints any real foundation? Is there in fact any injustice in these allocations or can these complaints be dismissed merely as local gossip?

From these quantitative records of project allocations, an attempt to judge whose interests are reflected in them is difficult to operationalise

because it is essentially a 'post mortem' political exercise. Even in my interview with cabinet ministers, none ever admitted (and who would?) that in these policy matters, particular interests were protected. The protection of interests and the influences which may be exercised in policy making are usually 'behind the scene' tussles. Then how can one know how and when certain interests are protected in these allocations, more especially after allocations have been made? However, despite these problems in fact-finding, some suggestions could be made.

In general, it is possible to make one principal comment about the policies on grant allocation. There is no substantial evidence of any systematic or calculated discrimination against any community. No community was ever given a grant for a non-existent project. Complaints are about projects which were started yet received no government grants because the Cabinet was not satisfied that all the necessary conditions had been fulfilled. The question<sup>1</sup> which the local people ask is: beyond the prescribed principles of allocation, how and when is the Cabinet satisfied that a project qualifies for grant? The local answer is that all members of the Cabinet are partisan in distributing grants to communities. These are local impressions which are difficult to erase in the people's minds.

#### THE PRINCIPLES OF NEED AND DERIVATION

Again, it is not disputed that in the early years of the State administration, 1967-71, the former Brass division, in which the Nembes were an integral part, contributed the least to government revenue through taxation (see Table 7) even though on divisional basis they constituted the largest percentage of the State population (see Chapter 2). In terms of territory, Brass division was also the largest in size. It is also a riverine division, with typical riverine problems of development as discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>1</sup>This question was asked by many chiefs in Ogba, Okrika, Bonny and Ogoni areas. The chiefs also provided the answer even though they gave no convincing evidence on this point.

TABLE 7

A) STATE REVENUE FROM TAXATION ON DIVISIONAL BASIS:

Division	Estimated Revenue 1969-70	Actual Revenue 1969-70	Estimated Revenue 1970-71	Actual Revenue 1970-71
Ahoda	£ 96,000	£ 4,850	£100,000	£ 9,680
Brass	18,000	3,710	32,000	3,050
Degema	19,000	3,840	29,000	4,300
Ogoni	20,000	6,410	26,000	10,860
Port Harcourt	181,880	7,300	175,000	18,160
	£324,880	£26,110	£362,000	£46,050

B) STATE REVENUE FROM OTHER SOURCES:

	<u>1969-70</u>	<u>1970-71</u>
Personal Income Tax:	£218,121	£ 489,537
Other Income Tax:	7,276	144,526
Lincenses, Fees and Fines:	35,087	462,471
Earnings and Sales by Government Departments:	2,933	18,063
Interests:	2,817	2,326
Miscellaneous Local Revenue:	26,301	165,796
Reimbursements:	--	1,211
	£392,535	£1,283,930

C) TOTAL STATE REVENUE:

	<u>1969-70</u>	<u>1970-71</u>
State Revenue from Taxation:	£ 26,110	£ 46,050
State Revenue from Other Sources:	392,535	1,283,930
	£418,645	£1,329,980

SOURCE: Ministry of Finance, Treasury Division, Port Harcourt.



Therefore, if in riverine conditions, local development needs were determined solely by the criteria of size and population, the Brass people would obviously require the largest amount of development capital from the government. Indeed, of the riverine communities, the Brass territories are the most distant from Port Harcourt. There are enormous problems of land and sea transport to facilitate communication with their neighbours, as well as other development needs: reclamation of land for other physical development projects. The list of development needs is endless. It is in this sense that the needs of the Brass people can be said to be enormous.

Yet it is also because the needs of the Brass people are great and their population is the largest that the other communities, especially the major complainants, expect<sup>1</sup> the highest amount of tax revenue from them. Arguments about the application of the principle of derivation in sharing state benefits arise mainly from this. It is in this sense that the local complaints against Nembe have some foundation even though it is difficult to expect equal amount of revenue from all communities. Moreover, the largest community may not necessarily have the largest resources exactly.

It is, however, difficult to define the needs of communities. Every local community has numerous needs, none of them can ever be reasonably convinced that neighbouring communities have more needs. Therefore, local complaints about injustice and favouritism are bound to arise no matter how the allocation of grants are made, especially if all communities do not receive equal amount of grants. After all, in the villages government is believed to have unlimited resources, resources which must be shared evenly to all communities. The local argument is that government cannot complain of inadequate resources because it can, and should, always mint as much money as would meet the people's needs. Added to this is the local tax-payer's complaint of

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<sup>1</sup>Based on the fact; there are more taxable adults in Brass ( and so more revenue should be derived); and that large territories require more development capital than smaller territories, especially in swampy areas where land has to be reclaimed before any project can be started. The beneficiaries of larger sums of development capital must therefore justify their larger share by contributing substantial amounts to the distributable pool.

'over taxation' despite (what they believe to be) government's reservoir of unlimited resources, and they ask why government fails to treat all communities on the basis of equality in allocating grants. These also provide important explanations to the kind of local complaints generated.

#### THE QUESTION OF THE NEW STATE:

In discussing the struggle for the new state, the question is not whether this matter is relevant in providing a guideline to (or basis for) the distribution of grants to communities. The matter of creating a new state has become a very important political issue in recent times - as I argued in chapter 6. Indeed the division of the State into two political blocs of supporters and non supporters of the Rivers State movement has a peculiar foundation: distribution of benefits based on the amount of sacrifice each community made in the struggle for new statehood - that is, to each according to his industry in the state movement. This is the common argument.

The obvious rationale behind this argument is that in the political struggle, certain communities and personalities were victimised by the NCNC party and that some Rivers people who did not support the State movement took sides with the NCNC party in victimising their kinsmen. Today the millenium has arrived, and the oil wells are flowing: the state is generally known as 'The oil-rich Rivers State'. What is argued is that the new state would not have materialised if the supporters of the State movement relaxed their efforts amidst victimisation by the NCNC party. In the opinion of the supporters of the State movement, the war of political survival is over and a new state is created. Booty of war is now to be shared. Why should 'soldiers' who did not participate actively in the battle, or support the cause of the battle, share in the booty? Even if the 'enemies' of the State should share in the benefits, their proportion of benefits should be far smaller than those of the supporters of the State movement. Indeed this is a very difficult arithmetic to work out.

Perhaps these issues - 'the why of state benefits' - may appear irrelevant to an observer, but considering the emergence of the two political blocs in

the State, it is difficult to dismiss these demands as foolish and baseless. One also wonders whether those who demand sharing benefits in this way are not influenced by Biriye's moral philosophy: why should people reap where they have not sown?

Yet in discussing the struggle for the new state, it is not easy to assess which of the communities contributed most or made the greatest sacrifice. At no time was there any systematic stock-taking of losers and beneficiaries, neither of victors and vanquished. The Rivers State movement involved different personalities and communities at different times. The different phases of the struggle cannot be easily identified with particular communities; if anything, individuals such as Chief Biriye of Bonny deserve specific mention, even though Biriye's struggles cannot be described as efforts of the Bonny people. Moreover, new statehood is not only about sharing benefits, as it is locally understood. It is also concerned with other problems of effective administrative control, and the management of the economy.

Therefore, in discussing the policy of the military Cabinet in these allocations, a number of conclusions about these local feelings emerge. There is one major area in which the local people are apprehensive of Cabinet policies. This is the behaviour of the military Cabinet. Whereas in their official speeches and pronouncements the Cabinet ministers are primarily concerned with the concepts and ethics of modern public administration - such as impartiality and fairness - in the opinion of the local people the men in 'uniform' or the civilians in the Cabinet have distinct identities. Every minister is a Nembe, Kalabari or any other. So also are policies identified with the 'ethnic' composition of the Cabinet. The 'god father' is associated with almost every policy matter. Hence the cabinet official emphasis on the ethics and concepts of modern public administration has little significance or meaning to the local man, not even the principle of collective responsibility.

### LOCAL FEARS : THE BASES

In the opinion of the local people, as well as mine, there are possible sources of manoeuvre in some of the conditions which govern the allocation of grants. I do not, however, mean to argue that Cabinet ministers have always manipulated these principles. But these possibilities have given rise to local suspicions and fears that some influential members of Cabinet have a vested interest in allocating grants.

There are three main sources which strengthen local fears of the possibility of manoeuvre. In the first place, the Cabinet determines<sup>1</sup> when a project has been started to qualify for grant. Secondly, the Cabinet decides what projects should be approved and how much should be allocated to any particular project. There is therefore the possibility that certain projects may not qualify for approval. Thirdly, since a community qualifies for only one grant in any financial year, it is also the Cabinet which decides when a community may apply for another grant on the completion of other outstanding projects.

In such circumstances most of the communities which fail to receive or secure sufficient grants, as they desire, are prone to interpret their 'misfortune' (in the allocation of grants) as the insidious machinations by the 'outsider' in the Cabinet; this outsider is a 'god father' or patron from other community. These styles of local interpretations also form a unique mechanism of 'patronal scapegoating', a mechanism by which the losers in the allocation of grants attribute their failure to the evil designs of the *nepotistic* ~~nepotistic~~ outsider. In any policy matter, this style of scapegoating makes it difficult to differentiate between the real loser and the imaginary loser.

### FURTHER GROUNDS OF LOCAL COMPLAINTS

Having examined the nature of local complaints, it is necessary to categorise these complaints and state the other grounds which have given rise

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<sup>1</sup>"Principles of Grant Aid to Communities". See policies (i), (iii) and (v).

to the complaints. The complaints fall into three main categories: those based on (i) local needs and interests; (ii) the application of the principle of revenue derivation, and (iii) the degree of commitment to the Rivers State movement (loyalty). All these three have already been examined in some detail.

But there are other causes and factors which are only indirectly covered by these complaints. First of all, complaints about inequality in the distribution of grants also relate to the geographical problems of transport, especially in the distant riverine districts. Not only are some communities poorer than others - and so there will be inequality in the amount of development capital raised for projects - but some communities are less central, less accessible and therefore more remote. This means that whereas some hinterland areas like Ogba and Ogoni are within easy reach of Port Harcourt, it will be more difficult to transport development materials to the distant and riverine territories like Bonny. In effect, even if equal amounts of grant were given to these hinterland and distant riverine areas, the latter (especially those without god fathers who cannot influence the use of government boats to transport materials to their areas at no cost to the community) will be placed at a disadvantage because of the large amount of money they will spend in transporting materials to their areas. In fact, a grant may not even be sufficient to convey materials to these areas. By implication then, it appears that it will be difficult to bridge the gap between the poorer and the richer, and that between the more central and the less accessible areas.

The second point is that of 'apparent discrimination'<sup>1</sup> which is not necessarily directed at any community by government, but results from the application of the policies in general. Grants are not given to communities on the basis of population, not even on the basis of need (no matter how need is determined). This means that while the richer and the more populated

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<sup>1</sup>As seen by the people.

districts get more official grants - by virtue of their numerical strength and wealth potentials - the poorer and the less populated districts will get fewer official grants, as outlined in policies (i) and (ii) because grants are given to communities which have some development capital and are able to initiate projects.

Yet one would imagine that the needs of the poorer, more swampy, and less populated areas might be greater than those of the richer - assuming that population is an index of wealth potentials and that in terms of number, local needs are the same in all territories. Then the question is: do not the poor get poorer and the rich get richer? Nevertheless, it is not easy to suggest a solution to this problem of imbalance between the poorer and the richer. Can, or should, the government penalise a richer and more populated community by refusing to give the community any grant, awaiting a time when the poorer ones will catch up the richer ones? While such a policy may appease the poorer ones, it is bound to lead to dissatisfaction among the richer areas. The other question is: can the poorer communities justifiably attribute their poverty or even their remote geographical position to the machinations of the richer ones? These are geographical and economic factors over which any community or government has little or no control.

It is evident from these analyses that what the people consider as proper grounds of allocation are difficult to satisfy. To a considerable extent, this is how one could understand the insatiable desires of people in the locality.

Thirdly, it appears that some of these complaints of injustice in the distributions also arise from the fact that official policies are not seen to be very consistent. In fact, some of these inconsistencies relate to the conflicting interests of the different areas. For example, if official policy as seen in policies (i) and (ii) is to assist all communities which initiate development projects, how can there be a limitation on the number of projects to be started in any financial year? (as seen in policy (iii)). On the other hand if there is no limitation in the number of projects, can the government really

afford to assist as many projects as are initiated, especially when bogus projects are started? Clearly, it cannot.

Fourthly, policy (v) is also striking. Granted that all projects which have been started will receive grants, are there no difficulties in producing satisfactory evidence that proper account of expenditure on any project is given? The rule is that such accounts must be submitted for official auditing before any further application for a project can be entertained. The question of submitting a satisfactory account is itself not an unreasonable one -- at least in the eye of the official. It is a check on the misuse of government funds (who audits the accounts of the V.I.P. official?), but in illiterate societies where there are very few or none versed in 'book-keeping and accounts', how can government demands in this direction be met? And in a society where a few V.I.P.'s want to get rich by misappropriating government fund, will strict auditing of accounts be in the interest of such defrauders who are likely to stir up trouble in the locality against the government if they are probed? But must government condone such frauds by relaxing the rules of auditing? These are major problems and contradictions which are inherent in the official policies; as expressed either explicitly or implicitly by some of the local complaints. The patron, as I said, is the scapegoat in these complaints. Why is this the case? This is the query I shall deal with briefly.

#### INTERESTS OF THE PATRONS.

It appears to me that certain local values and practices have helped to build up this system of patronal identification. These values relate to the interests of the patrons in Cabinet. On the average, the patron maintains close links with, and is a member of, his community union in Port Harcourt. To mention two examples, Governor Diete-Spiff belongs to the Nembe Union in Port Harcourt while Graham Douglas is also a member of the Abonnema (Kalabari) union. Others see these union memberships as patronal identifications with their communities. Hence it is believed that the patron

is bound to fulfill certain traditional obligations to his people; and in fulfilling these particular obligations it is also argued that the interests of other communities are bound to be neglected even in official matters.

Furthermore, the patron wants prestige and goodwill in his locality so as to mobilise sufficient political support. The local value system encourages this because the local men speak highly of patrons who show favours to their people. Patrons from less developed localities also desire that their localities keep pace with others in the field of community development. Moreover, the local pressures to achieve this balance with others become greater when local people realise that their men hold positions of ministerial responsibility. There is therefore a kind of exchange model: the patron depends on his people for support while his people depend on him for rewards. That the patron, no matter his status or position in life, is strongly attached to the mores of his local society is a well known fact and so others are inclined to see him first and foremost as a Nembe or Kalabari man and only secondly as a Rivers State Administrator. It is, therefore, inevitable to conclude that the average Rivers State patron, while changing substantially in response to overall state needs and interests, has also changed the least because he still maintains strong ties with his people.

#### CONCEPTS OF GOOD GOVERNMENT.

The foregoing leads us to the fourth major question I have asked in this chapter about the concepts of good government as seen by the governors and the governed. Finally, it also touches on the image of the Rivers State Public Service.

I have already discussed the content of the Cabinet's policies and principles. It is therefore important to ask: how did these affect the Cabinet's administrative and political performance? In attempting answers to this question, there will be no comparison between the present military Cabinet's performance and that of any civilian regime. Apart from the general difficulties in establishing the bases for comparisons, it is not



very clear how much better or worse the present Cabinet is. Circumstances - both political and economic - are different. Moreover, the present Rivers State Cabinet did not directly succeed any government. In many respects, it is a pioneer Cabinet. My answers will therefore be purely contextual and I shall suggest a number of ways in which some differences have arisen between the governors and the governed in the concepts of good government.

There is nothing unique about the cabinet policies<sup>1</sup> and principles. They are largely similar to Herbert Simon's and the Weberian administrative principles and models: impartiality, neutrality, efficiency, national objectives and modern administrative principles. Whether or not the Cabinet really believed in these principles is difficult to say, at least one may hazard a guess, indeed a difficult and risky guess.

It is clear that Cabinet Ministers have close connections with their people; therefore it is difficult for the Ministers to be completely insensitive to political demands of their people, especially when local needs are great and the pressures persistent. This model of expectations between the people and their ministers makes it very difficult for a non-committed executive to function.

The political background of some of the Cabinet Ministers also gives some understanding of how far they can be committed to state or community interests. Chief Biriye is described as a career politician. He has been in politics since the 1940's. It is speculated in some circles in Port Harcourt

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In examining these policies of the Cabinet, perhaps one might say that there is a confusion of political and administrative roles. However, the fact is that in policy-making, it is difficult to draw a sharp distinction between the politicians and the senior civil servants because the latter advise the former. Hence the line between making and administering policy is a shadowy one. As Richard Rose argued, "the difference between ministers and senior civil servants is not that between policy makers and administrators. It is a distinction between those who are primarily partisan and those who are primarily non-partisan. Both are deeply involved in politics." See Richard Rose Politics in England. London. 1965. p. 183.

that he may seriously consider returning to politics (whenever the army hand over power to civilians) so as to vindicate his commitment to the Rivers State cause and also to take vengeance<sup>1</sup> on his critics. There are similar speculations concerning Governor Diете-Spiff who is ranked as Nembe's 'number one citizen' by virtue of his present political status. The Ogoni Commissioners, Edward Kobani and Chief Nzidee, were also politicians before military rule in 1966. Kobani was a university politician at Ibadan University where he studied, while Nzidee was a county council politician who later became the Chairman of the Khana County Council. That both Kobani and Nzidee may return to politics is also a speculation rife in Port Harcourt. These men, including Dr. Obi Wali, are believed to be organising intense secret political activities and finalising their party blue prints in anticipation of the resumption of politics.

Most of these local speculations have arisen from one theory. At present most of the Cabinet Ministers are too prominent in their localities to be able to live as private citizens on return to civilian rule. They have been chairmen of local gatherings. They have been known and addressed as V.I.P.'s and Honourable Commissioners in a society where titles of distinction are highly prized. They have also built up large clientelistic ties: clients who will always sing their praise. How easy is it to fall from such heights, and if there is a fall, how easy is it to adjust? Having tasted power in the present regime, they may find it difficult to relinquish it happily and voluntarily. What else can they do other than to aspire to stay in office? Therefore almost every Cabinet minister is suspect of being a political aspirant. Basically politics in the local societies, and the relationships of sponsor and protégé, is one of mutual benefit. It is based on 'give and take'. The speculation therefore is that these ex-politicians must be paving the way for their political career by building up large clientelistic ties now that they are in office. What has given further credence to these impressions and

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<sup>1</sup>The belief as seen in Chapter 6, is that he is already taking vengeance.

speculations is the fact that at present these Cabinet posts are denied to some local people with credible political bases, and so the present incumbents have to demonstrate their political competence and their ability to outwit other future rivals. They can outwit other rivals by conducting themselves as 'able patrons'.

In the light of these, one possible suggestion emerges - that the political ambitions - real or imagined - of most of these Cabinet ministers will make it difficult for them to ignore the interests of their people in these allocations of grants. After all, what can policies and principles achieve unless these are enforced by non-committed ministers; and indeed sometimes actual performances depart from policies or even edicts especially when the policies are of a general nature. These are the practical limits to the official concepts of good government.

Nevertheless, the Cabinet ministers are satisfied<sup>1</sup> that the practical implementations of policies is in consonance with their beliefs on the supremacy of State interests and unity, merit and impartiality (see the distinctions). Yet this does not suggest that the Cabinet ministers are able to escape the local identification of policy implementation with Machiavellianism, a kind of Machiavellianism in which the vested self interests of patrons incline them to be nepotistic or communalistic.

#### LOCAL EDICTS:

At the other pole stand the local people. What they expect from their patrons has been extensively discussed in this work; basically these are the anti-thesis of the Cabinet's official principles - though not the anti-thesis of what might be expected of a politician. The local understanding of good government can therefore be summarised as three interrelated 'MUSTS'

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<sup>1</sup>Based on interview findings with the Commissioners: Mr. Kobani, Dr. Akobo, Chief Igbetta, Chief Nzidee and also Government House spokesmen. September 1973. Port Harcourt.

which are better described as edicts. These are as follows.

The good government must satisfy their wishes by allocating as much grants as the people want. Government must advance no policies which will provoke the people; the people are provoked if official policy implementation does not favour them. If there is any genuine local complaint, the Cabinet must abandon all such policies which are unpopular to the people. That is, the government must be responsive to local demands, and the local people have the right to determine what is genuine, and how and why any policy is unpopular, including the right to explain what constitutes unpopularity. In short, just as a military government has the right to promulgate edicts and expect conformity, the local people reserve similar rights; their edicts are their wishes and demands.

It is against this background that the Cabinet and local concepts of good government can be examined. On the surface, the two concepts may appear different and perhaps irreconcilable; yet it is misleading to argue that these are two opposites. In general, the interests and inclinations of the average Cabinet minister are not completely different from those of his people, except in so far as official policies may appear on a theoretical basis in the context of the Weberian model. Both the Cabinet ministers and his local people belong to the same local society, share similar values and views regarding what constitutes the primary interest and welfare of their local community.

This is not to suggest that the Cabinet ministers, at least in a military regime, are inseparable from their local civilian counterparts. Their status as top executives is clearly recognised. My argument is that because there is a plurality of goals (among the different communities) in many aspects of policy, their separation from the ordinary local man is not in such a degree that will be dysfunctional to the patron's people. Furthermore, one can distinguish between two models of policy interpretation. The first relates to policy as seen by the Cabinet minister in his capacity as a policy-maker in Port Harcourt; and the second relates to policy as seen by both the policy-maker and the local people outside the Port Harcourt context where the primacy of local interest is little in dispute.

#### THE PUBLIC SERVICE<sup>1</sup> IMAGE

Finally, from these discussions on grant allocations, some other generalisations, no less significant, come to mind. These generalisations relate to the image of the Port Harcourt Public Service.

It may be emphasised that group politics in and outside the locality is inevitable because of the different group cleavages in the State. As I argued in Chapter 2, these group differences, especially between the Kalabari and Okrika, are historical. The present nature of state politics in which the Nembes and Kalabaris have come to occupy prominent political and ministerial positions has only helped to reinforce the past historical differences in the minds of the people. Outside the localities these differences have also become manifest in the public service, thereby providing an arena (the Public Service) where group cleavages have become noticeable features.

Local complaints arising from the distribution of grants also suggest an obvious conclusion. No government can satisfy everybody all the time, not even at any time. It appears that what the Rivers people want is a government of 'saints', saints who must be seen to be above partisan politics. Local

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<sup>1</sup>As is reflected by the relationship between the Cabinet and local people.

people see Cabinet policies as either advantageous or disadvantageous to them. A policy is seen as advantageous when it serves a good purpose for the people, and vice versa. Against these local models of good and bad policies, one may consider the official principles of the Cabinet which stress that the implementation of policies will, or should, work out well in the interest of all groups in the State.

In these circumstances, the dissidents' view would be that if the Cabinet goes on interpreting its policy principles as at present, the result would be a further divergence from their (communal) interests, especially given that there are conflicting and divergent political demands from the citizens, as is typically the case in the Rivers State. The dissidents therefore constitute a de facto pressure group in public service matters. Nevertheless, it is misleading to imply that these conflicting group demands amount to bitter rivalries; it is a less aggressive competition in which each group directs its grievances to the public service patrons.

Some other conclusions more directly related to the Cabinet may also be made at this stage. In the first place, beside the Cabinet, local people have been able to identify the existence of a small coterie of insiders in the Cabinet, a body known as a more significant power centre. These two cabinets (the main and inner Cabinets), and the identification of its members with certain communities, have been associated with two levels of particularisms within the public service where all sorts of coalitions with particular communities are possible. These identifications are largely responsible for strong allegations that a Nembe and Kalabari government is in power in Port Harcourt. The critics<sup>1</sup> of the Cabinet, comprising mostly the youths and chiefs in the localities, accuse the Cabinet of excessive parochialism in the allocation of grants to communities. Such critics dismiss the official

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<sup>1</sup>Especially among communities which are either unrepresented or under-represented in the Cabinet.

policies of the Cabinet as hypocritical and misleading. One can therefore argue that whether these local accusations are true or false, there is a local awareness of public service politics - a kind of politics which is believed to be perpetuating its legitimacy in the public service. This can be explained by the local calculations of 'profit - loss' in almost every Cabinet policy on grants; and these calculations largely account for the current linking of policies with Machiavellianism. It is in this respect that the concept of Cabinet politics is based on a peculiar definition: situations in which the principal relations are those between the manufacturer (Cabinet) and the consumer (the local people), such situations in which the manufacturer decides what quantity or quality of commodity is desirable.

There is a second suggestion largely derived from the first. That because community development has become a fetish of long standing among Rivers State patrons in their localities, a public service which is very conscious of 'development' is emerging. It is argued that the emergence of this consciousness makes the public service into an arena for expressing local particularisms because the public service is the main source of dispensing public benefits. This also provides the basis on which to understand Nembe/Kalabari and other community groupings in the Port Harcourt political system.

Thirdly, there is that strong belief, also arising from the second, that Cabinet men when considering grant allocations almost inevitably adopt a strategy of 'self-interest' because they are aware of local expectations, expectations which stress that 'you must have a patron in order to get public service benefits.' Behind these expectations, there are also local comparisons of marginal losses or gains in grant allocations. The question often asked on the comparative model is: which are the communities benefitting mostly from grants (and vice versa)?

Fourthly, it could be inferred from the local demands and expectations that the local people suggest that it is difficult for even a military Cabinet

to argue that it has a monopoly of patriotism in allocating grants. From this notion of patriotism, the question is whether patriotism means the ability of officials to make official pronouncements on 'fairness and impartiality' to all groups in the allocation of grants (as the Cabinet does) or whether it means giving priority to self interest (as the local people believe that Cabinet men have vested interests). In this context, ~~the~~ patriotism has two edges, incorporating both the official and local versions, since both versions are legitimate expressions of political thought.

From these four related conclusions and the Cabinet's promises, an observer would expect two exclusive pictures of the public service: (i) the 'rational and impartial' implementation of policies -- the Cabinet's model, and (ii) the prevalence of local interests as covered by my observations and comments on the nature of local pressures. In spite of these two exclusive pictures, two concepts of the Rivers State Public Service have become prevalent both in the localities and in Port Harcourt. The first is that the Port Harcourt Public Service is a service of particularisms. Each group is for itself and God is for all. This stems from the cleavages and the alleged self-interest I have already discussed. The second is that the Public Service is a 'free-for-all' arena, an arena in which almost every policy maker should strive to cut a large share of the national cake for his people. One can argue that the second concept refers more or less to a warning to policy makers to abandon the principles of impartiality and equity -- principles which have almost become meaningless to the local man -- and protect the interests of their people, using all available state resources. Indeed, in view of the earlier arguments and observations in this chapter, it is difficult to question the bases of these two complementary concepts of the Port Harcourt Public Service -- concepts which are opposed to the 'rational view of modern administration' espoused in the western world.





CHAPTER 8CONCLUSION.

A major theme running through this work is that local people have made efforts to develop their communities - either using their own resources or in partnership with the State government. This study has also shown that though these communities have used their own resources for development, they are greatly dependent on the Port Harcourt administration for money, equipment and personnel.

The dependence of the local communities on the Port Harcourt administration could be explained largely in terms of the notion of distributive politics which ~~was~~<sup>we</sup> examined in Chapter 1. The Port Harcourt government is the major distributing agent. And given the limited resources of the local communities, it is only natural for these communities to be greatly dependent on the central administration. Furthermore, because all the communities want precisely the same scarce resources, we have also observed that there is tense rivalry and competition among groups for benefits, as well as scramble for power in the Port Harcourt arena.

This competition further suggests that in a political market - as the Rivers State experience has shown - the government must be able to offer a sufficient amount of goods to the people, if massive support for the regime is to be obtained. In the Rivers State, the 'failure' of the government to deliver enough goods to some of the communities has led to accusations that the policy-makers have been nepotistic and communalistic in their implementation of policy.

THE INTERMEDIARIES.

How have the political goods been delivered and through whom? It is in answering this question that the indispensability of the role of 'cultural brokers' in the political system becomes apparent. In the case of the

Rivers State, this study has shown that the patron is a 'cultural broker' who acts on behalf of his people at the Port Harcourt level. He is not only a broker, but also an astute politician. Because the patrons are the principal political actors in the Port Harcourt arena, they are people who function as intermediaries, thereby protecting their people's interests.

In a society where the patrons who are local notables are expected to act as 'guardians of the people', it is clear that the protective role of these intermediaries is culturally approved. Understandably, in their capacities as community influentials and senior administrators in Port Harcourt, these patrons participate in the two sub systems - the locality and the centre - which overlap. Hence as Doland put it, the patrons "engage in integrative transmissions" between the two sub systems, "as well as integrative manipulation in order to optimise their status"<sup>1</sup>.

Of course since the Port Harcourt government is an instrument of disbursement via an intermediary elite to the people (as we noted in Chapter 1), it is not surprising that it is the patron who plays such an intermediary role. What is, however, striking about his role is that, given the communal particularisms in the Rivers State, as a senior administrator, the patron is expected to influence policies to the advantage of his people - thus creating a conflict of values, since formally speaking, administrative structures are supposed to be 'non-political'. That the patron is indifferent to rules of political neutrality shows the mythical character of this claim to be 'above politics' at least in the case of the Rivers State.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert T. Doland, ed. Comparative Urban Research: the Administration and Politics of Cities. California 1969. p. 46.

For his part, the patron appears to have accepted happily his intermediary and protective roles. At least this is the picture of the patron which emerges in this study. The case study on Tsaro Wiwa provides a typical example of how patrons act as protectors of group interests and champions of their people's cause. Tsaro Wiwa's people saw him as a patriotic citizen who worked consistently in the interest of the common man. In this respect he made representations to the state government concerning their interests. Obviously, Tsaro Wiwa did not deny the protective and intermediary roles he played in the Ogoni political system. He confirmed that whenever the need arose, he discussed his people's problems with his colleagues in the Executive Council. And in fact Tsaro Wiwa's question - "what is wrong if a commissioner presents his people's problems to the government?" - leads me to believe that he saw himself as the Ogoni representative in Port Harcourt.

Furthermore, in launching his book, Ogoni Nationality, obviously Tsaro Wiwa identified himself strongly with the interests of his people. In identifying himself with his people's interests, Tsaro Wiwa was merely fulfilling a promise he made in 1967 to his people that he would restore the 'dignity of the Ogonis'. It would therefore not be surprising if he protected his people's interests in the Port Harcourt arena when he became a cabinet minister, the more so since he believed that his people deserved fairer treatment in the Rivers State.

Tsaro Wiwa is only one of several high status patrons who play intermediary roles in the Rivers State. Like Tsaro Wiwa, other people are interested in building up large followings in their communities. Several factors seem to affect the ability of a patron to obtain a large following. First, in his position as an administrator and politician in Port Harcourt, he is able to offer at least political protection to his clients.

Secondly, because the patron and most of his clients are citizens of the same community, his followers naturally believe him to be working for the general good. Besides, since the patron himself needs the political support of his clients (see Chapters 3 & 6) it is advantageous for him to maintain his relationship with his clients. It is largely because of these advantages which accrue to both parties that clientelism pervades the Rivers State Society.

Patrons also see themselves as local ambassadors in Port Harcourt. As such their obligations to their people are clearly defined. In a wider sense, these patrons are seen not only as liaison officers, but as astute politicians who are watchful for every opportunity to advance their particular communal interests. Hence the patron is seen as an arch-communalist by those groups which do not profit from his activities.

#### THE POLITICS OF COMMUNALISM.

It is clear from the foregoing that Rivers State politics is basically one of clientelism and communalism. Local people at any rate see politics largely in terms of communalism. Certainly, in the course of inter-community competition, the disadvantaged groups perceive their competitive world through communal prisms and hence believe all other groups to be equally communalistic.

Instances in which people see politics in a communalistic perspective are legion. It will suffice at this stage to give two examples. Firstly, in elections, people vote for those candidates who are most likely to protect local interests. A prominent politician such as Biriye, who suffered defeat in the Degema East (Okrika-Bonny) constituency, was certainly a victim of Okrika communalism (as Jumbo was a victim of Ibo communalism - See Chapter 1). The point is that a rule of communal solidarity applies whenever the citizens of the community find themselves facing outsiders and involved in

the larger political world.

Secondly, whenever the implementation of policy is unfavourable to any group, members of that group see other patrons as the architects of their misfortune. In short, the outsider is always seen as "nepotistic", "parochial", "vindictive" and "communalistic", and therefore as "uninterested in ensuring justice and fairness" in implementing policy. Clearly, communalism is, in short, the dominant political idiom in the Rivers State.

CONCLUSIONS.

Having dealt with policy-making and the nature of the Rivers State political environment, what conclusions can one draw from this study? Three major conclusions may be noted. Firstly, the Rivers State experience suggests that communal particularism<sup>1</sup> - at both the local and official levels - may be a persistent feature of modernity<sup>2</sup>, and the dynamics of communalism in the State are to be found, at least, in part, in the political realities of a fragmented social order. Secondly, the boundary of politics between the locality and Port Harcourt is thin because the major participants in local politics are also senior state officials. Therefore there is an infiltration of local politics into the Port Harcourt arena. Thirdly, the assessment of policy is made within a very limited, localised framework of reference.

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<sup>1</sup>H. Wolpe, 'Port Harcourt : Ibo Politics in Microcosm' in JMAS. Vol.7, 1969 p. 492 also argues that (i) communal particularism may well be a persistent and eurhythmic feature of modernity - this runs counter to the view that communal particularism is essentially an historic anachronism, ultimately destined to be submerged by the 'universalistic' tidal wave of modernity (ii) models which dichotomise 'tradition' and 'modernity' --- do little to further our understanding of the process of change in any particular society.

<sup>2</sup>For an explanation of the paradoxical persistence of communal sentiments and communal conflicts within modernising and modernised societies, see R. Melson and H. Wolpe 'Modernisation and the politics of communalism ---' APSR Vol. 64, 1970, p.1126. The implication of their argument is that there is no necessary incompatibility between functioning as a modern economic man, on the one hand, and performing as a communal political actor on the other.

## PROGNOSIS.

What can one say about the future of the Rivers State in the light of these conclusions and our findings in this study.

Clearly, the Rivers State experience suggests that communalism pervades the whole society. And even among the Port Harcourt officials, we have suggested that there is indifference to rules of political neutrality.

Undeniably, in Port Harcourt, the pervasiveness of communalism poses a serious problem for the observance of official administrative rules. The problem arises because if the patron succumbs (as we have suggested) to constant pressures to use his good offices to the advantage of his people, it is obvious that the official ethics of impartiality and inscrutability will be cast aside.

The question is: can communalism be curbed in the Rivers State especially in view of recent experience? It appears that it is with great difficulty that communalistic practices can be curbed. Why? Firstly, the policy-makers themselves have few or no effective ways of insulating central bureaucratic institutions from political incursion, even if they wish to do so. The protection of group interests is the primary concern for most people, especially the patrons. The part played by cabinet ministers such as Nwanodil and Wachuku (of the hinterland bloc) in the agitation for a Port Harcourt State offers a concrete example of how patrons act as their people's spokesmen (see Chapter 6), even to the extent of working to dismantle the very arena in which they at present operate.

Secondly, as local dignitaries, the patrons are interested in maintaining large followings in their localities, and whether they do so or not depends on satisfying the appetites of their clients. It is therefore difficult for any patron wishing to keep his position to renounce the idiom of communalism.

Thirdly, we have observed in this study that informal patronal segments exist within the Rivers State administration, and patrons who are public servants see their positions as client-creating assets. It should therefore be expected that the patrons would exploit the opportunities in the new state as long as it yields benefits for both themselves and their people. No structural reform of the public service seems likely to change this situation in the foreseeable future. Equally, there is no evidence of any real (as distinct from rhetorical) public rejection of communalism as a tactic in state politics.

For even if some attempt were made to curb these communalistic practices, since the government is not the only political actor, it would be necessary to enlist the cooperation of the other actors - the local people. Our observation in this study suggests that, at both the official and the local levels, only a few 'saints' (if any) opposed to communalism can be found. Most people appear to profit from communalism since it serves their purposes. Hence, communalism is more of a cultural than an administrative problem. It has become an endemic disease which is likely to eat deep into the whole administrative fabric.

As we have seen, it is not a condition from which only the Rivers State suffers. However reluctantly, we may plausibly suggest that this study exemplifies a phenomenon to be found throughout (and, indeed, outside) the developing world and hope that we have here indicated at least some of the dynamics underlying communalism in one, not atypical, Nigerian State.







APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AND ENROLMENT

Year	Type of School	Number of Schools	Enrolment
1969	a) Primary	361	112,638
	b) Secondary/Commercial	15	4,437
	c) Teacher Training	1	23,232
	d) Technical/Vocational	1	552
1970	a	409	151,000
	b	21	7,872
	c	3	470
	d	2	627
1971	a	560	160,000
	b	36	11,000
	c	5	900
	d	2	650
1972	a	565	180,000
	b	38	16,000
	c	6	1,000
	d	5	1,500
1973	a	570	233,000
	b	39	17,000
	c	10	1,350
	d	6	1,650
1974	a	588	244,000
	b	48	18,000
	c	10	2,000
	d	6	1,600

KEY: The letters: a, b, c, and d stand for:  
 Primary  
 Secondary/Commercial  
 Teacher Training and  
 Technical/Vocational respectively.

SOURCE: Ministry of Education, Planning and Research Division,  
 Port Harcourt.

APPENDIX 2SUMMARY OF SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Year	Number and Levels of Award		
	Post Graduate	Post Secondary	Post Primary
1970	19	296	1,978
1971	20	288	2,060
1972	100	409	2,205
1973	25	493	2,440
1974	--	--	--

NOTE: A dash (--) indicates that the figures were not available.

SOURCE: Ministry of Education, Scholarship Division,  
Port Harcourt.

## APPENDIX 3

(i) HIGH LEVEL (ADMINISTRATION AND GENERAL CLASSES) MANPOWER SITUATION IN THE RIVERS STATE GOVERNMENT SERVICE (as at 31st March 1969, 1970 & 1971)

Occupational Group	1969			1970			1971		
	Authorised Strength	Established Strength	Vacancies	A	B	C	A	B	C
<u>ADMINISTRATIVE CLASS</u>									
Permanent Secretaries	5	5	-	9	7	2	6	5	1
Under "	3	3	-	3	1	2	2	1	1
Senior Asst. " (Group 7)	13	8	5	18	12	6	9	4	5
Assistant "	31	7	24	31	16	15	21	10	11
TOTAL (All Grades)	52	23	29	61	36	25	38	20	18
<u>EXECUTIVE CLASS (ADMIN.)</u>									
Principal Executive Officers	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Senior " "	4	1	3	4	1	3	2	1	1
Higher " "	15	2	13	16	6	10	9	2	7
Executive Officers	38	7	31	44	18	26	30	15	15
TOTAL (All Grades)	57	10	47	64	25	39	43	18	25
<u>AUDITORS AND ALLIED</u>									
Auditors	12	-	12	9	4	5	10	3	7
Executive Officer's (Audit)	4	2	2	6	6	-	8	6	2
TOTAL (All Grades)	16	2	14	15	10	5	18	9	9
<u>STORES OFFICERS</u>									
Coaches	7	3	4	7	3	4	10	9	1
<u>REGISTRARS</u>									
Court Registrars	24	4	20	20	9	11	14	10	4
<u>TRADE &amp; INDUSTRIAL OFFICERS</u>									
Trade Officers	5	5	-	5	5	-	/		
Industrial Promotion Officers	-	-	-	8	3	5			
Technical Industrial Officers	-	-	-	12	2	10			
TOTAL (All Grades)	5	5	-	25	10	15			

KEY: Use of letters: A, B and C: A for Authorised Strength  
 B for Established Strength  
 C for Vacancies  
 / No Records Available.

APPENDIX 3 (Continued)Notes and Remarks:

- (i) Certain occupational groups of a quasi-professional nature have been included and the occupational groups shown are those considered to be outstanding.
- (ii) Figures for all Ministries and Departments have not been included because of the persistent failure of some ministries and departments to send their staff disposition returns to the Ministry of Economic Development and Reconstruction. In some cases, full staff lists were not kept by some Government Departments and at times staff lists were not regularly updated because of too frequent transfer of officers who were directly responsible for these matters.
- (iii) Government Departments included on the Table
- 1969: 5 Ministries (out of 7), the Sports Council, Audit Department, Military Governor's Office, and Judicial Department.
- 1970: 7 Ministries (out of 9), the Sports Council, Audit Department, Military Governor's Office, Public Service Commission, and Judicial Department.
- 1971: 7 Ministries (out of 10), the Sports Council, Audit Department, Judicial Department, and Public Service Commission.
- (iv) For convenience, posts filled in Acting capacities are not regarded as vacant. The distinctions between Acting and Substantative appointments were not (and are not) easily made in the Service because of the preponderance of Acting appointments.

SOURCE: Ministry of Economic Development and Reconstruction. Port Harcourt.

## APPENDIX 3

(ii) HIGH LEVEL TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL MANPOWER SITUATION  
IN RIVERS STATE GOVERNMENT SERVICE (as at  
31st March 1969, 1970 & 1971)

Occupational Group	1969			1970			1971		
	Author- ised Strength	Establ- ished Strength	Vacancies	A	B	C	A	B	C
<u>MINISTRY OF HEALTH</u>									
Medical Officers							106	24	82
Pathologists							4	1	3
Dental Surgeons							5	1	4
Pharmacists							36	6	30
Radiographers							12	2	10
Nursing Suptds.							36	4	32
Nursing Sisters							62	14	48
Lab. Technologists							10	-	10
TOTAL (All Types)							271	52	219
<u>MINISTRY OF WORKS LAND AND TRANSPORT</u>									
Architects	5	-	5	5	3	2	5	3	2
Surveyors	8	-	8	10	-	10	11	2	9
Engineers (Electrical, Civil and Mechanical)	24	1	23	25	2	23	23	7	16
Town Planners	7	-	7	7	-	7	-	-	-
Technical Officers	106	7	99	106	14	92	111	67	44
Works Suptds.	51	2	49	51	16	35	68	17	50
TOTAL (All Types)	211	10	191	204	35	169	218	96	122
<u>JUDICIAL DEPT. AND MINISTRY OF JUSTICE</u>									
High Court Judges	4	-	4	3	-	3	5	4	1
Magistrates	21	2	19	14	7	7	17	10	7
Other Legal Officers (State Counsels of all Grades)	21	2	19	23	5	18	27	11	16
TOTAL (All Types)	46	4	42	40	12	28	49	25	24



## APPENDIX 3 (Continued)

Occupational Group	1969			1970			1971		
	Author- ised Strength	Establ- ished Strength	Vacan- cies	A	B	C	A	B	C
<u>MINISTRY OF AGRIC- CULTURE, FISHERIES AND NATURAL RESOURCES</u>									
Agricultural Officers	15	6	9	15	12	3	20	18	2
Fisheries Officers	12	7	5	12	7	5	16	7	9
Conservators of Forest	6	-	6	6	2	4	6	3	3
Veterinary Officers	-	-	-	6	2	4	6	3	3
Agric. Suptds.	28	6	22	28	8	20	18	24	+6*
Fisheries Suptds.	7	-	7	7	3	4	3	3	-
Forest Suptds.	8	-	8	8	-	8	8	2	6
TOTAL (All Types)	76	19	57	82	34	48	77	60	23*

KEY: Same as shown on Appendix 3 (i)

Notes and Remarks:

- (i) The identifications and groupings of these professional and technical fields are not water-tight. Generally, those occupational groups shown are those considered to be outstanding.

Posts filled in Acting capacities are not regarded as vacant.

SOURCE: Ministry of Economic Development and Reconstruction.  
Port Harcourt.

APPENDIX 4STATE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES AND GRANTS TO THE DIVISIONAL COUNCILS

<u>County Council</u>	<u>Financial Year</u>	
	<u>1971/72</u>	<u>1972/73</u>
Port Harcourt	£100,000	£ 20,000
Ikwerre	18,115	6,000
Obio	10,882	6,000
Ekpeye/Engenni	11,530	6,000
Etche	12,125	6,000
Ogba/Egbema	12,340	6,000
Abua	9,960	6,000
Kalabari	28,805	6,000
Okrika	19,670	6,000
Bonny	17,343	6,000
Nembe	14,040	6,000
N. Ijaw	15,089	6,000
S. Ijaw	15,313	6,000
Ogbia	13,525	6,000
Khana	19,228	6,000
Gokana	16,987	6,000
Eleme	15,048	6,000
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>£350,000</b>	<b>£116,000</b>

NOTE: Figures for the other years (1973/74 and 1974/75) could not be given by any of the ministries.

SOURCE: Military Governor's Office, Field Administration and Rural Development Division, Port Harcourt.

APPENDIX 5COMPOSITION OF THE RIVERS STATE RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

- i) The Permanent Secretary, Field Administration and Rural Development Division, Military Governor's Office;
- ii) The Chief Planning Officer, Ministry of Economic Development and Reconstruction;
- iii) The Chief Rural Development Officer, Field Administration and Rural Development, Military Governor's Office;
- iv) The Controller of Works Services, Ministry of Works and Transport;
- v) The Divisional Officers;
- vi) The Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Ministry of Trade and Industries;
- vii) The Rural Health Officer, Ministry of Health;
- viii) The Chief Fisheries Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Natural Resources;
- ix) The Chief Agricultural Officer (Extension Services), Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Natural Resources;
- x) 16 Unofficial members each representing each of the 16 County Councils, and
- xi) The Principal Rural Development Officer as Secretary to the Committee.

SOURCE: Military Governor's Office,  
Field Administration and Rural Development Division,  
Port Harcourt.

APPENDIX 6REVENUE OF THE LOCAL COUNCILS:(A) FROM TAXATION

<u>Division</u>	<u>Financial Year</u>					
	<u>1969/70</u>	<u>1970/71</u>	<u>1971/72</u>	<u>1972/73</u>	<u>1973/74</u>	<u>1974/75</u>
Ahoada	£ 4,850	£ 9,680	--	--	--	--
Brass	3,710	3,050	--	--	--	--
Degema	3,840	4,300	--	--	--	--
Ogoni	6,410	10,860	--	--	--	--
Port Harcourt	7,300	18,160	--	--	--	--
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>£26,110</b>	<b>£46,050</b>				

(B) FROM LICENCES, FEES AND FINES:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u>
1969/70	£ 35,087
1970/71	£462,471

(C) MISCELLANEOUS LOCAL REVENUE:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u>
1969/70	£ 26,301
1970/71	£165,796

Notes and Remarks:

- i) The County Councils in the different divisions are as follows:
  - Ahoada Division: Ikwerre; Ekpeye/Engenme; Etche; Ogba/Egbema; Abua; Obio.
  - Brass Division: Nembe; N. Ijaw; S. Ijaw; Ogbia.
  - Ogoni Division: Eleme; Gokana; Khana.
  - Degema Division: Okrika; Kalabari; Bonny.
  - Port Harcourt Division: Port Harcourt.
- ii) A dash (-) indicates that the ministerial sources did not provide the figures.
- iii) The ministry kept no records of revenue derived on County Council basis. The items under (B) and (C) do not show figures on divisional or county council basis. It is regretted that the ministerial sources could not provide particularistic data.

SOURCE: Ministry of Finance, Treasury Division, Port Harcourt.

## APPENDIX 7

THE PATTERN AND RULES OF SUCCESSION TO AMANYANABOSHIP IN OKRIKA

Both the Konijus and Tubonijus accept one principle: there is a ruling family; so also are there King makers. Yet as will be shown in what follows, there are problems of recruitment to the office of Amanyanabo.

The King makers are members of the ruling family, though they are not eligible to become Kings. Usually the King makers are elders who are appointed by a joint-committee of elders and chiefs in the ruling house. When the 'Amanyanabo stool' is vacant, the King makers meet; thereafter they ask the ruling section within the ruling house to present a candidate or candidates to them for consideration.

It is customary that/<sup>an</sup> aspirant to the stool must be a chief - in Okrika it is believed that if a man is a very good leader, the Wari (house) would normally elect him a chief. In short chiefs are good leaders. Furthermore, it is expected that the aspirant should be nominated by some elders in his quarter or compound, a nomination which should be supported by the majority of the people in the quarter or compound. Later on, candidates who have been nominated are presented to the King makers who make their own choice. Nevertheless, the verdict of the King makers is not final, because both the King makers and the ruling section must reach an agreement on the selection of the candidate - to ensure that an Amanyanabo-elect is acceptable to a majority of the two groups of participants (the King makers and the ruling section).

However, besides the foregoing qualifications for Amanyanaboship, there are some other less important considerations - such as intellectual capacity, wealth and distinguished social status - which count in the selection of an Amanyanabo. This means that the qualifications for Amanyanaboship are not as clear cut as might appear to an ordinary observer.

As could be seen from these qualifications for Amanyanaboship, there are three main participants in the elections: the King makers, the ruling family, and the aspirants. Even when a stool is vacant, it takes a long time for the aspirants to canvass for support. Besides, usually there are many aspirants, each canvassing for support.

Among the different contestants, the choice of the most eligible candidate is a difficult one because of the complex nature of the considerations involved. Certain important questions arise: i) of the different contestants, who is the most suitable, and how is his suitability determined? ii) who is the wealthiest of the lot to be able to influence people and gather support, in a

society where it is not unusual for people to accept bribes before casting their votes? iii) of the nominees, who is the most intelligent to be able to attract supporters? and iv) would the nominees accept the ruling of the King makers at all times? Obviously, in recent times all these difficulties in assessing the credentials of the different contestants have made the election of an Amanyambo not only problematic, but highly political.

APPENDIX 8The Ijaw Rivers Peoples' League (Presidential Address, August 1949)

My Comrades of the Ijaw Rivers,

It is with the same feeling as possessed the Biblical father at the return of his run-agate son after his long sojourn in the world of indiscretion and whoredom that I address myself as President-General to this August body of people, the Ijaw Rivers Peoples' League, at this unique occasion. I am happy that the Ijaw Rivers Peoples' League has returned, may I prophesy, to stay, from its rather long sojourn in the land of lethargic sleep, and inertia, amidst the roaring torrents and waves and splashes of progressive march of the various peoples of our country, to the top. I say unto you all, "welcome and well-done, so far!"

May I dare to say, gentlemen, that these are no times that need extraordinary powers of oration and charm of words to arouse us, the proud sons and daughters of our brave and gallant progenitors of the Ijaw Race to concert measures and pool our resources for a tremendous, forceful, and lively drive towards self-determination as along with other virile tribes in our beloved country, Nigeria, in matters affecting education, health, economic stability, good sense of government, and other kindred factors which, together, constitute the pivot round which spins the glorious mechanism of modern civilization and progress.

We have lost the enviable niche carved for us of old by our forefathers, in the corridor of fame in the old Oil Rivers Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Like dogs, we are today assigned to pick the ignoble crumbs that fall from the master's table, which mean place is even sometimes and in some respects denied us. We are today so wholly given a prey to disintegrating forces of individualism and clannishness that we cut our noses to spite our faces, to the extent of appearing ludicrous to the eye of the world; and we have by this means, ignobly and without feeling invited to ourselves the application of the saying, "the first shall be last, and the last, first."

The surf of the dashing shallow water rolls laughing over our heads, and we remain as still and silent as real deep water. If these facts and others natal to the people of the Ijaw tribe be not motives enough to spur us to continued activity towards rising once more to keep our proud pace along with other tribes of our country, then let us break off even now, and let our memory be forever a monument of shame to generations to come; but if these be fire enough to kindle in us a feeling to retrieve our lost ground in the march of the times, then let us, one and all, here resolve to use might and main to pull

ourselves together, our people together, forgetting petty differences amongst us to recall, once more, the glory and grandeur that belonged to the Rivers People.

We learn, gentlemen, from yesterday the things to do today. Yesterday, we did resolve in this same strain, but did later rest on our oars. One and perhaps the only salient achievement of this League was getting a province of our own, the Rivers Province. A delegation of this League, led by my humble self did interview the Chief Secretary to the Government of Nigeria, here at Port Harcourt in 1947, through the Chief Commissioner, Eastern Provinces, in this concern; and soon after our aspiration materialised, we fell into sleep. This of course, was caused chiefly by a lack in our Secretariat. As this lack, I am glad to say, has been provided for by our amended constitution, it is nothing but hope that swells in our breasts. Let us now onwards sail smoothly on the troubled waters.

Our country calls us; the dictates of the times cry aloud unto us, "Arise, thou sleeping Ijaw giant! Free yourself of thy disrupting entanglements, and take thy wonted giant strides, and march unto progress!" it is only dynamic, fearless but tactful and selfless leadership that will take us far in our journey; leaders who are free and independent in profession are a desideratum. We need a faithful and loyal following; not a following saturated with fault-finding spirit, not a following like dumb-driven cattle. Let us adjust our ranks by a general election of officers, and then, let us bid ourselves, "Godspeed"

Countrymen, we are faced with problems of very intricate and frustrating complexity in our drive for self-realisation. And brains must be seated in rubber not to appreciate our difficulties. I shall be doing great dis-service to our tribe if I gloss over our faults which militate against our progress; and if we, through infatuation refuse to own these faults, and determine to make amends, we shall be wasting our powder in empty air.

I have been President-General of this League for five years since. I took over in April 1944, from our beloved father of the League, Mr. R.T. Wilcox, B.L, the first General President, and I have discovered within this period certain traits of character which fight against us. Here are a few of them: We lack the spirit of live and let live. By this lack we fail to stretch a helping hand to others who particularly do not belong to the same clan or town as we do, though of the same tribe. Many of us refuse to see anything good in others who, though of the same tribe do not belong to our clan. A good many of us have eyes only for ourselves and not for others, no matter to what clan or tribe



they may belong. A lack of the spirit of generosity towards one another amongst the peoples of the Rivers, stunts the coeval progress of our youth. We are far too prone to think in terms of clan and town, a rather narrow and circumscribed concept of nationalism.

Compatriots, before us lies the turbulent sea filled with such traits that wedge our common progress. There is nothing of general importance to be gained by the disproportionate rise of any single clan. We meet to plan and scheme, we strive, we strain, not in terms of clans, although these constitute the integral units in the superstructure of our Ijaw State, but in terms of the whole area as a State to be. Our policy should be equal, common and contemporaneous development of the area concerned.

The voice of the Ijaw race in the field of politics has been silent for long; his place has been left void for so long that even his existence is no longer felt. The recent successive political waves that swept so windily over the whole country show the Ijaw man where he places himself. In the past we had Kings, Chiefs and Leaders who treated on comparatively equal terms with rulers in Europe through their representatives; but what foul turn of events, oh Countrymen, that has so levelled us with the mire! Let us therefore rise and sleep no more until we have reached our goal!.

I thank you gentlemen for listening to me patiently and for so long. I now take leave of you to end my address.

Thanks,

E.D. WOLSELY

Ijaw Rivers Peoples' League  
President-General.

## APPENDIX 9

## APPROVED GRANTS FOR SELF HELP PROJECTS

for 1972/73 and 1973/74

1972/73

Name of Community	Project	Amount Approved	Total
		N	N
<u>NEMBE</u>			
1) Agbata-Biriya	Village Hall	800	
2) Okoroba	Town Hall	1,000	
3) Twn -Brass	Bridge	1,000	
4) Egwema	Village Hall	800	
5) Fantuo	Latrines (3)	400	
6) Ewelesuo	Reclamation and Embankment	800	
7) Okokokiri	Village Hall	800	
8) Tereke	Market	1,500	
9) Okoroma/Ologoama	Town Hall	800	
10) Agrisaba	Village Hall	800	
11) Otumakiri	Town Hall	800	
12) Tengelekiri	Jetty	400	
13) Basambiri	Town Hall	1,000	
14) Iseleogomo	Latrines (3)	400	
15) Benkiri	Jetty	500	
16) Odioma	Town Hall	800	
17) Etiema	Town Hall	800	
18) Liema	Town Hall	600	
19) Otatubu	Latrines (3)	600	14,600
<u>BONNY</u>			
1) Green Iwoama	Village Hall	1,500	
2) Borokiri	Village Hall	400	
3) Kuruama	Latrines	400	
4) Nanaabiye	Village Hall	400	
5) Agbanama	Embankment	600	
6) Epelema	Wells	200	
7) Jumbo Iselegono	Village Hall	400	
8) William Jumbo	Wells	400	

## GRANTS FOR SELF HELP PROJECTS for 1972/73 (Continued)

Name of Community	Project	Amount Approved	Total
<u>BONNY (Continued)</u>		N	N
9) Oloma	Village Hall	800	
10) Polokiri	Village Hall	400	
11) Abalamabiye	Bridge	600	
12) Bonny Town	Latrine	1,000	
13) Georgekiri	Well	400	
14) Finima	Bridge	400	7,900
<u>OKRIKA</u>			
1) Ederemabiri	Jetty	1,000	
2) Amadiama	Latrines (2)	600	
3) Abuloma	Market	600	
4) Ogbogbo	Reclamation (of land for Town Hall)	1,200	
5) Ogu	Bridge	1,500	
6) Amadi/Abuloma	Pipe Borne Water	600	
7) Wakama Village	Health Centre	1,500	
8) Obuwoeima/Opuado	Market	1,000	
9) Ibaka	Town Hall	800	
10) Ibuluya Ama	Motor Park	1,800	9,800
<u>KALABARI</u>			
1) Degeme Town	Market	1,500	
2) Kala Degema	Town Hall	1,000	
3) Sangama	Town Hall	1,000	
4) Oporoama	Health Centre	1,500	
5) Obonnoma	Town Hall	1,000	
6) Emelegho	Road	800	
7) Emago Kugbo	Town Hall	1,000	
8) Omekwe Tariama	Town Hall	1,500	
9) Minama	Town Hall	1,500	
10) Angulama	Town Hall	1,500	
11) Abalama	Maternity	1,500	
12) Idama	Town Hall	1,500	

## GRANTS FOR SELF HELP PROJECTS for 1972/73 (Continued)

Name of Community	Project	Amount Approved	Total
<u>KALABARI (Continued)</u>		N	N
13) Sokin	Maternity	1,000	
14) Tema	Town Hall	1,000	
15) Orusangama	Town Hall	1,000	
16) Adada	Town Hall	1,200	
17) Akalaga/Emadon/Oda	Road	800	
18) Tema	Latrines	800	
19) Okpo	Town Hall	800	
20) Okolomade	Town Hall	800	22,000
<u>KHANA (OGONI)</u>			
1) Ban-Ogoi Tai	Market	1,000	
2) Teka-Sogho	Health Centre	1,000	
3) Kegbara-Chara	Road	1,000	
4) Akporo Sogho	Library	1,000	
5) Lekuma Tai	Health Centre	1,000	
6) Sime Tai	Road	1,000	
7) Deeyor Chara Tai	Town Hall	1,000	
8) Norowa	Postal Agency	800	
9) Taabaa	Market	1,000	
10) Bunu Tai	Poultry	800	
11) Kono	Town Hall	1,000	
12) Kpite	Market	600	
13) Jor Sogho	Market	1,500	
14) Kaani	Town Hall	800	
15) Ueken-Kaani	Road	1,500	
16) Korokoro Tai	Bridge	800	
17) Luubara	Mat Weaving Industry	800	
18) Kono Boue	Poultry	600	
19) Wiiyakara	Road	1,000	
20) Uegwere Boue	Weaving Centre	1,000	
21) Gwara	Health Centre	1,500	
22) Tem Lueku	Town Hall	800	
23) Bara Obara	Town Hall	800	

GRANTS FOR SELF HELP PROJECTS for 1972/73 (Continued)

Name of Community	Project	Amount Approved	Total
<u>KHANA (OGONI) (Continued)</u>		N	N
24) Kabangha	Market	600	
25) Luawi	Town Hall	600	
26) Kporgho	Road	1,500	
27) Sii	Market	1,000	
28) Tuatua Tai	Craft Centre	600	
29) Bane	Health Centre	800	
30) Pue	Road	1,000	
31) Nyobe Bangha	Road	1,000	
32) Kapnor	Town Hall	1,000	30,200
<u>OGBA/EGBEMA</u>			
1) Obrikom	Market	1,400	
2) Okwuzi	Market	800	
3) Mgbede	Market	600	
4) Idu I	Town Hall	800	
5) Awa Ikiri	Road	800	
6) Umuadima	Poultry	800	
7) Obigwe	Town Hall	1,000	
8) Okpurukpuali	Town Hall	800	
9) Ama	Town Hall	800	
10) Elehia	Town Hall	600	
11) Omoku	Town Hall	2,000	
12) Kreigani	Town Hall	1,000	
13) Ede	Town Hall	700	
14) Elieta	Town Hall	600	
15) Osiakpu	Road	800	
16) Okansu	Bridge	1,000	
17) Ikiri	Town Hall	1,000	
18) Ogbogu	Town Hall	1,000	
19) Obite	Town Hall	1,200	
20) Okposi	Market	800	
21) Oboburu	Market	1,500	
22) Egita	Town Hall	600	

## GRANTS FOR SELF HELP PROJECTS for 1972/73 (Continued)

Name of Community	Project	Amount Approved	Total
<u>OGBA (Continued)</u>		N	N
23) Obor	Town Hall	1,000	
24) Erema	Market	1,200	
25) Agbada	Town Hall	800	
26) Obukegi	Bridge & Access Road	1,500	
27) Obiosimini	Village Hall	800	
28) Ohale-Usonini	Village Hall	1,000	
29) Ikri/Ama/Elieta	Road	800	
30) Ubete	Postal Agency	600	
31) Omoku/Onita	Canal (Creek)	800	29,100

## GRANTS FOR SELF HELP PROJECTS for 1973/74

Name of Community	Project	Amount Approved	Total
<u>OGBA</u>		N	N
1) Ohali Usomini	Library	800	
2) Ibewa	Village Hall	1,000	
3) Idu-Osobile	Village Hall	1,000	
4) Aggah	Market	1,000	
5) Ohiouga	Village Hall	1,000	
6) Obukegi	Road	800	
7) Obiebe	Village Hall	1,000	6,600
<u>BRASS (NEMBE)</u>			
1) Kongho	Market	1,000	
2) Aparanbio	Road and Bridge	500	
3) Akassa	Market	1,000	
4) Minibelen	Road and Bridge	500	
5) Minibio	Road and Bridge	500	
6) Ben Kiri	Village Hall	500	
7) Sangama	Road	400	
8) Sabatoru	Town Hall	1,000	
9) Kalaibileama	Latrines (5)	300	
10) Enyuwuama	Town Hall	600	
11) Obiata	Latrines	300	
12) Oruokolo/Fununu	Road and Bridge	400	
13) Sangapiri	Jetty	600	
14) Dumoebikuma	Jetty	600	
15) Fekorukiri	Jetty	600	
16) Iwoama	Latrines	300	
17) Agada	Latrines	300	
18) Dienra	Latrines	300	9,800
<u>BONNY</u>			
1) Borokiri	Village Hall	600	
2) Dan Jumbo	Bridge	1,500	
3) Banigo Iselegono	Bridge	500	
4) Degema Abbey	Embankment	500	

## GRANTS FOR SELF HELP PROJECTS for 1973/74 (Continued)

Name of Community	Project	Amount Approved	Total
<u>BONNY (Continued)</u>		N	N
5) Green Iwoama	Town Hall	500	
6) Kalaibiana	Latrines (2)	400	
7) Oloma	Town Hall	500	
8) Sangamabie	Village Hall	1,000	
9) William Jumbo	Village Hall	1,300	
10) Agbalama Oke Jumbo	Wells (3)	500	
11) Polokiri	Village Hall	600	
12) Egelebie	Latrines (2)	200	
13) Peterside	Bridge	1,500	
14) Halliday	Latrines	200	
15) Oluokolo	Wells (3)	200	
16) Beresiri	Latrines	200	
17) Kuruama/Ewoama	Bridges	1,500	
18) Abalamabie	Town Hall	1,000	
19) Jumbo's Iseleogono	Village Hall	600	
20) Georgekiri	Jetty	400	13,700
<u>KALABARI</u>			
1) Ifoko	Town Hall	1,000	
2) Krakrama	Town Hall	500	
3) Bille	Health Centre	1,750	
4) Obuama	Jetty	500	
5) Old Bakana	Town Hall	1,000	
6) Kala Degema	Town Hall	500	
7) Kula	Town Hall	1,000	
8) Angulama	Town Hall/ Postal Agency	1,000	
9) Abonnema	Town Hall	1,800	
10) Minama	Town Hall	1,000	
11) Ke	Health Centre	1,500	
12) Sama	Town Hall	1,000	
13) Tema	Wells (7)	400	
14) Tombia	Bridge	1,000	



## GRANTS FOR SELF HELP PROJECTS for 1973/74 (Continued)

Name of Community	Project	Amount Approved	Total
<u>KALABARI (Continued)</u>			
		N	N
15) Degema Town	Market	500	
16) Buguma	Market/Town Hall	1,800	16,250
<u>OKRIKA</u>			
1) Okuru-Ama	Latrine	400	
2) Orim-Polo	Canal (Creek)	300	
3) Ogan-Ama	Town Hall	600	
4) Amadi Ama	Pipe Borne Water	1,000	
5) Ibuluya Ama	Motor Park	500	
6) Abuloma	Pipe Borne Water	1,000	
7) Dikibo Ama	Pipe Borne Water	1,000	
8) Daka Ama	Road	300	
9) George Ama	Pipe Borne Water	1,800	
10) Ogoloma	Jetty Causeway and Public Latrines	1,750	
11) Ogu	Bridge	500	
12) Bolo	Road	300	
13) Ogbogbo	Reclamation of Land	300	
14) Ozuboko-Ama	Town Hall	600	10,350
<u>KHANA (OGONI)</u>			
1) Bianu	Town Hall	1,000	
2) Bianu/Deebere/Keo	Road	500	
3) Nyogor Lueku	Town Hall	1,000	
4) Nyobe Baghu	Town Hall	500	
5) Nyowii/Kpai	Road	400	
6) Yae/Die	Road	400	
7) BaaLueku	Town Hall	750	
8) Ka-Lorri	Road	400	
9) Nyonuku/Tam-Lueke	Road	400	
10) Kpong Barakon/ Korogbere	Road	400	
11) Kpong	Town Hall	1,000	
12) Luebe	Road	400	

## GRANTS FOR SELF HELP PROJECTS for 1973/74 (Continued)

Name of Community	Project	Amount Approved	Total
<u>KHANA (OGONI)(Continued)</u>		N	N
13) Nwokuru	Town Hall	1,000	
14) Luusue Sogho	Town Hall	1,000	
15) Bunu-Bagha	Town Hall	1,000	
16) Okwali	Town Hall	1,000	
17) Pere	Road	200	
18) Le-ckeere Tae Yee Society	Poultry	400	
19) Pue	Town Hall	1,000	
20) Duburo/Luukpom/ Luutem	Road	200	
21) Taabaa	Market	1,000	
22) Bane	Health Centre	1,000	
23) Baen	Poultry	500	
24) Opuoko	Market	1,000	16,450

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