

THE QUESTION OF NDOKI IJAW ORIGIN: MYTH OR REALITY

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ABSTRACT

The question of the origin of ethnic groups has been the concern of many historical scholars so much so that it has often generated controversies. Many argue and described the search for historical origins as efforts in futility. That said, one cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that ethnic groups or group of persons have their historical origins without which, a question mark is left on the existence those groups. This paper is an articulate attempt to investigate though the origin of the Ndoki in particular. While many unscrupulous, misguided and historical deficient minded persons argue that the Ndoki are Akwa Ibomites, some submit that they are Ogonies/Rivers. That notwithstanding, I shall in this paper try to investigate and paint a vivid picture of this group. Consequently, it is also imperative to observe that these group of people known and called the Ndoki are one indivisible entity that have lived together as a people for many centuries in their present abode and speak Igbo language though but today are balkanized and are found in Oyiigbo (Obigbo) Local Government Area of Rivers State, Ukwa-East Local Government Area in Abia State; and the Uhuobu group of villages which are today part of Akwa Ibom State. It is unfortunate that this calculated military mistake happened to this group in an attempt to keep them perpetually marginalized and impoverished through the mechanism of balkanization. Posterity have proved them wrong that no matter how hard they tried to put a knife in what held these group together which transcends Crude Oil and other selfish sentiments, things refused to fall apart. The paper shall rely heavily on oral sources and archival materials which the researcher believes will provide a more objective account of this group of people (the Ndoki).

Keywords: *Ndoki, Ijaw, Myth, Reality, History*

INTRODUCTION

There is no gainsaying in the fact that what we have and call today Nigeria is a product of accident of an unholy matrimony of several ethnic groups who knew next to nothing about each other. The ethnic groups have divergent culture, language, social and political system. Through accidents of history, several ethnic groups, each with its own culture, language, social and political systems, have been brought together to form what is now the Nigerian nation.

At political independence in 1960, Nigeria was a fledgling democracy identified with

structural imbalances. The circumstances which led to the creation of states in 1967 centered on the national question, specifically, on the structural imbalances of the federal system. State creation was construed to be a strong move to address such imbalances. But the move raised new national issues, particularly that of administrative boundaries. The boundaries between given political units became uncertain and contentious. Some ethnic communities considered themselves highly disadvantaged by being located in a particular state. Others felt strongly that boundaries within a given state should be redrawn in order to ensure convenience and ease of development.

Crawford Young has argued that many widely used communal labels cover multiple layers of self-consciousness. For example, the Igbo nation in Nigeria covers several communal labels defining the multiplicity of the self-consciousness and rivalry within that nation. Thus, Ndoki as a communal label arouses a definite self-consciousness distinguishing it from others in the Igbo nation, and influenced by its past socio-economic interactions with the non-Igbo national communities whose labels and self-consciousness tend to differ.¹

Traditions, collected recently from the Ndoki in Rivers State, cite Benin as a place of origin, and the Ibani as their companions in migration. The phrase, Aminadokiari, which they state as the folk etymology for the name Ndoki, is of course, Eastern Delta Ijaw dialect for 'I am searching for my brother'. That is, that the Ndoki came searching for the Ibani in the course of their migration. Alagoa corroborates this when he observed:

The traditions suggest that they migrated north and east-wards from the Central Delta along with the ancestors of the Ibani to their present location where they were affected by Ibo cultural influences. By implication, they were non Igbo who were culturally influenced by their Igbo neighbours among whom they settled for a long time. This state is subject to investigation although appear to be factual.²

This paper will, therefore, try to provide answers to the following questions: Who are the Ndoki? What condition necessitated the name Ndoki? How factual is the statement that the Ndoki are Igbo? Could it really be that they are Ijaws? In answering these questions, various cultural traits among the Ndoki will be considered. In doing so, we shall show the divergent historical presentations of multiplicity of conflicting interests groups and scholars. The researchers shall also try to present an objective view that best accommodate the various versions of the origin of the Ndoki.

The justification of this study is, therefore, underscored by the fact until now no scholar have been able to present an acceptable account of the Ndoki origin, the continuity of the question of Ndoki origin must be provided with an acceptable answer for the purpose of posterity and coexistence among the Igbo.

UNDERSTANDING THE AREA OF STUDY

The un-balkanized boundary of Ndoki stretches parallel to the Imo River on the East, where the clan is bounded by the villages of Ika and Obong clans. The Imo and Aba rivers

roughly correspond to the South and East boundaries of the clan. Apart from the riverside villages, the majority of the villages are connected with either of these rivers by creeks and roads. The area covers approximately 450 square km. With its abundant endowments, which include rich farmland,³ intersecting rivers, rich creeks and forests, Ndoki had early contacts with the world economy, having acted as major routes for slave trading, purchase of food for slave caravans, trade in rubber, palm oil, etc. But there was little economic progress on account of the coercive economic controls by 'sub and super-imperialists'.⁴ The sub-imperialist activities were such that

... by the mid-1800, Ndoki villages ...were under the control of Bonny, the most important were Ohambele and Akwete. In 1869 following a civil war in Bonny and the subsequent founding of Opobo, King Jaja took monopoly of Ndoki markets. After four years and by a Treaty of 1873, Bonny resumed exclusive right of Akwete market, while King Jaja was to control Ohambele.⁵

The implication of these 'controls', 'monopolies' and 'exclusive right' is that there were severe inequalities in economic relations. While the indigenous people owned the markets and produced the goods, they had no measure of control over the terms of exchange. Thus, the activities of the sub-imperialists in relation to the super-imperialists over Ndoki were full of intrigues and maneuvers, power contest and distrust. The interest of Jaja's struggle with Britain is ... two folds: first Jaja, ruler of a small but rich state, was clearly in the process of modernizing it independently of European rule; secondly, his deposal by Consul Johnston shows that the man was, apart from his own inclinations, subject to pressures to formalize control. In 1884, Jaja had negotiated a treaty with Consul Hewett ... but deliberately excluded from it the clauses permitting freedom of trade and freedom of religion contained in the prototype treaty.⁶ Crowder linked these activities by King Jaja to the latter's ambition to 'control traditional sources of supply of palm oil' and related goods particularly from Ndoki land. Essentially, the maneuvers were motivated by an ulterior desire to build a strong autonomous state within the Niger Delta capable of mastering its own circumstances and environment. The motivation was the desire to extend and consolidate the 'liberation' of Opobo from Bonny in 1869 and the follow-up peace treaty of 1873. This required local satellite economies without a contending power.

There was manifestation of fundamental tendencies of capitalist development, creating wealth, in relative terms, for the sub- and super-imperialists, and poverty for Ndoki. But the economic contacts with Ndoki attained a progressive level of cultural assimilation with Opobo and Bonny, strengthened by religious rites, marital and political ties.⁷ The assimilation has survived the collapse of the economic relationship. The 'super-imperialists' took over the Ndoki market after the British protectorate was proclaimed on June 5, 1887. But this penetration was strongly contested by the sub-imperialists as King Jaja's armed agents raided Ndoki markets in order to purge them of direct dealings with the super-imperialists. The attendant conflict was dramatic and eventful, as the British consul, H.S Johnston, warned King Jaja on September 5, 1887, as follows:

... If your people attempt in any way to prevent the whiteman from trading freely

with the natives, or offer him any molestation whatsoever, I will hold you directly responsible for any damage incurred by such action on the part of your subjects. I regret that your conduct should still compel me to maintain an embargo on your trade...⁸

Worried that the control of markets and the economic interests of the sub-imperialist were being threatened, King Jaja, in his reply challenged the Treaty for Free Trade made with various Ndoki communities by the super-imperialists. He argued, among other things, that “these places that the whitemen have been visiting are my markets; therefore, my canoes must always be found there.”⁹ The contest over Ndoki markets resulted in the extradition of King Jaja by the super-imperialists on September 16, 1887. This opened the way for free trade with Ndoki by the British merchants which meant a new era of unrestrained economic exploitation.

Under the super-imperialist trade control, Ndoki stagnated further because of the ‘revolutionary and conservative rationality’ of British merchant capital. The petty production economy encouraged through free trade treaties ensured that Ndoki peasantry could not be transformed into a ‘progressive’ petty bourgeoisie. Since the nationalist struggle was by the petty bourgeoisie from different ethnic groups, Ndoki was not an active participant because their weak economic base determined their politics. It became difficult for the people to participate in the emergent national transformation since they lacked the economic base for the political struggle that followed. Her administrative significance began, also, to decline following market expansions made by the trading interest covering 6,000 square miles of hinterland.¹⁰ The garrison established in 1896 at Ndoki was transferred to Aba in 1902 and in 1903 the district headquarters was formally transferred to Aba also. In 1946, Ndoki was annexed to Aba division. These transfers meant that fiscal outlays on economic and social infrastructures together with their multiplier effects in the process of urbanization correspondingly shifted away from Ndoki at the rationality of merchant capital.

On the other hand, the background of the rural Ndoki communities is that of small independent producers. The basis of production is agrarian, concentrated on family units. Because of low density (about 95 people per square mile), the area is not yet seriously affected by land hunger. The very slight degree of commercialization of production has permitted the small family subsistence production to persist. Ownership of land has remained collective or communal. Thus, each household receives each year as much land as it is capable of working.

The concept depicted a claim of strong cultural relationship with parts of Rivers State, explicitly Opobo and Bonny, an identity believed to have long been entrenched, despite circumstances which have changed with time. This was the precept for a demand to merge Ndoki with Rivers State made under the canopy of Ndoki Welfare Association (later Union), an urban based association of the elites. Other reasons for the demand included (a)

the need to be administered as one political unit; (b) the desire to satisfy the people's popular will; (c) the need to minimize administrative problems associated with splitting the clan and placing the people into several political jurisdictions; (d) the desire to effect permanent settlement of border clashes between the Ndokis and the Ogonis and the Ibibios¹¹; (e) the need to ensure administrative convenience with Rivers State; and (f) the determination to ameliorate the political disabilities of the clan.¹²

The Ndoki, now members of the Ibo ethnic group, had a population of only 35,000 in 1953.¹³ Statistical data presented by the National Population Commission after the 1963 census show that Ndoki had a population of 41,037 and was a mere 0.57% of the then East Central State or 1.30% that of the Rivers State. It was argued that it would be justified to merge Ndoki with Rivers State where the opportunities for human development would quadruple over those available in East Central State and double those in the proposed Imo State, and would, to that extent, remedy their disabilities.

The then proposed creation of Imo State also generated fear of inequality and domination which, ultimately, pushed the Ndoki to favor merger with Rivers State. They considered that their priorities could not compete favorably in Imo State where there are several numerically superior groups whose priorities must, of necessity, be considered first. The situation in Rivers State was considered to be different because the variation in the size of the constituent ethnic groups are not such as to put any one group in a permanent disadvantage.

However, because of a weak economic base, the Nigerian elites are often fractious, particularly when motives concern improvement of material existence. Thus, a splinter elite group emerged in Ndoki who quickly shifted grounds based on assurance that Imo State would be created from the then East Central State. Outside any specific forum such as Ndoki Development Union, members of this group were influential in the state circles. Their arguments, ostensibly made in the interest of the people, included the points (a) that there had been age long administrative relationship of the Ndoki with the Ibos in Aba division. Such a relationship had been concretized so much that it required no severance; (b) that there were more opportunities to be expected in the new Imo State than in any old state; and (c) that 'cultural affinity' was less significant than expediency and acceptability of the people in an administrative setting.

The Ndoki were seen to be making history; they were not making it just as they pleased, under circumstances chosen by themselves per se, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. Given these conditions, the Ndoki case can be seen in a specific context: struggle for coexistence and participation in the Nigeria polity. Explicit in the struggle is the conviction that the lives of the people would not be worthwhile without democratic values.

The reason for which the Ndoki were balkanized into three states of River, Akwa Ibom and

Abia is yet to be comprehended. For instance, those in Rivers State include Ayama, Okoloma, Umuosi and Obeakpu. From these early settlements, the people spread to Egberu, Afam-Ukwu, Afam-Nta down to Umuagbai, Azuogu, Maraihu, OkpontonOkwanku, Obunku and Obete. Those that later crossed the Imo River are found in Abia State and inhabit the following communities; Akwete, Azumini, Mkpuaejekere, Nkpunkpha, Nkpunkpule, Ogbuagu, Akirika-Ukwu, Akirika-Nta, Ohambele, Abaki, Akanu, Akiri-Obu, Eti, Obohia, Obozu, Obunku-Ugbor, Ohaobu, Ohandu, Ohanku, Ohanso, Uhuru, and Ubaku.

VERSIONS OF NDOKI HISTORICAL ORIGINS

It is important to start this section of our discourse by warning those interested in reading about the history of the Ndoki that the early history of the Ndoki until now is elusive because what we have are divergent versions. What we had and still have is evidence from oral tradition which is very tricky and must not be taken at its literal face value. Ndoki is said to have originated from Ijaw. The founder of Ndoki was Opuamakuba and his brother who later founded Bonny. They were the sons of King Amakiri of Ijaw land. Opuamakuba had three children namely: Iloko, Ihu and Nwankwo – Iloko was the King Ndoki and founder of Obohia, Ihu founded Umuihueze and Nwankwo founded Umunkwo.

Explicitly, Okoloma was the first place the Ndoki settled and later scattered to form the different villages of Ndoki clan. The Ndoki and the Bonny were known to be of Ibani race. These Ibani migrated from Ijaw of the Central Niger Delta. Opumakuba settled in Okoloma along the Imo River valley. It was in this place that King Iloko the son of Opumakuba was born. His brother Alagbanyi migrated towards the basin of Essene Creek Region and founded Bonny. When Alagbanyi's son came back to Ndoki and discovered that his brother's great grandson was still living there (Okoloma), he said “Adokiyiri” (Ibani dialect) which translated in English Language means “I have found my brother” Hence they are called “Ndoki”¹⁴

Iloko is among the villages of Ndoki found in the Southern part of Imo River, in the North of Iloko is Afam, Kedire (Ogoni) in the south, Ayama in the West and Egberu and Afam Ukwu in the East. Okoloma was made of three villages namely Iloko, Ayama and Okoloma. Iloko was the seat of Power of the Iloko Kingdom. They were respected as the royal family in Ndoki and the King bears the title “Iloko”. The Iloko is about 5 kilometres from Obigbo now called Oyibo.

To another group, the Ndoki history is to found in the record in 1933 by the Assistant District Officer, Aba Division, Mr. C.T.C Ennals. From this account, the ancestors of the Ndokipeople were part of a larger migration which included the ancestors of Bonny people which left the Edo Empire of Benin as a result of fierce civil war. After travelling *terra marique* and getting to Oguta and Umunoha in Owerri Division and to Aro-Ndizuogu in what used to be Okigwe Division, they moved south and settled for some centuries at Umuagbai, Azuogu, Maraihu, Umuosi and Obeaku before the ancestors of Bonny who

were said to be hunters moved and founded that city-state. Those left behind spread and formed what is known today as Ndoki villages.¹⁵

The above submission is contestable in view of the fact that the parties engaged in the war that necessitated the migration were not mentioned. The fact remains that the Ndoki could not have migrated from Edo and could not have come to settle in Umuagbai, Azuogu, Obeaku, etc. which incidentally are Ndoki village. This evidence here appears to me a fairytale because the son cannot become the father. The above tradition is pardonable in view of that the fact that it was recorded by a colonialist (C.T.C Ennal Assistant District Officer, Aba Division. According to Adiele Afigbo in his essay titled “Igbo History and Society” “the key to an understanding of the Ndoki tradition is the fact that the people, like most peoples of who live in a zone of linguistic and cultural transition, face in a particularly acute form the problem of identity of who they are...”¹⁶

The basic given facts from my findings is that the Ndoki are non-Igbo. That their general culture and tradition has so much in common with the culture of their brothers in Bonny cannot be overemphasized. Most of their villages no doubt bear Ijaw names like Ayama, Okoloma coupled with the fact that the two brothers worshipped the same god called “Ikuba”. Culturally speaking, most of the cultural ceremonies are the same and also observed by both the Ndoki and the Bonny on the same day especially the “Watam” Cultural dance which is observed on the 25th of every year, the Ukemkpa dance, Ejesilem, etc. To explain the NdokiIgboness can only be traced to the centuries of sojourn in the interior of Igboland.

To further buttress the fact that the Ndoki and the Bonny are brothers and hails from Ijaw group is drawn from the account of the origin of the name Ndoki. The story had it that the two brother went to war against another group during which the Ndoki having nothing more valuable horn had pledged to bonny people for a loan of money. After the war, the bonny people demanded the horn which the Ndoki brothers refused. As a result, years of bitter quarrel existed between them. And a leader had a son during the period who was named in Igbo *Anyi naadokwanike* meaning what are contending. As a result, the quarrel ended and whenever the Ndoki visited Bonny, they were referred to as *anyinaadokwanike* people.¹⁷ Invariably, that goes to show that they were brothers and have no reason to contend over anything.

Furthermore, the view that the Ndoki are from Benin is not only a misnomer but unfounded. The tradition which mentioned that the ancestors of Bonny and Ndoki were hunters and wine tappers respectively, is also no true except when related to the period of human history, the hunting and gathering stage of human evolution.

MIGRATIONS AND SETTLEMENTS

The migration and settlement of the Ndoki villages was informed by fear which emanated from the dream of Iloko's wife Ntaku. In this dream, she saw the people of Iloko converged

at a playground called Ama-Ukwu and suddenly the big tree that was their god called “Anunu Obeyi” fell and killed them except women and children who were not allowed to come closer to the shrine.

When told the story to her husband, Iloko gathered all the chiefs and consulted the oracle that interpreted the dream to them through the chief priest. According to the chief priest, the dream implies that there will be war and if care is not taken, they will be carried into captivity. Consequently, King Iloko and his chiefs decide to leave Iloko land for a safer place where their enemies could not reach nor destroy them. Everyone was informed to prepare to accept the measure as the best option rather going to war to be enslaved. They left with the intention of coming back after the predicted war because of their King and their god Ikuba. In the process, King Iloko died as Iloko I of Ndoki.¹⁸ The three sons of Iloko that led the migration were Nkata, Aja and Eni. They settled in the area called Obohia.

THE INJUSTICES OF STATE CREATION/BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT

State creation was a definite response to the effects of the politics of pluralism in the same manner as boundary adjustment attempted to redress the attendant administrative problems. State creation and boundary adjustment share common features. Each of them was a redress to past inadequacy which was affected under military fiat. There were no institutions to mobilize the people and provide them with the framework to effectively participate in solving national problems, especially those associated with inequality in the distribution of resources. Those were periods devoid of mass participation. The setting provided leverage for the political elites, across the agitating groups, to organize themselves over the people and to be identified with the transforming and restructuring tasks of the military government. The masses were fooled into believing that their interests were compatible, if not identical, with those of the elites, acting as a substitution for mass mobilization and participation.

The emergent elites in Ndoki are representative of the political culture of the Nigeria dominant class. They have their strong-hold in the modern sector as 'intermediaries', as property owners who are ready to make compromises in order to maintain the status quo, and to ensure their material existence. They see themselves as bearers of modernization whose lifestyles are different from, and their views important in, the local communities. They, therefore, exist in a superior social relationship with the members of rural areas-the peasants, petty traders, tappers and fishermen.

Boundary becomes an issue to the local people if its demarcation tends to delimit the scope of their farmland. Otherwise, it is an issue meant for the bureaucrats and the law enforcement agents. It is clear, therefore, that the indifference to administrative boundary by the rural community producers emanated from a level of consciousness that coincides with the material conditions of their existence. This is because `the production of ideas, of concepts, of consciousness, is at first, directly interlinked with the material activity and intercourse of men 41

Having distinguished between the two levels of consciousness, it becomes clear that the sentiment and support of the rural dwellers was aroused and shaped in 1976 by the Ndoki elites over the issue of administrative boundary. This was done by the use of 'cultural affinity', a captive concept designed to trace the 'roots' of the Ndoki people and to address their past. It was also meant to draw a clan distinction, a communal label, signifying a definite self-awareness compared with the close neighboring clans. To the elites, therefore, boundary agitation was propelled by the incident of past socio-economic interactions fanned by the incident of past government neglect. But it was more of a populist endeavor to be accommodated within the existing scheme of existence rather than a demand for a change of the scheme.

The government synthesized all the inputs, noted the historical facts and considered all relevant issues, including stability, security, oil and class. For example, while arguing for security, the government indicated the class, and therefore, political, content of boundary and how that was veiled under either ethnicity or 'statism'. The government also noted how potentially divisive and dangerous to national interest was the sweeping web of self-interest nursed over boundary adjustment. It stated that,

Oil wealth has rendered many people more opportunistic in their dispositions. Private gain rather than national interest has become the main concern ... the motivations of private gains could set people against people and incite others to riot ... that some public functionaries were occasionally involved in dispute involving their states of origin, thus compromising their status as public officers.¹⁹

Opportunism divests from merit; it strengthens competition and informalities. It also works on the basis of impersonality to optimize achievements that otherwise would be impossible or redirected. It becomes an escape route in negation of the issue of national question inherent in boundary adjustment. Opportunism also affects the national question to the extent that it fails to disabuse intermediate or sub-national loyalties. The federal government's boundary decision in Ndoki, though historical in approach, was uneconomic and insensitive to history.

The commission found that the Ndoki have consistently been treated as minority. The bulk of the people living south of the Imo River were more inclined to accede to Rivers State, but the creation of Imo State appeared to have changed several minds in favour of remaining in Imo state. The Commission was convinced that the situation was unstable and could easily get out of hand it felt that consideration of stability should transcend the wishes to keep all the Ndoki under one state. The commission accordingly recommended that Imo River should be the boundary in this area between the two states.²⁰

The view of the Federal Government was mechanistic. It failed to address history. The issues that led to boundary agitations, in the first instance, did not arise because the people

lived together under one administrative unit, nor were there cases of instability among the people prior to 1976. Rather, the issues were materialistic and deserved concrete and objective solutions. That it was not possible to do so can easily be seen in how the fractious political character of the elites led to rationalization of general welfare interests into such defensive abstracts as 'stability'. This has had the far-reaching consequence of splitting Ndoki and placing its people into three different states in the country, thus negating the philosophy of state creation based on linguistic boundaries. This has been seen by the people of Ndoki as a travesty of justice and deliberate act to dissolve their corporate entity.

²¹

Three Ibo-speaking Ndoki villages (Mkpukpuaja, Ogbuagu and Ohaobu) found themselves as a 'mis-match' in Etim Ekpo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, a predominantly Ibibio-Annang domain. Fourteen Igbo-speaking Ndoki villages were crammed with the Ogonis (Khana speaking) in Rivers State. These include Umuagbai, Mgboji, Ayama, Obunku, Umosi, Obeakpu, Azuogu, Egberu, Afam-nta, Afamukwu, Okoloma, Obete, Okpontu, and Marihu. The rest of the people were left in what is now Abia State. They include Akwete, Ohanso, Ohambele, Ohanku, Obohia, Ohuru, Akirika, Akirikaobu, Abaki, Mkpukpuowha, Obozu, Umuogo, Azumini, Eti, Mkpaujakerere, Ubaku, Ohandu, and Umuibe. This contrivance raises serious political dangers over the civil rights of the Ndokis. They are likely to lose the natural basis for commonality of efforts and articulating of common interests. In Nigeria's sandy political edifice, if democracy is seen as the government of the whole people by the whole people, equally represented, what is the stake of the Ndokis? Seen more in Mill's vision, the numerical majority (non-Ndoki) in each of the three states is favored, while the 'reduced Ndoki minorities' become 'disfranchised', their disabilities worsened. They are politically converted to yield to the 'warranted' majority in the different states. So precariously placed, the Ndoki think there is no necessity for, or the chance of, using their minds any longer in the scheme of national issues. The fear that the minority group's freedom of expression would be taken away or abrogated by the majority, and that the minority will be economically and politically dominated by the majority has become a reality. Under these circumstances, those who accept the values of the status quo lay an understandable but myopic emphasis on 'stability' as the goal of reform. What is inherently more unstable than a society that lacks justice, freedom and equality in all its ramification? It is clear that the split of a whole number into units of three is a weakening formula in politics.

²²

Both the agitation and the split are, therefore, reflexive. Awakened by the lessons of history, the Ndoki, in an attempt to ensure their survival in the process of nation building in Nigeria, have acquired a self-consciousness which has altered their thinking. Their present political fate is a product of their pattern of thinking. The lesson of the consciousness-in-reflex constitute the basic national question for the Ndoki. As a people, they desire protection of their civil liberties and rights, and assurance of coexistence in the comity of Nigeria's multi-culturality. It is unmistakable that the present tripartite segmentation of the people further mystifies the problem of the national question. Rather than ensure ethnic integration and

stability, it encouraged separatist demands for existence. For example, in their demand for a separate local government the fourteen villages in Rivers State argued that they

The creation of Oyigbo Local Government in 1991 to accommodate the Ndoki communities was, in principle, a negation of the 1976 boundary adjustment in the area. It was a realization that what the people desired in 1976 was that the government should attend to their material need and give them opportunities and avenues to participate in politics without fear of domination. The desire was blocked by the elites in a context where the people could not express their views. The reverse attitude of the government shows that the argument for 'natural boundary' detoured from reality.²³

CONCLUSION

This paper has critically examined the various versions of Ndoki origin as well the attempts at the balkanization of the people with common ancestral linkage and cultural affinity under the guise of state creation and boundary adjustment. The position of this paper therefore is that the Ndoki as much as they are non-Igbo people are also not from Benin (the so called Edo Empire). The researcher eagerly calls on scholars and all men of goodwill with sound historical leaning to join hand with him in unraveling the mystery of the historical origin of the Ndoki. Though available records seem to link the Ndoki to the Ijaws which the researcher at the moment do subscribe to, a lot more research is required in this area.

The researcher also focused on the injustices of the past in context of state creation and the attendant problem of boundary adjustment created for the Ndoki people and discovered that this accounts for the political disadvantage of the people. The consequence is a worsening political fate of the people that has resulted in their being bulkanized and placed into non-viable segments in three different states. This has caused the people not only loss of self-identity in the Nigerian polity but also a weakened chance of political participation.

ENDNOTES

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 11. See 1953 Census as cited in "The Ndoki Development Union: The Case for the Merger of the Whole Ndoki with the Rivers State of Nigeria," 1980, p. 12. This figure could be an undercount in view of fear of taxes levied against the 1953 census.
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 17. Oral Interview Chief Akawor, Egberu, Ndoki, Age 88yrs, 21st January 1985.
 18. Oral Interview Daniel Nwulu, Obohia Ndoki, Age 99, 18th November 2002
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 20. Ibid
 21. See Ukwa People's Assembly Memorandum, 1994. Ukwa was the administrative/local government unit that oversaw the public affairs of parts of Ndoki and Asa communities in Abia state.
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