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Alekwu Poetry as a Source of Historical Reconstruction: The Pursuit of Idoma-Otukpo Origin, Genealogy and Migration

Idris O. O. Amali

This paper attempts a historical investigation into the origin, genealogy and migration of the Idoma-Otukpo people of Benue State of Nigeria.¹ The Otukpo people who are of Idoma ethnic group during the Kwararafa diaspora sojourned through various phases and places are now found in their present location 100 kilometers south of Makurdi, the Benue state capital. Other Idoma groups of Kwararafa origin are Ugboaju, Adoka, Oglewu, Orokam, Agatu Igumale, Agila and Otukpa (see maps I and II). Traces of proto-Idoma people are found in Keana and Doma Nokwu (the great Idoma) of Plateau State, in Iyala Obubra and Iyala Ikom of Cross River State of Nigeria. These people still maintain cultural civilizations that are akin to those of the Idoma people in the Lower Benue and considered "main stream" Idoma. The Idoma Alelewaafia masquerade tradition which is the main source of this historical analysis also exists among the Doma Nokwu and the Iyala. Our focus is on Otukpo people of Idoma.

The premise of our reconstruction of Idoma-Otukpo history of origin and migration is based on historical evidence contained in Idoma Alekwu oral poetry. Alekwu poetry is artistically rendered by the Idoma Alekwu masquerades. Alekwu is the physical re-enactment into a masquerade form, of a qualified deceased father in Idoma-Otukpo. Thus, the emergence of the masquerade to perform or chant at any occasion means the physical but spiritual return of a deceased father to interact with the society and his family.

¹ A paper delivered at the 13th Annual Conference of the Archeological Association of Nigeria held at Akodi Afrika (Cultural Center, Museum Institute), Iffe-Ijumu, Kabba, Kogi State Nigeria August 21-28, 1995 on Nigerian ethnic origins. It has now been revised. I am grateful to the University of Maiduguri for funding my attendance at this conference to deliver this paper. I also acknowledge with thanks the oral materials collected from J. Ataku Ocheibi and Ismaila Oteikwu Amali, a Ph.D. student of the Department of Education, University of Maiduguri for making available to me his work on Idoma-Otukpo. For the dating of Idoma history, see Erim O. Erim, "A Pre-colonial History of the Idoma of Central Nigeria," Ph.D Thesis, Dalhousie University, Canada, 1977.

The Alekwo poetry is a national warehouse from which the Idoma society looks at itself and is capable of reconstructing its past for group identification and solidarity. Thus, the Alekwo poet is capable of narrating the various places of Idoma-Otukpo movements, settlements and names of its ancestors from their putative Apa to a present day father. This view is further buttressed by S.O.O. Amali when he reports that:

The Alekwo chants the history of the land, the genealogies of the lineages and the families of the land. It is the duty of an Alekwo to know the history of everybody in the land very well.²

Indeed, the historical past of the African indigenous oral societies such as the Idoma people could be carefully excavated from their oratures. The issue of significance of poetry in the reconstruction of African historical past and the centrality of oral poetry in African genres of oral expressions is very well enunciated by Bolanle Awe, a distinguished African professor of history when she submits that:

The importance of oral traditions in the reconstruction of the history of non-literate peoples has virtually ceased to be a matter of debate and is now generally acknowledged. Indeed within the last few years, historical research, based on such traditions has made possible histories of many societies in Africa. Their culture has accumulated around it a rich variety of oral traditions whose study has made significant contributions to their past. For the earlier period of their history, their historians have had to rely on oral traditions, even for the latter period, in spite of the existence of written documents, oral traditions have still

² S.O.O. Amali, "Alekwo Festival and History of Otukpo Idoma," paper delivered at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1971, 5. See further R.G. Armstrong, et al (Alekwo song texts transcribed and translated with S.O.O. Amali, Otekwu Amali and Aboje Egili) *Music of the Idoma of Nigeria, Edigwu Sings the Ancient Songs of Otukpo Nigeria* (New York: Asch Mankind, 1969).

proved very useful in giving a balanced view about events.³

The history of many African societies are yet to be fully appreciated through careful research, documentation and publication. This problem becomes more acute when we consider some stateless societies in African nations where little attention has been given to their histories. Even those states and stateless nations that have received earlier written historical accounts need to be reviewed closely with the aid of oral traditions in order to give them new life and historical vibrance. We begin our discussion with the migration of the Idoma-Otukpo people from their source of origin as contained in Alekwu poetry. Otukpo people, like any other Idoma nationality, claimed to have originated in Apa. Apa, otherwise known as Kwararafa was a cradle of civilization of many Nigerian nationalities that today occupy the upper and lower Benue and Middle Belt of Nigeria. Such nationalities include Igala, Nupe, Epira, Doma, and Yala.

Historical evidence available to us in this century throws ample light on the historical foundation or evolution of the State which was later known as Kwararafa. The nucleus was said to have come from the Abakwariga of Kano origin. Indeed the Kwararafa was neither an Idoma, Doma, Nupe, Igala nor Iyala word. Rather, its etymology is deeply rooted in the Hausa expression: Kwana ram Pa that means let me settle here. This Abakwariga "kwana ram Pa" later became known as Kwararafa. The Abakwariga not only founded the Kwararafa but dominated the cultural and political lives of that state from its formative stage. Thus, some of the Kwararafa leaders were of Abakwariga-Kano origin.⁴ While in their putative Apa, the time for Kwaraafa diaspora emerged. Erim Ode Erim interestingly puts the date of this migration from Apa of the Idoma kingdom and others of Apa origin between 1535-1565.⁵

With the eventual dispersal of the Kwararafa nationalities from Apa, the Idoma Alekwu masquerade-poet narrates that when they (Idoma-Otukpo) came from Apa, they went and settled at "Okali". The

³ Bolanle Awe, "Praise poems and historical data: The example of the Yoruba Oriki," *Africa* 44 (4 Oct. 1974): 331.

⁴ Chukwudi Unomah, "The Gwandra Settlements of Lafia to 1900," in Elizabeth Isichie (ed) *Studies in the History of Plateau State Nigeria* (Hong Kong: Macmillan Press, 1982): 123-35.

⁵ Erim, 98.

"Okali" is the present day "Wukari" of the Jukun people. Eliagwu Ikwuyatum (Oteikwu Amali, 1965: 6-7) indicated that from Apa, the Idoma Otukpo settled in Otiya. He places Otiya before "Okali Wukari" as narrated by Alekwu Ikongbe (in appendixes 1 and below). From Wukari or Otiya, they settled next at Ajuma. Bu informant Elaigwu Ikwuyatum gives Adumahina as the next abode of Idoma-Otukpo. After Ajuma, or Adumahina, the Otukpo settled at Okongo, an important settlement of the Idoma-Otukpo people between 1685-1715 (Erim 1977-98). The Otukpo chieftaincy was said to have started in this putative Okongo. Okongo seems to be located about 60 kilometers northwest of Makurdi on a Federal trunk A Road between Lafia/Makurdi and now called "Akanga" in Tiv-settled area of Benue State.

From "Okongo", the Idoma-Otukpo settled next, according to the Alekwu poet, in "Abice Ogodo" or "Abiche Oloodu", meaning Abiche the Ogodo or Abiche the home of Odu-spear between 1745-1775.⁶ This is the salutation or title of the King of Otukpo. Abiche is located a few kilometers northeast of Makurdi-Gboko road on the shores of the lower and upper Benue. The Abiche people who are also of Apa origin, and may be extracts of Idoma people are still here but now encapsulated by the later migrant Tiv people. Below is Alekwu's personal voice for illustration:

We left Ajuma
 We went and settled at
 Okongo the Ogoodu
 Abice Ogodu-Abiche, home of the spear
 We left that place
 We went and lived at Umu.⁷

The Otukpo people settled next at Umu. From Umu, they went and lived at Agbadayi. The Agbadayi settlement was beside a very large expanse of water usually praised by the Alekwu poet. The geographical feature of the water as described by the Alekwu poet suggests a large lake beside which the Otukpo people had settled. Following is the Alekwu poetic description:

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ See Appendix 1.

Agbadayi

The water which remains entirely in a circle.

The water which remains on the road

That consumes the kidney of fowls.⁸

This version of the migration of the Idoma-Otukpo people next indicates that after Agbadayi, they lived at home at "Iceefu." From "Iceefu," they settled at "Ogandede." The migratory narrative indicated that the Otukpo lived at "Akpeeko" and "Ijuwo." Alekwu poet recounts:

We left Adagbayi

Then we went and lived

At Akpeeko and Ijuwo

Akwunte which lived a home at Ifaagwu

While they are cutting down the tree

The Lizard still takes the tree for
climbing

The war came on hand

The war drove us⁹

According to this account, Otukpo people seemed to have lived in two separate locations simultaneously. This was "Akpeeko" and "Ijuwo". Erim Ode Erim's (1977:98) version of migratory account puts the "Ijuwo" settlement between 1715-1745. Akwunte, a crucial father on the Otukpo genealogical tree after Ochakllapa, the Otukpo progenitor was said to have lived in Ifaagwu before war came on hand. But again, the poet reminds us that at "Akpeeko" and "Ijuwo" the Otukpo people were driven to "Ocekwu" by war. Indeed Akatu Ocheibi is of the same view with this writer when he contends that the road and route of migration of the Otukpo people was a thorny and problematic one as they met various hazards.

From Ocekwu they settled next at "Okokllo". Having left "Okokllo", the Otukpo people went and lived at "Okpaele". "Okpaele" seemed to have been occupied by the Idoma-Umogidi people before the arrival of

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

the Otukpo people. Otukpo people according to the Alekwu poet went to live next in "Okwutachi" between 1775-1805 (Erim Ode Erim 1977:98). This "Okwutachi" remains an important settlement of the Otukpo people. Many migratory poetic narratives of the Alekwu pay homage to the established nature of the Idoma-Otukpo settlement here. In fact, it was here that Ofita, the son of Agbooko left to join the rest of his Otukpo Kings men to become the King of Otukpo. The Alekwu masquerade states:

We went and lived at Okpaele
 Where these Umogidi people had remained
 We left Okpaele eee!
 We went and lived at Okwutachi
 Then war broke out between us and
 Adoka people.¹⁰

The Alekwu further gives a historical statement regarding the Otukpo Adoka relationship. While at "Okwutachi", it was reported that war broke out between the Otukpo people and Adoka, another group of Idoma-Apa origin. It is therefore meant that both Idoma-Otukpo and Idoma-Adoka had lived at this putative "Okwutachi". The account of this war remains very fresh in Alekwu poetry.

From "Okwutachi", the masquerade continues and completes the last lap of this long journey of the Otukpo migration from the ancient Apa to the present settlement of Upu and Otukpoland:

Then we left Okutaci
 We went and lived at Ogoligo
 We left that place
 Before we settled at Ewulo
 Ewulo, the market
 Which they attend day after day.¹¹

At Otukpo-Ewulo, they met the Oglewu, another group of Idoma descendants. Due to the pressure mounted by the various migrants that constituted the Otukpo and other ethnic groups, the Oglewu people

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

who had lived in the lowland deserted the place for the incoming migrants.

The second version of the story of Idoma-Otukpo migration from Apa is made possible through the research work in 1965 by Oteikwu Amali. It states chronologically and follows the various places which the Otukpo people had settled before finally settling in the present day Idoma-Otukpoland. They are as follows:

Apa, Otiya, Ukali (Wukari)
 Adumahina, Obana, Ugboaju-Omega,
 Ala, Ijuwo, Akpeeko, Agwashi, Otiya,
 Okwutachi, Ajecho, Okpomlokpo, Ewulo.¹²

This historical narrative seems to have added new names to the list of places that the Otukpo people had lived, namely: "Adumahina", "Obana", "Ala", "Agwashi", "Ajecho" and "Akpomlokpo". Another version adds yet some place names the Otukpo had settled between Okwutachi and the present Ewulo-Otukpoland. These are "Ogbaya" and "Uga" respectively. Thus, from these versions of migrations, the Idoma-Otukpo we have gathered, and settled in 31 places since they migrated from the putative ancient Apa kingdom. Our tentative compression of Idoma-Otukpo migration contained in Appendix 8 below attests to this argument.

We discuss next, the Idoma-Otukpo genealogy as contained in Idoma Alekwu oral poetry. An Alekwu poet chants and calls each ancestor with all the necessary appellations associated with each name. These appellations contain praise epithets that highlight the attributes of the praised. From such praises, historical information is also fetched. For example, Ode, Agbo, Akwunte, Odaji, Ekwo and a host of others are praised by the poet with various appellations through which we can look into the past not only with respect to the individual, but to the society in general. For example, Akwunte, one of the progenitors of Otukpo, is praised by the Alekwu.

Akwunte lived a home at Ifaagwu

¹² Oteikwu Amali, "The Essentials of Idoma/ Igala Grammar," unpublished manuscript, 1965, Appendix 4:2.

While they are cutting down the tree
The lizard still takes the tree for climbing.¹³

From the above, we know that Akwunte, one of the Otukpo ancestors lived at Ifaagwu and while there, his demonstrated act of bravery is manifested in the metaphor and image of a lizard which insists climbing a tree that is being felled.

The chronological listing of ancestors on the genealogical tree is traditionally patterned along the patrilineal line. Thus, because Otukpo society is patrilineal, the names usually called with their offsprings are normally those of men. From the genealogical chants or tree right from Ocakllapa, the progenitor of Otukpa, Akwunte, Okooko, Ohewo, Ocumokwu, Oko and Odaji covering several years, no names of female offspring of these ancestors have been included on the genealogical tree. It was only with Ona, the younger brother of Odaji that his female offspring Oufe was mentioned. When Oufe is mentioned, the Alekwu poet conventionally or stylistically does so with an appropriate apologetic expression:

Even though women do not occupy a seat
On the genealogy of Otukpo
The home of the father who begot me
We still call Oufe
The mother of the Ijami-Oglewu
For the coming generation to know.¹⁴

There is no doubting the fact that the historical past of the Idoma-Otukpo is expressed in their Alekwu poetics. However, something has to be said about the issue of "absolute truth" in order to avoid a situation of a general acceptance that every name on the list is entirely a "gospel truth" or biologically Idoma-Otukpo.

Through oral tradition, the Idoma-Otukpo society has throughout the years tried to pass on, from one generation to the other, its histories that they believe. Problems would however arise when we attempt to establish an "absolute historical truth" particularly when we are wading through a long period of time. The problem of establishing

¹³ See Appendix 1.

¹⁴ Idris O. O. Amali, *Themes and Techniques of Idoma Alekwu Poetry*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Jos-Nigeria, 1992: 381.

an "absolute historical truth" becomes more apparent when we look into the past of Idoma. There was a serious period of individual and group movements that encouraged dispersal of the human Idoma populace from the upper Benue to the lower Benue. Therefore, the historical account that a society tries to maintain is in some cases the pulling together of loose ends of their historical sojourns and experiences. This practice which finds theoretical base in the historical concept "Emogbakwu" or the Idoma method of joining the loose ends of the history of the land. "Emogbakwu" is a compound word in which "Ema" means relationship, while "Ogbakwu" means "stitching", "tying" and "knotting" of relationships together. The "Emogbakwu" concept is dynamic in nature and attempts to scrutinize, to add and drop names in order to emerge with a "generally acceptable" version of the genealogy. Thus, a situation of relationship by incorporation exists in the main genealogical structure of the Idoma-Otukpo. That is, in the genealogical list, names of individuals who are not patrilineally or genetically Idoma-Otukpo, as we learn later, may be included.

The Otukpo family tree sprang from Oko, the progenitor of all Otukpo people. Oko was survived by Odaji and Onah. At his death, Odaji was survived by three male children. Okatakpa, Amanyi and Oteikwu, while Ona was survived by Ogwuche, Ode, Oono, Okopi and Agbo (alias Agbooko) in order of birth. Ode, Oono and Okopi died early amongst Onah's children. Whilst Ogwuche assumed responsibility for Oono's children, Ode and Okopi's offsprings were fostered by Agbooko, in addition to also taking over their widowed mothers.¹⁵

The Alekwu masquerade commences the Idoma-Otukpo genealogy with an open declaration of poetic invocation. He first invokes "Owo" a personal god, the "Enoci" -sunrise, "Enone" -sunset, 'Ico'-sky, and "Aje" -earth god; as reflected in the following religious poetic opening of the genealogical chant:

¹⁵ *The Success Story of the Agbooko Community Association* (Makurdi: Gov. Printers 1983): 1.

I have invoked Owo
 I have presented to the sunrise
 The sunrise says
 I should give to the sunset,
 The sunset says
 I should present it to the earth saying:
 It is the earth that is the most senior
 I invoke the earth.¹⁶

After this conventional opening prayer which is believed to clear the path for the Alekwu poet to chant properly, he embarks upon the chronological listing of the Idoma-Otukpo ancient ancestors. First, he calls or invokes "Ocakllapa", the foremost Idoma-Otukpo ancestor-progenitor. Ocakllapa was also believed to be one of the Kings of Apa confederation. The power and influence he wielded was so enormous that the Alekwu poet still documents them in this rather hyperbolic expression:

Apa who created
 guinea corn, created yams
 who created human beings on earth
 Who created various kinds of things¹⁷

After Ocakllapa is Akwunte (see Appendixes 3, 4, and 5). Akwunte was said to have lived in Ifaagwu and had earlier been praised in this paper. At this point, it is pertinent to refer to (Appendix 6) where Eigege Alekwu masquerade although from Otada lineage in Otukpoland had given account of the Otukpo geneology.¹⁸ The poet asserts authoritatively that Ocakllapa first begot Onyilokwu. Onyilokwu in turn first begot Enyinokwu and Ajuma respectively. It would seem that it is this line of Enyinokwu according to this version that is the direct progenitor of Otukpo people since it is Enyinokwu that begot Okooko. While Alekwu poets in Appendixes 3 and 6 say that it is Ohewo that was next begot after Akwunte, Appendix 4 says

¹⁶ Amali 1992, 381.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ The Otada lineage in Otukpo, which has maternal connection with the Otukpo people, also traces their origin to Apa.

Ocumokwu, contradicting Appendix 5 which indicates Okooko. Ohewo, Agbo and Okooko are all significant on the genealogical tree of Otukpo. The death of Ogabo the Alekwu poet reveals was a remarkable one. When Ogabo died, various types of animals attended his burial ceremony.

The Alekwu Poet in Appendix 5 places Ogabo after Ohukwo. From Ogabo, he calls Ogwu. Poets in Appendixes 3, 4, 5, and 6 also place Ogwu after Ogabo, Ogwu was the father of Oko:

After Ogabo
Then Ogwu the Efulu
Efulu which overwhelms Onche
And a thing is placed on a platform.¹⁹

This Oko is seen as the father of the entire Otukpo. Thus, the Otukpo people are greeted "Aoko", that is, the children of Oko.

Whom did Oko beget first? Oko was said to have beget Odaji. This was followed by Ona. They are the two main lines of Otukpo geneology from where the geneological tree branches off. Odaji is the father of the Aodaji while Ona is the father of Aona in Otukpo. The Alekwu poets recounts:

Then Oko beget Odaji
Whose strength overwhelms animals to fight animals
The animals emit fire from the horns
That fight Odaji²⁰

Ona is named and praised after Odaji his elder brother and the poet:

He went and beget Ona who beget us
Ona who wore leather, the great evil
Ona who went to a place
And they picked something at home.²¹

¹⁹ Amali 1992, 285.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 285

²¹ Alekwu Ejoidudu in *Ibid.*, 87.

Ona's hunting skill is further praised when the poet reports:

Ona, father who begot me
 The man who built a dam of earth
 And bailed out water with his shins
 When he went to the stream
 He carried the things of the stream in his hands
 When he went to the hill
 He carried the things (animals) of the hill in his hands²²

Furthermore, Ona who is said to be one of the prominent fathers of Otukpo was:

A hunter, and in the course of one of his hunting trips, he lost his track back to Adumahina. He was said to have wandered for days until he was given refuge by one Onyilo in Ugboju-Omega. Here he settled and got married to Enye.²³

Ona settled in Ugboju Omega after he was feared to have lost contact with his kindreds. While in Ugboju, Ona's soured relationship with the Ugboju people is better narrated by the ancestral Alekwu masquerade:

While we were at Ugboju of Omega
 As they had begot Ekwo, the Igaba ooooo
 And since the Ocekpakpa-bold-face
 Of Otiya Otukpo did not permit
 Those of Ekwo when the day breaks
 They and those of Ugboju of Omega
 would fight every day

Then those of Ugboju of Omega
 would insult them.
 Then fight broke out between them.

²² *Ibid*, 407.

²³ Oteikwu Amali " (UMS, 1965): 6.

Those of Ekwo together with Ode his brother
They fought a great deal²⁴

As a result, Ona left Ugboaju with his offspring. The history of Ona's eventual appearance in Ugboju and Ugboaju connection because of its antiquity now calls for closer and careful historical investigations and cross examination of data from various sources other than the one usually and conventionally narrated by the Idoma-Otukpo Alekwu poet.

Odaji begot three children: Okatakpa, Amanyi and Oteikwu in order of seniority. The lineage has not multiplied as the Ona's offspring. The Alekwu poet reveals that:

Odaji begot Okatakpa
The guinea corn
Which suffices food suffices gruel
But human beings remain beating
to the earth the guinea-corn
I say oh! no guinea corn
Has done a lot.

We now shift the genealogy to the line of Ona. Ona first begot Ogwuche, whose mother was Enye. Subsequently, he begot Ode, Oono and Okopi. Ode was a distinguished individual usually praised by the Alekwu masquerade for his bravery. Ode became the first Idoma-Otukpo man to be made into an Iklekwu masquerade.²⁵ Thus, he is usually greeted "Ode the first child of Enye". Like Ode, Oono and Okopi died young, a situation that has adversely affected the population growth of the line.

After Okopi, the Alekwu poets in appendixes iii and v narrate that Oufe, Apoci and Agbo were born for Ona in order of seniority. Oufe, a woman, is called with apology as earlier indicated. She is the mother of the Idoma-Ijami-Oglewu people. Apoci who was born after

²⁴ Amali (1992): 389.

²⁵ See Idris O.O. Amali, "Praise Poetry in Idomaland: A Critical Examination of Idoma Alekwu Praise Poetry," a paper presented at the 1st Annual Conference on Idoma Literature, Language and Culture at the College of Education, Katsina-Ala, Benue State of Nigeria 14-17th May, 1986 for the Alekwu Poetry in Praise of Ode.

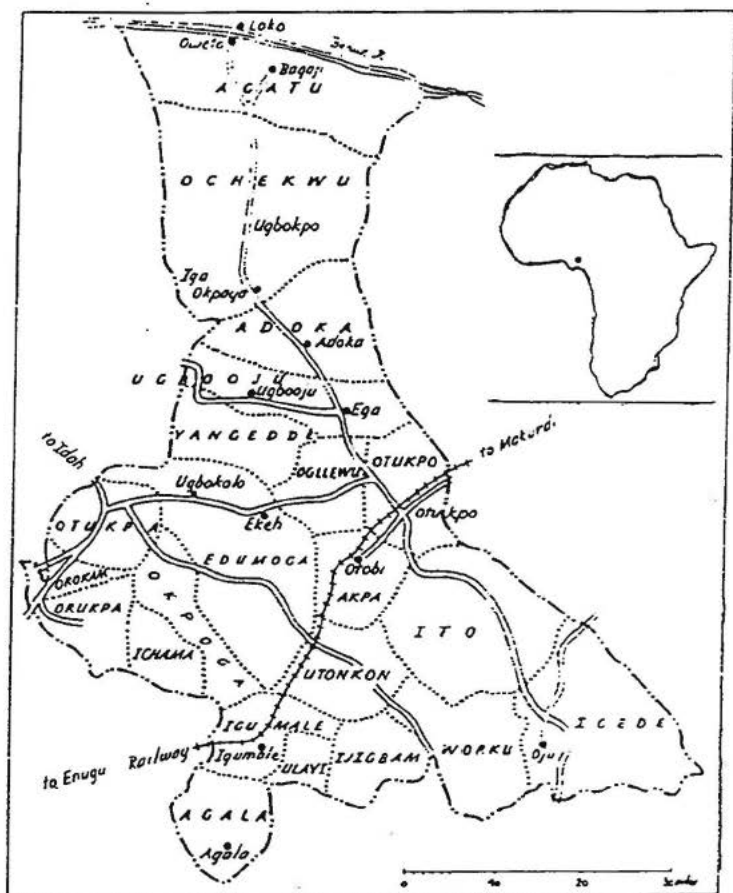
Oufe was reported to have been captured during the horse-war. Apoci therefore has no descendant in Otukpo. The last birth of Ona was Agbo who multiplied exceedingly.

Turning to the grandsons of Ona, Ogwuche first begot Agebe, Ode begot Abakpa—the Ojou and Oono begot Epulebe. While Okopi begot Alogah, Agbo begot Omepa as his first child. It is gathered from Otukpo informants that the Abakpa which was said to be the child of ode was actually an Abakpa-Hausa person and not genetically Idoma-Otukpo as claimed in this genealogical tree. There is also usually a narrative mix-up as to who is the first child of Oono and Okopi. This is confirmed by Appendixes 3 and 6 which give the first child of Oono as Otamedu while Appendix 5 gives the name of Epulebe.

From the grandchildren of Ona, we move to his great grandchildren. Thus, the children of the wives of Agabe, Aloga and Omepa. For the purpose of brevity and space constraints, we are branching off to a particular line in order for us to reach the name of a last child on earth in Idoma-Otukpo. We move to the Agbo (Agbooko) lineage. Agbooko like his father Ona had many children: Omepa, Okpe, Eceipu, Aduma, Onyilokwu, Oonyebe and Okadonye in order of seniority (see Appendix 3).

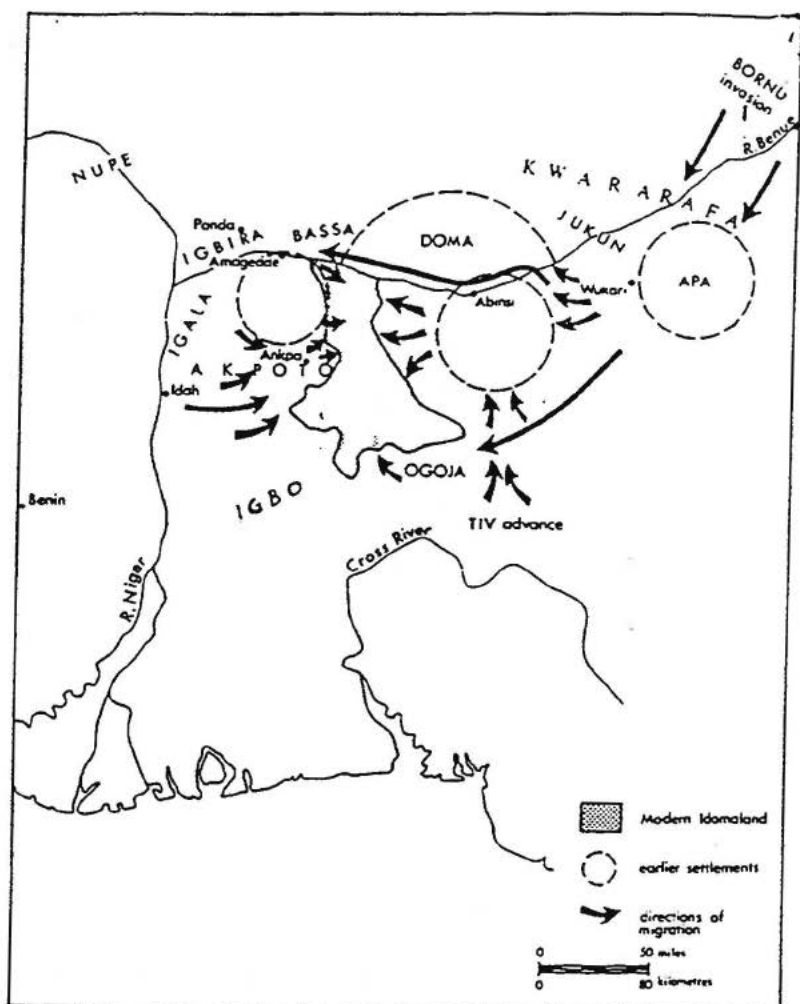
We pick Eceipu from the children to pursue the genealogical account. Eceipu who was the son of Agbooko besot the following children; Ocoonye, Aleji, Aloga, Ocinokwu and Oyo respectively. Ocinokwu from this lineage first begot Onyilo. Onyilo begot Ella and Oba. When Oba begot his child, he begot Eglii. Eglii subsequently begot Ogo. Ogo who in turn begot Aboje is still alive in Otukpo Upu Community. (See Appendix 3)

In this paper we have amply demonstrated that African oral artistic expression such as poetry contains vibrant historical information from where we can have an overview of the peoples historical past and reconstruct that past in order to build the present for the future.



Map showing the Idoma-speaking peoples and their Kingdoms.

Source: R.G. Armstrong, "Idoma-Speaking Peoples," in Daryll Forde (eds.), *The Peoples of Niger Benue Conference, West Africa, Part X, Ethnographic Survey of Africa* (London: London International African Institute, 1969) reprinted in S.O.O. Amali, *An Ancient Nigerian Drama* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden: 1985) 10.



Migrations into Idomaland from Apa and Igala

Source: Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, "Art as Evidence: The Hausa Factor in Idoma History" (Boston: African Studies Center, Boston University, 1984). Kasfir's map was adopted from Erim O. Erim, "A Pre-colonial History of the Idoma of Central Nigeria," Ph.D Thesis Dalhousie University, Canada, 1977.

Appendix 1

Otukpo Migration²⁶

- Where did we come from?
 We came from Apa
 We came from apa eeee
 Apa which created guinea corn
 created yams
5. We came from apa
 Then we went and settled at Okali (Wukari)
 We left Okali
 We went and lived at Ajuma
 We left Ajuma
10. We went and settled at Okongo the Ogoodu
 Abice Ogido
 We left that place
 We went and lived at Umu
 We settled at Umu
15. We left Umu
 Where did Otukpo live next
 We went and lived at Agbadayi
 The stream which remains entirely in circle
 Let it come and lead the genealogy
20. We left Agbagayi
 We went and settled at Iceefu
 Let it come and lead the genealogy
 Eeee eee eeeeeeee
 We left Ogandele
25. Then we went and lived at Akpeeko and Ijuwo
 It was at that time they performed
 The charm for Akwunte
 Akwunte which lived a home at Ifaagwu
 While they are cutting down the tree
 The lizard still takes the tree for climbing
30. The war drove us

²⁶ Idris O.O. Amali transcribed and translated the Alekwu Chant by Ikongbe Masquerade of Upu-Otukpo at the occasion of the making of Late Chief Ocheibi Okplefu into the Royal Alekwu Masquerade in December 1995. I extend my thanks to Akatu Ocheibi who recorded the audio transcribed by Amali.

- We went and lived a home at Ocekwu
Agbaduma which pours bitterness
Okokilo into which we went and settled
35. We left that place oooo!
We went and lived at Okpaele
Where these Umogidi people had remained ...
Where we remained ...
We left okpaele eee!
40. We went and lived at Okwutachi
Then the war broke out between us and Adoka people
Then we left Okwuatchi
We went and lived at Ogoligo
We left that place
45. Before we settled at Ewulo
Ewulo, the market (day) which they attend
from day to day.

Appendix 2

OTUKPO GENEALOGY

Prayer for the Opooceji Ceremony²⁷

1. Otiya home of Odu, home of my father!
Where did the prayer of otiya, home of odu come from?
We came from Apa.
Otiya, Home of Odu.
5. From where did the prayer of otiya, home of Odu come?
We came from Apa
Apa which created guinea-corn and yams.
It created the people of the whole world!
We who are sons of Idoma oga,
10. It is from Apa that we came!
Idoma, father who begot me!
When we first came to Apa,
Where was it that we came to live?
Otiya, home of Odu, home of my father!
15. We came to live at Okongo
Okongo dug the hole of odu!
And also dug the snake-hole.
The digging-pick digs the hole, the hoe carries
(the dirt out).
Come to receive my prayer, receive (my) invocation!
20. Going from there, as we came from Apa,
Whom do I know on whom I must call first of all?
I call upon God.
My god, Adogo, male Leopard,
God who gave the leopard (his) share
25. But who refused the leopard horns

²⁷ Recorded by professor R.G. Armstrong in 1969 assisted by S.O.O. Amali, Oteikwu Amali and Idris Amali. The transcription and translation was carried out jointly by R.G. Armstrong, Oteikwu Amali and Idris Amali. See also Idris O.O. Amali "Themes and Techniques of Idoma Alekwu Poetry," a Ph.D. Thesis in English (Oral Literature) from the University of Jos, Nigeria, 1992:399-419. This text was chanted by the great Alekwocinokwa of Ainehi. The poet here traces the genealogy to the last child of his line.

- God who gave the enace-tree
 But the enace-tree said that God had not given to it!
 Come to receive my prayer and invocation.
 After God,
30. Whom do I know to swear on?
 After God,
 Whom do I know to swear on?
 After God,
 Whom do I know to swear on?
35. Adogo, male Leopard!
 I shall invoke the Land!
 Land of my mother, eternal,
 Which went to live in Omu,
 Land which was cleared, to when they put the
 oracle-question,
40. Land which put forth the egbe and palm (trees)
 Round land, which lived at Igbum!
 When the male leopard has grown big
 It is in the orchard -bush it makes its home.
 May he come to help me
45. As it (the prayer) goes from there, as we came
 from Apa
 Whom do I know to invoke?
 Okooko,
 The swimmer, who entices the clumsy man out!
 May he come to receive my Prayer, receive my invocation!
50. After Okooko.
 Deep water which swallows the knife-blade, (whether the
 water is deep or not, it swallows the knife-blade.)
 Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
 From there, whom do I know to invoke?
 Akwunte who lived at Ifaagwu
55. When they became king
 They cut down a tree while the lizard was climbing up on it
 Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
 After Akwunte
 Whom do I know to call upon?
60. Ohewo Maadiinya! (Ohewo= one who rubs camwood on
 himself)

Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
 After Ohewo Maadiinya
 Whom do I call upon?
 A child who does not know the name of his father is
 Ocumoku Alama!

65. The pregnant Gaboon viper that bears many small vipers!
 Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
 After him,
 Ogabo Oonekpo,
 Ogabodo who died
 And all the animals rubbed red camwood on their horns
 in his father's home!

70. Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
 After Ogabo Oonekpo,
 Whom do I know that I may call on him?
 Ogwu EflaAdoko, Who Enticed-Once-to-Put-
 Something-
 in-the-Sun,

The palm-kernel shells that they placed on the ground
 Which knew once the Hawk!

75. Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
 After Ogwu Eflu, Father of Oko,
 Whom do I know that I may invoke?
 Ogwu begot Oko Ajega Joogwugwu

80. Oko who heard the news of war and would not sleep in
 a house!

Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
 When Oko was going to beget his first-born,
 Whom did Oko begot?
 Oko went on.

85. Oko begot Odaji
 Who fought with the animals and dealt strongly
 with the animals,

Animals whose horns were gleaming fought with Odaji
 Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!

When Odaji was going to beget his first-born,
 90. Odaji begot Okatakpa
 Guinea-corn suffices for fufu, for "porridge",
 for gruel;

- And people take sticks to beat the guinea-corn
 with a sound beating; I say, "What a pity"
 Guinea-corn has done great things!
95. Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
 From there,
 whom did he (Oko) beset after Odaji?
 Idoma (land), mother who bore me!
 Ona father who begot me,
100. Atanka Manyimanyi,
 The man who built a dam of earth
 And bailed out water with his shins!
 When Ona went to the stream
 He carried the things of the streams in his hands.
105. When he went to the hill
 He carried the hill-things (animals) in his hands!
 Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
 After Ona
 When Ona was going to beget his first-born,
110. Whom did Ona beget?
 Ona begot Ogwuceekwo, son of Enye,
 When Ekwo agreed, the women were wonderfully skilled.
 Ekwo the crooked who stole the bones from the (roof of
 the reception house.
 Ekwo who lay quietly,
115. Who cohabited with women in the stream!
 Ekwo, the creeping plant which creeps.
 Which covers the space between yam-heaps!
 If a young person ventures to cut firewood
 And cuts the thorn-tree;
120. Three days later, four days later
 Legs swell up
 Arms swell up.
 They say, Onma Ediigwu Oga, the ceremony should
 come!
- Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
125. After Ekwo,
 Whom did he (Ona) beget as the next-born to Ekwo?
 Ode Olubi was the chief of the palace.
 What did Ode say? Ode called Oko,

Ode, the first, son of Enye.

130. May Ode come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!

After Ode,

Whom did he beget next to him?

Agabi Idoma!

Oono, the son who was hard for Enye to bear.

135. Oono Onaji Kidaablekwu.

The sun which shines above and dries the things of earth!

An empty skin which causes a fight among dogs

Dogs eat skins, dogs don't eat iron;

If they (attempt to) eat iron, the iron remains
clanging irons!

140. Come to receive my prayer, my invocation!

After Oono,

Whom did he beget next to him?

Okopi The-Bad-Grass-which-the-Horse-did-not-eat.

The long stick which they use to cut down the wasps nest:

145. If you do not know how to cut (the next) down,
the wasps catch and sting you!

Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!

After Okopi the Bad-Grass,

Whom did he beget next to him?

Agbo Ejifa, father who begot me,

150. Strong-Face which one uses to defeat a person in bargaining

Agbo who went to the farm and fear came over the hunter.

When Agbo went to the stream

He carried the stream-things in his hands, (i.e.
fish, crocodile)

When Agbo went to the hill

155. He likewise carried the hill-things in his hands! (Animals,)

When the bush-fire heads towards the amoto grass

Agbo took it with joy

Agbo took it with excitement!

Let him come,

160. Let him come and receive my prayer, receive my invocation!

(This concludes the sons of Ona)

As it went from there

Ogwuceeko was going to beget his first-born son,

Whom did Ogwuceedo beget first?

- A! Ogwuceeko begot Agebe Ogwuba, the son of Eje.
165. Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
Then whom did Ode beget as his first born?
Ode begot Abakpa.
Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
When Oono was going to beget his first-born,
170. Whom did Oolono ("Child of Pain") of Enye beget
as his first-born?
Oono begot Otamedu
Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
After Oono,
Whom did he beget next?
175. Whom did Okopi Egbeubi beget as his first-born?
He begot Adikwu the termite, whom they used as a fence!
Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
Agbo Ejifa, my father,
Whom did Agbo Ejifa beget as his first son?
180. Agbo Ejifa begot Omepa Ogllogbaano,
Son of Ija.
As he begot Omepa,
Whom did he beget next to him?
Then he begot Okpe Aduji Moloowo Akakabiaka.
185. Akpene dala mucu (?)
The Crow who set the fire but enjoyed the sun above!
As he begot Okpe,
Whom did he beget next to Okpe?
Eceipu Adigaba, father who begot himself!
190. Come to receive my prayer., receive my invocation!
As he begot Eceipu Adigaba,
Then he begot Aduma the Leopard-with-Spots
Which they kill with the forearm!
195. Come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
As it went from there,
Whom did he beget next to him?
Idoma, mother who bore me,
Then he begot Eje, the spotted leopard
200. which they kill with the forearm!
May he come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
As he begot Eje, the leopard-with-Spots whom they

kill with the forearm

Whom did he beget after him? Agabi Idoma!

205. Then he begot Onyilokwu Edegbliigwu who shared the things of war.

As he begot Onyilokwu Edegbliigwu who shared the things of War,

Whom did he beget after him?

Then he begot Oonyeebe, she was the bow that went to a place

And made the place empty!

210. May she come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!

When he begot after her

Whom did he beget after her

Then he begot Okadonye who says no evil

May he come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!

215. As it left that one

The prayer has come to the home of the father who begot me,
The child should go to the lineage of his father!

Eceipu Adigaaba,

Whom Eceipu, the father who begot me, was going
to beget his first-born,

220. Whom did he beget?

Then he begot Ocoonye,

The Ukpo-Tree that went to a place, with which they cast divination.

As he begot Ocoonye

Whom did he beget next to him?

225. Then he begot Aleji Molleudu,

The mongoose who caught something in the valley,
And the running civet-cat was pleased!

May he come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!

May he come to help me!

230. As he begot Aleji Mogleudu,

Whom did he beget next to him?

Then he begot Aloga Egwebe, They-swept-the-Place
preparation-for-the-Day-of-Trouble.

May he come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!

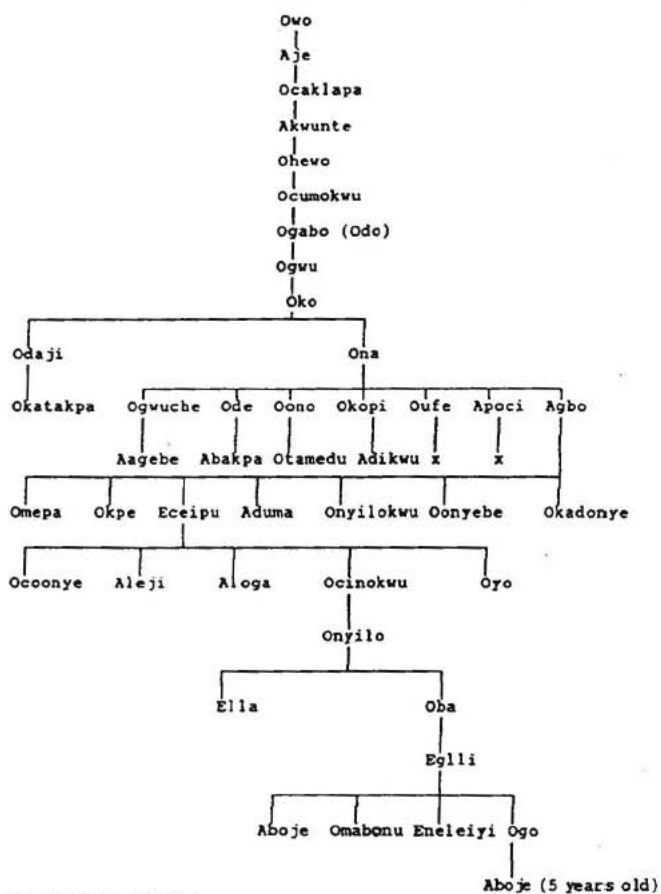
As it left that one,

235. Ah! Ukpo Gebe, father who begot me, was going to

- beget his first-born,
Whom did he beget first?
Then he begot Ocinokwu Ede, The-Great-Tree.
Ah! Ede Gblligwu divided the things of war,
Ede who was carrying on a war
240. Would take a cow's neck and cut it with an axe!
As it left (from there),
When he begot next to him, whom did he beget?
Then he begot Oyo, Great Meteor, which struck the
earth and all the tribes heard!
Then he begot her, a woman.
245. As it went from there,
Whom did Ocinokwu beget as his first-born?
Then he begot Idu Who-Threw-a-Spear-and-Caught-a-Hawk,
It was him he begot as his first-born.
Whom did he beget next to him?
250. When Idu Otokpa Kwoogo begot his first-born,
He begot Onyilo Agwu, Burned-Stubble-which-becomes-
Wet-with-Dew-and-Turns-into-Tall-Grass,
Stubble-which-Gets-Dew-and-turns-into ijile-Tree!
It is whom he begot!
When that Onyilo Agwu was going to beget his first-born
255. He begot Ela Eglli, The-Bad-Locust-Beans:
When they are (cooking) on the fire, water on earth is
finished!
If they put eglli-beans on the fire and put beans on fire,
When the beans are done, the eglli-beans are not done,
May he come to receive my prayer, receive my invocation!
260. As it went from there,
Whom did he beget next to him?
Oba, father who begot me
Hawk which has a peak and the birds are afraid,
Then it was he whom he begot.
265. Then when Oba Ejila was going to beget his first-born,
Then he begot Eglli Abiinya who catches the strong man.
When Abiinya Kwoolofu, (one who seizes the powerful)
Was going to beget his first-born
Whom did he beget?
270. Then he begot Aboje Ema Le!

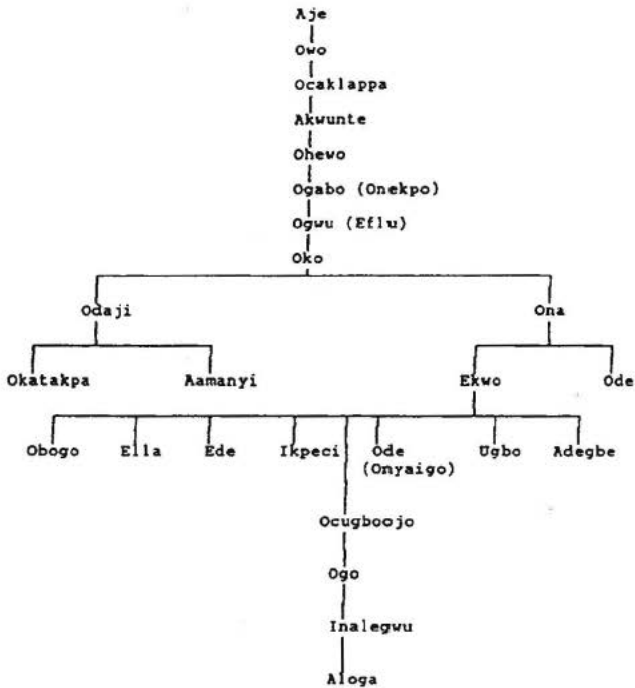
If the arm is no longer there,
The relationship is ended.
He knows the relationship is the one who makes
the relationship!

Appendix 3

Genealogy²⁸

²⁸ This chart has been drawn by Idris O.O. Amali from the information contained in Otukpo genealogical chant in Appendix 2.

Appendix 4

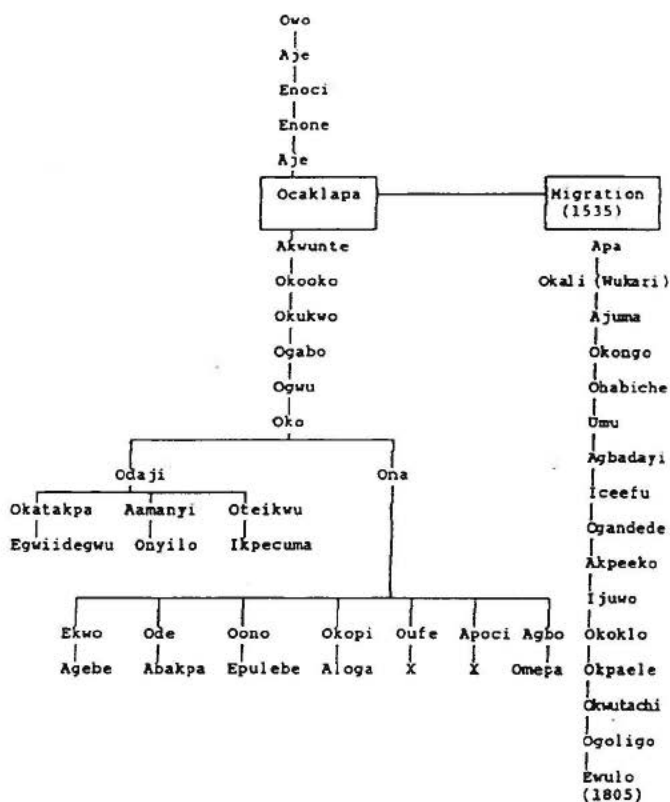
Genealogy²⁹

Chanted by Once Ongaji Alekwu masquerade

Idris O.O. Amali (1992:671)

²⁹ Chart drawn from Onche Ogaji Alekwu Chant by Idris O.O. Amali 1995.

Appendix 5

Otukpo Genealogy/Migration³⁰

Idris O.O. Amali (1995)

³⁰ The Chart was drawn by Idris O.O. Amali from information collected by audio recording of Ikongbe Alekwu Masquerade. It was recorded in 1992 by J. Akatu Ocheibi on the occasion indicated above.

Appendix 6

Otukpo Genealogy³¹

1. Apa (1535)
2. Otiya
3. Okali
4. Ajuma
5. Adumahina
6. Obana
7. Okongo
8. Ogoodu
9. Abice
10. Umu
11. Agbadayi
12. Iceefu
13. Ogandele
14. Ugboaju (Omaga)
15. Ala
16. Akpeeko
17. Ijuwo
18. Ifaagwu
19. Agwashi
20. Okoklo
21. Okpaele
22. Otiya
23. Okwutaci
24. Ajeco
25. Oglidi
26. Akpomlokpo
27. Ogoligo
28. Ogbaya
29. Uga
30. Ewulo
31. Upu - Otukpo (1805)

³¹ Drawn from the Alekwu poetic chant of Alekwu Eigege masquerade of Otada-Otukpo. Drawn by Idris O.O. Amali (1995).

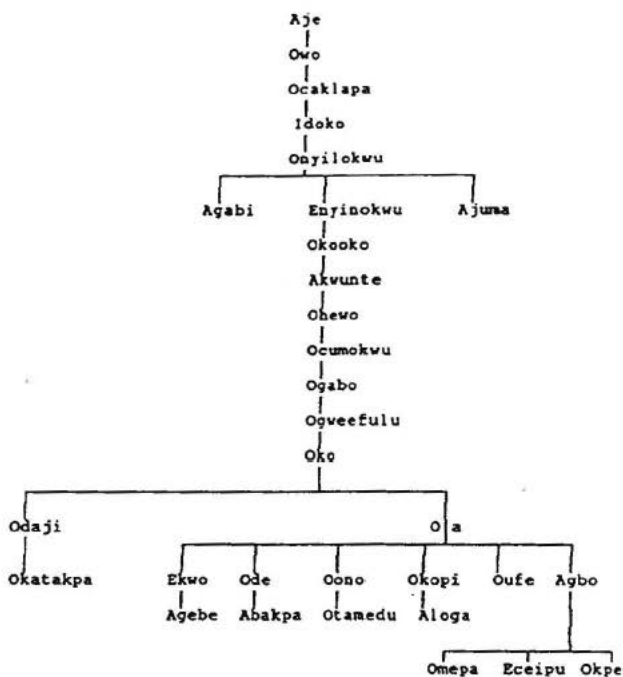
Appendix 7

Four Versions of Otukpo Migration from Their Putative Apakwararafa³²

(1)	(2)	(3)
1. Apa	1. Apa	1. Apa
2. Okali	2. Otiya	2. Obana
3. Ajuma	3. Ukali	3. Okongo
4. Okongo	4. Adumahina	4. Omu
5. Umu	5. Obana	5. Akpeeko
6. Ogbadayi	6. Ogboaju Omaga	6. Omu
7. Iceefu	7. Ala	7. Otukpo
8. Ogandede	8. Ijuwo	
9. Akpeeko	9. Akpeeko	
10. Ijuwo	10. Agwataci	(4)
11. Ifaagwu	11. Otiya	1. Apa
12. Okoklo	12. Okwutaci	2. Okali
13. Okpaele	13. Ajeco	3. Umu
14. Okwutaci	14. Akpomlokwo	4. Otiya
15. Ogoligo	15. Ewulo	5. Ijuwo
16. Ewulo		6. Okwutachi
		7. Ogilidi
		8. Otukpo

³² Item 1, Idris O.O. Amali (1995); Items 2-4 by Oteikwu Amali.

Appendix 8

Compression of the Four Versions of Otukpo Migration³³

³³ Idris O. O. Amali (1995) Tentative Compression of Idoma Otukpo Migration and Settlements from four narrative versions.