

The Role of Agriculture in the Economic Development of Idofin-Igbanna, Kwara State Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study focus on the role of agriculture in the economic development of Idofin-Igbanna, agriculture remains one the major economic activities of Idofin, agriculture as an engine of growth and poverty reduction, because it assured food security. This paper however, focuses on the development of agriculture, the gender role in agricultural activities, it also attempts the role and impact of government in the prospect agricultural economy of Idofin-Igbanna. The paper obtained it's data from both primary and secondary sources which are made up of oral interview, books, journal articles, newspaper reports and government publications relevant to the topic.

Keywords:

agriculture; economic; development

I. Introduction

Idofin land comprises four separate communities Occupying two geographical divisions; Igbana-Idofin and Odo-Ashe-Idofin. Each of these communities is a combination of different and independent groups of immigrants with their migratory legends. There are the early immigrants who became the aborigines of Idofin, these were the people who were said to have migrated from Mobba-Otun in the present Ekiti State. The aborigines comprise Odo-Eru, Ilegose and Igbon groups of peoples. The latter immigrants migrated into that community mostly as a result of the destruction of their communities during the 19th century Yoruba and the Jihad wars. However, with time both groups of immigrants formed a new organic political entity to which they submitted their original ethnicities. One of the consequences of this was the postulation and in some cases lumping together of different and conflicting theories of traditions about the origin of the peoples which may be classified into two namely; Ife-Igbomina based theory and Ekiti-Otun traditions (A.E. Olorukooba, 2017).

According to the Ife-Igbomina theory, Idofin people have a common ancestor with the Igbomina speaking people in the present Irepodun and Ifelodun Local Government Areas of Kwara state. The tradition of the *Igbomina* speaking people speaks of common ancestor called *Ologbomona* who migrated with Oduduwa from Egypt to Ile-Ife (Ibiloye, 1978). Hence, the traditional culture of Igbomina people is associated with Ile-ife where the people first became conscious of themselves. The settlement in the present homeland is brought about by different unconnected migrations from different places in Yorubaland. The first groups according to Dada P.O.A. were the Isin group, Idofin, *Omu-Aran*, *Agbonda*, *Arandun* and *Esie* who migrated to Ile-Ife through *Ija-Igbe* (correctly written as *Ijaregbe*), a town near the present Ijesha in Ogun State as a result of certain animosity" (Dada, 1985). Since all Yoruba refer to Ile-Ife as the centre of world creation and their ancestral home, Igbominas claim to have migrated from there could not have been exceptional. The ruling dynasties in Igbomina and

also in Idofin also trace their origins to Ile-Ife and their descent directly or indirectly to Oduduwa' (A. E. Olorukooba, 2017). Idofin people might never have a common ancestor with Igbominas nor migrated from Ile-Ife because the Ife-Igbomina theory lacks credibility because it fails to indicate in time perspective when the *Igbomina* people left under the leadership of either *Ologbomona* himself or his descendants. It is also silent over what led to the animosity and against whom it was nursed either in Ile-Ife or *Ijaregbe* that led to their migration to somewhere around their present homelands.

In such circumstances as it occurred, cultural cross-fertilization and the dominance of the populous Igbomina groups of people over the small indigenos (Idofin) population was culturally inevitable as observed by Whiteley:

Idofin people has been acted upon by its neighbors- in this case the Igbomina of the adjacent Omu-Isin district This influence is noticeable in language, and in the type of houses built at Idofin, quite a fair proportion of which are on Igbomina's model. The Idofin people inter-marry fairly and freely with their neighbours but the Ekiti strain is not so much discernible in the type of countenance, shape of skull and facial markings of the tribe".

It can thus be concluded that *Ife-Igbomina* theory about Idofin people is not true and lacks substance. Although there is no doubt that Idofin people had been culturally assimilated by their neighbours, it is equally evident that they are originally of Ekiti stock. Like other Yoruba, Idofin people claimed in their oral traditions to have originated or migrated from Ile-Ife (which is equally doubtful) although not with the Igbominas. Lastly the theory has no place in the people (Idofins) oral traditions and in the colonial records.

(b) Ekiti-Otun Traditions

C.G. Whiteley in his Osi District Assessment Report of 26 February 1916" says

The people of Idofin came from Awotun where they formed a one quarter of the town, they migrated north in consequence of a quarrel over the succession to the leadership. The connection between the two towns may be seen in the title Mobba which each suffixes to its name.

Originally the immigrants under some eight leaders formed eight settlements seven of which were on almost inaccessible hills Four of the seven hill settlements were destroyed by the Fulani raids and the remaining three descended from their hill settlements fifteen or Twenty years ago. These three towns are called Odu-Aga (Odo-Aga), Ibiafon (Ehin-Afo) and Ojokolo (now Aiyekale) and are quite close together, all being subsidiary to Idofin proper, the eight settlement that always Occupied its present accessible site

As neatly as this report is compiled it cannot be taken as representing the gospel historical truth. Though unlike the others it touches more on the history of the aforementioned component towns of Idofinland, it still needs to be analysed to extract the likely historical truth. The assertion that Idofin people migrated from Otun under eight leaders which comprised the present Idofin land is misplaced and not supported by oral traditions. The notion might have been informed by the popular saying among the people that "*Ori mejo ni Idofin ni sugbon Isapa se kesan,*" meaning Idofin composed of eight different groups under

eight leaders' settlements while *Isapa* a town now in Ekiti Local Government Area of Kwara State is the ninth. This Socio-political slogan was borne out of the traditional military organizational structure of Idofinland which Whiteley, a resident officer in the district happened to have met and observed in the late 19th century. In that set-up, the army was divided into eight contingents that corresponded to the eight administrative units or wards into which Idofinland was divided. Each contingent was under a military commander called *Elegbo* that met together with that of *Isapa* at a place called *Isin*, situated at the base of *Oke-Are* Mountain in Idofin-Igbana. Hence the popular saying quoted above (Ajiboye, 2021).

Although, it is evident that Igbana-Idofin had been occupying its present accessible site before *Odo-Aga Idofin*, *Ehin-Afo-Idofin* and *Aiyekale-Idofin* descended from their settlements fifteen or twenty years later (that is 1896 and 1901) but their history is dated prior to this time. Igbana-Idofin too had once settled in *Oke-Are* Mountains particularly during the Fulani wars before descending to their present accessible site (Ajiboye, 2021).

According to oral traditions Abadofin the founder of Mobba-Idofin is said to be one of the sixteen chiefs who migrated from Ile-Ife to found the early sixteen Kingdoms the source also added that in terms of seniority, he was second to *Oore* his blood relations and founder of *Otun* and the most senior of the sixteen chiefs However, from Samuel Johnsons "The History of the Yorubas" (Johnson, 1921), neither the name *Abadofin* nor his Kingdom (Idofin) is included on the lists of the early sixteen Ekiti Kingdoms whose founders names became their monarch's titles respectively.

Nevertheless, it is doubtful if the Ekitis (including Idofins) have migrated from Ife. This is because field investigations and linguistic analysis of the Yoruba dialects, according to J.A. Atanda, have revealed that other Yoruba settlements particularly *Oba-Ife* near Akure one of the early Ekiti kingdoms founded by Deji, one of the sixteen chiefs is said to have been in existence before the advent of Oduduwa (Atanda, 1980). This is further corroborated by Samuel Johnson who stated that the Ekitis were among the aboriginals who Oduduwa struggled with before coming to the East" (Johnson, 1921). However, up till today, oral tradition and research maintains that the Ekitis migrated from Ile-Ife

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Geographical Location

The area under study comprises four separate communities; *Igbana-Idofin*, *Odo-Aga-Idofin*, *Ehin-Afo-Idofin* and *Aiyekale-Idofin* all of which are presently called the other way round. Idofin is located in Oke- Ero local Government Area of Kwara State, it shares common boundary with Ekiti Local Government in the East, Irepodun Local Government in the West and Ifelodun Local Government in the North. The town is settled on a highland surrounded by many hills and mountains which notwithstanding made the place accessible to the other world through Osi-Idofin road and Omu-Aran via Oko Road to Idofin. Among the hills and mountains that surround Idofin are *Oke-Are* (a potential tourist attraction), '*Okuta Agba* and *Ajumoda* to mention but a few (Johnson, 1921).

Up to the first half of the 19th century, Idofin land transcended its present geographical boundaries (Johnson, 1921). While the area was bounded in the north by '*Babanla*, a Sub-group of Igbomina speaking people of the state, the Oro River also formed a natural boundary between Idofinland and Pategi, a sub-group of Nupe speaking people in the North-East and also the Egbe people of the *Okun* speaking stock in the East. To the West, the area extended as far as *Isanlu-Isin* (now in Isin Local Government area of Kwara State). Here, the area thus

embraced the total land area of the present *Owa-Onire*, a town near *Isanlu-Isin*, *Omu-Aran*, *Olla* (hitherto known as Odo-Omi) and Oko town.

In the South, the area transcended the Oro River boundary with *Ajuba* a village as far as near a stream situated very Close to Osi where it shared common boundary with the latter" (Johnson, 1921). According to a source, *Ejeru* hill was the Southern frontier defense military base of Idofin land both during the Jihad and the Fulani wars. Particularly the *Aaye-Otun* and the *Otun* wars of 1858 which sacked all settlements in Ekiti land, *Omu*, *Arandun* and other places except Idofinland (A.H.M. Krik-Green, 1921).

Consequent upon these wars, several Ekiti people took refuge with Idofin people on the *Ejeru* hill situated near the present *Ajuba* along Idofin-Osi road. Prominent among the people were the *Iketa* people of *Osi* and some *Opin* groups of people in Ekiti land. The coming together of this people must have produced a strong military army which led to the defeat of Balogun Ajayi of Ibadan's army in 1838 (A.H.M. Krik-Green, 1921). The *Iketa* people in particular were said to be known for their military prowess.

After the war, Idofin people withdrew their soldiers from *Ejeru* hill to *Ijogbasin*, a flat rock situated nearer to their present settlement, a source added (A.E Olorukooba, 2017). The source further said that while some Idofin and Opin people refused to go back to their original home base founded the old Ajuba settlement that was situated at about two kilometers East of the present *Ajuba* village, quite a considerable number of the *Iketa-Osi* people followed and settled permanently with Idofin people in their original home base. The source further claimed that these people were the ancestors of the present *Iketa* people in Igbana-Idofin. Incidentally, there is the *Iketa* ward in Igbana-Idofin" (A. Atofolaki, 2021).

2.2 Agricultural Development and Economy Activities of the People

From the earliest time, agriculture has emerged as the main occupation of the people. It has been the people's source of income and of food, around which rotated the main commercial activities taking place between the people of Idofin and her neighbours. Food crops are sold raw or processed into various food items for preservation locally or into flour sold to her neighbours. For example, yams are processed into yam flour. These foods and their final products are the main articles of trade which the Idofin people exchanged for their neighbors' commodities such as dry fish, farm implements and foodstuffs" (A.E. Olorukooba, 2017).

Besides farming, there were local industries in the area. The main ones were pottery, spinning, cloth weaving and dyeing industries. They were manned mainly by women and each representing a specialised trade in the textile production processes. Locally hand-woven cloth is called *kijipa* or *kente*. They are produced with a specific type of loom. The Other materials used are two vertically erected poles against the wall of a building, with a distance of about three or four feet apart. They are braced horizontally at the top and bottom with two separate big raffia branches on which the local threads are vertically twined covering almost the gap between the two horizontally parallel raffias that are relatively suspended by the vertical poles. The cloths produced with these are broad loomed types and they are very broad and thick (E. Akande, 2021).

However, With the coming of immigrants, either through commercial or more probably consequent upon the fall of old Oyo empire, a new system of weaving typically of Oyo was introduced. This is the narrow loom type handled by the men alone but this could not compete successfully with the broad loomed types that were typical of Ekitis from where it

infiltrated into their neighbouring areas. The broad loomed types were more marketable among the Oyos such as *Ogbomosho*, *Ede* and others who were the major buyers from Idofin people (E. Akande, 2021). Some of these cloths are Ogbomosho, named after its popular buyers (the Ogbomosho people), *Isan*, *Keke*, *Isin* and *Ala* to mention but a few" (E. Akande, 2021).

The geographical location of Idofinland between the Nupe people from the North-East, the Igbominas to the West and North-West, the remaining Ekiti groups to the South and Yagba to the East, has strategically placed it as a commercial "bridge" between her surrounding neighbours. According to Whiteley, "the trade route from Pategi passes through Idofin to *Osi* and *Otun* (A.E. Olorukooba, 2017). The Idofin people also traded in their commodities with the rest of Igbomina people in the present Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. These areas include *Igbaja*, *Oke-Ode*, *Omi-Aro* and others commonly referred to as (*Ileko-Ilorin*), that is the suburbs of Ilorin, from where they obtained dogs which were resold to the hunters in Idofinland for hunting and to Some *Ogun* worshippers who offered them as sacrifices to *Ogun*, (God of iron) (O. Moses, 2021). From *Ikele*, *Ado*, *Ido*, *Ijero*, *Aramoko*, all in the present Ekiti State the people also traded their commodities in exchange for palm oil and kolanuts which were in turn sold to the Igbomina and Nupe peoples (O. Moses, 2021).

Thus, it can be seen that the geographical location of the commercial bridge between her neighboring Nupe and Igbominas; and in an area characterised by good soil, favorable climatic conditions and the presence of mountains and hills which served as out-posts from the refugees fleeing from superior powers have culminated in populating the area with various groups of people with different cultural backgrounds and linguistic stocks. Resulting from this have been inter-group marriages and cultural cross fertilization (A. Atofolaki, 2021).

III. Discussion

3.1 Gender Role in Agricultural Activities

The participation of male and female farmers in agriculture operations in Idofin, showed that 93.3% of the male farmers were engaged in land preparation compared to 70% of the females who took part in the same activity. Findings also revealed that while 91.7% each of the males participated in planting and harvesting, 66.7% and 88.3% of the females took part in the same activities. In addition, while about 88.3% of the male farmers took part in insect/pest and disease management, 73.3% of the females were participated in the same activity. Furthermore, the result of the study showed that 86.7% of the male farmers were engaged in weeding compared to 75% of the females who participated in the same activity.

Also, while about 85% of the male respondents took part in fertilizer application, about 66.7% of the females participated in the same activity. This implies that both male and female farmers were engaged in all the cassava, cashew, yam, cashew, guinea corn farming operations. However, the male respondents recorded higher participation in all the cassava farming operations compared to the females. Although, the male folks dominated the of farming process, it is important to note that women's activities in root production have increased due to increased need for food and cash. This has implication for research and extension to reach out to both male and female farmers in the study area with appropriate technologies and information. Women play a vital role in advancing agricultural development and food security. They participate in many aspects of rural life-in paid employment, trade and marketing, as well as many unpaid activities such as tending to crops, fetching water and wood for fuel, and caring for family members. Women also manage household consumption and

food preparation. Despite their great contribution, women face many constraints in the multiple activities they pursue – less land ownership, ineffective and inadequate access to credit, extension and other services and ability to hire labourers (A.T Ajayi, 2016), men are generally believing to be the chief actor, although both sexes participated in the production (A.T Ajayi, 2016).

Consequently, it is important to note that the plantation and processing is not just about planting and irrigation of crops but one of the important things to do is clearing of weeds majorly by able bodied men sometimes assisted by women, from time to time so as for the weeds in between the crops not to struggle for the nutrients meant for the crops (A. James, 2021). Furthermore, the crops harvest is primarily manual and/or with the aid of tools, although mechanized implements already exist. It is one of the costliest operations of the production system done often performed by women. The harvesting includes the following stages: pruning of aerial parts (dispensable in some cases) to a height of 20 cm above ground level, followed by the uprooting and collapse of the roots depending on the nature of crop, and, finally, the transport of the roots to the processing units (A. James, 2021).

Unsurprisingly, farmers across all study sites attached substantial weight to traits such as high yield, root size, early maturity, and dry matter content. The yield of storage roots constitutes an important basis for farmers to cultivate the various varieties identified in the study sites. This finding supports the assertion that high yield is one of the primary traits in farmers' varietal selection. There were however significant differences in the extent that classes of traits were mentioned by women and men across all study sites. Women attached greater importance to cooking/processing traits than men. Statements coded in this category included: "Makes good products gari, fufu and lafun;" "Products made from it swell and draw and mold fine;" "It 'fills' the stomach when eaten and fufu and gari made from it draws;" "Gari made from it is appealing." Conversely, men attached greater importance to agronomic traits than women. Statements coded in this category included: "Suppresses weeds;" "Good canopy formation;" "Beautiful, appealing in the field." Together these findings validate the assumptions that gendered divisions of labor in agriculture production and processing directly drive trait preferences and accumulated knowledge.

3.2 Economic Importance of Agriculture to the People

The ultimate objective of internal-food trade should be to transfer food surpluses from producing areas to consuming centres when they are needed. It is the food marketing system that helps to create the time, form and place utility. As it has been observed earlier that women who are also responsible for weeding, harvesting, transportation of harvested farm produce from farms to their final destinations, processing, preservation and marketing of the harvested crops, likewise there is the development of agriculture and an assurance of food security (A. T Ajayi, 2016). Idofin-Igbanna trade with other neighbouring communities like Odo-ashe, Odo-aga, Okedaba, Oro-ago, Iloffa to mention few. Hence, this led to an alliance and cooperations among the aforementioned neighbouring town. In 2009 a cashew nut processing company was established along Olomu-way Irepodun local government Omu-Aran Kwara state, this cashew company buy from far and near, Idofin was not left out and thus increase the income of cashew owners and producers. Likewise in 2016, there was a price hike in the sales of cashew nuts, in so much encouraging that many more people ventured into the plantation, thus increase land tenure and more people in agricultural production. Other economy Importance includes the steady development of town from rural to developed states and with the recognition of the local government towards the town located along the valley of many mountains.

3.3 Government Roles in the Promising Agriculture

Kwara State like many of its contemporaries in the North Central zone is no doubt an agrarian settlement. The presence of three of the existing federal government-owned agricultural institutions in the state probably attest to this claim. The parastatals are National Centre for Agricultural Mechanisation (NCAM), Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI) and Nigerian Stored Products and Research Institute (NSPRI) all in Ilorin, the State Capital.

While the people of the Kwara North and South senatorial districts are known for the growing of tubers, grains and cash crops, those in the Central engage mostly in animal husbandry, probably due to the availability of expanse of Savannah vegetation within the district. But despite the massive land in the Council Areas of Edu, Patigi, Shonga and Kiama, all in the Northern part of the state and deciduous vegetation in Council Areas of Ekiti, Oke-Ero, Oyun, Offa, Irepodun and Ifelodun, practising farmers in these areas engage in drudgery farming.

Even efforts of the state government in providing modern farming technique skills for the youths at Idofin-igbanna Youth Demonstration Farm at Oke-ero Council Area of the state has yielded little or no results, as farming in the state is still left to the aged with obsolete practice and archaic tools.

A Professor of Agriculture at Faculty of Agriculture University of Ilorin, Omotesho said unless governments in Nigeria, make farming enticing and alluring to the youths, “via proper training, veritable policies, periodic monetary interventions like soft loans and availability of modern equipment,” the nation would one day find it difficult to feed its human population.

3.4 Continuity and Change in the Agricultural Production

Climate change is already affecting agriculture, with effects unevenly distributed across the world. Future climate changes will most likely affect crop production in low latitude countries negatively, while effects in northern latitudes may be positive or negative. Animal husbandry also contributes towards climate change through greenhouse gas emissions.

Agriculture contributes towards climate change through anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and by the conversion of non-agricultural land such as forests into agricultural land. In 2010, agriculture, forestry and land-use change were estimated to contribute 20–25% of global annual emissions. In 2020, the European Union's Scientific Advice Mechanism estimated that the food system as a whole contributed 37% of total greenhouse gas emissions, and that this figure was on course to increase by 30–40% by 2050 due to population growth and dietary change.

A range of policies can reduce the risk of negative climate change impacts on agriculture and greenhouse gas emissions from the agriculture sector

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of agricultural plays a strategic role in the process of economic development of of idofin igbanna. It has already made a significant contribution to the economic prosperity of Idofin-land and its role in the economic development is of vital importance. By providing food and raw material to non-agricultural sectors of the economy, by creating demand for goods produced in non-agricultural sectors, by the people on the strength of the purchasing power, earned by them on selling the marketable surplus, it also

provides investable surplus in the form of savings and taxes to be invested in non-agricultural production in Idofin land.

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S/N	Name	Age	Occupation	Adress	Date
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3	Akande. E	69	Farmer	Ebido compound, Idofin-igbanna	22/08/2021
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