

Evolution of Inter-Community Boundaries in Africa

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Article abstract

A model of the evolution of inter-community boundaries in Africa is presented. It is assumed that adjacent communities have different cores from which they progressively explore and interact in the frontier between them. The boundary is not fixed before there is effective occupation of the frontier and its evolution can be visualized in different stages: (i) expansion stage when the communities spread out from their different core areas; (ii) contact stage when explorers and migrants come against physical or human hinderances to their expansion; (iii) stabilization stage when each side lays exclusive claim to parts of the frontier from which it seeks to exclude the other. Attempt to exclude others may lead to conflicts on rights to sections of the frontier; (iv) allocation stage when adjacent members of different communities resolve disputes arising from stabilisation and agree on the boundary between them; (v) delimitation stage when the entire length of the boundary between two communities is agreed upon and defined; (vi) demarcation stage when the boundary is surveyed and marked; (vii) administration stage during which the boundary is periodically supervised. Examples of real situations in Western Nigeria are used to illustrate each stage of the model.

EVOLUTION OF INTER-COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES IN AFRICA *

by

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« All theoretical concepts and planning of the frontier [boundary] must be based on the duality of its character and function, viz. the limit of the dynamism of a state, and the line of separation between two states. From this comes the working rule which states that *the geographical site of a frontier [boundary] is that zone in which at a given moment, the force of expansion of two neighbouring states mutually neutralize each other* »¹.

Every community in Africa lays claim to a specific territory but in many cases neighbouring communities do not agree on the location and evolution of the boundaries between their territories. In an attempt to justify the claim it makes each community give the history of the establishment of territorial rights in the area. However, the accounts given by each side are usually different from those of its neighbours and the boundaries claimed do not coincide². The accounts do not provide a satisfactory explanation of how inter-community boundaries were determined. The aim in this paper is to discuss a model of boundary evolution showing how the boundaries between the territories of adjacent communities could have developed. The model is illustrated with examples from Western Nigeria (figure 1).

The Evolution of Boundaries

The primary function of boundaries is to separate the areas of interest or jurisdiction of different parties (persons, communities or states). There-

* *This work is derived from a study of indigenous boundaries in Western Nigeria for which the University of Ife gave a research grant. My colleagues in the Geography Department of the University have been most helpful in commenting on the various ideas on the model of boundary evolution. I am most grateful to all of them particularly Drs. J.O. Adejuwon and J.A. Olagbaiye who read the drafts and offered useful advice on its improvement.*

¹ GOBLET, Y.M. (1955) *Political Geography and the World Map*. New York, Frederick A. Praeger, p. 181 (Italics mine).

² See for example: ADEJUIGBE, Omolade (1970) Ife-Ijesa Boundary Problem. *Nigerian Geographical Journal*, Vol. 13, pp. 23-38.

ADEJUIGBE, Omolade and OLLENU, N.A. (1962) *Principles of Customary Land Law in Ghana*. London, Sweet and Maxwell, pp. 217-219.

fore the most important factors in boundary development are the parties which are separated and whose authorities are limited by it. The need for the parties to define their areas of authority presumably developed because of a desire to avoid conflict over certain areas or ressources. Therefore in considering the evolution of boundaries it can be assumed that :

- (i) each party has a distinct base or core areas, where it was first established ;
- (ii) the different bases were initially separated by some territory which no one has claimed and which can be regarded as a frontier ;
- (iii) expansion from the bases or cores into the frontier was for the purposes of exploiting its resources such as soil, vegetation (including fruit, grass and timber), mineral, water and animals (including fishes) ;



Figure 1 Western Nigeria. Communities cited in text.

- (iv) the resources of the frontier are inelastic and therefore each side may, at a certain stage, want to have exclusive control over the resources in particular areas ;
- (v) the parties would desire to avoid conflict or the resumption of conflict over resources and hence would seek agreement on the sections of the frontier to be exploited by each side.

Expansion from the base could be in two stages. First there is exploration of parts of the frontier. The aim of the exploration is to assess the resources of the area and be conversant with the nature of the terrain. Secondly, there would be exploitation of the resources of the explored territory. During the initial stages it is possible for people expanding from different bases to explore and exploit the resources of the same general area without their coming into contact. This is the more so if the exploration takes place at different periods. In that case two people might know the same area and each believes that he is the only one there. Ordinarily, knowledge of other party's existence or interest in the same area would come when each leaves behind evidence of his presence there. Such evidence could be the establishment of camps or marks indicating exploitation of the resources. However, evidence of resource exploitation will depend on the nature of the particular resource. Whereas people engaged in activities such as the felling of timber, mining or farming would leave behind evidence of their activities there may be nothing to indicate the operations of those involved in the collection of fruit, hunting or fishing. In the latter case later explorers of the area of operation may think that they are the first people to visit such area and therefore that they are entitled to claim it.

Even when the people involved in exploration in a frontier area come into contact they may jointly exploit the resources of an area without any conflict whatever. This could be the case with resources such as water, fruit and game. More than one person could collect the fruit of a single plant, and game in a given area could be sought by two or more hunters who are aware of each other's presence. The essence of this argument is that at the early stages of contact between members of different communities there may be a great deal of intermingling among them in the area of contact. Therefore, at that stage there may be no exclusive claim to any part of the contact area or frontier.

It can be assumed that the first contact between two different communities took place through two people. Each of such people could have enough for his own needs and may therefore not be opposed to sharing the resources of the contact area with the other party. However, in course of time, the population of each community within the contact area will increase. Since there is no unoccupied space for expansion the increased population will have to limit themselves to the contact area. In order to satisfy their needs they would make more intensive exploitation of the resources. The intensive exploitation would involve more frequent visits

to, for example, hunting grounds and eventually concentration by each person of his activity in a given area. Consequently each person will start to lay exclusive claims to his area of operation. In course of time adjacent members of the two communities would agree on the limits of their areas of concentration and the course of the boundary between them. The type of situation which exists in frontier areas has been aptly described by Peattie :

« When the world was less thickly populated there were waste spaces between settlements. The space between was only vaguely claimed if at all . . . The hunting ground between one settlement and the next is a common. Such were also the forested areas between clearings in the feudal days of the early middle ages in northern Europe. As populations increased and the outer zones of the fiefs or groups of fiefs came to overlap each other the forests were designated as marks or marches areas of defence ». As the marches became populated, the fence markings or enclosure markers of the administrative units were moved outward until a common boundary line between the two expanding countries was established.³

Other scholars have also recognized the evolutionary nature of boundaries. Thus, Whebell identified the following stages : (i) establishment of a core-and ipso facto (ii) existence of frontiers of separation between cores. Through expansion from the cores . . . these frontiers become (iii) frontiers of contact and the rationalization of conflicting or overlapping jurisdiction requires (iv) establishment of formal boundaries.⁴

The essence of the foregoing is that the following stages can be recognized in the evolution a boundary between two communities. (i) *Expansion Stage* when both communities spread out from their bases or what Whebell styled core areas. (ii) *Contact Stage* when people from both communities come against hinderances to their expansion at various points within the frontier area. (iii) *Stabilization Stage* when people from opposite communities lay claim to territory and attempt to prevent encroachment into that territory by those from the other side. (iv) *Allocation Stage* when adjacent members of the two communities agree on a boundary between themselves. (v) *Delimitation Stage* at which there is a discussion, description and acceptance of the course of a boundary between the two communities. (vi) *Demarcation Stage* when the boundary is traced on the landscape, surveyed and marked with pillars or in other suitable manner. (vii) *Administration Stage* when the boundary is periodically supervised to ensure that it is not overgrown by vegetation and that the boundary marks are not damaged or removed. The development of each of these stages is explained further in the following paragraphs.

³ PEATTIE, R. (1944) *Look to the Frontiers : A Geography for the Peace Table*. New York and London, Harper Brothers, pp. 57-58.

⁴ WHEBELL, C.F.J. (1968) Core Areas in Intrastate Political Organization. *Canadian Geographer*, Vol. XII, pp. 99-112 (especially pp. 99-101).

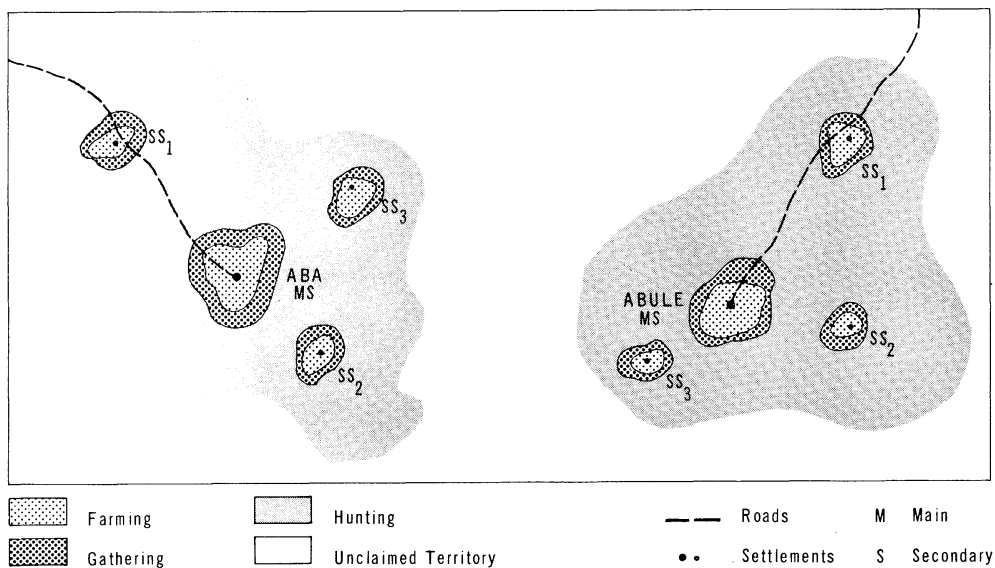


Figure 2 Model of the pattern of expansion from different bases.

Expansion Stage

It can be assumed that in the early stages of territorial partitioning each community was engaged in one of the primary occupations of gathering, hunting, herding and farming. In such a situation the zone immediately surrounding each base would be devoted to cultivation or intensive grazing and may be surrounded by a protective rampart. Such an inner zone would normally be divided amongst the major sub-groups or families of the community. Beyond the farming zone there would be the gathering zone where forest products are collected. Although some hunting may be done in the gathering zone the main hunting grounds would be beyond it, that is in the outer zone (figure 2).

As the population increases at each centre there would be need for more land for each of the major activities. Consequently, the farmland would extend into the initial gathering zone. In order to replace what has been lost to farming and also satisfy the larger population, the gatherers would take up adjacent areas of the hunting zone. The overall population increase would lead to growth in the number of hunters who would have to go farther than before. In this way each community would continue expanding its areas of operation in all directions until its members are prevented from doing so by a physical impediment or contact with members of other communities. It would appear that it is this stage of boundary evolution that Brigham described as the tribal stage⁵.

⁵ BRIGHAM, A.P. (1919) Principles in the Delimitation of Boundaries. *Geographical Review*, Vol. 7, pp. 201-219, especially pp. 201-202.

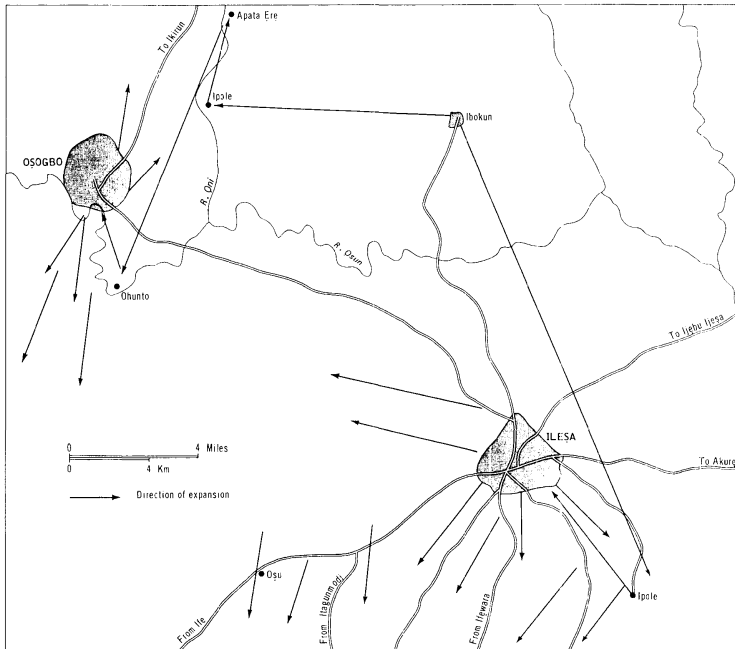


Figure 3 Movement of the founders of Ilesa and Osogbo.

In real life expansion from the base or settlement is influenced by knowledge of the position of other communities and the tendency is to expand more in the direction away from those other communities. The direction of expansion is usually that which the migrants believe to be unoccupied. As Goblet rightly notes :

« People are attracted by and move towards regions of gentle relief and fertile soil or those in which the sparse and backward population will offer little resistance; and these people will advance until they encounter geographical or human force which are too powerful to be overcome by their own force of expansion » ⁶.

It is difficult to find an example of on-going expansion which illustrates the above points. But the accounts of the foundation of many communities in Western Nigeria suggest that their expansion could not have been much different from that hypothesized in the model. In the case of Ilesa, the founding group, which migrated from Ile-Ife, first settled at Ibokun, from where a large section went to Ipole. It was from the latter place that the final move to Ilesa was made ⁷. Expansion from Ilesa has been generally towards the south, in the area of present Ijesa Southern District Council, where new settlements were founded. Osogbo is another example. The founding group came from the same source as Ijesas and

⁶ GOBLET, Y.M. *op. cit.* (ref. 1), p. 165.

⁷ Mr. Ekemode, Lecturer in History, University of Ife, August, 1968.

the following account indicates their pattern of movement : « . . . they first settled at Ipole near Omu River, then at Apata Ere . . . then at Ohunto, a dry site on the meander loop of the River Osun »⁸ (figure 3).

Contact Stage

In order to achieve maximum success, people (usually hunters) who form the vanguard of expansion would, at any stage, spread themselves out such that each of them would concentrate in one area which would be regarded as his hunting ground and in which others would not normally hunt. New arrivals would try as much as possible to avoid the hunting grounds of established hunters, but would go beyond such areas to land yet unclaimed. In this way the hunters from each community would go on expanding their areas of operation in various directions until they come in contact with physical impediments such as rivers or hills or people from another community.

When a person encounters a stream the tendency would be to avoid crossing it and move along its banks. However, later members of the same community may find it necessary to cross the stream and expand on the opposite side. Such expansion would continue until they meet members of another community. At that stage they would turn away from the advancing community to land yet unoccupied, that is the frontier, within which they would move in the same direction but roughly parallel to the major stream. This will continue until they encounter another stream, which can be called diverting stream, at which point each side would turn towards its community along the bank of the stream. The party going towards the confluence of the major and the diverting streams would follow the bank to the confluence but the one going towards the source of the diverting stream may soon cross it and continue expanding on its opposite bank (figure 4).

The effect of hills is not much different from that of rivers. People would first attempt to go around a hill or cross it through cols or passes rather than ascend it. If, in the process of going around, they encounter members of another community they would turn to ascend the hill and eventually reach the crest at which place they may turn back, since they may not like to take the trouble of descending to the other side where members of the opposite community might be established already.

The hunter's contact may not lead to a boundary. In fact it would not lead to territorial claims in the first place. Its purpose is to make each side aware of the other's existence. For this reason it can be regarded as a primary contact, as distinct from those established later and which may lead to boundaries.

⁸ OLOYEDE, A. *Rural-Urban Relationships of Odo Otin and Oshogbo*. Unpub. B.A. Dissertation, Geog. Dept., University of Ife, 1969, p. 6.

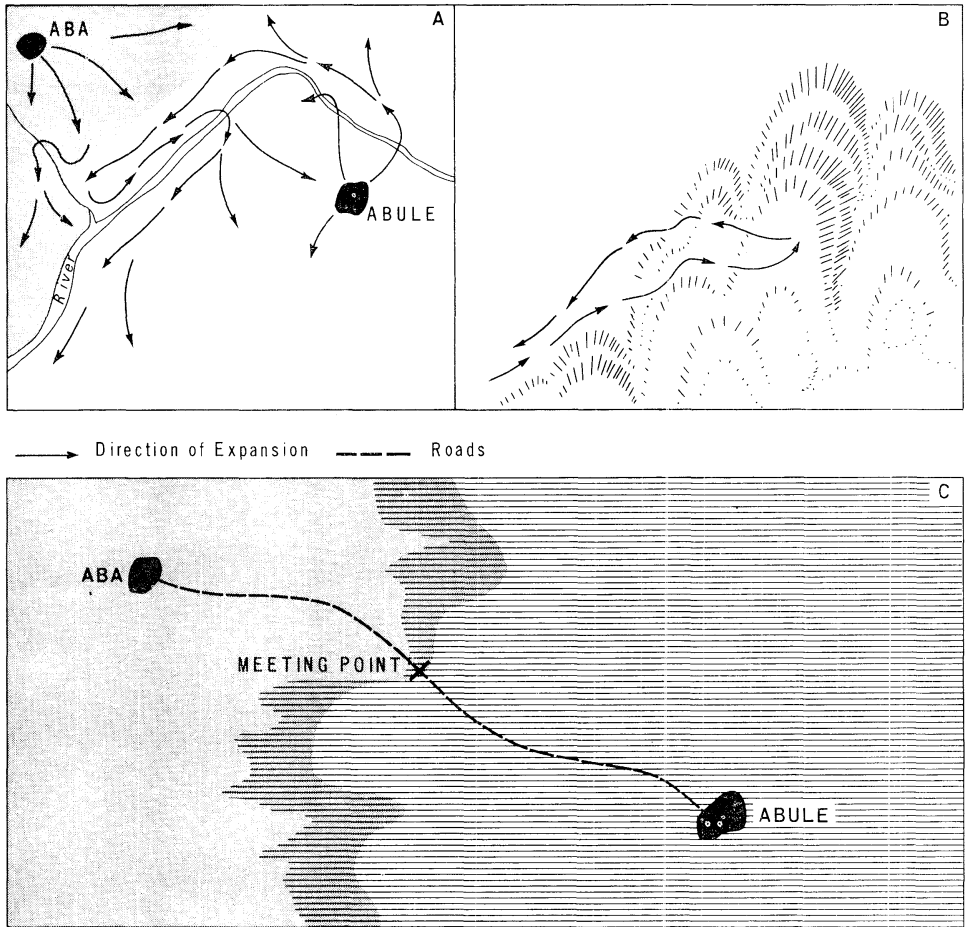


Figure 4 *The contact stage in boundary evolution.*

As the population of each community increases and the farming or intensive grazing zone encroaches more and more into the gathering and hunting zones hunters in the frontier area may change their occupation and start farming or intensive grazing. This will lead to the establishment of permanent settlements. A farmer needs less land than a hunter hence the hunter-turned-farmer may not be able to control all the areas in which he used to hunt. Nevertheless he will retain his knowledge of all areas known to him in his hunting days and pass this on to those from his own community who may follow him. Such knowledge will include information about hunters from other communities he has met. The latter might also have settled down and their bases linked with his own. The accounts given by the first arrival would make his followers believe that he controls the territory as far as the places he visited, and they may rely on him for guidance on how far they should move to settle. This will start another phase of expansion in the course of which farmers from both sides will meet. That meeting may

be styled as secondary contact. So long as there is much uncultivated land for all there may be no conflict and farmers from different communities may intermix freely. This is the more so if the secondary contact occurs away from meeting points established during primary expansion stage.

Although most communities do not have accounts of contacts with their neighbours such contacts can be inferred from the territorial claims now being made by the various communities. The inference is possible because no community would claim an area not known to its members and in all probability none would claim less than the area actually visited by its members. Since the claims of neighbouring communities usually overlap, the area of overlap can be regarded as the frontier within which they interacted and hence where they came in contact with each other. One good example of this is the contact zone between Akure and its northern neighbours (figure 5).

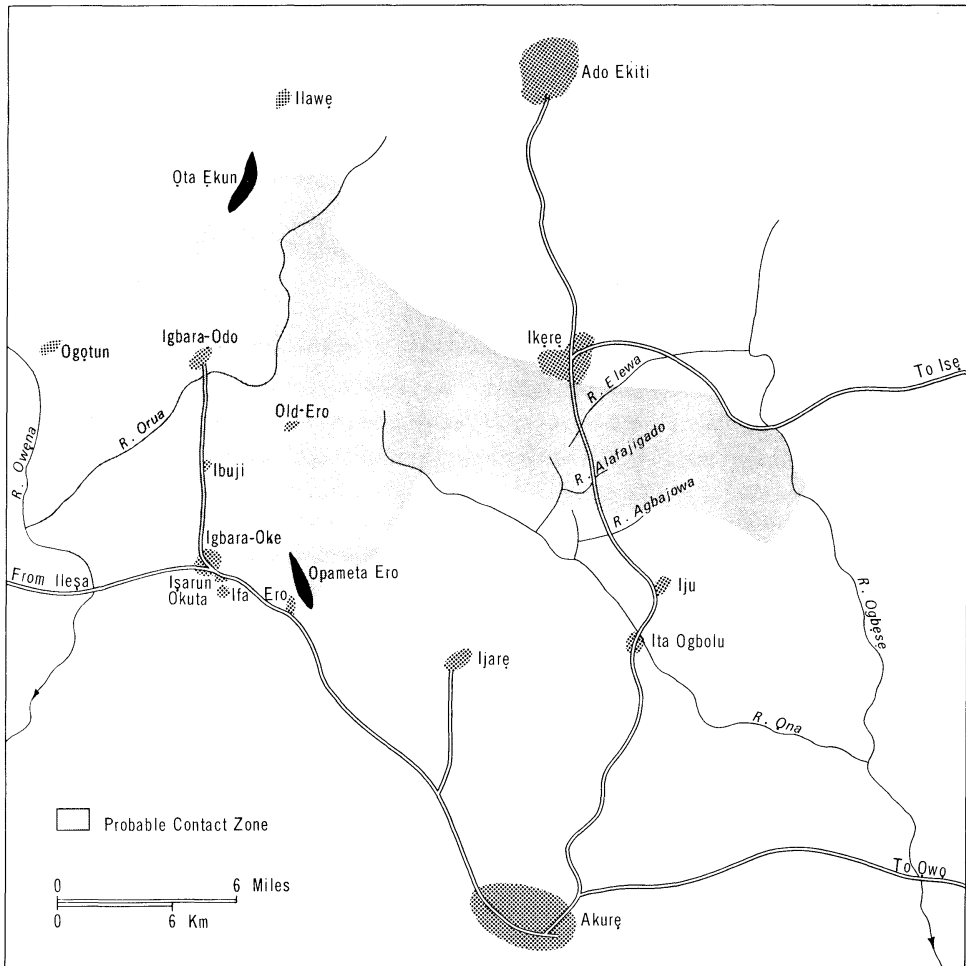


Figure 5 Probable contact zone between Akure and its northern neighbours.

The expansion stage of the communities can be reconstructed from the territorial claims of each of them. In a definition of the boundaries of Akureland it was stated that :

« Akure is bounded on the west by the River Owena, on the south by the River Ofosu and Benin . . . on the east by the River Ogbese and on the north by Igbaraodo and Ikere ».

« In the primitive age when lands were being partitioned out among the emigrants from Ile-Ife on the western side Akure had its boundary with the Owa of Ijesha, the northern side with the Ewi of Ado »⁹.

From the first statement it would appear that Akures recognize Igbaraodo and Ikere as their northern neighbours. Judging by the second paragraph it seems that in Akure's view, both towns are on land which belonged to Odo « in the primitive age ». However, this interpretation is not supported by other definitions of the northern boundary of Akure, one of which runs as follows :

« Although there is no river to form the Northern boundary of Akureland yet this is well defined. It was demarcated at two points : (a) by a rock between Igbaraodo and Ilawe known as Ota Ekun and (b) by a large heap of stones at the market place at Ikere gathered for this purpose by the nearby settlers. From a point on the Oruo near its junction with the Owena in the vicinity of Ogotun and Igbara-Odo, a line drawn in a North-easterly direction through the pile of stones at Ikere referred to in (b) above to (the point where the Ikere-Ise road crosses) the Ogbese River »¹⁰.

An alteration to this description was made when Akures claim that their boundary with Ogotun is at Oja-elepo in that town¹¹. One important feature of the description is that it brought Igbara-Odo within Akureland and hence it contradicts the first one which excluded Igbara-Odo from Akure's territory.

The main interest in the description is that it gives an idea of how far the Akures expanded in the early stages. Since no one would lay claim to a point he does not know it is clear that Akures had knowledge of the areas they claimed. Such knowledge was most probably gained from accounts given by some Akures who had been to the various places. Therefore it can be assumed that in the primary expansion stage members of the Akure community went as far as Oja-elepo, Ota Ekun, and the present site of Ikere. It can be further assumed that at that stage they came in contact with members of other communities to the north. Going by the statements cited above it would appear that Ado-Ekiti was the only community with whose members Akures came in contact. If that be the case the primary expansion

⁹ Deji of Akure to District Officer (D.O.) Ekiti, April 5, 1927.

¹⁰ ADEGBOLA, L. Memorandum on Akure-Idanre Land Dispute. AKDIVCO 2, file AK. NA. 234/1 *National Archives Ibadan (N.A.I.)*.

¹¹ Notes on Akure-Ogotun Boundary Reconciliation Meeting held in Ogotun on January 11, 1950. AKDIVCO 4, File LR 22/1, (N.A.I.).

pre-dated the establishment, in their present locations, of some of the present towns, particularly Ikere and Igbara-Odo. This would explain the contention of Akures that traditionally they had no boundaries with those towns. In fact it is claimed that Ikere was founded after a boundary had been established between Akure and Ado-Ekiti and on the latter's side of the boundary¹².

According to Ogotun, their boundary with Akure is at Opa Meta Ero on the Akure-Ilesa road¹³. As in the case of Akure it can be assumed that the Ogotun claims indicate the farthest points reached by their members before they came in contact with Akures during the primary expansion stage.

The Igbara-Odos claim that their boundary with Akure is at Okuta-Ifa between Isarun and Igbara-Oke¹⁴. Again this indicates that they went as far as that point before establishing contact with Akure.

The Ikeres have no definite claim as to their boundary with Akure. Nevertheless they have occupied land between their town and Iju, Ita-Ogbolu and Ijare which are all on Akureland.

The claims indicate that there was an area known to Akures as well as their neighbours to the north. It cannot be doubted that Akures interacted with members of those communities within the frontier zone. None of the communities claimed exclusive use of all areas known to it. Therefore they did not object to members of the opposite community settling on parts of the area. Thus Akure raised no objection to the founding of Igbara-Odo south of Ota Ekun and on part of the territory known to its members, and neither did they oppose the expansion of Ikere beyond the heap of stones as far as to which they went. On their part Ogotun did not oppose Akure occupation and establishment of settlements (at Isarun, Ibuji and Old Ero) west of Opa Meta Ero as far as to which Ogotuns went. Similarly Igbaraodo did not object to the establishment of Old Ero and Ibuji north of Okuta Ifa. All these indicate that there was no established boundary between Akure and her northern neighbours within or outside the frontier area. Furthermore they show that neither Akures nor any of their northern neighbours attempted to claim specific territory in the early days. If they had done so they would have exercised ownership rights by demanding isakole (land rent) from later occupants of the territory so claimed.

The lack of any specific boundary within contact zones or frontier areas is not limited to the above example. It can be demonstrated in such zones between any two communities in Western Nigeria and possibly anywhere. However, as land or any other resources become scarcer there will

¹² Information collected at Akure, August, 1969.

¹³ Notes on Akure-Ogotun Boundary Reconciliation Meeting held in Ogotun on January 11, 1950. AKDIVCO 4, File LR 22/1 (N.A.I.).

¹⁴ Information collected during fieldwork in July 1969.

be need for each side to lay exclusive rights over particular territories. Thus the stabilization stage will be reached.

Stabilization Stage

As the number of people within the frontier increases, land for further expansion will become scarcer. Therefore, individuals will concentrate their activities on very small areas from which they would attempt to exclude others. Usually the boundaries of the areas so claimed are not defined hence others could encroach on the outer edges. The attempts to exclude others from particular areas will lead to the diminution of the zone of interaction established in the contact stage. Sometimes the exclusion could be sought as a way of reserving exclusive rights over some natural resource (timber, mineral or fruit tree). More commonly, however, stabilization has taken place as a result of direct contact between farmers and the subsequent scramble over farmlands. When farmers from opposite communities first come into contact they would not make specific claims over territory because there would still be enough land to satisfy everyone. But as land becomes scarce each side would attempt to lay exclusive claims over parts of the farmlands and this would lead to stabilization. Very often the claims of one side are challenged by the other which would try and prove that it too has rights over all or parts of the territory being claimed by the opponent. For this reason the stabilization stage is characterized by disputes over territory. The stabilization stage is that when the position of the boundary is being suggested and challenged. It is therefore similar to the transition stage of Brigham¹⁵ and the outline or sketch stage of Lapradelle¹⁶.

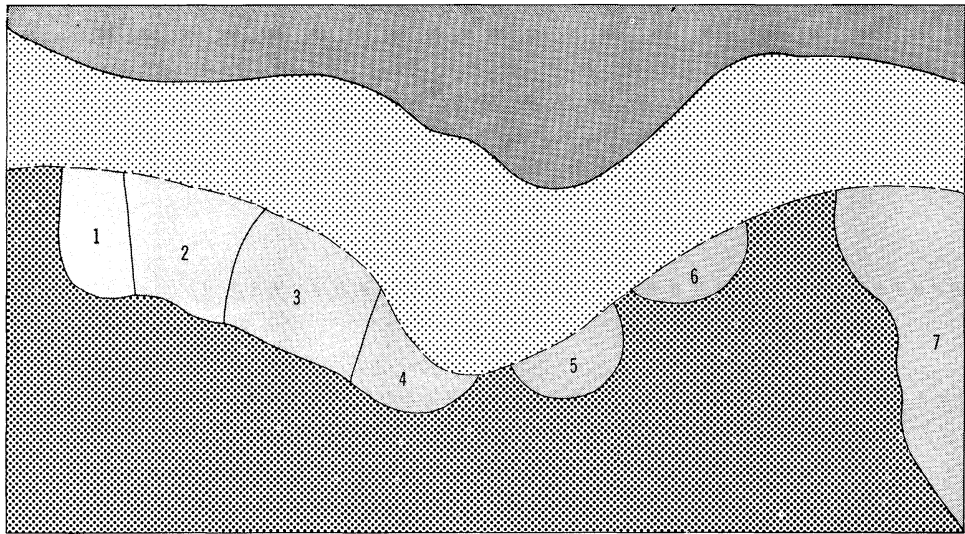
A very good example of the stabilisation stage is that on the Aiyede-Orin boundary in Ekiti. Aiyede and Orin had known of each other's existence for a long time and had been expanding their farmlands in the frontier between them. However, they did not achieve secondary contact until after 1960 when the Government acquired a part of Orin's farmlands for a Farm Settlement. All those previously farming on the acquired territory were evicted and had to seek new farmlands. They turned towards the greatly diminished frontier between them and their neighbours and in the process came in contact with Aiyede farmers. Because unfarmed spaces were scarce each tried to claim exclusive rights of whatever space remained. The following account¹⁷ gives an idea of the claims of both sides (figure 6).

The first plot on part of which there were some old cocoa trees was surrounded in the west and south by cocoa plots owned by Aiyede farmers.

¹⁵ BRIGHAM, A.P., *op. cit.* (ref. 3).

¹⁶ LAPRADELLE, P. De (1968) *La Frontière*. Paris. (Cited by PRESCOTT, J.R.V. (1965) *The Geography of Frontiers and Boundaries*, London, Hutchinson, University Press. p. 64).

¹⁷ Reports of investigation by Mr. S.A. Akerele of Aiyede and Mr. J.O. Ajibola of Orin into the clash between Aiyede and Orin Farmers at Egan, September 1966.



- Orin Farm Settlement set up by Government on plot acquired from Orin
- Area Farmed by Orin
- Disputed Areas
- Aiyede's Cocoa Farms

After S.A.Akerele, 1966.

Figure 6 *Disputed farmlands on the Aiyede-Orin frontier.*

The Aiyede claimant said he cleared the area and planted cocoa in about 1959 but did not take care of the cocoa until 1966 at which time he was challenged by Orin farmers. The Orin claimants stated that they cleared the plot and planted cocoa there in about 1960/61 and again in 1965 when they also planted another set of cocoa, but that the latter were uprooted by Aiyede farmers. In reply the Aiyede claimant said it was the Orin farmers who uprooted his cocoa in order to plant their own.

The only evidence of cultivation on the second plot were some stands of plantain belonging to an Orin farmer. The Aiyede claimant owned the adjacent plot on which he had cocoa. He objected to the Orin people's attempt to clear land which he intended to use in the future.

The third plot carried some cocoa which both sides claimed to have planted at about the same time in 1961. The plot lies between the established cocoa farms of the two claimants and each had witnesses from his community supporting his claim. The fourth plot carried some fairly old cocoa trees and also some younger ones in addition to plantains. It was stated that an Aiyede man planted cocoa on the plot in 1960 whilst an Orin man said that although he cleared the area in 1960 he did not plant plantain on it until about 1963 and cocoa in about 1963. These accounts would explain the presence of cocoa of different ages on the plot.

An Orin farmer uprooted cocoa trees on the fifth plot because, according to him, the land belonged to his ancestors and he had not given permission to anyone to plant cocoa there. The cocoa in question was planted by Aiyede farmers and formed part of a larger cocoa farm. When the cocoa was planted no one challenged their rights to the plot.

Complaints about the sixth plot arose when labourers engaged by an Orin farmer to clear an uncropped land extended their work to a part of an existing cocoa plot belonging to an Aiyede farmer. The latter feared that the Orin man was planning to take over his cocoa and so protested. However, the Orin man explained that he had no intention of challenging his rights on the plot and that the clearing was done by mistake.

An Aiyede farmer with a cocoa plot nearby had previously cultivated the seventh plot, and left it under fallow without planting any permanent crops on it. An Orin farmer then came there and established a farm in it.

This example shows very well the type of situation which develops when contact is established by those making intensive use of the land. Obviously the various claims and counter claims represented an attempt to exclude others from the given territory and therefore stabilise territorial claims. Evidently the only way of avoiding clashes as described above is to have mutually agreed boundary. Such a step may lead to boundary agreement between individuals and the other later stages of boundary evolution.

Allocation Stage

In order to resolve disputes arising from conflicting claims to territory adjacent farmers or villages may agree on boundaries between their respective farmlands. The agreements would be recognized by only the farmers or villages concerned. There will be no agreement on a boundary in places where farmers are not in contact or those areas where there is still enough land for all to use. The boundary agreement may be made possible by the intervention of an arbitrator agreeable to both parties. In either case the main feature of the allocation stage is that it applies to only small sections of the boundary and the agreed sections are separated by others where no decision has been reached on the boundary. Indeed, sometimes allocation may be a simple statement as to the rights of each party to territory on either side of an agreed point. The details of the boundary being left to later stage. The allocation and other stages of boundary evolution have been previously recognized by Jones¹⁸.

An example of the allocation stage is that of Ibadans and Ijebus on their common boundary. Ibadan did not develop into an important centre

¹⁸ JONES, S.B. (1956) *Boundary-Making: A Handbook for Statesmen, Treaty Editors and Boundary Commissioners*. Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, p. 5.

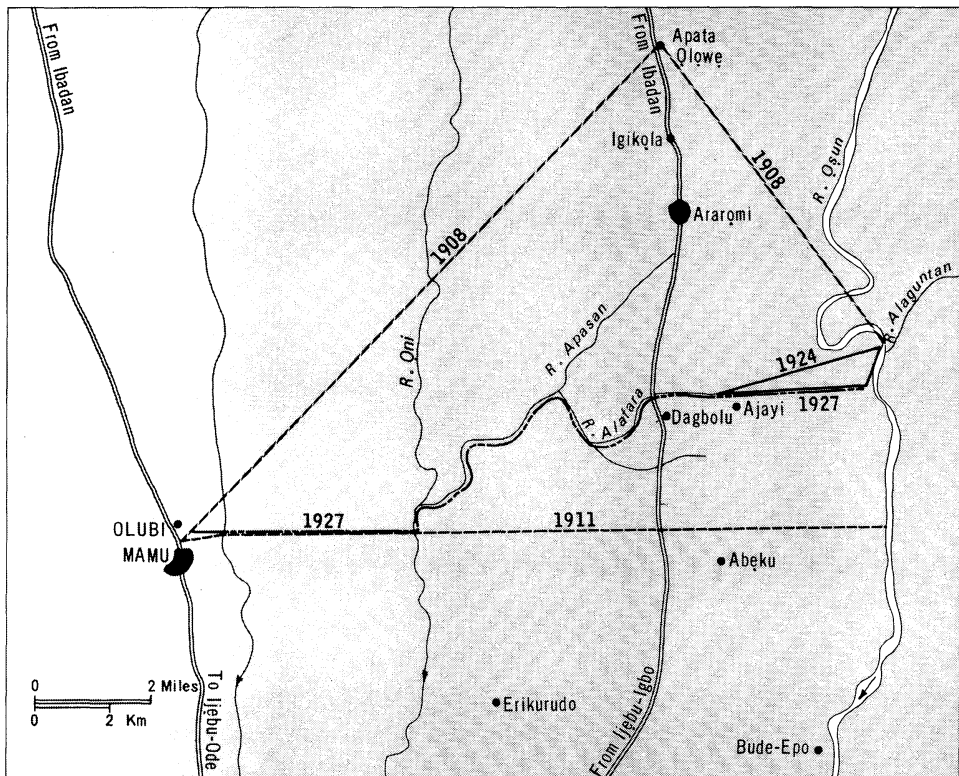


Figure 7 Allocation stage in the evolution of the Ijebu-Ibadan Boundary.

until the mid-19th century. Up to that time it was part of the Oyo kingdom with which the Ijebus allegedly shared a common traditional boundary. The Ijebus claimed that their territory used to extend to parts of present Ibadan city¹⁹. However, since the latter became important in the nineteenth century its citizens had extended southwards and established settlements. By the close of that century they had founded Olubi on the Ijebu-Ode — Ibadan road and Araromi on the Ijebu-Igbo — Ibadan road and were extending south of Araromi towards Ijebu-Igbo²⁰. The Ijebu had also expanded towards Ibadan and by the close of the 19th century had founded Abeku and by 1906 Dagbolu and other settlements around the Ijebu-Igbo — Ibadan road²¹ (figure 7).

The effect of this pattern of occupation was that the Ijebu could no more insist on a boundary passing through Ibadan. Instead they accepted a suggestion made in 1897 that the boundary should pass through River

¹⁹ Summary of Papers on the Ibadan-Ijebu Boundary. August 4, 1923, File 815 Vol. I, Oyo Prof. 3 (N.A.I.).

²⁰ File 815 Vol. I, Oyo Prof. 3 National Archives, Ibadan (N.A.I.)

²¹ File 1725A Vol. I, Ijebu Prof. I (N.A.I.)

Mamu near Olubi²². The course of the boundary east of Mamu was left till a later date. Although attempts were made in 1908, 1911 and 1915 to determine its exact location the boundary was not satisfactorily delimited until after 1924.

The first attempt to determine the exact course of the boundary was made in 1908 when both communities agreed that Apata Olowe on the Ijebu-Igbo — Ibadan road should be on the boundary which was then defined as :

« Mamu to a point on the Ijebu-Igbo — Ibadan road $7^{\circ} 11\frac{1}{2}'N$ marked by very large granite boulder [Apata Olowe]. From this point south east to the junction of the Osum and Alaguntan Rivers »²³.

This agreement was communicated to the Governor for ratification but he did not approve it because of objections from Ibadans who argued that the boundary was unfair to them in that it grouped Araromi, a recognised Ibadan settlement with the Ijebus²⁴. In addition they pointed out their Ibadan farms extended southwards for up to four miles from Apata Olowe to areas south of Araromi.

The non-approval of Apata Olowe as a point on the boundary meant that the only agreed point was Mamu and the government assumed that the boundary should be along a straight line due directly east of Mamu. An attempt was made in 1911 to implement this by demarcating a boundary along the line²⁵. The Ijebus objected to this on the grounds that some of their settlements such as Dagbolu and those in the River Apasan area were grouped with Ibadan ; and also presumably because it gave more of the unoccupied land to Ibadan thereby depriving the Ijebus room for further expansion.

In an attempt to find a solution to the problem the Olubadan suggested in 1915 that instead of Apata Olowe the boundary should pass through Igikola because « the whole land from Olowe to Igikola was farmed wholly by people from Ibadan »²⁶. It would appear that the proposal was made without adequate consultation with Ibadan farmers in the area because the suggested boundary would have grouped Araromi and other Ibadan Settlements with Ijebu. That such grouping would have been unacceptable to the Ibadans is shown by the fact that when he realised its implications the Olubadan denied making the proposal²⁷. Also the demand of Ibadan farmers in the area differed considerably from that in the proposal — they suggested that the boundary should pass from Onija-Erin farm near River Osun to

²² *Idem*.

²³ File J27/1923 Vol. II, Ijebu Prof. 6/6 (N.A.I.).

²⁴ File 1725A Vol. I, Ijebu Prof. I, (N.A.I.).

²⁵ File J27/1923, Vol. II, Ijebu Prof. 6/6 (N.A.I.).

²⁶ File J51/1920, Ijebu Prof. 6/3 (N.A.I.).

²⁷ File J27/1923, Ijebu Prof. 6/5, (N.A.I.).

Esudeyi and Erikorodo²⁸. They later claimed Budo-Epo near the Osun River. These latter suggestions were rejected by the Ijebus. The lack of agreement on the boundary led to serious disturbances in the area with Ijebus attacking Ibadans particularly between 1916 and 1923. In order to prevent further disturbances the Residents for the two areas met at Mamu in June 1924 and recommended that the boundary should run :

« From the survey pillar S.E.S. 208 on the Ijebu-Ode-Ibadan road south of Olubi in a straight line to its intersection with the River Omi. The Omi in a northerly direction as far as its confluence with Alafara and from that junction the Alafara to its source. From the source of Alafara straight line to River Osum at the point opposite to that which the River Alaguntan flows into it »²⁹.

The Ijebus rejected this suggestions because it fell short of that of 1908 which they wanted. Because of that rejection the matter was referred to an arbitration whose recommendations, which both sides, accepted were that the boundary should be along a line defined as :

« Commencing at a point on the Ijebu-Ode — Ibadan road half a mile north of Mamu due east to the intersection with the Omi River. Thence along the left bank of the Omi in a northerly direction to its intersection with River Apasan. Thence along the left bank of the Apasan in an easterly direction to its intersection with the Alafara River. Thence along the left bank of the Alafara to its source, 1,400 ft. northwest of Ajayi village. Thence by a line due east to the River Osun »³⁰.

The disputes over the course of the Ibadan-Ijebu boundary indicate the limitations of the allocation stage in boundary development. Although both sides accepted Mamu there was still disagreement as to where the boundary should be fixed. The same type of dispute is to be found on the Are-Afao boundary in Ado Ekiti District (figure 8). In an attempt to settle a dispute over their boundary the Oba of Ado Ekiti fixed a point on the Are-Afao road as boundary between Are and Afao in about 1920. The District Officer in the

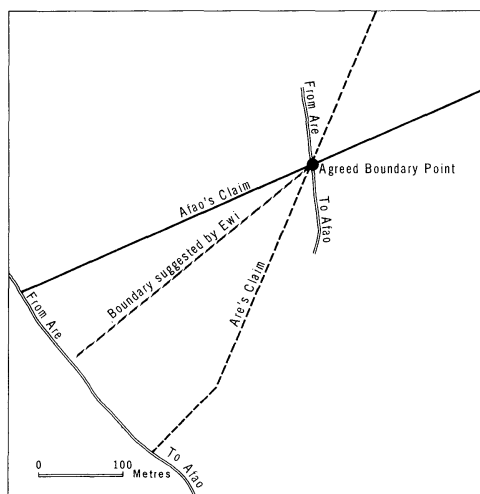


Figure 8 Different interpretations of the Are-Afao boundary.

²⁸ File 1725, Vol. I, Ijebu Prof. (N.A.I.).

²⁹ File 815, Vol. I, Oyo Prof. 3, (N.A.I.).

³⁰ *Idem*.

area confirmed the Oba's decision in 1922³¹. In all the discussions only a single point was agreed upon. Both sides accepted that the boundary was a straight line passing through the point fixed by the Oba. But there was disagreement on how to draw the straight line. Each side gave its own interpretation and farmed accordingly. This led to a dispute and in 1953 Are took Afao to court on the grounds that Afao people started to cause disturbances by farming on the Are side of the land and requested the court to order Afao to refrain from molesting Are's right to the land. On the other hand Afao claimed that the people of Are have been trying to cross the boundary to the Afao side. The court decided that « an imaginary line out at right angles from the peregun point on the (Are-Afao) footpath extending to the end of the land on the south and to its end in the north should be the correct course of the boundary decided in 1922 »³².

The allocation stage is not always restricted to agreement on points. It could involve determination of long stretches of the boundary between adjacent settlements or members of the two communities.

Delimitation Stage

One main difference between the allocation and delimitation stages is that the latter usually involves the full length of the boundary as against sections of it agreed upon during the allocation stage. The aim during delimitation stage is to reach agreement on the location of the boundary in areas where none was reached in the allocation stage and those in other areas. However, if delimitation is carried out by an arbitrator such as a government official, rather than by a meeting and agreement of the two communities, or if the communities fail to involve the people in the different sectors of the frontier area in discussions leading to boundary delimitation, it is quite possible for the delimited boundary to overlook agreements reached during the allocation stage. In that case the delimited boundary might be rejected by those who lose territory because of the oversight.

Boundary delimitation started in Western Nigeria when British colonial officials wanted to know the limits of each indigenous kingdom so that they could determine the areas of jurisdiction of District Officers and other functionaries of the colonial regime. The negotiation for the boundaries were conducted through the District Officers who usually delimited the boundaries.

An example of a boundary delimited in this way is that between Ijebu and Ife Divisions. In 1927 the Government defined this boundary as the intersection of the Isoya-Atikori road and River Sasa and thence northward along Isoya-Atikori road to its intersection with the Opa River, then in a southeasterly direction down the River Opa to its confluence with River

³¹ *Simple List of Ekiti Divisional Papers File 1084 (N.A.I.)*.

³² Are-Afao Land Case Native Court Ado Ekiti, 1953.

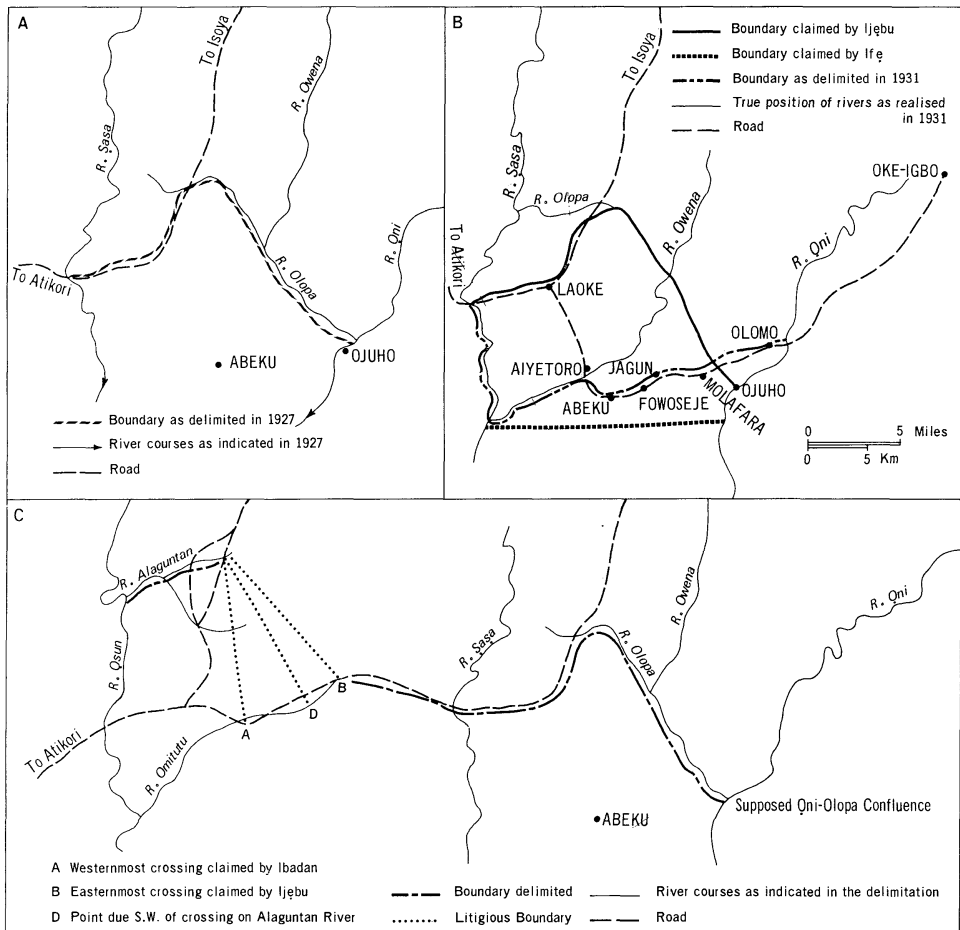


Figure 9 Problems in the evolution of the northeastern boundary of Ijebu Province.

Oni³³. This boundary was based on wrong information that the River Opa (or Olopa) is a tributary of River Oni, while, in fact, that river flows into the Sasa (figure 9A). That mistake apart, the boundary was rejected by the Ife on the grounds that it cuts off to the Ijebu side some Ife villages, the most notable being Abeku where the Oni Ademiluyi who was then on the Ife throne claimed to have lived before he became Oba³⁴. On the other hand, the Ijebu claim that their boundary with Ife is along « the intersection of River Sasa and the Atikori-Isoya path northward along the path to its intersection with River Opa and up that river to its source and then in a straight line to a point called Ojuho on the River Oni »³⁵. After many attempts a

³³ Gazette Notice on the Northern Boundary of Ijebu Province, March 3, 1927.

³⁴ Oni of Ife to D.O. Oyo, February 2, 1927, File 07839 Vol. I, Oyo Prof. 3 (N.A.I.).

³⁵ Joint Report on Ife-Ijebu Boundary by Acting D.O. Ife and D.O. Ijebu-Ode, May 1928. File 07839 Vou. I, Oyo Prof. 3 (N.A.I.).

new boundary to which both sides expressed no opposition was defined in 1931 as :

« the intersection of the Ibadan-Ijebu boundary with the Sasa and thence along the Sasa to its confluence with Owena, thence along the Owena to its intersection with the Laoke-Oke-Igbo path at Aiyetoro, thence by this path in a south and easterly direction passing through Abeku, Fowoseje, Obutu (or Jagun), Molafara and Olomo to its intersection with River Oni »³⁶.
(figure 9 B)

Delimitation is a very important stage in boundary evolution in that it is the one at which the course of the boundary is fixed. A good delimitation will resolve existing disputes over the boundary and ensure that others do not occur in the future. To achieve that objective the course of the delimited boundary must be discussed with, and agreed to, by the parties concerned. In addition both sides must have a clear idea of the location of the delimited boundary. This requires that prior to the final delimitation there should be a detailed survey of the borderlands through which the boundary is to pass so that the pattern of occupation by the parties concerned and the positions of the natural features there are accurately located.

Demarcation Stage

After a boundary has been delimited it is necessary to trace it on the ground and fix suitable boundary marks. In this way members of the two communities would have no difficulty in identifying the boundary and limiting their movements accordingly. It is the process of doing this that is called demarcation.

Very often the demarcating team may experience difficulty with the interpretation of the boundary definition. This may be due to ambiguity of the definition or the adoption of non-existent features as reference points. Such problems are referred to the communities so that they can clarify the situation and if necessary agree on a re-definition of that section of the boundary. When the boundary has been demarcated, a final definition of it will be prepared and it will incorporate any alterations to the delimitation agreement made during the demarcation stage as well as references to boundary marks and the direction of the boundary from them. The post-demarcation definition represents the final and binding version of the boundary.

In modern times boundary demarcation requires the use of sophisticated survey equipment for locating directions and measuring distances. For this reason the demarcation stage is usually left to surveyors. The type of alterations (to the delimited boundary) occurring during demarcation may be illustrated with the example of the northern boundaries of Ijebu Division east

³⁶ Gazette Notice on the Northern Boundary of Ijebu Province, May 1931.

of River Osun. In 1927 it was defined as the intersection of the Ibadan-Ijebu boundary with River Osun and :

« thence downstream along Osun River to its junction with Alaguntan River, to its intersection with Apomu-Atikori road, thence in a south-southeast direction to the Omitutu crossing on the Isoya-Atikori road, thence along this road in an easterly direction crossing the River Shasha, (Sasa) thence northward along this road to its intersection with the Opa River, thence in a southeast direction down the Opa River to its confluence with Oni River »³⁷. (figure 9 C)

During the demarcation of the boundary in 1928 the following problems arose³⁸ :

- (1) that there were new and old Apomu-Atikori roads.
- (2) the position of Omitutu crossing on Isoya-Atikori road was not clear.
- (3) that the confluence of rivers Opa and Oni does not exist anywhere.

The first of these problems was resolved by seeking clarification on which of the two roads was intended. It was explained that the boundary should follow the old Apomu-Atikori road. The second problem was not easily solved because the two communities concerned did not agree on Omitutu crossing on the Isoya-Atikori road. Actually the road cross the River three times but none of these was exactly south-southeast from the intersection of the Alaguntan stream with the Opomu-Atikori road (figure 9C) The Ijebus claimed that the easternmost crossing which gave them more land was intended in the description whilst the Ibadans insisted that the westernmost crossing was the one intended. During the demarcation of the boundary it became known that River Opa was not a tributary of River Oni but that of River Sasa. This meant that the Opa-Oni confluence did not exist anywhere and made a new definition of that section of the boundary necessary.

Administration Stage

In order to avoid trespass across the boundary by either side, it is necessary to keep it from being overgrown with vegetation. To this end arrangements are made for cleaning it regularly and ensuring that the boundary marks are in good order. This process of maintenance and supervision is termed the administration stage.

Most demarcated boundaries are not administered as such. Reliance is placed on the acceptance of the boundary by both sides and it is assumed that neither side would want to remove the boundary marks. In a few cases, however, the boundary is maintained and cleaned every year. This is usually

³⁷ Gazette Notice on Northern Boundaries of Ijebu Province, March 3, 1927.

³⁸ File 815 Vol. II, Oyo Prof. 3 (N.A.I.).

the case where demarcation followed fierce dispute whose recurrence both sides wish to avoid.

CONCLUSION

The development of some colonial boundaries may not conform with the model for two reasons. One, some colonial boundaries were fixed before the colonial powers had explored all the areas through which they were to pass ; and two, the allocation and delimitation stages may occur simultaneously. In spite of this it seems likely that the different stages recognized above can be identified in the evolution of many colonial boundaries in Africa and elsewhere.

The model implies that indigenous boundaries evolve over time and are not usually fixed before there is effective occupation of the frontier areas. However, the evolutionary approach is different from the conceptions of most communities in Africa as to how they came about their boundaries. The common practice is to claim that the ancestors and founders of the various communities agreed on specific boundaries³⁹. Examination of the allegedly agreed boundaries show that they are points rather than lines. Even then the agreements on the points may be denied by one of the parties. A possible explanation for this is that the points being claimed by a particular community are those which it reached before first meeting any member of the opposite side. The area between the points claimed by people on either side would therefore represent the frontier within which the communities interacted during the contact stage.

In many areas such interaction was still continuing during the early stages of colonial administration and the attempts to determine boundaries between different communities. The attempts to allocate territory or delimit boundaries made each community realise the claims of its neighbours and to challenge them. Therefore the incidence of boundary disputes has been high since the beginning of colonial administration. The courts and other agencies responsible for the settlement of such disputes usually allocate the whole of the frontier or disputed area to one of the parties. Following the model just discussed, it could be that the most appropriate solution of the disputes could be the recognition of the rights of each side in the sections of the frontier it occupies. This would mean that the disputed territory will be divided between the parties on the basis of occupancy rather than be allocated entirely to only one side. Such a solution may be more acceptable to the disputants, and hence facilitate the completion of the evolution of the affected boundaries.

³⁹ See, for example the statement of Akure on how they arrived at the boundaries they now claim cited above in Deji of Akure to District Officer, Ado Ekiti, April 5, 1927 (ref. 7).

ABSTRACT

ADEJUJIGBE, Omolade : Evolution of Inter-Community Boundaries in Africa

A model of the evolution of inter-community boundaries in Africa is presented. It is assumed that adjacent communities have different cores from which they progressively explore and interact in the frontier between them. The boundary is not fixed before there is effective occupation of the frontier and its evolution can be visualized in different stages : (i) expansion stage when the communities spread out from their different core areas ; (ii) contact stage when explorers and migrants come against physical or human hinderances to their expansion ; (iii) stabilization stage when each side lays exclusive claim to parts of the frontier from which it seeks to exclude the other. Attempt to exclude others may lead to conflicts on rights to sections of the frontier ; (iv) allocation stage when adjacent members of different communities resolve disputes arising from stabilisation and agree on the boundary between them; (v) delimitation stage when the entire length of the boundary between two communities is agreed upon and defined ; (vi) demarcation stage when the boundary is surveyed and marked ; (vii) administration stage during which the boundary is periodically supervised. Examples of real situations in Western Nigeria are used to illustrate each stage of the model.

KEY WORDS : Core Area, Frontier, Boundary, Expansion stage, Contact stage, Stabilization stage, Allocation stage, Delimitation stage, Demarcation stage, Administration stage.

Africa, Western Nigeria.

RÉSUMÉ

ADEJUJIGBE, Omolade : L'évolution des frontières entre les communautés humaines en Afrique

L'auteur présente un modèle de l'évolution des frontières entre communautés en Afrique. Il est présumé que les communautés limitrophes ont des centres différents d'où elles mènent leurs explorations progressives et entrent en contact sur la frontière. La ligne de démarcation n'est pas fixe avant qu'il n'y ait une prise de possession effective de la frontière, et l'on peut se représenter son évolution par différentes étapes : (i) l'étape d'expansion où les communautés s'étendent à partir de leurs différentes zones centrales ; (ii) l'étape de contact où explorateurs et population migrante se heurtent à des obstacles physiques et humains gênant leur expansion ; (iii) l'étape de stabilisation pendant laquelle chaque côté réclame exclusivement des parties de la frontière dont il cherche à exclure l'autre, tentative pouvant provoquer des conflits concernant les revendications frontalières ; (iv) l'étape de répartition lors de laquelle des membres voisins de communautés différentes résolvent les conflits provenant de la stabilisation et se mettent d'accord sur le tracé de la frontière ; (v) l'étape de délimitation où l'on s'accorde sur la longueur entière de la frontière entre deux communautés et où on la définit ; (vi) l'étape de démarcation au cours de laquelle on arpente et marque la frontière ; (vii) l'étape d'administration pendant laquelle on surveille la frontière périodiquement.

L'auteur se sert d'exemples de situations réelles observées dans l'ouest du Nigéria pour illustrer chaque étape du modèle.

MOTS-CLÉS : Zone centrale, Frontière, Ligne de démarcation, Étape d'expansion, Étape de contact, Étape de stabilisation, Étape de répartition, Étape de délimitation, Étape de démarcation, Étape d'administration.

Afrique, Ouest du Nigéria.