

THE GOVERNMENT OF IJEBU-IMUSIN (IFE-OWODAIYE)

The extensiveness and the large number of townships and villages, 323 in number, made it necessary to group them in fours, fives, sixes and so on either on basis of proximity, or on basis of affinity, to facilitate administration, contact and dissemination of messages. The Agbon used to sound his big drum which would be re-echoed from strategic points to summon people to the meeting place whenever there was cause for such a purpose. Nevertheless, many towns, first from the outskirts, fell away and formed themselves into separate units during the period of the long interregnum when there was no longer a strong and central force to worship and obey. Today, the present generation of those places would hardly accept they were once Ijebu-Imusin particularly as the original name with which their ancestors were accustomed had long changed. Even Isonyin, which till the first decade of the twentieth century was part and parcel of the domain of Oloko, the head-chief being one of those who suffered with Oloko Adebote in 1907, now found it hard to regard itself as a member of the kingdom. This breaking away became prominent and worse because of the new name "Imusin" which was more or less by misconception wrongly attached to the marketplace, the old meeting place, where the Isin tree happens to be. It is a misnomer to regard the marketplace alone as Imusin. The buildings springing up round the market are on lands belonging to towns around the market and naturally normally therefore must go with such towns as the market had no land.

The old grouping, however, to a great extent is still the dominant feature of administration in the remaining area. The Idokos were six in number although some have now moved away from their old sites to join other towns. The Esilu Marun embraces Odolameso, Odonisaki, Oke-Agba, Oke-Egbo, and Idode. We have Odo-Afuseri (now Odo-Aseri). Odo-Akujegi, Aboyin. Okejamu and Ilare group. We have the Itamarun group made up of Odosengborin, Itunpelu, Ojamo (with Idotun) Oke-Mogba, and Odo-Ayanlu. The Esilu Merin consists of Idanre, Imeri, Ipodo, and Ipako. The Ehin Ade group includes Imuwen, Iwaiya, Idomodu and others beyond Ade River. Odomagbo, Ipebi, Odomogun, Odosennuwa, and some others to which Ife-Ijebu has now extended form another group. Kokunesere, Igbaga, Iwasi, Owoye form another group. We also have Ikala, Ildo Ilagunjo and Ipepe group to name a few. Yemodo, Tojoro and Togumaga which at one time were wrongly carved by the British administrators with Owu and Ikija, had on their own declared for, and returned to their kith and kin in Ijebu-Imusin.

Odonapa, the seat of Agemo cult, was alone because it is a place of secrecy. It is also the headquarters of the Osugbo fraternity and the great lledi, the shrine, is under the management of Chief Odele who must be a native of Odonapa. There are two other junior houses of Osugbo at Iwasi and beyond Ade River but these are subordinate to the house at Odonapa.

Esure, where the shrine of Esu was, with Rudukoye as the keeper and head of the town, was regarded as a place where the gods quickly answered prayers and offered protection. This place also stood alone like Odonapa. With the belief that it was a hallowed ground, houses and shrines of worship were first centred there. It was not unlikely that the worship of Oluwari was sited there for this reason; that the first Christian church built by the Church Missionary Society then (now the Anglican) but later transferred to the Roman Catholic Mission was also sited there and so was the first Muslim Mosque. It was with the same belief that Obelu Girinade, an Ilamuren of Ijebu Ode, who had been childless for many years came to stay with the Rudukoye, married one of the daughters and was later blessed with children that he never went back to Ijebu-Ode permanently. He died at Esure, but as was the age-long custom, the corpse of a son-in-law, who died in his father-in-law's house should be taken to his hometown or buried outside the in-law's village. The corpse of Obelu Girinade was thereupon buried at Loguro on Ewuren village land adjacent to Esure afterwards bought by Rudukoye descendants.

Each village or township had an Ilamuren or an Oloolu as the head chief. Ilamuren is a traditional chieftaincy. Most often an Ilamuren wears a coronet not of beads, (Roto or Aboro), during the annual ceremonies in his shrine. The following are some of the Ilamurens not arranged in order of precedence as they are co-equal. The Goge, the Magbo, the Yegosen, the Lisaki, the Mogun, the Lameso, the Sengborin, the Ogirimadagbo, the Magusen, the Ogbadagbada, the Yebola, the Apebi, the Mogba, the Ayanlu, the Lowuren, the Lapoekun, the Luwasi, the Nopa, the Ladoken, the Rudukoye, the Kunusi and later the Obelu and others, a few in present Ijebu-Imusin district. Each Ilamuren had control over his own town or village and not beyond. The Nopa had control over Odonapa.

The Oloolu (where there is no Ilamuren), and, after the British advent, styled the Baale, had no official insignia but had similar powers in his own village or town like an Ilamuren. Any member of a town, who is of a reasonable age can be appointed an Oloolu after the approval of the Oloko. This headship used to rotate from one quarter in the village or town to another. An Oloolu, the head chief, is first nominated by members of the quarter whose turn it is to present one. If he is acceptable to the whole town, he is then presented to the Qba in the traditional way for approval. Then he becomes a member of the Council of Chiefs. Each quarter in a town has a sub-chief called Oloritun. The Olorituns form the executive Body for each town under the Ilamuren or the Oloolu. An Olotu-Ona is also appointed in each town whose chief duty is to organise general cleaning of all roads and making of new ones.

Village meetings are held normally at central parts of the town and in some cases in the compound of the head-chief. The chiefs of village or town groups or their representatives used to meet to discuss local affairs and to act as lower courts for their area.

The whole district was centrally administered by the Oloko, the supreme head, through the council of chiefs. The Oloko was regarded as a deity, a semi-god more rarely heard than seen. He had his Odis (plenipotentiaries) who conveyed his will to the people. The Council of Chiefs normally embraced the Ilamurens, the Oloolus, the Oliwo, the Olurin and the Apenas from the Osugbos, the Agbon, the Kakanfo from the Pampa. The body was in advisory capacity in general matters affecting the whole district. The Oloko occasionally joined the council of chiefs to deliberate on crucial issues. In matters concerning other districts, one or two Ilamurens with the Oliwo or a number of Osugbos would represent the Oba, since the Oba cannot leave his throne. In matters of the security of the area, it is the Agbon and the Pampas that handled it before 1890. Ita Mogiri, the eastern end of Ijebu-Imusin (Ife Owodaiye) used to be the meeting place of all Ijebu land east of Owa River which is near Ijebu-Ode, and the Oloko or his representative was the chairman. The Agbon, the war chief of Ijebu-Imusin was in charge of the army of that area.

BODIES OR INSTRUMENTS USED FOR GOVERNING - THE OSUGBO

The OSUGBO was the legislative and the executive body controlling the government of the whole district but responsible to Oba Oloko. It was and still is a secret cult though admission is open to any responsible citizen of reasonable age. There are three Osugbo houses in Ijebu-Imusin, the main one, which is the headquarters, is at Odonapa, while the two junior ones are at Iwasi and Ehin Ade. A new member must undergo an oath of secrecy and adherence to all the practices of the cult. He should not divulge whatever happens at their meeting place to anyone who is not a member. At a stage, he would start the use of wrappers round his waist in place of trouser and also round his body instead of Agbada. In the presence of a higher chief, and particularly at the afin Oloko, he must not wear a cap. The cap may be folded and placed on the head or on his lap when sitting. When a member rises to the post of a chief in the cult, he would be entitled to wear his cap. A fully inducted member wears on his shoulder, a platoon, which is a knitted strip of cloth.

The cult was well known for its periodical jocund festivities and the sound of its big drums, and it was notorious for its influence over life and death. The head of the Osugbos is Oliwo, followed in rank by the Olurin and then the chief Apena. When the Oliwo is in Katun, the Olurin will be in Kasi and vice-versa. Any member from any one of the villages in Ijebu-Imusin except from Odonapa and Esure can rise to the status of the Oliwo, Olurin or Apena. The Odele Chieftaincy is the only one reserved for and held by Odonapa. Members of this cult are also called OGBONIS that is, eiders, probably because of their age, or because of their functions or because of how they dress and move.

The ERELU chieftaincy is a special title normally given as a mark of honour to an elderly woman from any one of the towns. She must be a woman widely known and respected for her high reputation and public comportment. On the recommendation of the Osugbos and with the approval of the Oloko, she is installed as the Erelu for the whole land and become the only female member of the Osugbo cult.

THE PAMPA

The PAMPA, as constituted and as it functioned, could be likened to the British House of Commons. It is as old as the district itself. It is formed from among the youths and the common people from the whole 323 villages and now from all the fifty-five towns and villages that still make up Ijebu-Imusin. It was the army of the nation. Any young man above the age of puberty may attend the meetings on his own or may be sent as a delegate of his town. In whichever capacity he comes in, he is recognised as his town's representative and conveys back decisions and orders affecting the whole district. No Ilumuren or Osugbo member (Ogboni) can be a pampa but a man with honorary chieftaincy title may be a member.

The Pampas meet regularly every month and discuss the welfare of the whole district. They are chiefly concerned about the progress, the peace, the social welfare and the security of the area. The head of Pampas is the Agbon who acts like the Prime Minister and the Field Marshall. He is followed by the Kakanfo, who again is followed by two titled chiefs of the same status and hence are never promoted. They are the Otun and the Osi of Ijebu-Imusin. Any citizen of respectable record, even if he had not been attending the meetings of the Pampas can be appointed the Kakanfo from the side of Ijebu-Imusin whose turn it is to present one provided he is acceptable to the majority of the people and is approved by the Oba Oloko. Anyone, from any of the towns or villages, except from Odonapa and Esure, could rise to the office of Agbon or Kakanfo. These two towns were supposed to have got sacred duties, the Agemo and the Esu in hand, sufficient to look after. Like the Osugbo titles, when the Agbon is in Kasi, the Kakanfo will be in Katun. The Kakanfo automatically becomes the Agbon on the demise of the latter after passing through the necessary procedure. The Pampa's being the army of the district, the Agbon had the authority of summoning all virile youths of the district by his big drum to give notice of emergencies and to order action.

THE AGEMO

The AGEMO is an idol especially worshipped by the people of a particular town. In Ijebu-Imusin, it is worshipped by the people of Odonapa and the Nopa is the head of Agemo worshippers. Agemo is accepted to be a living idol that has travelled with its own community to Ijebuland from their original homesteads. Each has its own special priest who is the leader not only at the shrine but also the head and the ruler of the town. The Agemo is supposed to have two shrines one within the town and the other in a reserved, small, un-deforested land outside living area.

The Agemo is feared because it is believed that it has the power of cursing and bringing evil, particularly instantaneous death to its victim. When the worshippers are moving to their shrine, they give warning by shouts, and women are not expected to meet, nor even to see them or else they die. They shout, "you see it partially, you die immediately". If by chance anyone meets them, they say "We will not return to meet you alive".

There are sixteen Agemos in the whole of Ijebuland. They seem to have hailed from the same origin, for it is their age-long practice to meet annually at a common place called Imosan. After the yearly meeting and their ceremony would have ended, they will all assemble at Ijebu-Ode to honour, dance and pray for the Awujale before dispersing to their homes.

The Nopa of Odonapa after his return home also honours, dances and prays for the Oloko before closing the year's festival. He most often invites other Agemos to join him.

THE ORO

The ORO is another fetish much dreaded particularly by women and young boys underage because it is the fetish used by the government to destroy criminals and undesirable elements in the community. It was often used to frighten young children if they were naughty and insubordinate. The elders would say "Oro mbo wa gbe o" that is "Oro would come to take you away". Even elders in anger during an altercation sometimes would tell another one if he felt cheated, "Oro a gbe e" that is "Oro will get rid of you" actually meaning he, the offended, will pay the other back rightly.

Oro is conceived to destroy by swallowing up its victim. It is made to roar mostly at nights at varying pitches of sounds. Sometimes it roars in its grove or round the village during the festival seasons in high, sonorous, light pitch like babes or roars in frightfully heavy pitch like a big lion and sometimes in middle pitches. Whenever Oro is moving round the town, all doors must be fast locked from dusk to dawn, the un-initiated and the women must be inside and all houses must be as silent as possible while the men with the Oro will be yelling and shouting "Yee paa, Oro o!! yee paa, baba o!! They will also be singing and drumming at intervals.

Each village or group of villages used to have an Oro grove where Oro is worshipped. It was used to help the village or local government when capital punishment was to be administered. The leading Oro grove was at Idokunusi under the control of Kunusi who himself was the Ilamuren of that village. It is this Oro grove that the central government often used whenever there was an epidemic or any fearful incident in a village or an area. The Oro is generally made to come out at night to wipe out the evil thing and cleanse the whole area.

THE VILLAGE GROUPINGS

ESILU MARUN

NAME???	ITAMARUN	NAME???	
Odolameso	Odosengborin	Odo Aseri	
Odonisakin	Itunpelu	Odo Akujegi	
Oke Agba	Ojamo	Aboyin	
Oke Egbo	Okenugba	Okejamu	
Idode	Odo Ayanlu	Ilare	

ESILU MERIN

NAME???	NAME???	NAME???	NAME???
Idanre	Odomagbo	Odo Aseri	Kokunesere
Imeri	Ipebi	Odo Akujegi	Igbaga
Ipodo	Odomogun	Aboyin	Iwasi
Ipako	Odosenuwa	Okejamu	Owoye

NAME???	EHIN ADE???		
Ikala	Imuwen		
Ilodo	Iwaiya		
Ilagunjo	Idomodu		
Ipepe	???		

THE ILAMUREN / OLOOLU / BAALE TITLES

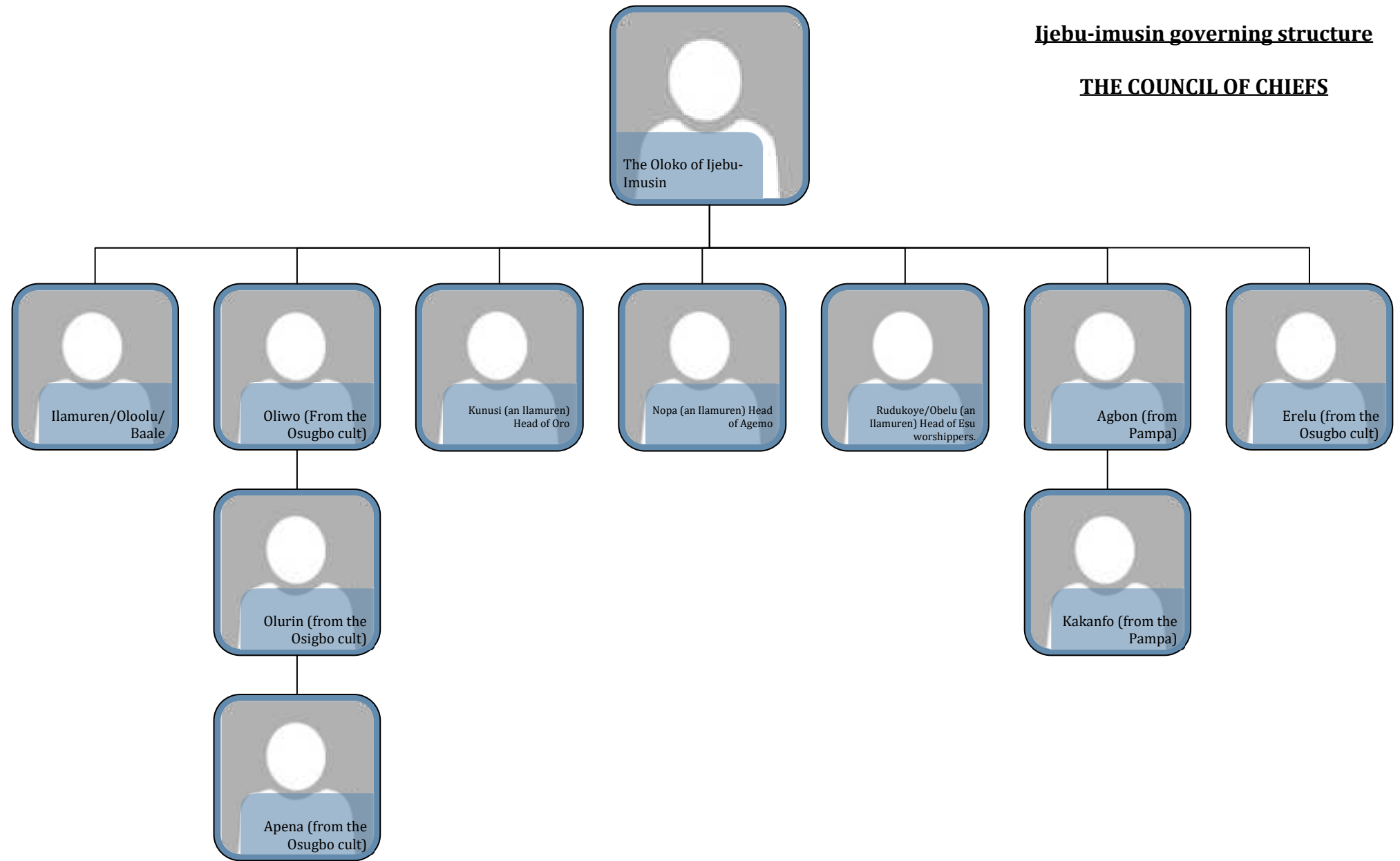
TITLE	TOWN		TITLE	TOWN
Goge			Magusen	
Magbo			Ogbadagbada	
Yegosen			Yebola	
Lisaki			Ajebi	
Mogun			Mogba	
Lameso	Odolameso		Ayanly	
Segborin			Lowuren	
Ogirimadagbo			Lapoekun	
Luwasi			Nopa	
Ladoken			Rudukoye/Obelu	Esure
Kunusi	Idokunusi			

References:

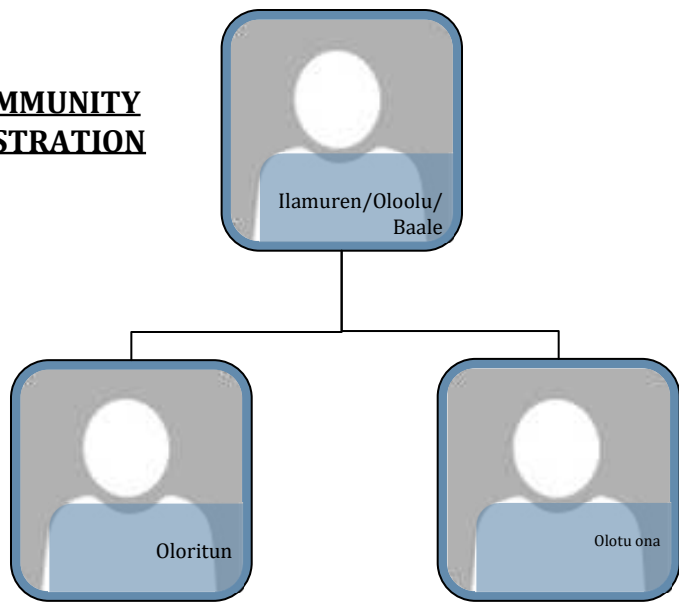
1. An introspection into the history of ijebu-Imusin by Revd D. A. Oduyayo, 1978

Ijebu-imusin governing structure

THE COUNCIL OF CHIEFS

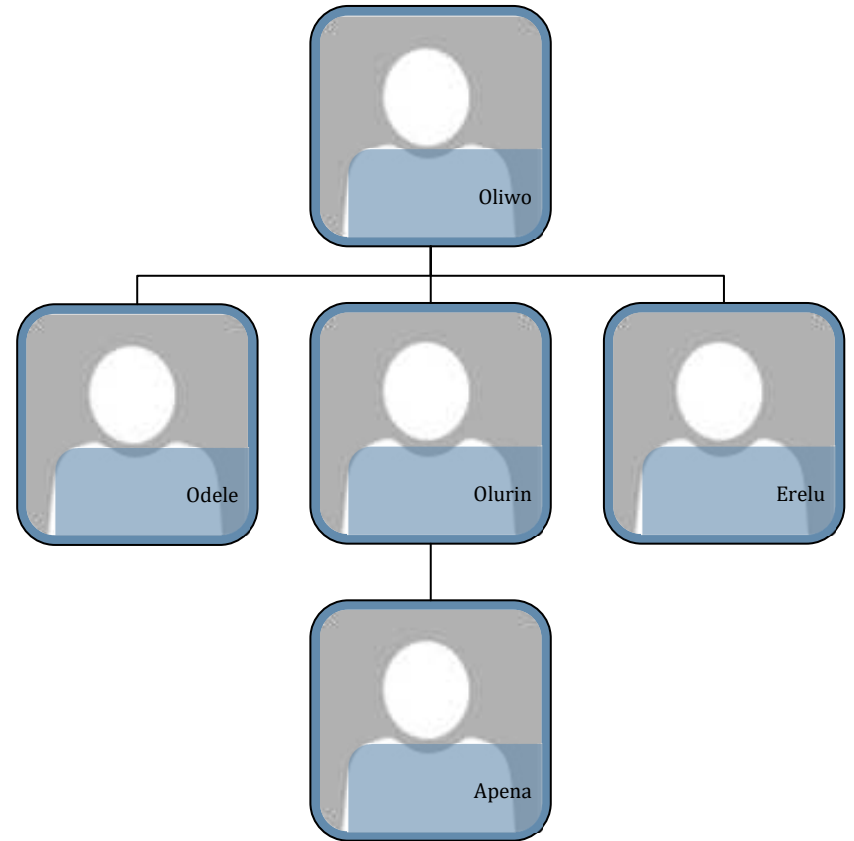


THE COMMUNITY ADMINISTRATION



Ijebu-imusin governing structure

THE OSUGBO



THE PAMPA ORGANIZATION

