



## **Ife-Modakeke Crisis (1849-2000): Re-thinking the conflict and methods of resolution**

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## **Ife-Modakeke Crisis (1849-2000): Re-thinking the conflict and methods of resolution**

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### **Abstract**

This paper identifies the gap in the historical narratives gathered from the members of the belligerent communities and the sparsity of related literatures. Thus, this paper attempts a chronological reconstruction of the Ife-Modakeke conflict by exploring and fusing a plethora of related secondary source of data. The paper advocates the need to sustain an accurate history of the Ife-Modakeke relations; implementation of social justice; and the disarmament of the members of the two communities to engender sustainable peace and the total prevention of the conflict from re-occurring.

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## **Introduction**

The Yoruba people are predominantly spread across West Africa, specifically Nigeria, Republic of Benin and Togo. They constitute the largest second ethnic group in Nigeria with a language and culture found in West Africa and Latin America. Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Yoruba people were not known to have referred to themselves as Yoruba. However, they have had a similar language of various dialects, culture and administrative systems which scholars refer to as the *ebi* system.<sup>1</sup>

The primeval history of the Yoruba people is mostly lost in antiquity but the political history of the Yoruba early states have been mostly reconstructed such that it is known that the early Yoruba states carried on diplomatic and war relations with one another.<sup>2</sup> The Yoruba diplomatic and war relations was probably more evident during the Ekitiparapo war of 1877-1886.<sup>3</sup> The war marked the apogee of the age-long internecine rivalries among the Yoruba states. And while the treaty which culminated from this war brought a lasting resolution to several of these rivalries, there remains however, vestiges of these age long problems that are yet to be totally resolved. The Ife-Modakeke conflict which is the central theme of this paper serves as a notable example of an age-long intra-ethnic Yoruba problem which the phenomenal treaty from the Ekitiparapo war failed to resolve.

The Ife-Modakeke conflict, having re-occurred over and again across three centuries of 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, is the oldest intra-ethnic conflict in Nigeria. The people of Ife and Modakeke belong to the same ethnic nationality.<sup>4</sup> Several reasons for the conflict have been purported but an observable fact, however, is that not much attention has been given to the existence of the distortion and mutilation of the history of the conflict and the contributory role it plays in the recurrence of the conflict. The unavailability of a recorded history of the Ife-Modakeke conflict structured along the chronology of events from the beginning of the Ife-Modakeke relations has continued to sustain nationalistic feelings within the ranks of the members of both communities and driving them into armed and structural violence with each other.

This paper finds its basis in the need to provide a chronologically structured historical narrative of the pre-war relations between both groups, the causes of the war, the peace agreements between the belligerent parties and the roles played by both groups in sustaining these agreement. This study shall be conducted by using secondary data from a plethora of related literatures, newspapers, magazines to mention a few.<sup>5</sup>

## **Ife-Modakeke Relations pre-1835**

Historically, Ile-Ife is widely acclaimed to be the cradle of the Yoruba group. Owing to its central role in the socio-cultural and socio-political world of the Yoruba, Ile-Ife has earned a number of epithets such as *'ibi ojumo ti'n mo wa'*, (the place from where it dawns), *'olori aye gbogbo'* (the head of the world), *'Oodaye'*, (where creation of the world took place), *'ilu alade'* (the city of crown) and finally, *'Ilu Orun'* (the city of heaven). This status of primacy which Ile-Ife enjoyed appears to have been universally accepted across Yorubaland and a number of statements attesting to this fact were recorded when the British attempted to wade into the Yoruba internecine wars of 16 years, otherwise regarded as the Ekitiparapo wars which saw Ibadan engaging in wars in almost all cardinal points of Yorubaland<sup>6</sup>. Higgins a Commissioner sent by the Lagos government to mediate among the belligerent Yoruba groups recorded that the Alaafin of Oyo at that time did not want Ile-Ife left deserted and wanted the people of Ife to return to their homes because they were the father of all and all people came from Ife.<sup>7</sup> Ogunsigun, the Balogun of Ijebu army, noted in April 1886 that the Ijebu king felt it was his duty to re-instate the people of Ile-Ife back in their town because Ile-Ife is regarded by all Yoruba towns as the sacred spot from where they originated.<sup>8</sup> Also, during the Yoruba internecine wars of the 19th century still, the renowned Basorun Ogunmola of Ibadan, also known as the *'kiriniun onibudo'* (lion of the camp master) was recorded to have sent messengers to negotiate terms of peace in order that the cradle of the race may not be in perpetual desolation and for the ancestral gods to be worshipped.<sup>9</sup>

The early history of Ile-Ife enjoyed a great deal of attention from researchers since the last century, yet the seeming mystery of the origins of the town is still very open to continuous research to this day. From extant literature on the early history of Ile-Ife prior to the Oduduwa era, it is believed that Ile-Ife was originally not a unified town under a single monarch. Rather, the town was composed of several independent communities with localized political systems. These pre-Ife communities have been identified to be 13 in total number and they include Iddo, headed by Ompetu; Iloromu, headed by Obaluru; Ideta, headed by Obalesun or Obalade; Odin, headed by Lokore; Iloran, headed by Obaloran; Oke Qja, headed by Obajio; Imojubi, headed by Apata; Iraaye, headed by Obalaaye; Ijugbe, headed by Obalejugbe; Oke Awo, headed by Fegun; Iwinrin, headed by Obawinrin; Parakin, headed by Obalufe, Omologun, by Obadio.<sup>10</sup> The emergence of Oduduwa on the political stage of Ile-Ife effected several changes in the socio-political and socio-cultural systems. The 13 communities were collapsed into one, forming what is now known as Ile-Ife and was further divided into 6 quarters of Ilare, Ilode,

Moore, Iremo, Okerewe<sup>11</sup> and Iraye<sup>12</sup> These communities which are still in existent and the quarters under which they fall are regarded as places from where founders of a number of Yoruba towns emigrated such as Orimolusi of Ijebu Igbo and Adimula of Ifewara of Okerewe Quarters<sup>13</sup>; Igbajo and Omupo towns founders were both from Ilare Qaurters<sup>14</sup>; Oke-Igbo and Ido Ajinare founders were both from Moore Quarters<sup>15</sup> to mention but a few. However, these quarters are known to be occupied by migrants from different parts of Yorubaland and Nigeria such as the Hausa settlement at Sabo in Ilare quarters and Oyo emigrant settlement in Modakeke within Iraye Quarters.

Ile-Ife for several centuries enjoyed the position of the capital city of the Yoruba<sup>16</sup> until the emergence of Oyo. Oyo-Ile was a town generally agreed to have been founded by the legendary Ife prince known as Oranmiyan which grew to become an empire as a result of its institutionalised military structure and state sanctioned periodic campaigns.<sup>17</sup> The military campaigns and activities of Oyo army helped it to expand so much that it covered a very large part of the present day Yorubaland, Borgu, Nupe, parts of Republic of Benin and Togo<sup>18</sup>. During its apogee, Oyo Empire co-existed with the less militarily powerful kingdoms of Ife, Ilesa, Ijebu, Egba, Ekiti and this politico-military relation among these Yoruba states saw Oyo providing military stability across Yorubaland being the most powerful state.<sup>19</sup>

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Oyo was marred by internal problems that affected the military strength and activities it was known for. This was such that it became helpless in the face of the raids and eventual dispersal it was subjected to by the Ilorin army comprising of Yoruba, Fulani and Hausa soldiers whose military expeditions evolved from creating a state independent of Oyo, into a jihad styled conquest seeking to expand its sphere of political and religious influence. Although a narrative about the migration of Oyo people to Ile-Ife stating that the Alaafin sent brave warriors from all over Oyo Empire to go back to defend Ile-Ife, the ancestral home of the Yoruba people, has recently emerged.<sup>20</sup> However, it is generally agreed that refugees from the Ilorin problem at the time began to migrate South with Ife receiving trickles of these migrants at first and with the worsening of the situation in the Oyo areas, they thronged to Ifeland in floods. The first set of refugees were said to have migrated to and settled in Ile-Ife from 1770 and they were said to have been from different towns which were within the greater Oyo and they include Ejigbo, Offa, Ede, Ikoyi, Ogbaagba, Oje, Ola, Oko, Irawo origins. These refugees settled at Ife towns of Moro, Ipetumodu, Eduabon, Yakoyo, Ifalende, Waro, Oogi, Sepe, Ikire and Apomu.<sup>21</sup> The threat of Ilorin army coming to ravage the above mentioned towns of their refuge as a result of the invitation extended to them by a Muslim man in the

town of Iwo resulted in the eventual migration of these refugees into Ile-Ife proper.<sup>22</sup> Ile-Ife became their choice of refuge because of its position as the cradle of their race on the one hand and also because Ile-Ife which is heavily forested was almost impregnable to the Ilorin army which relied on cavalry.<sup>23</sup>

These refugees were well received and protected by the Ooni of the period, Akinmoyero (*Odunle bi ojo*).<sup>24</sup> The people of Ife allowed the refugees to settle among them and there was an attempt at integration by the people of Ife who took the refugees into their family compounds and quarters as a part of them.<sup>25</sup> Available literature have it recorded that, from the feeling of appreciation to their benefactors, the refugees gave one of their daughters as a wife to Akinmoyero, the Ooni. These texts further recorded and widely circulated that the union between Ooni Akinmoyero and the Oyo woman produced Adegunle who would later become an Ooni.<sup>26</sup> However, the records from the history compiled by the Abewela Royal Compound reveals that Ooni Adejinle whose son, Ooni Adebale Sojuolu (Ogbonsegbonde) had a union with a woman of Owu origins, known as Adunwoloju, which produced Ooni Adegunle Abewela whose ancestry is linked to Ooni Owodo, the 13<sup>th</sup> Ooni of Ife.<sup>27</sup> And further research revealed that Ooni Akinmoyero was from Otutu royal compound. Hence a descendant of Lafogido.<sup>28</sup>

Some notable instances of the integration attempt between the people of Ife and the refugees are Ajombadi of Ijaye, settled at Oke-Esho; Wingbolu of Oko, settled at Iyekere; Ojo-Bada from Aragberi, settled in Ijugbe; Ogungbe of Ojo, settled at Oke Owu; and Adefajo, settled at Lagere.<sup>29</sup> These refugees were absorbed into the different parts of the town so much that those who had relations already living in Ile-Ife were encouraged to follow their kinsmen to settle on the lands Ife people leased to them as farms. Also, many of the refugees who would migrate to Ile-Ife later were given farmlands to cultivate and made to pay annual rents.

The relation between the people of Ife and the refugees was very cordial that they were encouraged not only to settle but to ply their trade of choice. For instance, Wingbolu was a blacksmith by trade and was given a land in Iyekere to settle in order that he could dig and smelt iron-ore from a place near Iwinrin. In the recognition of his trade and the feeling of integration, he was conferred with the title of Ogunsua, this cognomen originally belonged to the Ojugbede family of Ife who were known blacksmiths. Wingbolu would later become the refugees' first leader and played a profound role in the founding of a town for the refugees later

in the course of their history in Ile Ife. The refugees adopted the Ogunsua cognomen as the official title of the leader of the refugee town.<sup>30</sup>

The refugees and their host enjoyed military cooperation. For instance, the people of Ife incorporated the refugees into their army which was successful in repelling the encroachment of the marauding Ijesa who were making inroads into Ife territory. In addition, the corporation between Ife army and the refugees recorded successes in destroying Owu and the Egba towns within their reach. They also succeeded in establishing themselves in Ibadan which was originally an Egba town which they founded as a new town.<sup>31</sup>

The people of Ife and the refugees had amicable relations until the people of Ife who had occupied the town as a new settlement lost the leadership positions they had hitherto enjoyed. The people of Ife who occupied Ibadan enjoyed preferential status and rights under Maye Okunade, the Ibadan leader of Ife origins.<sup>32</sup> This created ill-feelings among their refugee allies and a violent conflict soon erupted which led to the expulsion of Okunade Maye and Ife people from Ibadan in 1830.<sup>33</sup> An attempt by Maye and the Ife people to re-instate their status in Ibadan was made futile by the collaborative effort between the refugee army and Kurunmi of Ijaye, both of Oyo origins.<sup>34</sup>

The death of Maye Okunola in Ibadan in the hands of the refugee army precipitated the Ife's loss of political and military control of Ibadan and the rise of nationalistic feelings within the ranks of the people of Ife in Ile-Ife who had continued to receive a high refugee population that continued to swell. This general stand of the Ife people on the situation in Ibadan created a sense of oneness among them and consequently, however, the antipathy of Ife towards the refugees settled in the different compounds and wards in Ile-Ife created a sense of identity for the refugees who began to differentiate and separate themselves from the people of Ife. By the close of 1830s, the refugees in Ile-Ife started to see themselves as brothers, spoke Oyo-Yoruba as a symbol of their brotherhood, regarded themselves as Oyo and developed anti-Ife feelings. These feelings and stand of antagonism held by both parties towards each other would lead to the break out of violent conflicts in the latter stages of the Ife-Modakeke history. This Oyo nationalistic identity which the refugees rallied under as a unifying umbrella was deeply entrenched that A. J. Phillips, a Colonial Administrative Officer commented in his annual report that 'despite having no plans to return to their original homes like other strangers in Ile-Ife, the people of Modakeke maintained a separate identity in Ife'.<sup>35</sup>

This build-up of palpable acrimony between Ife and the refugees who lived within several quarters and compounds with the Ife people led to the eventual murder of a number of Ife kings, namely, Akinmoyero, Gbanlare, Gbegbaaje and Wunmonije<sup>36</sup> who did not share their subjects' stand of animosity towards the refugees; whose services they employed and who they also protected from being sold into slavery by the people of Ife.<sup>37</sup> Upon the ascension of Ooni Adegunle a.k.a Abewela Gberengede, the bitterness between the refugees and their Ife host had become very heated that the Ife people demanded that the refugees be sent out of Ile-Ife. The Ooni ordered their relocation to a temporary settlement from where they would evacuate to their several places of origin. Thus, the Ooni requested that the refugees be allowed to settle at Iraye, under Obalaaye; Iwinrin, under Obawinrin; Ijugbe, under Obalejugbe and Oke-Awo, under Owa-Fegun.<sup>38</sup> These towns were part of the 13 autonomous communities which Oduduwa's emergence unified into one with the introduction of his monarchy as recorded in the early history of Ile-Ife.<sup>39</sup>

Given the fact that they were refugees from different Oyo-Yoruba towns, the refugees did not have a single nomenclature they were known by before and after their temporary re-settlement on a new expanse of land. However, oral tradition records that the communities where the refugees were settled were rife with *eiye ako* (stork bird) which cried '*mo da ke ke*' from which the people of Ife derived Modakeke as a term with which they referred to their former refugees. This term was later adopted by the refugees who began to regard themselves as Modakeke.<sup>40</sup> The etymology of toponym has a variant which states that the migrant Oyo people consulted an oracle which directed them to go to Ebu Alako near Oke-Owu where they met a swarm of Ako (Stork) birds and the name was derived from the cry of the storks in a large tree Mo-da-ke-ke-ke-ke, and where '*Ako ri aaye duro si*' (where stork bird have space to settle).<sup>41</sup>

### **The Ife and Modakeke Conflicts: An Overview**

The Ooni Abewela's decision to move the refugees out of Ile-Ife to the expanse of land stretching across three communities owned by different families were soon given an entirely new dimension by the Ife people who concluded that the Ooni was sympathetic to the Modakeke people at the detriment of the interests of the Ife people. Couple years after the relocation of the refugees, the Ife people construed the relocation as a move to deprive them of the services accrued to them from the refugees and the authority they had over the refugees without the Ooni ordering them to keep off farmlands owned by the people of Ife.<sup>42</sup>



The location at which the Modakeke were settled was contiguous to the Apesan market, a place where the Ondo-Ijebu trade route entered Ile-Ife. This put the market under the command of Modakeke people which resulted not only in their economic prosperity but their monopolisation of arms and ammunition trade which put the control of the flow of weapon into Ile-Ife under their command<sup>43</sup> These factors and a number of others culminated in the eventual murder of Ooni Abewela by the Ife people whom they also refused a royal burial.<sup>44</sup> With the removal of the Ooni from the scene, the people of Ife turned their attention towards the nascent Modakeke town in 1849, the Modakeke did not only show true courage but kindness. During this siege laid on Modakeke by Ife, the Modakeke routed the Ife people and captured twelve thousand and seventy (12, 070) of Ife which they, out of reverence which every Yoruba had for Ife and out of gratitude, released all of their captives unconditionally.<sup>45</sup> Not assuaged by the magnanimity of the Modakeke people, the Ife people proceeded to raise another siege against Modakeke within the space of a month but they were routed, their city razed to the ground, their artefacts looted and a large number of them were captured and sold into slavery.<sup>46</sup> As a result, Ile-Ife was abandoned by its people who relocated to Isoya, Okegbo and other Ife towns where they remained till 1858.<sup>47</sup> The Ife people did not return to their city until Ibadan, under Ogunmola negotiated peace and brought them back. For this, they lost their independence and became a vassal state to Ibadan for the next 30 years, a position which deeply irritated the people of Ife whose reaction to being a vassal state reached its peak when Ibadan imposed an Ooni on them, an occurrence to which the people of Ife greatly took offense with and waited for the opportunity to throw off Ibadan yoke.

The Ekitiparapo war provided the Ife with the right opportunity to throw off the Ibadan yoke and crush the Modakeke people all at once. With the Ibadan fighting on 5 different fronts which included Ijebu and Egba, two Yoruba towns which controlled the flow of trade from the coastal areas into the hinterlands. They blockaded Ibadan from getting to Lagos and this posed a problem to the military fortunes of the Ibadan army which could not procure Snider rifles similar to those in the possession of Ekiti army in large quantities with which they did a lot of damages to the Ibadan army.<sup>48</sup> The only route through which Ibadan could acquire weapons in order to have its military fortunes turned around was the Oke-Igbo route which was an Ife town ruled by Derin Ologbenla, an Ooni-elect of the period. This development placed Ile-Ife in a pivotal position in the outcome of the war, a development which all parties involved in the war recognized and desperately sought to possess to their advantage.<sup>49</sup> The kidnappings<sup>50</sup>, skirmishes and eventual murder of Obalaaye, an Ife chief precipitated a break out of a very

violent war in 1882.<sup>51</sup> Again, the Modakeke were victorious but not without losing their commander in chief who died shortly from his war wounds.<sup>52</sup> What followed was the total destruction and desertion of Ile-Ife which Higgins described to have been completely razed to the ground and that grass had overgrown the place which made it impossible to discover the traces of a single house<sup>53</sup> and it remained so till 1894.<sup>54</sup>

The introduction of Christianity, Islam, and colonial economic and political developments changed the course of the conflict between the people of both towns. While other Yoruba towns where traditional system gave way rapidly to Christianity and Islam, the people of Ife proved impervious to the penetrative measures taken by these religions and it wasn't until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that both religions began to gather slow and small footing in the town.<sup>55</sup> The first mosque in Ile-Ife was built in 1903 and the people of Modakeke congregated with the people of Ife to worship at the first major mosque located close to the palace in 1928.<sup>56</sup> By 1934, the conflict between the Ife and Modakeke people resurfaced again but under the garb of religion. The people of Modakeke wrote a petition to the District Officer to make complaints about religious servitude to the Ife people.<sup>57</sup> They sought the approval of the D. O. to conduct their Friday prayers in Modakeke instead of the mosque in Ile-Ife.<sup>58</sup> This conflict which was couched in religion was largely regarded as Modakeke's attempt at getting autonomy in order to conduct its own affairs within Ile-Ife. This was seriously contested by the people of Ife but it did not degenerate into an open violent conflict.

In 1946 there was a cocoa boom in Nigeria, particularly in the western part of the country. Prior to this period, the Ife who were the land owners had a business arrangement to lease lands to the people of Modakeke who worked the farms and paid royalties in form of farm produce, regarded as *Isakole*, to the families that owned all the lands in Ile-Ife. With the sudden boom in cocoa farming, the people of Ife who owned the land and the people of Modakeke who leased these lands were at loggerheads over the choice of payment of royalty in cash. The Modakeke people began this conflict by refusing to pay their respective landlords royalties claiming since the king of Ife owned all lands and was not receiving royalties; they were in no way bound to pay royalties to family heads who leased lands to them. This was followed by the anti-*isakole* agitations in the press, sponsored by the literate Modakeke people abroad, particularly, Lagos.<sup>59</sup> Despite the intervention of the Ooni, the District Officer, and the courts, the Modakeke were resolute in their position not to pay *Isakole* and rather took a stand that if any Ife came to their farms to demand *Isakole*, they would knock his head off and deliver the remains to the Ooni.<sup>60</sup> This was taken further by the Modakeke people who thronged to farms in different organised

bodies to harvest crops from the farmlands they leased. This illegal harvesting was recorded to have been perpetrated by Modakeke in the Ife villages of Famia, Fagbenro, Oniwinrin, Sango, Amugba, Gorogoro, and Jiboye.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, violence was recorded to have broken out between the police and Modakeke who prevented the former from arresting one of the perpetrators of illegal harvests and this crisis led to some of the police being injured and hospitalized<sup>62</sup>. In 1978, the Land Use Act influenced the Modakeke to assume freedom from all obligations of paying any royalties as a result of the declaration stating all lands belonged to the government. And the interpretation of the Land Use Act by the Ife people who owned the land to have meant nothing has changed and the status quo remained contributed to the ill feelings both parties had towards each other and a charged environment which led to the crisis in 1981 between both parties.<sup>63</sup>

With the decolonisation process in full gear in Nigeria in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, political parties were formed and locals began to vie for public offices and participated in elections. The new local government law became operative in 1955 and this led to the differences in the choice of political parties between Ife and Modakeke. While the Ife people subscribed to Action Group (A.G.), the Modakeke people went with the opposition which was the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C.). Through N.C.N.C they sought to entrench their separatist agenda by political means when they began the agitation for a separate council. This was carried over into the second republic of 1979 when the Ife people endorsed Unity Party of Nigeria (U.P.N.) and the Modakeke people supported the opposite party, National Party of Nigeria. The struggle between UPN and NPN compounded the conflict between Ife and Modakeke so much that Ile-Ife became somewhat of a battle ground and in 1981, the people of Modakeke launched an unwarranted attack on the people of Ife residing at Akarabata, Oke-Eso and Ojoyin where they burnt, looted properties as well as maimed and killed a lot of people. The 1983 gubernatorial elections which saw N.P.N emerging victorious had Modakeke people who were largely N.P.N supporters in a celebratory mood. The ambiance of their celebrations was very charged that they launched attacks on Ife people again and murdered four prominent Ife sons alongside a Modakeke politician who was their representative at the State House of Assembly but of U.P.N. membership.<sup>64</sup> Finally, during the Mbanefo panel for the reform of local government and boundary adjustment in 1996, the people of Modakeke tendered a memorandum requesting an Ife North East local government comprising of six federally recognised wards in Modakeke and its adjoining villages with Modakeke as its headquarters.<sup>65</sup> And during the same panel, the people of Ife submitted a memorandum requesting the creation

of Ife East local government comprising of some parts of Ife-North and Ife Central.<sup>66</sup> By the recommendations of this panel, only the Ife East Local Government with headquarters at Enuwa was created. A development which the Modakeke recorded favoured their demands but was allegedly manipulated by the late Ooni Okunade Sijuade<sup>67, 68</sup> This perceived loss by the people of Modakeke led to a breakdown of law and order when the Modakeke people resorted to violence and attacked the people of Ife and their properties culminating into a major intra-tribal war that lasted for a couple years.

### **Methods of Resolution and their Impacts**

Conflict resolution is an inevitable aspect of human interaction requiring the need to learn to manage conflicts and deal with them in a way that prevents escalation and to arrive at new, innovative, and creative ideas to resolve them. The Ife-Modakeke conflict began in 1849 and has, over the course of more than a century, continued to re-occur. However, given the protracted nature of the conflict, there have been at every juncture of the crisis, several solutions proffered to resolve the conflict.<sup>69</sup>

Prior to the first open conflict of 1849, the developments in Ibadan which culminated in the relegation of its Ife leaders to the background as well as the reaction of the Ife people back at home towards the Modakeke settlers snowballed into a pent up anger that led to the murder of a number of Ife kings and was reaching a point of explosive violence within Ile-Ife itself. To stem the tide of an eventual violent conflict, Adegunle Abewela who was the Ooni at the time ordered the relocation of Modakeke people out of the quarters and compounds where they lived among the Ife people in order to douse the tension that had built up and threatened to tear the peace that had hitherto been enjoyed in Ile-Ife apart.<sup>70</sup> This conflict management method yielded fruits of peace for a while as direct contact between the Modakeke settler and the Ife people who owned the lands was reduced to the barest minimum. However, this peace did not last long when the people of Ife began to feel the economic effect of the Ooni's solution. The people of Ife realized their economic position was threatened when the people of Modakeke who had been ordered out of the town continued to work on the farms belonging to the Ife people and also, the location where the people of Modakeke were relocated to put them in the position to control trade Ondo-Ijebu trade route which put the Ife people at an economically disadvantaged position<sup>71</sup>. This peace method, rather than serving as a palliative, prepared the groundwork for a conflict that was to continue to resurface for several decades.

The socio-economic independence exercised by the Modakeke people by continuously farming on Ife land and their control of trade in Ife which was suspected to have been in collaboration with the Ife king created a rallying point for the Ife people who murdered their king and proceeded to attacking the people of Modakeke on their new settlement twice which led to capture of Ife town by Modakeke who killed many, sold many into slavery and expelled the survivors from their town.<sup>72</sup> The evacuation of Ile-Ife lasted for some time until 1854 when a resolution for the conflict was brokered by Ibadan when Ogunmola sent mediators to negotiate the terms of peace that brought Ife people back to their home. During the negotiations, the Ooni Kumbusu, who was the reigning Ife king at the time stated that he and his people were not interested in restitutions from the Modakeke people and what had happened between them would be obliterated.<sup>73</sup> This resolution lasted from 1854 to 1878 during which the Ife and Modakeke people lived in harmony till the break out of the Yoruba internecine wars, popularly regarded as *Ekitiparapo* wars which engulfed the entire Yorubaland.

The position of Ibadan as the sole military power in Yorubaland which materialised from the pivotal role it played in checking the advance of Ilorin army into Yorubaland at the Osogbo war of 1840<sup>74</sup> and the Jalumi war 1878<sup>75</sup> coupled with its role in bringing Ife people back from their exile, culminated into the disadvantaged position Ife assumed under Ibadan. Ibadan did not only place an *Ajele* in Ile-Ife but nominated and imposed Oonis on the people of Ife while the people of Modakeke identified with Ibadan as a result of their shared Oyo ancestry. Consequently, the Ife and Modakeke peoples were placed in vassal positions to Ibadan and as a result, provided Ibadan with men who fought in a number of wars Ibadan army was engaged in, including the Kiriji or Ekiti Parapo war.<sup>76</sup> The loss of Ibadan; the forced exile from the previous violent conflicts with Modakeke and the vassal position under Ibadan offended the people of Ife who sought the slightest opportunity to break free from Ibadan and then focus on getting Modakeke to leave their town<sup>77</sup>. The Ekitiparapo war saw to the extrication of Ibadan from the major trade routes of Ijebu, Egba, and Ondo that cut across Yorubaland<sup>78</sup>. While the Ijebu and Egba controlled the routes that from the coasts, Ife controlled the Ondo route and being armed with this, it sought to press home its demands. In the latter part of the war when a stalemate was imminent and belligerent parties were already exhausted from the protracted war, the intervention of the British was encouraged and parties involved were made to sign treaties in which their demands were included as clauses.<sup>79</sup> For the people Ife, among other requests, their demand in the treaty was the total evacuation of Modakeke from their town, a request to which the council in Ibadan provided a new expanse of land for resettlement and this

is now known as Ode-Omu in 1908.<sup>80</sup> This demand was met with several oppositions from the Modakeke people and in 1909, during the reign of Ooni Sijuwade Adelekan Olubuse I, this treaty was effected and the Modakeke people were evacuated from Ile-Ife<sup>81</sup> a period which has been described as an era in which Ile-Ife returned to its previous state of slumber in which it reverted to playing its spiritual role in Yorubaland and isolated itself from the larger politics across Yorubaland.<sup>82</sup> This option of resolution which would have permanently resolved the crisis lasted till 1922 when the people of Modakeke were allowed to return and resettle in Ile-Ife.

During the reign of Ooni Ademiluyi Ajagun of 1910 to 1930, who succeeded Ooni Olubuse II, the colonial government had introduced Native Authority System with traditional rulers as the Sole Native Authority. Under the traditional rulers, a local tax system was implemented within which remuneration derived from the sum total earned in taxes within the domain.<sup>83</sup> The Ooni at the time was earning way below the Alaafin who had more population of Oyo citizens under him. With these factors in place and the various attempts made by the Modakeke people to negotiate their return back to Ile-Ife, the Ooni despite the dissenting opinions from his chiefs and subjects readily acceded to the request of the Modakeke people to return in order to have his salary increased. With the approval of the colonial authorities, the people of Modakeke were allowed to move back to Ile-Ife but under an agreement to move into a new quarter in Ile-Ife, called Iraye quarters. Where they would be subjects under Obalaaye and thus, Iraye quarters was created in addition to the 5 original quarters.<sup>84</sup> In addition to this agreement which the Modakeke readily subscribed to which made their settlement a part of a quarter within Ile-Ife, they also agreed to the periodic payment of *isakole* to the Ooni and also, individuals who wished to farm paid *isakole* on lands they leased from families that owned them.<sup>85</sup> The violation of the treaty of 1886 by the Ooni and the people of Modakeke led to the promulgation of a new treaty in 1922 under the auspices of the colonialists which lasted till the end of the Ooni Ademiluyi's reign.

The 1922 treaty began to collapse but this did not surface in 1934 when the people of Modakeke sought to pursue their autonomy under the guise of religious struggle. They petitioned the district officer for permission to build their own mosque in Modakeke as opposed to praying together with the Muslims resident in Ile-Ife on Fridays. Ooni Aderemi who was the Ife king at the time reminded the Modakeke that they were allowed to return to Ile-Ife on the agreement that their town shall be a quarter within Ile-Ife.<sup>86</sup> The District Officer at the time also concluded that the mosque question raised by the Modakeke was a desire they had in conducting their

own affairs separately from Ife people.<sup>87</sup> The next problems that arose from the 1922 resettlement agreement were the *isakole* payment and local government debacles.

The agreement over *isakole* between the Ife and Modakeke people was in payment from farm produce. However, with the boom in the cocoa price, the people of Ife demanded the payment of *isakole* monetarily. A demand which the people of Modakeke disagreed with. A number of resolutions were attempted first by the Ooni Aderemi, the king of Ife at the time, who offered the people of Modakeke virgin lands where they could farm without paying *isakole* to anyone.<sup>88</sup> The *isakole* problem was taken to the court where it was decided that the people of Modakeke who farmed on the lands owned by the people of Ife were bound to pay the *isakole*, an order to which the people of Modakeke refused to comply.<sup>89</sup> The Egbe Omo Oduduwa waded into the conflict and helped to work out a solution based on the payment of low rate *isakole* with the option of taking up freehold land made available by the Native Authority or evacuation of the people of Modakeke from Ife land after the sales of crops and houses to the people of Ife but these proposed solutions failed.<sup>90</sup> In 1978, with the Land Use Decree, the people of Modakeke ceased all forms of *isakole* payment and this precipitated a conflict in 1981.<sup>91</sup>

The *isakole* crisis, although economic on the surface was a prelude to the separatist agitation that was to plague the relation between the two groups for the following decades. The 1922 agreement approved the re-settlement of Modakeke but as a quarter within the larger Ile-Ife but not as a separate town. The people of Modakeke began the pursuit of a separate identity through political parties by endorsing N.C.N.C and N.P.N in the 1950s and 1970s respectively while A.G and U.P.N were endorsed by the people of Ife.<sup>92</sup> And after the council elections of 1955, the people of Modakeke joined with the Origbo, Ila, and Ifetedo to form an organization which excluded the people of Ife through which they dominated the political space in Ife.<sup>93</sup> During this period, the people of Modakeke pursued several projects such as building a town hall and a palace aimed at asserting a separate identity within Ile-Ife<sup>94</sup> and in 1981 the Oyo state created a Commission of Inquiry of local government which recommended the creation of another local government in Ife that would have given the people of Modakeke autonomy but the people of Ife rejected it over the fear of having a separate town created within their town.<sup>95</sup> The failure of the government of Oyo state to grant the recommendation from the commission led to sanguinary violent clashes between both groups. The violent conflict led to the creation of another Commission of Inquiry whose findings which the government of Oyo State endorsed in its White Paper were that Modakeke was a quarter in Ile-Ife and not a distinct town.<sup>96</sup> Following the inability of the people of Modakeke to have a local government created

for them between 1981 and 1983, another opportunity presented itself in 1989 during which they sought to have their local government and as a means of resolution, they were merged with the Origbo group. In asserting their identity, the Modakeke made attempts to have the name of the local government changed from Ife North Local Government to Modakeke/Origbo or Oyotedo Local Government but these attempts were rejected by the Origbo group.<sup>97</sup> In 1996, during the Mbanefo Panel which was set up to inquire into ethnic conflicts and boundary adjustment in Nigeria, the people of Ife and Modakeke both pursued their respective interests. While Ife sought the creation of Ife East local Government, the people of Modakeke pursued the creation of Ife North East Local Government. The former was approved by the Federal Government but the latter was not and this led to a breakdown of law and order as a result of the people of Modakake's violent protest.<sup>98</sup> To address the problem of integration and autonomy as pursued by Ife and Modakeke people separately, a number of other resolution methods have been initiated over the years and some of these include: the 1987 Justice Kayode Ibidapo/Obe Judicial Commission of Inquiry; the 1996 Arthur Mbanefo Panel of Inquiry into the Creation of Additional States, Local Government, and Boundary Adjustments; the 2000 Olabode George Presidential Conflict Reconciliation Committee on Ife-Modakeke, Ife North LG Communities; and between 1999 and 2002, the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (HRVIC).<sup>99</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Mutilation and distortion of history has been a contributory factor to the reoccurring nature of the conflict. The study discovered that members of the belligerent communities are poorly enlightened about the historical background of the conflict since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and they have most relied on mutilated and distorted version of history handed down by generation. The study also discovered that the members of the belligerent communities tend to lean towards peace when confronted with documented record of event showcasing the pre-war relations between both groups, the causes of the war, the peace agreements between the belligerent parties and the roles played by both groups in sustaining these agreement. Thus, the study has shown that it is imperative for a chronologically structured record of the conflict to be explored and made available to the general public in order to contribute towards the sustainability of peace and prevent a relapse into the conflict – a phenomenon which the distortion and mutilation of history tends to lean towards.



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