# A HISTORY OF THE AGILA IN ADO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

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**ABSTRACT**

*The paper interrogated the origin, migration and settlement of the Agila people in Ado Local Government Area of Benue State. The paper traced the genealogy of the Agila people to two separate Progenitors. The study adopted the 'Ago-the progenitor of ten clans in Agila" and 'Osilagama the progenitor of two clans in Agila' 'narratives. The paper has established that the Wukari and Idah traditions and customs were assimilated (inherited) from the onset. The Jukun and the Igala 'Model of royalty' custom is quite a true resemblance of the Agila chieftaincy institution. And as such, if Agila history must be told by mirroring image of realities, with these and other cultural correspondence with the Igala 'Chieftaincy Model', and Arekwu mystery; tracing the genealogy of Agila as a whole to Idah is by no means out of place. Thus, conclusion was reached that: Firstly, Agila is a product of the mystical efforts of both Ago and Osilagama and their descendants that have over the centuries made Agila unique culturally wise in Idomaland. Secondly, Ago's lineage has be traced to the Oba of Benin who briefly lived with his mother in Idah the ancestry home of Osilagama and other Idoma groups, but they never co-habited together in Idah before they separately migrated and settled down in Agila at about the same time. Thirdly, their children and descendants apparently formed the twelve clans; fourthly, the socio-cultural stratifications existing among the clans regarding the chieftaincy institution, the Arekwu cults and other customs were collectively agreed by the two Progenitors to be fashioned after the Idah Model. Fifthly and finally, all the Agila clans have peacefully co-existed and practiced their rich and unique cultural heritage for centuries.*

**Key Words:** Agila, History, Culture, Traditions and Development

## Introduction

To start with, Agila is a name of a district in Idoma land. Agila town which is about eight five kilometers from Otukpo is the ancestral home of the Agila people in Ado Local Government Area of Benue State. Apart from the ancestral home, Agila has other settlements such as Apa-Agila, Ivetse, Ikpeba, Ogbokwu,Udokwu, Odah, Udegu-Ukpo, Aganacha, Avovo etc. Formerly, Apa- Agila which was predominantly a settlement of those Agila people who were unable to return to Agila town after the Nigeria Civil War. Today however, Apa- Agila is the most developed community in Agila district population and infrastructural wise. Agila shares common boundaries with Ohaukwu LGA of Ebonyi State in the East, Enugu State in the West, and Igumale the Ado LG headquarters in the North. Traditionally, Agila community has twelve clans.

Agila history cannot be discussed in isolation without taking into consideration the origin and migrations of the Idoma as an ethnic group of which Agila is one among its districts. In this regard, this paper has critically traced the history of the Idoma ethnic group right from the ancient Kwararafa confederacy to Igala kingdom, later to Apa Cradleland and then



narrowed down to Agila. It has also clearly answered the question whether or not the entire twelve clans of Agila community migrated from a single ancestry to the present place of abode. This extensive study of Agila history became necessary as Agila being a constituent part of Idoma, has traditions, customs and kingship totems that are similar to what is obtainable among the Jukun and Igala ethnic groups. It is against this background that this paper shall attempt to examine the themes of Agila origins, migrations and settlement as they relate to the trajectory of the pre-colonial history of the Agila people. Thus, purpose of this intensive analysis is to correct erroneous assumptions of existing interpretations on Agila history and thereby expand our knowledge of the early history of the people. At the end of the analysis, it would be evidentially clear whether the whole twelve clans of Agila have single progenitor or not. While the historical evolution of Agila as an integral part of the Idoma tribe would be better understood within the context of the origin and migration of the Idoma ethnicity, the data required for this study was largely sourced from primary sources and supported by the growing literature from secondary sources regarding the history of the Idoma in general and Agila in particular.

## The First Phase: The Kwararafa Confederacy and Apa1

The study of the migrations and settlement of the Idoma ethnic group is as complex as the heterogeneous of nature of the people. Although, the Idoma traditions unanimously trace their origins to Apa (Beipi), tentatively associated with a onetime capital of the legendary Kwararafa confederacy, which before the 15th century was under the Abakwariga. The confederacy of Kwararafa once existed within the Benue valley area has been confirmed by several scholar.[1] By every indication, Kwararafa was a multiethnic State or confederacy located around the present day Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State. The ancient kingdom shared common border with the Bornu Empire to the west, and the Hausa States to the South. Thus, among the ethnic groups in Nigeria that have traced their genealogies to the Kwararafa confederacy but not limited include Jukun, Igala, Idoma, Etulo, Ebirra etc. With this large number of tribes that had traced their origins and migrations to Kwararafa, Bala has this to say about the conglomerated nature of the kingdom. With the return of the tribes before the 14th century and lasting 300 years, Wukari is a kingdom existed with a people whose identities were shrouded in mystery. Their adversaries and neighbors could only identify then by prowess in



war and the transitional expression exploits associated with them.[2]

The Kwararafa kingdom which some scholars also refer to it as 'Jukun kingdom' was actually a confederation that was strategically built around the traditional and religious supremacy of the 'Aku- Uka''. The Aku-Uka is the traditional name of the Kwararafa kingship that governed the societies within the territorial jurisdiction of the Kwararafa kingdom. The Aku-Uka who is still the First Chief in Jukun land determined who gets what, when and how within the Kwararafa confederation. Available archeological evidence had revealed that the territorial land and rivers occupied by the kingdom were very fertile and endowed with lucrative economic resources. The situation that prompted most members of the confederation to engaged in viable and profitable business ventures such as salt mining, farming, trading, fishing etc. Presently, an evidence of salt deposit is found in Akwara and fishing activities in Ibi River. Most likely the ancient Kwararafa people were more into salt mining than other economic ventures. Thus, the Kwararafa economy boom invariably made the confederation a major trade centre along the River Benue valley, where traders from other States, Kingdoms and Empires often come for business

transaction. The high flow of commercial activities in Wukari and its environs habitually made the Aku-Uka became a prominent and influential personality in this era.

Professor Erim in his paper tiled ' The Early Foundational of the Kwararafa Confederacy 1331-1902' has this to say about the era and nature of the kingdom: a foundational genealogy and archeological have revealed that the famous Kwararafa confederacy had been existed as at 1331 AD. While it existed, Kwararafa occupied vast territories of land in the valley area of Nigeria which embraced a plethora of cultural distinct ethnic groups living side by side.[3] The renowned Professor Erim also argued that the strong hold of the Kwararafa confederacy shrank in the seventeenth century to a micro- state which dominated by the Jukun ruling elite.[4] Consequently, the irreparable shrank of the kingdom obviously prompted the further migration of the Igala, Idoma, and Ebirra ethnic groups westward along the River Benue valley from Wukari until they finally settled at Idah; where later developed and became the Igala kingdom. Over the years, scholars and even oral traditions have divergent views as per the reasons that led to the shrank and subsequent exodus of ethnic groups out of the kingdom. However, a school of thought believed that the Kwararafa rose to



be prominent before 1500 AD, were in conflict with their more powerful neighbours in the 17th century, and reduced to a small tribute State by the 18th century.[5.]

While the postulation of this school is by no means out of place, a genealogical survey has revealed that the insurgency conflict with neighbours should not be solely uphold to be the only reason why the Idoma and other ethnic groups exited the Kwararafa. The survey identified their intrinsic desire to be independent from the Aku-Uka kinship so as to maintain their individual ethnic identity, and freedom was the ultimate reason for their exodus out of Apa from Kwararafa kingdom. As a result of this cause for the movement, Okpe Jr. contends that Idoma began to spread out over the larger areas of the lower Benue, mainly south of the river[6] , while Erim dated this first wave of Idoma migrations to between c.1535 and 1625[7]. With this development, Idoma kindreds such as the Ugboju, Adoka, and Otukpo constituted this category of these migrants who vigorously pushed into the Benue vally[8] until the arrival of the Tiv fundamentally affected their settlement. In other words, the collapse of this evolving settlement is what scholars as such Erim, Armstrong and Okpe Jr referred to the 'new Apa or Apa 1''. What can be deduced from the analysis is that while the

Igala, Ebirra left the Apa1 (new Apa?) moving south wards the Benue valley, the Ugboju, Adoka, and Otukpo groups of the Idoma tribe remained put while some Idoma moved further with the Igala and Ebirra to formed the Igala Kingdom in Idah.

**The Second Phase: the migration into Igala Kingdom and movement into the Modern Idomaland**

Idah which is the traditional headquarters of the Igalas, is where the famous Igala kingdom was located. Just as they presently have the Attah Igala as the First Class Chief of Igala land, the ancient Igala kingdom was equally governed by Attah Igala. In other words, the traditional institution of Attahship is as old as the Igala people. The nature and character of its royalty uniqueness has made the institution to stand prominent in the comity of Nigerian First Class Chiefs. Due to the absence of modern means of documenting historical facts and figures, it is impossible to confidently give the actual date as to when the Attahship began to govern the Igala kingdom, and as such the ancient communities majorly rely on oral tradition to preserve their historical facts. Like most ethnic group in Nigeria, the origin of the Igala and the Attahship does not have a single school of thought. However, one of the schools linked the Igala kingship with the Jukun fraternity with the Igalas in Wukari. A



former British Colonial Divisional Officer in Igala land, Mr. Clifford Miles, strongly argued that the origin of the Attah kingship is Jukun. According to Miles, the Igala chiefdom was founded by the ancestress Queen Ebulejou, the daughter of Abutu Eje a noble of the Jukun Court at Wukari.[9]

In line with what that has been already established in this paper, Miles maintained that Abutu Eje left Wukari with a large crowd as a result of the political reasons and migrated westwards along the southern bank of River Benue, and came to a temporary halt in the vicinity of Amagede (now in Omala LGA); where Abutu Eje died.[10] Afterward, his daughter, stepped into her father's shoes and led her people from Amagede to Idah where she was installed as the first Attah Igala, and so began to reign in Idah[11]. This is how the kingdom started and it continued to grow from strength to strength. And the view point of this school is time-honored by most Igalas especially the Attah ruling family. Meanwhile, opinion of any other schools pertaining to the origin, features, and membership composition of the kingdom, even the basis in which political power was shared among people that made up the kingdom is certainly outside the scope of this chapter. However, genealogical and archeological source has it that the certain groups of the Idoma

and Ebirra tribes who left Kwararafa with the Igalas also co-habited in the Igala Kingdom until there was a cause for them to leave.

Historically it is difficult to get the precise date the Idoma left the Idah but Erim has dated this period to be between 1685-1951.[12] However, oral tradition has it that the Ebira, and Idoma had to move further from the Igala territory for obvious reasons of succession. As it was a common practice in the royal circle of Idah that the losing side in succession dispute was always obliged by tradition to move out of the capital enmasse to the inland and sometime beyond the boundaries of the Kingdom. In this case, the Ebira and Idoma belonged to the losing side and so they had to move. But, oral tradition put it that the dominant theme in the struggle of the Idoma settlers was to secure political independence of Attahship. So, it was their desire to be rid of Attah's political influence and colonization. This decision forced the Ebira to move westward, while the Idoma group moved eastward gradually until they finally settled at the Apa cradleland and/or the home of their ancestors under the leadership of Iduh. Today, these categories of the migrants form the western Idoma districts such as the Otukpo, Orokam, Ogbadibo,[13] Igumale and the Osilagama clans of Agila. This second phase of migration has



over the years orchestrated the impression that the Ai-Osilagama of Agila and other Idoma districts in this phase are of Igala origin.

From the above historical analysis, apart from Kwararaf a and Idah, the Apa cradle (which could be called Apa2) land was the third major settlement of the Idoma group of migrants, before them gradual spread to the present places of abode. This is with the exception of the other Idoma groups that earlier dispersed to their present abode by the collapsed of the Apa1. Historically, oral tradition which is the primary method in which history has been passed in Idomaland, posited that 'Iduh' who was the father of the Idoma migrants had several children and other migrants who each established different Kindreds and districts within and outside the core Idomaland. According to Idoma oral tradition of origin the Iyala and the Doma people are groups of Idoma speaking people whose geographical in-propinquity has separated them from their Idoma kinsmen in Benue State. E.O. Erim confirmed this position with the argument that 'there were some Idoma groups which today live outside 'core' Idomaland and yet maintain close genealogical ties with members of the Idomanland.'[14] Oral tradition has it that the Iyala and Doma people are amongst other 'core' Idoma groups outside the core

Idomaland. For instance, 'Ai- Ode' are the descendants of a putative ancestor called 'Ode'. Erim traces the genealogy of Iyala people thus to Ode alongside with othe Idoma clans.

Iduh is the father of all Idoma

He also begot the following children:

Ananawoogene who begot the people of Igumale;

Olinaogwu who begot the people of Ugboju;

Idum who begot the people of Adoka;

Agabi who begot the people of Otukpo;

Eje who begot the people of Oglewu;

Ebeibi who who begot the people of Umogidi in Adoka and

Ode who begot the people of Yala[15]….

The complexity associated with the Idoma migrations and early dispersal settlement accounted for the reason why the Idoma ethnic groups are also found in Cross River, Nasarawa and Enugu states respectively. In a larger domicile, currently the Idoma are predominantly found in the southern senatorial district of Benue state with different clans and districts. Each of the districts has their own district Head selected and/or elected in accordance with their customs. The office of the 'Och' Idoma' which is the colonial creation is the paramount ruler of Idoma



land, and as well as the Chairman of Idoma Traditional Council. Giving the historical evolution of the origin and migrations of the Igala and Idoma, it appears realistic to accept the school of thought that believes that these ethnic groups have close ancestral ties for ages. The linguistic and cultural similarities existing among these ethnic groups are enough empirical evidence to further accepts the truism of the Igala- Idoma ancestry connection. To further buttress this historical fact, many traditional Idoma (especially the Agila) 'spiritual chants and secret tongues spoken during traditional ceremonies are actually Igala dialects.

The Agila for instance, the most traditionally cherished greeting exclusively used for the Otse Agila is 'Ogaba Iduh'; the exclusive royal usage of 'Okanga'- the royal talking drum; the 'Ekwu Aja' - the ancestral spiritual/Arekwu exclusively used by the royal clans etc., all these cultural similarity phenomenon are enough empirical proves to believe that Agila is among the Idoma districts that have their migration through the Idah ancestral home of the Igala. The linguistic and cultural similarities existing between the Igala and Idoma is a substantial platform to uphold the school of thought that believes that Iduh is the Progenitor of the Idoma, who oral traditional believed that he

played influential and leadership roles in the migration processes to the Apa Cradle land. Although, it is arguable among scholars to assert that all Idoma clans or districts have their origins trace to Iduh neither from Idah the headquarters of the ancient Igala State. In other words, there is possibility that is not every part of Idoma that are descendants of Iduh.

In a reaction to the above premise, E.O.Erim cited in O.O Okpe,Jr 'Origin, Migration and Settlement of the Idoma' argues that the history of the Idoma legend of origin and ethnicity is perhaps the most complex aspect of the people's pre-colonial history. This explains why it has consistently engaged the critical attention of scholars over the years. In one dimension, it has observed that the early history of the people indicates that Idoma ethnicity is a contemporary phenomenon.[16] On his part O.O Okpe,Jr, asserts that what this implies is simply that the heterogeneous groups which is today answers to the name 'Idoma' did not have a common ethnic identity before the advent of the British into the land. Okpe,Jr concludes that this may have certainly accounted for the controversy, confusion and ambivalence the legends of origin and ethnicity of the people generated during the early days of colonial administration at the beginning of the 2oth century.[17] This contention is necessary as



intervening social- cultural forces such as marriage, farming, trade, hunting expedition etc. must have influenced the migration and settlement of some groups of person from elsewhere other than those from the Idah ancestry home. In other words, there is possibility that there are families, sub-clans, and clans in Idoma of today whose origin are not directly linked to the Apa- Idoma ancestral home neither the Igala kingdom in Idah through Kwararafa confederacy. In a swift reaction, E.O.Erim argues that Iduh was certainly a migration leader, that he was not the father of the entire Idoma.[18] On the basis of the above analyses this chapter make the following conclusions on the origin and migrations of the Idoma ethnic group.

The first observation is that, in whatever perspective one may based his argument, in antiquity, the Idoma tradition unanimously believed that the Idoma people moved out of Apa in the legendary Kwararafa kingdom. This suggests that the Idoma cohabited with the Jukun, Igala, Ebirra and other ethnic groups in the ancient Kwararafa confederation. The second observation is that, the origin and migrations of the Idoma are clearly linked to Apa of which both oral tradition and scholars believed in the veracity of this tradition in the context of the general Idoma's belief. Thus, the contention among scholars is

not against the authenticity of the genealogical claim but the definite location of the Apa. Better still, intellectual curiosity of some scholars have equally led to the conceptualization of Apa 1 and Apa cradle land. Based on these collaborated positions about Apa, A.M. Adejo, viewed Apa as a place (that is) larger than life, real but also invested with myth.[19] The third observation is that, while certain Idoma groups moved gradually to their respective present places of abode after the collapse of Apa in the legendary Kwararafa Kingdom, other Idoma groups still migrated with the Igala, Ebirra etc long westward Benue river to the Igala Kingdom in Idah. Where the Ai- Osilagama clans of Agila and other Idoma clans later left the Idah and migrated eastward till them reunited with their other Idoma kinsmen who did not follow to the Igala kingdom.

The fourth observation is that, there is every likelihood that Iduh's children and descendants have begotten many clans and districts of Idoma ethnicity as the people's belief and preserve by oral tradition; but this does not mean that every clans of Idoma ethnicity are obviously direct descendants of Iduh. Therefore, referring to Iduh to be either the 'father' or 'leader' of the Idoma ethnicity is not out of place, probably because of his great numbers of children who later begot many Idoma clans; or



due to the indelible leadership roles him played in the course of migrations and settlement of Idoma ethnicity. Thus, the mystery of the influential roles successfully played by Iduh either as a progenitor or leader of the Idoma group of migrants has historically made Royal Fathers of Idoma ethnicity to be accorded with the royal accolade 'Agada Iduh or 'Ogaba Iduh'. This singular honour is an evidence that the Idoma socio-political system right from antiquity recognized Iduh's contributions in the origin, migrations, settlement and development of the Idoma ethnicity.

The last observation is that, the language of the people is known as Idoma. But like most other ethnic groups in Africa, there are variations in the various dialects of Idoma. These dialectical variations do not however, pose any barrier in understanding of one another's tongues. Although, each Idoma group tends to lay claim to the originality of its dialect. The variations only exist in spellings and pronunciations but not in the meaning and understanding of words. The dialects are distinguished by substitution of "tsi" for "chi" or "ji" and "ri" for "li" phonetics. Those in the West and South employ the use of "ji", "tsi" and "ri" respectively. The Agila of our study being one of the districts in the South goes for "tsi" and "ri" phonetics,

while those in the North and Central part of Idoma goes for the "chi" phonetics. For example, "Oche" which means king to the North and Central Idoma is pronounce as "Otse" by the Agila, Igumale and other Southern Idoma groups. Thus, the slight dialectical differences existing among some communities and districts in Idoma land is by no means a strong factor for one to argue against the unitary genealogy of the Idoma, or in favour of their diverse origin. As research has showed that distance in settlement, sharing of borders with other tribes, inter-tribal marriage, trade etc. are strong centripetal socio-cultural forces to cause intonation variation in speaking a certain language. Therefore, the intonation differences among the Idoma is what can happen to any language (tribe) that is open to the influence of the aforementioned factors. Having come this far, who are the Agila in the present day Idoma land?

## The migration to Agila: The Case of Ago and Osilagama

Historically, there are several schools of thought regarding the origin of the Agila people. Examining the view points of all the schools of thought is certainly the best interest of this chapter. With the already established background, it has



evidently proved that Agila is among the Idoma districts that have their genealogy from the Idah ancestry home. In this analysis, this paper attempted to review some of these perspectives with the crucial objective of clarifying vital issues associating with the origin, migration and settlement of the Agila.

One of the schools of thought could be coined as '*Ago-the progenitor of ten clans in Agila".* The clans includes Ogbilolo, Osudu, Efoha, Anmeta, Otokilo-Anidu, Akpoge, Okpatobom, Okpakor, Onogwu and Onwa. Among the proponents of this school of thought is O. Egwurube in his book titled 'Agila History: Issues and Perspectives'. Thus, Egwurube argues that it would be recalled that the first Attah Idah was a Bini prince who had sent to Idah as chief by the Oba of Bini. This event and other policies of the Oba trigger off the Bini-Igala war which was described as war of survival for the Benin kingdom in Igala-land. During this these movements, Ago, son of the Oba of Benin left South of Idah, C 1595-1775.[20] Egwurube further argues that Ago had earlier left Benin to escape unending dynastic disputes in the ancient Benin Empire[21].

On the account on how Ago found expression in Agila history, Egwurube also contends that Ago participated in the

Benin-Igal war of the 16th century. Igala lost the war and turn its fury on those who fought for the enemy. Ago and others who fought on the side of the Benin left Idah.[22] Egwurube concludes that Ago left with his descendant to Adiga where they lived for 60 years and adopted the Akopto language and customs. Ago's later movement finally brought him to the present- day Agilaland[23] and consequently established the Agila territory based on the ten clans mentioned above.

On the basis of the above analysis and in the context of the argument presented by Egwurube, Ago and his mother are by no means descendants of the early Igala in Idah who early oral tradition has traced their origin to Wukari, neither Ago's lineage is traced to the Igala, Idoma or Ibirra whose origin have been conjecturally traced to the Kwrararafa confederacy or Apa. While Ago's connection with Agila is not discarded in Agila history, the author of 'Agila History: Issues and Perspectives' has simply admitted that Ago, as the son of Oba of Benin and who strongly fought the Bini- Igala war on the side of the Benin people against the Igalas in Idah. Thus, the above position can be inferred that Ago is neither of Igala extraction nor Idoma extraction; hence Egwurube and other proponents of this perspective have ethnographically traced Ago's genealogy to the



Oba of Benin. This suggests that Ago and his descendants were only assimilated into the Akopto language and custom (associated the Igala and Idoma) during their abode in Okpaga.

Another, perspective associated the ancestral origin of the Agila with *'Osilagama-Idah -Apa Connection*'. Expressed by this school of thought, this strongly argues with established linguistic, ethnographical, and archaeological and chiefdom evidences that Osilagama was among the prominent leaders that led the Idoma group who migrated out of Igala kingdom in Idah to the Apa2 before moving Eestward to the present day Agila where he established the Agila Kingship. The tradition have that Osilagama was a loyal and resourceful person to Great, Abute Eje during their migration to Idah.[24] Where he worked closely with the Attah and lineage as a royal house resources person. As part of the empirical evidence, this school believes that the Agila kingship, the Arekwu cult and so many other customs were cautiously fashioned but in mystery by the Osilagama after the Idah model where he served as a representative of the Idoma ethnic group in the Attah dynasty. In other words, the Ai-Osilagama clans of Agila have traced their origin to Apa where the other groups of Idoma ethnicity believed to have originated and migrated from.

Thus, this tradition believes that the then Attah-Igala and his kinsmen allowed Osilagama, and his descendants to embark on the migration along side with other Idoma groups for the sole purpose of; (1) of maintaining his Idoma ethnic identity and (2) capturing territories and thereby fostering the extension of the Attah's sphere of influence; and by extension, to spread the Igala custom and tradition around the lower Benue valley.[25] The above collaborated view of this school has backed its argument and expressed why the Agila chieftaincy institution and Arekwu cults are typical of the Igala. This phase two migration and settlement of the Idoma accounts for the origin, migration of settlement of Osilagama , who is known for ages as the Progenitor of two clans of Osiroko and Efofu in Agila.

The history of Agila legend of origin and custom has never been complex and a subject of controversy among the Agila during the pre-colonial, colonial eras and even before 1983. The methodological question posed by some writers about the origin, migration and settlement of the Ai-Ago and Ai-Osilagama is nothing but an orchestrated attempt to dipping confusion and disaffection among the Agila. It has been asserted in some quarters that, the Osilagama was a magician from Ijubu-land brought to the Attah of Igala, Ayegba Om'Idoko in Idah



who later migrated to Agila with the death of the king[26]. Another writer, Osteanya contends that Osilagama assumed the office of Otse-Agila on the invitation of the elders of the ten clans because they were unable to settle a very fierce disagreement between two contestants[27] over the Headship of Agila. In a response to the above collaborated position against the Osilagma's origin and settlement background, Genesis S.O.Ikese in his article titled 'Re: On the letter Mr.Ikese Wrote,' maintains that if the beginning of the Osilagama and his descendants kingship over Agila was so, that elders called upon a 'stranger' to take up the highest office in the land, then they were the most questionable set of homo-sapiens that have occupied this part of the planet earth, or they were suffering from cerebral dysfunction (sic).[28] Ikese further contends that the write-up questioning the Osilagma's royalty and settlement background is a fable, for it contain no historical facts about Agila and its rich culture.[29] On the basis of the above argument, no rational thinking being would ever accept the notion that a total stranger was voluntarily invited to resolve a chieftaincy dispute and the stranger suddenly abrogated and abolished the existing chieftaincy order (structure) in Agila and automatically assumed the Headship of Agila without resistant from the invitees. And after his transition

beyond to meet his ancestors, his children and descendants still continued to govern Agila for more than four centuries without resistant. Therefore, the perspective that King Osilagama was an invited stranger in Agila is a history rooted in myth that cannot withstand any historical veracity.

Available genealogical evidence have showed that 'Osilagama' who is the Progenitor of two clans (Osiroko and Efuofu) out of the twelve clans of Agila, reigned in Agila as Otse-Agila between 1625 and 1690[30] had prominent sons as Adiregba, Otsirebe, etc. From antiquity, it is in the oral history of the people that after Osilagama joined his ancestors Adiregba, Otsirebe and other of his descendants such as Akogwu, Okoriko, Unwaba, Otse Akogwu, Otse Akilozi, Otse Otsikor, Otse Unazi, Eza Ogaba, Ochoga Ochonu I etc had equally occupied the throne of Otse-Agila. Today, all the sub-clans within Osiroko and Efofu clans were begotten by Otsirebe and Adiregba respectively who were the male children of King Osilagama. On the other hand, the descendants of Ago constituted the remaining ten clans of Ogbilolo, Osudu, Efoha, Anmeta, Otokilo-Anidu, Akpoge, Okpatobom, Onogwu, Okpakor and Onwa. Apparently, even though the two Progenitors of Agila (Ago and Osilagama) had different ancestry origins and also migrated separately to the



present day Agilaland, the entire Agila community is mindedly built around the descendants of these Progenitors.

## Conclusion

Like in the case of most districts in Idoma land, the genealogy of Agila cannot be told in a straight jacket analytical view point. Thus, any other school of thought on the methodological origin, migration and settlement of the Agila would be applauded provided such perspective is not built on falsehood aims to contradict the hitherto existing Agila tradition and custom. Be that as it may, having traced the genealogy of the Agila people to two separate Progenitors using the '*Ago-the progenitor of ten clans in Agila*" *and* '*Osilagama of progenitor two clans in Agila*'' methodologies; still yet it would amount to intrigue for any school of thought to confidently argue that all the kindreds in the 'ten clans' and even within the two clans have a common ancestry or genealogy. As an extensive genealogical survey has revealed that fraternity ties propelled by the forces of marriage, trade, and farming had influenced and attracted the migration and subsequent settlement of a large of people who are now Agila but not did share the same genealogy with other Agila who had traced their origin to Ago or Osilagama. Consequently,

the genealogical survey showed that there are several families and kindreds (okonu'ole or Iyetse) in Agila that their origins have been traced to the neighbouring Ibo and Igbo communities that shares boundaries with Agila.

This foundational paper has briefly but intensively used historical facts and traditional totems to substantially prove that the Idoma (certain clans in Agila inclusive) have had historical ties with the Jukuns in Kwararafa kingdom, the Igalas in Idah before migrating to the various places of abode. These historical ties still found much expression in most Idoma communities which actually had maintained and sustained the Wukari and Idah traditions and customs assimilated (inherited) from the onset. The Jukun and the Igala 'Model of royalty' custom is quite a true resemblance of the Agila chieftaincy institution. And as such, if Agila history must be told by mirroring image of realities, with these and other cultural correspondence with the Igala 'Chieftaincy Model', and Arekwu mystery; tracing the genealogy of Agila as a whole to Idah is by no means out of place.

By and large, on the basis of the above analysis regarding the origin, migration and settlement of the Agila, this paper



makes the following conclusions: First, every Agila is proudly pride of the mystical efforts of both Ago and Osilagama and their descendants that have over the centuries made Agila unique culturally wise in Idomaland. Secondly, Ago's lineage has be traced to the Oba of Benin who briefly lived with his mother in Idah the ancestry home of Osilagama and other Idoma groups, but they never co-habited together in Idah before they separately migrated and settled down in Agila at about the same time. Thirdly, their children and descendants apparently formed the twelve clans; Fourth, the socio-cultural stratifications existing among the clans regarding the chieftaincy institution, the Arekwu cults and other customs were collectively agreed by the two Progenitors to be fashioned after the Idah Model. Fifth and finally, all the Agila clans have peacefully co-existed and practiced their rich and unique cultural heritage for centuries.

## ENDNOTE

1. For more details, see O.O Okpe,Jr 'Origin, Migration and Settlement of the Idoma'in Y.A.Ochefu, J.I and T.A. Varvar (ed). *A History of the people of Benue State*, Makurdi: Aboke publishers,2007, p56-7.
2. M. Bala, Kwararafa Kingdom, in Heritage Magazine, Jos:2005 January/February Edition.
3. See. E.O. Erim , *The Early Foundational of the Kwararafa Confederacy 1331-1902*,In Nigerian Magazine, Vol.5.No.3,1975.
4. Ibid, see E.O. Erim , *The Early Foundational of the Kwararafa Confederacy 1331-1902…*
5. H.J. Fisher, The Sahara and the Central Sudan, in R.Gray el at (eds), *Cambridge History of Africa* from 1600- 1790 BC, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
6. O.O Okpe,Jr 'Origin, Migration and Settlement of the Idoma'op.cit.,p65.
7. Ibid.Similarly, see E.O.Erim cited in O.O Okpe,Jr, op.p65
8. Okpe Jr. adds that Idoma kindreds such as the Ugboju, Adoka, and Otukpo constituted this category of these migrants who vigorously pushed into the Benue valley.



9. C. Miles, Report of Genealogical Survey Conducted by the British Colonial Division in Igalaland. Oxford: Oxford University press, 1934,p.34.
10. Ibid, see C. Miles, p.36
11. Ibid, see C. Miles, p.36
12. E.O. Erim, Idoma Nationality 1600-1900: Problems of Studying the Origins and Development of Ethnicity, Emgum Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, 1981.
13. Ibid. Erim argues that the Otukpo, Orokam, Ogbadibo and others are part of the categories of the migrants that moved out of Idah.
14. E.O. Erim, Stereotype Themes in Yala Oral Traditions. Oduma Magazine,2(1), August,1974,p.11.
15. E.O. Erim, Traditions of Origin of the Tdomn-Yala people. In Algoa, E.J (ed.),Oral Tradition and Oral History Africa and the Diaspora; Theory and Practice, Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization for Nigerian Association for Oral History and Tradition.
16. See. O.O Okpe,Jr 'Origin, Migration and Settlement of the Idoma'……...p56-7.

17. Ibid, see O.O Okpe,Jr 'Origin, Migration and Settlement of the Idoma'……...p56-7
18. E.O.Erim argues that Iduh was certainly a migration leader, that he was not the father of the entire Idoma.
19. A.M. Adejo, The Political Evolution of the Idoma, in New Nigeria Saturday April 19,1997.,p.13
20. For more details, see O. Egwurube, Agila History: Issues and Perspectives, Makurdi: Brains Books,2007, p10-2.
21. According to Egwurube, Ago had earlier left Benin to escape unending dynastic disputes in the ancient Benin Empire…..P.12
22. For more detail see O. Egwurube, Agila History: Issues and Perspectives…….P12. On the account on how Ago found expression in Agila history, Egwurube also contends that Ago participated in the Benin-Igal war of the 16th century. Igala lost the war and turn its fury on those who fought for the enemy. Ago and others who fought on the side of the Benin left Idah.
23. Egwurube, concludes that Ago left with his descendant to Adiga where they lived for 60 years and adopted the Akopto language and customs. Ago's later movement finally brought him to the present- day Agilaland…..p.12



24. Most informants interviewed on this issues argued that with established linguistic, ethnographical, and archaeological and chiefdom evidences that Osilagama was among the prominent leaders that led the Idoma group who migrated out of Igala kingdom in Idah to the Apa2 before moving Eestward to the present day Agila where he established the Agila Kingship. The tradition have that Osilagama was a loyal and resourceful person to Great, Abute Eje during their migration to Idah.
25. The informants also argues that this tradition believes that the then Attah-Igala and his kinsmen allowed Osilagama, and his descendants to embark on the migration along side with other Idoma groups for the sole purpose of; (1) of maintaining his Idoma ethnic identity and (2) capturing territories and thereby fostering the extension of the Attah's sphere of influence; and by extension, to spread the Igala custom and tradition around the lower Benue valley.
26. Interview, Prince Paul Akpowo Ochoga,120yrs, Opinion leader, interview in Apa-Agila,January,2004.
27. See. K.O. Otseanya, "On the letter Mr.Ikese Wrote" in The Voice, September30th ,2009,P18-19.

28. For more details, see G.S.O.lkese, 'Re: On the letter Mr.Ikese Wrote' in The Voice, Friday Novemeber25th ,2009,P6.

29. Ibid., the write-up questioning the Osilagma's royalty and settlement background is a fable, for it contain no historical facts about Agila and its rich culture…see G.S.O.lkese,p.6

30. For details of this consult the following works: C.K Meek, the Northern Tribes of Nigeria, London:1925, 2 Volumes; R.G Armstrong, D. Forde and P. Brown (eds) Peoples and Benue Confluence ….'and E.O. Erim, Idoma Nationality 1600-1900: Problems of Studying the Origins and Development of Ethnicity, Emgum Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, 1981.