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"HOMETOWN" VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS, LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
AND THE EMERGENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN WESTERN NIGERIA*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the membership and activities of one type of intermediary organization, the "hometown" voluntary association in the context of Western Nigeria, with the purpose of extending our understanding of the significance of these organizations for the process of local development and for the evolution of civil society and state-society relations. Through a detailed examination of the membership, activities, internal structure, and external linkages of three hometown associations, we shall delineate the importance of similar organizations in rural communities across the continent.

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Introduction

At a time when most African countries are characterized as "strong societies and weak states"¹, the tendency for Africanists to afford the state "ontological primacy" in explaining the nature of African political economy is being challenged. One manifestation of this challenge has been a shift in scholarly attention to those intermediary and autonomous organizations which function and sometimes flourish in the space that exists between the state and the household--a shift to the groups which comprise "civil society."²

A host of private and voluntary associations have historically had a profound impact upon individual and collective behaviour in both rural and urban Africa. Current scholarly interest in these intermediary organizations is part of a broader search to identify those institutions which might better link state and society together to make the state more responsive to the needs of the governed and by so doing, enhance its legitimacy. Intermediary organizations not only provide links between the state and societal interests, they also perform an important mediating role whereby the macro-policy objectives of the state and the particularistic interests of society's groups are adjusted to each other; a process of bargaining.³ By expanding the sphere of "civil society,"⁴ the proliferation of intermediary organizations increases the likelihood of a more pluralistic and democratic political order.

¹See Atul Kohli (ed), The State and Development in the Third World, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Joel Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) and especially Goran Hyden, Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

²Michael Bratton, "Beyond the State: Civil Society and Associational Life in Africa," World Politics, 41, 3 (April, 1989), pp. 407-30.

³See Joel D. Barkan and Frank Holmquist, "Peasant-State Relations and the Social Base of Self-help in Kenya," World Politics, 41, 3 (April, 1989), pp. 359-80.

⁴In this paper we agree with Michael Bratton that "we require a neutral definition of civil society which does not prejudge the nature of state-society relations." See Bratton, "Beyond the State," p. 417. Civil society is that sphere of group activity which exists between the state and the household.

Intermediary organizations also contribute to the process of economic development in Africa by providing needed infrastructure and an array of social welfare services to small towns and rural areas which the state is unwilling or unable to deliver, and which are not obtainable from the market. Typically, these services are collective goods. The market does not provide collective goods, because it is usually unprofitable for individual suppliers to do so. The state does not provide them, because it lacks the capacity to do so. The provision of primary and secondary education, basic health services, water, and cattle dips by Harambee self-help groups in Kenya;⁵ the provision of credit to small farmers by rural credit unions in Zimbabwe;⁶ the activities of "hometown" associations, market womens associations, farmers unions, local improvement societies, cultural organizations in urban areas, and "old boy" associations in West Africa, are well-known examples.

This article examines the membership and activities of one type of intermediary organization, the "hometown" voluntary association in the context of Western Nigeria, with the purpose of extending our understanding of the significance of these organizations for the process of local development and for the evolution of civil society and state-society relations. Through a detailed examination of the membership, activities, internal structure, and external linkages of three hometown associations, we shall delineate the importance of similar organizations in rural communities across the continent.

Three kinds of data were collected for this study. (1) Detailed case histories of three established (and apparently successful) hometown associations in Oyo State--the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe, the Fiditi Progressive Union, and the Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union. (2) Interviews with local government officials on the relationships between local government authorities and rural community development groups in the Ifijio local government area of Oyo state and the Odeda and Ijebu-North local government areas of Ogun State. (3) Interviews with prominent officials and consultants at the state and federal level responsible for the implementation of two potentially significant initiatives undertaken by the Federal Military Government

⁵ See Barkan and Holmquist, "Peasant-State Relations and the Social Base of Self-help in Kenya"; Frank Holmquist, "Self-help: The State and Peasant Leverage in Kenya", *Africa*, 54, 3 (1984), pp. 72-91; Philip Mbithi and Ramus Rasmuson, *Self-Reliance in Kenya: The Case of Harambee* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1977); and Barbara P. Thomas, *Politics, Participation and Poverty: Development Through Self-Help in Kenya* (Boulder: Westview, 1985).

⁶ Michael Bratton, "Farmer Organizations and Food Production in Zimbabwe", *World Development*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1986), pp. 367-84.

aimed at mobilizing rural community action.

Perspectives on Local Voluntary Associations

Although a sizeable literature aimed at classifying and analyzing voluntary associations developed in the 1960s and 70s, little of this literature dealt with voluntary associations in developing countries and Africa in particular.⁷ During this period, and continuing into the early 1980s, the attention of Africanists focussed mainly on the developmental role of the state. As attention shifted to the dynamics of peasant-state relations and the decline of state authority,⁸ Africanists began to recognize the importance of civil society for creating a more stable base on which to build legitimate state authority. It is not surprising that in this context voluntary associations have begun to attract more attention from students of African development.

Voluntary associations have been subject to at least six interpretations in the literature: (1) The "civic virtue" perspective. (2) The "shadow state" perspective. (3) The "bulwark against the state" perspective. (4) The local "growth machine" perspective. (5) The "intermediary broker" or "linkage" perspective. (6) The "attachment to place" or "roots" perspective. The associations discussed in this article manifest elements of all six, suggesting that at different times and in different contexts voluntary associations perform multiple functions, and that different individuals participate in the activities of the same association for different reasons.

⁷The Journal of Voluntary Action Research was launched in 1972, and Donato J. Pugliese's Voluntary Associations: An Annotated Bibliography (New York: Garland Publications, 1986) contains 384 entries. Only 17 of these references are to studies of voluntary associations in Africa of which only four deal specifically with associational life in Nigeria: Graham Kerr, "Voluntary Associations in West Africa; 'Hidden' Agents of Social Change." African Studies Review, 21, 3, (December, 1978) pp. 87-100 examines voluntary associations in Eastern Nigeria; Sandra T. Barnes, "Voluntary Associations in a Metropolis: The Case of Lagos, Nigeria." African Studies Review, 18, 2, (September, 1975), pp. 75-87; J.L.L. Comhaire, "Voluntary Associations in Nigeria" in David H. Smith (ed.), Voluntary Action Research, (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath & Co., 1974) pp. 101-110.; James N. Kerri, "Studying Voluntary Associations as Adaptive Mechanisms: A Review of Anthropological Perspectives." Current Anthropology, 17, 1, (1976), pp. 23-47. Three additional articles have come to our attention: Sandra T. Barnes, "Voluntary Association's Membership in Five West African Cities." Urban Anthropology, Vol. 6, (Spring, 1977), pp. 33-106; Chokuka Okonjo, "The Western Ibo" in P.C. Lloyd, A.L. Mabogunje and B. Awe (eds.), The City of Ibadan, Cambridge University Press, 1967; and Emma Osuji, "Rural Development by Self-Help Efforts in Abiriba, Imo State, Nigeria," Nigeria Magazine, No. 147 (1983).

⁸Goran Hyden, Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania, Bomi Chazin and Donald Rothchild, eds. The Precarious Balance (Boulder, westview, 1988).

1. The "civic virtue" perspective. This interpretation of voluntary associations views the citizens of a nation as a vast reservoir of untapped energy, eager to participate in national and local development and prepared to engage in selfless action to promote the common good and to come to the assistance of other, less fortunate, members of the community. Africans, especially West Africans, have shown a strong interest in forming associations for this purpose.
2. The "shadow state" perspective. This perspective views civic associations as instruments of state manipulation. In this view, the effort to involve large numbers of citizens in community action and volunteer activities is a cynical move by political elites to shift the responsibility and burden of social welfare costs to private organizations and local institutions.
3. The "bulwark against state power" perspective. In this view, voluntary associations are important because they contain and ward off state power from oppressing the citizenry. Voluntary associations also serve as a mechanism for citizens seeking to make the exercise of state power more accountable to the governed.⁹
4. The local "growth machine" perspective. This view sees voluntary associations either as instruments of local capital or as organizations to be co-opted to serve the interests of local business and political elites. The growth machine is a local coalition of political and commercial actors that seeks to develop local communities for their own interests.¹¹
5. The "intermediary broker" or "linkage" perspective. This perspective focuses on at least three functions which voluntary associations perform because they link central institutions to local communities: (i) A political bargaining function through which the interests and claims of the state and those of local populations are adjusted to each other. (ii) An economic function through which resources are mobilized for both national and local development. (iii) A communication function through which "national" values are introduced and legitimized into local communities while local perspectives and values are infused simultaneously into the national scene.

⁹ R.K. Geiger and J.R. Wolch, "A Shadow State? Volunteerism in Metropolitan Los Angeles," Environment and Planning D: Society and Space Vol. 4 (1986), p. 391.

¹⁰ This view was first articulated by Tocqueville in his observations of 19th century America, and is the basis of the pluralist model of democracy which dominated social science in the 1960s. See Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America ed. by J.A. Mayer and Max Lerner (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), David B. Truman, The Governmental Process (New York: Alfred B. Knopf, 1958) and William Kornhauser, The Politics of Mass Society (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959).

¹¹ John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Space, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 62.

6. The "attachment to place" or "roots" perspective. In this view, voluntary associations are also "groups that are able to elicit deep and lasting commitments from their members. Communities of memory"¹² which reaffirm their sense of place and attachment to the local community and its values. Especially important in this regard are the locally based associations which nonetheless draw membership from former residents of the community who have migrated to major urban areas and who often hold important positions in government service and business at the national level. Such associations strengthen the affective ties people have for/with their place of origin.

Associational Life in Western Nigeria

Associational life is an important feature of society in Western Nigeria. N.A. Fadipo's Sociology of the Yoruba, originally written as a Ph.D. thesis in 1969 and published posthumously in 1970, discussed four principal types of Yoruba associations--political, religious, occupational, mutual help and convivial.

The tendency to form associations and corporations is very strong among the Yoruba. To a large extent it derives from the organization of the people into compounds. They are formed for the purpose of promoting common interests in the fields of politics, economics, religion, recreation and enjoyment....One interesting result of this tradition of associations is that wherever there is an appreciable community of Yoruba, either outside Yorubaland or even only outside their own particular communities, an organization will spring up complete with officers. This organization will certainly have judicial functions, and will have its convivial and mutual help features strongly developed.¹³

Peter Marris,¹⁴ Kenneth Little,¹⁵ and others have noted the importance of associational life in other areas of West Africa. Previous research on such associations has been overwhelmingly sociological or anthropological in nature, stressing their role in maintaining and reinforcing ethnic identities and regional loyalties. Also, the prior focus was on the urban bases of such associations and emphasized their roles as support organizations facilitating the entry and assimilation of recent migrants from the rural communities. Little credited the impact of urbanization in the rise of associational life since ethnic unions and tribal associations served crucial functions for the migrant communities in strange and sometimes hostile urban environments.

¹² Robert Bellah, Habits of the Heart (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), p. 212.

¹³ N.A. Fadipo, The Sociology of the Yoruba, (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1970) p. 243.

¹⁴ Peter Marris, Family and Social Change in An African City (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961).

¹⁵ Kenneth Little, West African Urbanization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

Little also ascribed the existence of many home branches of ethnic unions to the actions of zealous former residents eager to share the benefits of associational life with hometown populations.¹⁶ However, the rural-based developmental and political roles of these associations have received much less attention.¹⁷

Our emphasis will be on the effect of these associations on the mobilization and transfer of resources between urban and rural communities and in their role as intermediary organizations (and buffers) between local communities and the state. Nigeria presents a particularly apt fieldsite because of the extraordinary number of organizations, the rich variety of associational life, the high degree of geographical mobility of members of the community, the persistence of ties to localities of origin, and the complex network of social relations which cross-cut rural and urban locales.¹⁸

"Hometown Voluntary Associations"

Active "hometown" voluntary associations exist in many albeit not all local communities in Western Nigeria. Some of these organizations have functioned for more than fifty years. Over long periods of time, beginning in the colonial era and continuing through the vicissitudes of two civilian regimes and five military governments, the most successful of these organizations have provided a wide array of basic public services to residents of the local communities in which they function-- primary and especially secondary education through the construction and management of community schools; medical services through the construction and staffing of health clinics and even hospitals; electricity and phone service through the installation of utility poles; water, roads, public meeting halls and postal service through the construction of the necessary infrastructure.

In the process, some associations have taken on the form and assumed many of the tasks of local government: in effect, a shadow state with a clear structure of internal governance, one that is often specified

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 29-30, and Kenneth Little, "The Role of Voluntary Associations in West African Urbanization," in Pierre van den Berghe (ed.), Africa: Social Problems of Change and Conflict (San Francisco: Chandler Publications, 1965).

¹⁷ Only Emman Osuji's "Rural Development by Self-Help Efforts" focuses explicitly on the role of voluntary associations in the development of rural Nigeria.

¹⁸ Sara Berry, Fathers Work for Their Sons (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 42.

by a written constitution for the organization. Membership is open, at least theoretically, to all residents of the community. Associations are arenas within which members of local communities articulate their needs, and set priorities as to which needs shall be met first. These associations also levy "taxes" on their memberships in so far as they set the levels of contribution expected from community members of different means to finance group projects. They cannot, of course, enforce payment in the same manner as the state. Nor, in most cases are members of the community excluded from enjoying the services provided by the organization if they do not pay. However, through mechanisms of social pressure, including ostracism, these associations have proven very effective in ensuring compliance. Thus, to the extent that all members of the local community comply with the decisions of the group, hometown associations make "public policy" even though they remain private bodies. In some communities, they have emerged as the legitimate "apex" organization of the community's associational life, in many others they seek to serve this function.

Given the quasi-governmental role of these organizations and the services they provide, it is perhaps not surprising that the Federal Military Government has begun to take an increasing interest in these organizations and is fashioning a rural development strategy explicitly linked to their incorporation as a part of the local governance structure. The federal government is presently engaged in an effort to identify and register all "communities" in the country. Through its Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, the government is urging all local communities to form and register community development associations. The actual number of communities and hence the number of "hometown" and "community" associations within them is unknown,¹⁹ but most observers agree that such associations are more numerous and well established in southern Nigeria than in the North. The proliferation of these organizations appears to be inversely related to the rigidity of the stratification system in the local communities where they are formed. Whereas such organizations often constitute a base of power for local elites in the South, they are frequently perceived as a threat by traditional leaders in the North who discourage their activities.

¹⁹The Directorate's publications refer to the "more than 90,000 communities to which virtually every Nigerian can trace his or her roots (Daily Times, Lagos: May 26, 1989)". See also Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, Rural Development: The Mobilization Approach (Lagos: Federal Government Printer, 1987).

"Hometown" voluntary associations are but one type of local community organization found in West Africa. They can be distinguished from other voluntary associations in at least two respects. First, the express purpose of these organizations is to provide needed services to all members of a single specified locality. Second, a significant part of the leadership and financial support for the activities undertaken is provided mainly by men (rarely women) of relatively high education and status, who have emigrated from the locality to pursue a career in an urban area but who continue to identify with their "hometown". Members of such locality specific hometown associations also belong to nation-wide associations (professional associations, trade unions, political parties, social fraternities, service clubs, churches, etc.). The hometown association thus becomes a forum for the meshing of local and national interests, and it is this characteristic which enables them to play an effective intermediary role between center and periphery. What distinguishes hometown associations from other local groups and nation-wide associations is that they establish extensive linkages between local communities and national institutions. It is these linkages to the center which enable hometown associations "to deliver the goods" in terms of private and public assistance to the local community, and why they are valued by local residents.

Why have some towns and villages in Western Nigeria given rise to successful associations while others have not? Who participates in and benefits the most from their activities, and who does not? What, if any, are the negative consequences of these organizations? Can these or similar organizations be established in communities where they do not now exist, or is this particular form of intermediary organization a product of a particular period and generation--that of the late colonial era--which prevents its replication? What policies, if any, can the state pursue to nurture the establishment of associations in communities where none exist, and what are the tradeoffs between involving central or local government agencies in this exercise? To answer these questions, we turn to a review of the activities, history and leadership of the three hometown associations considered for this study.

Three Examples of Successful Hometown Associations

In a pattern similar to that which unfolded elsewhere in Africa, initial efforts at self-help community development in Nigeria were a response to the unwillingness of the colonial state to provide social welfare

services to rural communities and coincided with the rise of African nationalism in the period immediately before and after World War II. As with the nationalist movements, these efforts at community development were organized by men in their thirties who were relatively more educated (though not highly educated) than their fellow residents, and most significantly, by men who had spent periods of time outside the community and who often continued to reside in a major urban area, usually Lagos.²⁰ In the case of the organizations included in this study, these men evolved over time into a group of local leaders which eventually became the "power elite" of the community and which continues to wield influence at the beginning of the 1990s even though many of its original members are now in their seventies and eighties or deceased. Over time, this group has been joined (or in some cases displaced) by younger men of higher educational and occupational backgrounds including lawyers, professors, doctors, businessmen and senior civil servants who pursue their careers outside the community.

The important question is how and even whether these associations will survive the transition in function occasioned by the dramatic changes which have occurred since their founding in the early 1930s. These associations now must deal with the turbulent economic and political conditions of contemporary Nigeria, the changing relationships among and between generations, and the evolving nature of the Nigerian State. The three associations which are our case studies each represent a slightly different pattern of how these changes are being addressed. The Fiditi Progressive Union has survived with much of its original leadership, or their proteges in place. The Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union has had a major shift in leadership as a younger cohort have taken over the mantle of leadership. The case of the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe represents a very different approach, involving the creation by the parent community association of a separate entity, the Awe Development Corporation to take advantage of the skills and interests of younger and professional members of the community for the purpose of development planning and implementation.

The Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union

The Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union (OAPU) is located in the town

²⁰The early dominance of men in founding these organizations is a reflection of the differential educational and other opportunities for men in colonial society. Women tended to be active in either "auxiliary" organizations or in other spheres of action, i.e. the market.

of Otan-Ayegbaju, a community of approximately 125,000 residents,²¹ 23 miles northeast of Oshogbo. The union was founded in 1930 by a railway clerk in Lagos together with other first generation Lagosians from Otan. Although the union was organized in Lagos, it differed from other urban ethnic organizations in that its primary purpose was the development of the hometown rather than the provision of services (e.g. burial, credit, social) to the new migrants.

While the men who founded the union were not members of an elite, they were geographically and socially mobile individuals. They were among the first generation of Nigerians from their region to obtain primary school education and subsequently among the first to migrate to Lagos as a result of the early establishment of missionary schools in Otan-Ayegbaju during World War I. In all other respects, however, Otan-Ayegbaju was a backwater as the British authorities bypassed the town when they located public services and infrastructure. By the 1930s, Otan was thus a relatively underdeveloped community with a small population of mobile "sons" who had seen the outside world.

Early efforts at development by OAPU began in the 1930s and consisted mainly of attempts to persuade the British to locate selected infrastructure in the town. These efforts led to the construction of a catering rest house for British officers, but failed to route the railway through the town. The first significant project to benefit the local population was the construction of the Anglican Grammar Secondary School in the late 1940s. The school was built through a combination of self-help organized by the union and material assistance provided by Anglican missionaries. In 1955 the Catholic Grammar Secondary School was opened after being constructed on the same basis.

Through the efforts of OAPU, Otan-Ayegbaju was one of the first rural communities to obtain electric service which commenced in 1952. The electrification is also an example of how a hometown association, acting on behalf of a rural community, can bargain effectively with the state and manoeuvre the state into providing a service it originally did not intend to offer. In this case the union requested the colonial government to provide

²¹The question of exact populations in Nigeria has been very problematic. No one knows the population for any town in Nigeria; the last "official" census was taken in 1963 and its results are generally treated with some skepticism. A new census is to be conducted in 1991.

electric service, but was told that the town could only receive power if OAPU purchased and erected poles for the transmission lines. The town leadership believes the government purposely set this requirement in the expectation that it could not be met, but within six months the union had succeeded in erecting the poles. The colonial government then stated that it must first provide electricity to a neighboring community. Leaders of OAPU next threatened to sabotage the new line unless Otan was also supplied, at which point the government altered its schedule.

Efforts by OAPU tapered off in the late 1950s, but in 1962 the organization constructed a large town meeting hall. The union then shifted to constructing roads, a more complicated series of projects because construction sometimes required the removal of houses which blocked the routes. Residents who were asked to vacate their homes were provided new homesites, but not paid compensation. In a small number of cases this led to extended discussions, and in one instance, an individual was forcibly evicted. The ability of OAPU to mobilize public support to enforce locational decisions indicates the considerable authority wielded by the organization and its leaders.

Development activities organized by OAPU dropped off markedly in the late 1970s and early 1980s as the union, then almost forty years old, continued to be run by its original leaders. The aging of the first generation of leaders coincided with the emergence of a more highly educated group of younger men many of whom had become successful professionals or businessmen in major urban areas to which they had migrated. These men, already in their forties and early fifties, felt left out of the running of the union. In the mid-1980s, this group asserted itself and took control of the organization. Under their direction, the organization of the union has been strengthened and a new round of projects, including some which are very ambitious and which require considerable outside assistance, have been started. These include a new post office built at a cost of N250,000; the renovation of the old post office into a police station; a ring road around the town; the renovation and expansion of the town hall; the construction and operation of a public toilet; the employment of a town watchmen to reduce theft, and the construction of a 25 bed hospital at a cost of N1.6 million.

The process by which the union selects, organizes and finances a project is now highly routinized. Ideas for specific projects arise informally among the leadership and/or the residents of the town and are then discussed at a monthly meeting of delegates from the roughly 25 active branches of OAPU which function in Nigeria's principal cities. Each branch sends two to three delegates to the monthly meetings which are always held on the afternoon of the first Saturday of the month, and which serve as semi-public forums for discussing all matters concerning the union.²² Votes are rarely taken at these monthly meetings; decisions are by consensus. When the group is divided on a project (or any other matter), it is referred to the union's executive committee²³ which then seeks to formulate a consensus position before the next monthly meeting when it is discussed again. Some proposals thus gain widespread support while others are ultimately dropped.

²²The holding of meetings on a Saturday afternoon is not accidental as it facilitates attendance by delegates who must travel some distance to attend. The practice is typical of many hometown associations. In addition to discussing specific projects, delegates consider issues of membership, union personnel, etc.

²³The members of the Executive Committee and the officers of the union are elected every two years by the entire paid membership of OAPU. OAPU also holds one meeting each December that is open to all members who have paid their annual dues. While the members of the Executive Committee and the officers are formally accountable to the organization's rank and file, the latter are almost totally dependent on the leadership to initiate and implement new projects.

Once a decision is made to proceed with a project, the executive committee assumes responsibility for its direction though it sometimes appoints a special committee or an individual to supervise the construction. At this point, the union estimates the total labour and material costs of the project and assesses the residents of the town and its urban branches for contributions to the project. Two principles are followed which are also followed by other hometown associations. First, the union requests contributions on a project by project basis. Although OAPU like other unions requires members to pay annual dues, most money raised by the organization is obtained in response to requests for support of a specific endeavour. Experience has shown that while town residents and "sons and daughters of the soil" who have migrated to the urban areas are generous in their support of the union, they are more likely to contribute when they know how their money will be spent. Second, local residents are assessed on an individual basis with the expectation that most will pay by contributing their labour, while those residing outside Otan-Ayegbaju are assessed via the OAPU branch to which they belong with the expectation that they will pay in cash.

The net effect of this procedure is that although the assessments are formally equal, those who can afford to give more are expected to do so--and they do. By allowing local residents to contribute labour instead of cash, no resident of Otan-Ayegbaju can plead that he cannot afford to pay. Under this method, all residents are assessed the same amount, but unskilled labour is valued at N3 per day while skilled labour is valued at N6. By contrast, members of the urban branches are pressured by branch officers to give generously, and individual contributions are publicized to encourage competition between branch members. Competition between branches is also encouraged by the leadership.

Roughly 90 per cent of the cash contributions come from the urban branches. This method of raising funds is thus very successful at taxing those who can most afford to pay as well as at transferring resources from the center to the hometown. Although no new projects were started in Otan-Ayegbaju in 1988 and 1989, OAPU raised approximately N50,000 each year to sustain its activities. During the

early years of constructing the new hospital, the union raised up to N250,000 annually. When one remembers that many towns the size of Otan-Ayegbaju in Western and Eastern Nigeria have established unions on this model, the magnitude of voluntary remittances to the rural areas to support development is substantial.

The construction of a 25 bed town hospital has been the most expensive project undertaken by the union. It has also been the most complex project, and one requiring state support as well as support from a major international donor, the World Health Organization, to complete. The project illustrates how a well organized hometown association like OAFU can serve as an intermediary, not only between individual residents or rural and urban society, but also between rural communities and the state. The hospital was ultimately built and staffed through a four-way partnership involving the union, the World Health Organization, the Oyo State Ministry of Health, and the teaching hospital of the University of Benin.

If effective leadership is a crucial ingredient for organizing and especially sustaining an association, what is the mechanism of governance which operates in OAFU to provide such leadership for the group? Why, moreover, do ordinary residents of the town follow the leadership and support the activities of the association? As noted above, the union was started by the first generation of men who left Otan-Ayegbaju for the cities but who continued to regard the town as their "home". It is now sustained by a subsequent generation of urban dwellers who like their predecessors, remain attached to their place of origin. The importance of this "attachment to place" should not be underestimated. Nor should this sentiment be confused with altruism or simple enlightened self-interest though such may be motivating factors. Put more forcefully, hometown associations succeed to the extent that they mobilize both migrants and those who have remained in the town around this theme.

For those who have migrated, especially the most educated and successful, participation and support of OAFU is in part contingent on their opportunities to "call the shots;" that is to say, the migrants will return on a regular basis and provide financial support via their branch organizations if they are given substantial authority

over the association. Ordinary citizens, especially those who have remained in the town, have less to say about what the association does but are the prime beneficiaries of its activities.

The members of the executive committee regularly engage in several other practices which minimize challenges from below. First, there is a high measure of consultation among leaders between delegates meetings. Second, there is a concerted effort by the leadership to inform town residents, and especially members of the urban branches about union projects. The current president of the organization even sends out a newsletter to the branch organizations to ensure that adequate information reaches the rank and file.

Most significant, the president and the other members of the executive committee meet informally the evening before each delegates meetings. A similar meeting follows the delegates meeting in which members of the committee compare notes and agree on how each should deal with local government and state authorities, and whether and how it should become involved in the political activities also occur. It should also be stressed that these men clearly enjoy each other's company. Part of returning home, indeed the attraction of "home" is the socializing with one's age cohorts and lifelong friends. An important aspect of this "attachment to place," is that it continues among members of the second (and as well as the third and fourth) generation of migrants. Will the sons and daughters of the present leadership, people who have grown up in an urban and more multi-ethnic setting than their parents, also return to their ancestral home to sustain organizations like CAPU, or are we witnessing the high water mark of such activity by members of the Nigerian upper-middle class? Can these hometown associations survive without their support? The answers to these questions are unknown, yet will have profound implications for the of these organizations.

The Fiditi Progressive Union²⁴

The founding and history of the Fiditi Progressive Union (FPU) is very similar to that of OAFU. The town of Fiditi is a community of 42,000 residents located 35 miles north of Ibadan in an area which was also a site of missionary activity. The union was founded in 1934 by literate males from Fiditi who had been educated at missionary schools in the 1920s, and who had migrated to Lagos and other cities yet maintained contact with the town. Most of these men held minor white collar positions in the colonial civil service, the railways, hospitals, and other public institutions. As in Otan-Ayegbaju, the founding fathers of the Fiditi Progressive Union evolved into a close group of local notables which controlled the organization for the next four decades.

Fiditi is a poor community with limited resources compared to other towns of similar size. Most residents are farmers; there is little manufacturing. Fiditi's location on the main road between Ibadan and Oyo, however, has proven to be an asset as substantial road traffic, phone lines, the regional power grid, and a water main pass directly through or near the town. Through the efforts of the FPU, the town has been able to take advantage of its proximity to this infrastructure constructed to serve other communities. Fiditi is also an important market for fruit produced locally and imported from other towns.

As in Otan-Ayegbaju, the early history of progressive union in Fiditi was concerned with the expansion of local educational facilities. During the 1930s and early 1940s this concern resulted in the expansion

²⁴ We wish to acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Boye Agunbiade of the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research for assisting us in assembling this portrait of the FPU as well as the late Chief J.L. Lawale, B.G. Adeleke, Chief Ojelabi, and Reverend Oladele. Mark Lawrence and Matt Martin, student research assistants at the University of Iowa provided additional assistance.

of primary education in partnership with local missionaries of several denominations. By the late 1940s, the union shifted its emphasis to secondary education as neither the colonial government nor the missionaries had established secondary schools in Fiditi. The main undertaking in this realm was the construction and staffing of the Fiditi Grammar School which opened in 1954. The FPU also financed the training of some teachers, recruited others and paid their salaries. In 1959 the union succeeded in persuading the then regional government of Western Nigeria to provide grants to the school. The initiation of government support which continues today, was partly the result of several "sons of Fiditi" becoming senior officials in the regional government. As with state assistance to Otan-Ayegbaju, the hometown association played a crucial role in brokering state aid to match efforts by the town.

The FPU has also constructed roads, arranged for electric and telephone service, and established a primary health care facility. As with the union's efforts in education, each of these projects was initiated because the government or relevant parastatal agency did not first provide the desired service to the town. The completion of all of these projects, however, required eventual state assistance; in short, a partnership between the union and the relevant governmental authority. **Through** this process the union and other hometown associations can hold the state accountable and effect a bargaining process between the local community and state agencies that results in developmental efforts that would not otherwise occur. At the same time, the efforts to extract resources from the government provide a rallying point for members of the community, often patching over local splits at least temporarily, and providing a focal point for reinforcing civic pride. Efforts to lobby state agencies, however, also increase the level of competition between associations of adjacent communities with the result that the larger and better organized communities gain at the expense of the rest.

The internal structure and mode of governance of the Fiditi Progressive Union is similar to that of the Otan-Ayegbaju Progressive Union. First, although membership in the union is open to all residents of Fiditi, the association is run by a small group of officers some of

whom have controlled it for many years. The day-to-day business of the FPU is conducted by an executive committee whose officers are elected every two years by the general membership. The executive committee is also composed of one to four delegates from each of the 15 to 20 active urban branches depending on their size, and meets monthly to discuss union business including ideas for new projects. Although semi-annual meetings are held of the entire membership, effective power is held by the leadership.

While recognizing that they must bring in "new blood," the current leaders contend that they are repeatedly given the assignments to oversee new projects and lobby on behalf of the town. In contrast to the union in Otan Ayegbaju, the original leaders of the FPU have not been displaced by a contingent of "young Turks." Rather, the original group of leaders who are now in their mid-seventies and eighties, have been joined over time by a few men ten to fifteen years their junior and by others in their thirties and forties. Delegates from the urban branches are younger and more educated than the officers who continue to reside in Fiditi. The older leaders described their relationship to the delegates from the urban branches as "a partnership," and were quick to acknowledge that the FPU depends heavily on its branches for financing,²⁵ technical expertise, and a web of outside contacts that can make or break any project. How long this partnership can continue, however, is unclear; ultimately a new generation of leaders must take over if the FPU is to thrive. Moreover, because the FPU is in competition with other hometown associations to extract assistance from the state and other outside agencies, the union will lose out if it doesn't regenerate its leadership cadre.

Another "transition issue" is whether the FPU should shift its emphasis from social welfare projects to efforts that are more concerned with production and income generation. Fiditi now enjoys virtually all

²⁵ As with OAPU, most cash obtained by the FPU is raised from the branch organizations for specific projects. The annual dues, and cash contributions by residents of Fiditi provides only a small proportion of the annual budget.

of the basic social welfare services, and the question has arisen what the union should do next. Many hometown associations have begun to nurture productive enterprises, and commercial activities but to date the FPU has not. The executive committee gave some consideration to starting a canning factory to process local fruits, but abandoned the idea when it determined that the investment required was high, the appropriate equipment difficult to obtain, and demand for the product unclear. It is quite likely that the union also finds it difficult to initiate income generating projects, because unlike social welfare projects, small-scale enterprises can be started on an individual or partnership basis. When organized on the basis of collective action, productive enterprises are also more vulnerable to "free-riding" by participants than social welfare projects, because the latter provide benefits which can only be obtained through collective action while the former do not.²⁶

It would thus appear that the FPU is at the proverbial "crossroads". It must regenerate its leadership, and reconsider its "product mix" if it is to continue as the main agent of development in Fiditi. These challenges are not unique to the union, but confront all hometown associations that have functioned successfully for many years.

The Egbe Omo Ibile Awe and the Awe Development Corporation

The Egbe Omo Ibile Awe (EOIA) serves a community of approximately 40,000 people in Oyo State mid-way between Ibadan and Ilorin. Compared to the "progressive unions" of Otan-Ayagbaju and Fiditi, the EOIA is a more complex organization which has recently placed greater emphasis on raising the productivity of rural residents rather than providing them with an array of social welfare services. The EOIA has gone further than the unions in Otan-Ayagbaju and Fiditi in grappling with the "issues of transition" that face established hometown associations. Thus, the EOIA established the Awe Development Corporation (ADC) in 1982

²⁶For a concise summary of the conditions under which collective action is most likely to succeed in the context of peasant communities, see Samuel L. Popkin, The Rational Peasant (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 252-59.

as a committee charged explicitly with promoting productive enterprises in Awe.

The Awe Development Corporation consists of individuals appointed by the Egbe Omo Ibile. The chair/^{man}and treasurer of the Egbe dOmo Ibile hold parallel positions within the ADC, but other local and non-resident community members of the ADC are appointed for their knowledge and skills at promoting productive activities. Unlike the EOIA, the corporation is not voluntary association open to all residents of Awe.

The Egbe Omo Ibile Awe was founded in 1912 as a cultural association, and still defines its primary mission in terms of preserving and strengthening the indigenous institutions and customs of Awe (e.g., the Oba). The EOIA is thus an organization that has functioned for almost eighty years, and which enjoys widespread support from the local community. Prior to the creation of the ADC, development projects in Awe were carried out directly under the auspices of the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe. Efforts at infrastructural development, as distinct from efforts of a cultural nature, began in the late 1940s culminating with the opening of the first secondary school in Awe in 1954.

The day-to-day business of the ADC is carried out by a board of approximately fifteen people headed by a chair/^{man}and an executive secretary. The board includes two chiefs who are members in that capacity and about a dozen local notables, some (but not all) of whom are also chiefs. The current chair/^{man}is a local farmer with a secondary education. He is widely regarded, however, as a forceful and articulate leader. Turnover of board members is slow. In the words of the current treasurer "it is just like a corporation; members serve for as long as they are capable of making a contribution."²⁷

Basic policy of the ADC, however, is not determined by the board but by the Central Planning Committee which meets quarterly to review the activities of the corporation and set the agenda of activities for

²⁷ Personal interview with Chief J.C. Opatola, July 15, 1989.

the next quarter. The Central Planning Committee also appoints members to the board other than the chair and treasurer. In terms of functions, the planning committee is "The Board," while the board is the administrative body responsible for implementing the policies of the Committee. The Committee is composed of representatives from the branch organizations of the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe which exist in most of Nigeria's principal cities. As with the unions in Otan-Ayegbaju and Fiditi, many of these representatives are professionals and business people of high status and means.

In contrast to the unions in Otan-Ayegbaju and Fiditi, the Egbe Omo Ibile through the establishment of the development corporation, has attempted to extend its organization down to the grassroots. The planning committee and board are supported by ten Development Area Organizations which are themselves divided into Primary Production Units. In an effort to involve more women in rural development, the ADC has also established a Women's Development Union which operates in each of the ten development areas. The flow of authority in all these divisions of the corporation is strictly "top-down"--from central bodies controlled by local notables and prominent outsiders to the grassroots. Officers of the ten area organizations are appointed by the board. Because the corporation is not a membership organization, there are no formal mechanisms by which its officers can be held accountable to the "rank and file" except via the EOIA. As in Otan and Fiditi, however, residents of Awe can give or withhold support for the corporation's activities. Grassroot support is expressed by belonging to the parent organization, the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe, and by contributing funds or labour to specific projects organized by the ADC.

The structure of the ADC likewise means that it has no branch organizations of its own, but receives the bulk of its financial support from the branch organizations of the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe. ADC projects are thus financed mainly by grants for specific projects from the parent organization. The corporation has also received support from the local government authority for Awe, and from United Nations Children's Fund.

The heart of the ADC is the Central Planning Committee. This group of professionals includes several members who hold high positions

in the Federal Military Government. Others have at times been advisors to the government and to major international aid organizations. This group of professionals is primarily responsible for the formation of the corporation as a separate entity devoted to the development of Awe. The group has played a major role in establishing important linkages between Awe and the center of Nigerian society as well as linkages to international donors. Its members are also responsible for drafting "The Opticom Plan," a blueprint for the development of Awe.²⁸

It is important to note that the formation of the ADC was not a result of any conflict between the generation of urban professional bent on accelerating development back in their hometown, and the leaders of the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe. Rather, the ADC was established as an explicit "development agency" to facilitate the management and financing of development activities in Awe, to make the town more attractive to international donors, and to facilitate the implementation of different types of development efforts including those which raise the productivity of rural residents. The corporation repeatedly emphasizes its close relationship with the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe, and argues that Awe's sons and daughters who reside outside the town "have a duty" to maintain ties with their place of origin by supporting the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe and the Opticom Plan. For most sons and daughters outside Awe, lending support means making a financial contribution. For the most active participants, it is much more. Those who periodically return for meetings of the corporation and the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe, do so for fraternal reasons as much as to assist Awe's development. As in Otan-Ayegbaju and Fiditi, participation in the hometown association reaffirms one's attachment to one's home community, and defines one's identity in the larger context of Nigerian society. In contrast to OAPU and the FPU, it would appear that a division of labour has been worked out between the younger generation of professionals who return from the

²⁸ Central Planning Committee, Egbe Omo Ibile Awe, Awe Development Plan: An Opticom Approach (Ibadan: Les Shyraden Ltd., November, 1982). This remarkable document defines a planning strategy for a particular community, but is viewed by its authors as a blueprint for replication in other Nigerian communities. Several of the authors are thus involved in current efforts by the Federal Military Government to stimulate the formation community development associations in communities which have none.

cities, and the older generation of leaders in the hometown. While the former have assumed responsibility for charting the development of Awe through the ADC, the latter maintain their authority through the Egbe Omo Ibile Awe.

As in Otan-Ayegbaju and Iiditi, a major impetus for the activities of the EOIA and ADC has been the limited extent to which the state satisfied local perceptions of Awe's basic needs. In recent years, the corporation has raised and spent more than N30,000 on small-scale water projects (mainly boreholes), and N18,000 on the construction of a market. The ADC has also spent over N40,000 on land litigation to protect Awe farmers from encroachment by farmers from Oyo town, and by seeking to establish a formal boundary between the two communities. In an effort to raise productivity among Awe's farmers, the corporation has established a demonstration farm and employed two managers to run it and disseminate information to local farmers. The corporation has also purchased one tractor and obtained the use of another from the local government authority to provide tractor services to local farmers at below market rates. The interest in providing quasi-extension services to local farmers suggests that unlike most hometown associations, the EOIA via the ADC is shifting from providing social welfare services which do not directly raise the level of rural production to providing services that do.

State Responses to Hometown Voluntary Associations

The relationships between hometown voluntary associations and the state described in this essay have dwelt on efforts by hometown associations to extract assistance from state agencies for their projects, and not on efforts by the state to reach out to community based organizations in the rural areas. As such, our perspective has been exclusively "bottom-up" rather than "top-down". The state, however, with few exceptions still defines its role as one of bringing, if not imposing, its strategies for development to the periphery; local initiatives are to be contained or manipulated to be consistent with state interests. Efforts to decentralize the state in Africa to overcome this problem have been announced periodically with great

fanfare, but in the end most attempts have been exercises in deconcentrated administration rather than the devolution of decision-making authority to local or regional communities.²⁹

In this regard, the Nigerian experience is both more complex and hopeful than others on the continent. Nigeria's federal system of 21 states has shifted a significant measure of political authority away from the center. From the perspective of the local community, however, the state government remains a distant arena with its own agendas; in effect another, albeit semi-autonomous layer of "the center." This is especially true in the current period of military rule when state governments are directed by military officers appointed in Lagos.

The Rise of Local Governments

The most promising state mechanism for linking up with local communities is Nigeria's evolving system of elected local governments which has expanded greatly since being reorganized in 1976. There are presently 450 local government authorities in Nigeria. A typical local government serves a population of roughly 225,000 people in an area of approximately 100 square miles. The government is headed by a council of 10 to 12 members who are elected from single member wards. The first partisan elections for local governments were held in December, 1990.³⁰ A typical local government has five specialized departments (finance, education, health, works, community development), headed by a councillor and staffed by several civil servants provided by the state public service.

²⁹ Dennis A. Rondinelli, John R. Nellis, and G. Shabbir Cheema, Decentralization in Developing Countries, World Bank Working Paper No. 581 (Washington: The World Bank, 1983), and Joel D. Barkan and Michael Chege, "Decentralising the State: District Focus and the Politics of Reallocation in Kenya", Journal of Modern African Studies, 27, 3 (1989) pp. 431-53.

³⁰ Under the Federal Military Government councillors were appointed prior to 1987. Councillors were then elected on a non-partisan basis, but those elected were dismissed in July, 1989. Following the establishment of the Social Democratic Party and the National Republican Convention, new elections were held in December, 1990 as the second phase of the military's program to return Nigeria to civilian rule.

Most significantly, local governments have the authority to formulate their own budgets and raise revenue. Not surprisingly, most are better at the former, and are heavily dependent on the federal government for their revenues. At present, 10 percent of the federal budget is set aside for local government in the form of block grants. State governments are supposed to contribute 10 percent of the revenues they generate within their state, but rarely provide more than half this amount. A typical local government will have an annual budget of up to N5 million of which roughly 70 to 80 percent will be provided by the Federal Government, 10 to 20 percent by the state, and only 5 to 10 percent raised locally. Though substantial, much of the money provided by the federal government must be spent on specific programs thereby limiting the discretionary authority of local officials.

A review of local government performance in Ogun State, as well as those in Awe, Fiditi, and Otan-Ayegbaju suggest the following about their activities and their relationships with hometown associations. First, under the Federal Military Government, local governments have become significant players in so far as their staff has been professionalized and upgraded, and their budgets enlarged. With their expanded revenues local governments are increasingly involved in providing some of the same types of basic social welfare services historically provided by hometown associations. Construction of meeting halls, roads, and especially of rural health clinics, boreholes and wells now constitute a substantial amount of local government business. As such, local governments are becoming natural targets of opportunity for associations seeking state aid as well as by local communities seeking to organize themselves for development without significant participation by urban "sons of the soil."

Because the members of the local government councils are elected on a ward (i.e. territorial) basis, decisions of where to allocate revenues are becoming the focus of local politics. Most local governments serve areas which include more than one town of 10,000 to 50,000 inhabitants as well as up to a hundred villages, and there is an expectation on the part of the councillors that revenues should be evenly spread across all wards. Councillors elected from wards which do not have an active

hometown association, are thus reluctant to allocate a disproportionate share of the local government budget to projects sponsored by an HVA in a ward they do not represent. Conversely, councillors from wards with active associations argue that their wards deserve more assistance, because their constituents have worked harder to develop their areas. Leaders of local government are also somewhat wary of hometown associations, because of the active role of urban "sons of the soil." Local leaders often refer to these men as "outsiders" and "absentee leaders" who demand too much and try to dictate to the locals. Perhaps for this reason, some leaders look with favour, indeed encourage, the organization of new community development associations by local residents in areas where such activity has been negligible. With the introduction of partisan elections, it is likely that rival parties will both seek the support of existing associations and encourage the formation of new ones to extend their political base across the rural areas.

The rise of elected local government in Nigeria might thus complicate matters for some hometown associations by drawing them into political conflicts which heretofore they have attempted to avoid. In talking with the leaders of the associations considered in this study, we were struck by the widespread concern of how to deal with the reemergence of electoral politics in Nigeria, especially party politics at the local and state levels. Most leaders felt that their associations should keep out of the fray, but that this would probably be impossible. Some spoke of devising hedging strategies whereby their organization would give nominal support to all parties, thus building bridges to whichever party emerged victorious.

State Sponsored Community Development Associations

The greatest potential challenge to established hometown associations may be the emergence of hundreds of village community development associations which are being organized with state support to emulate the accomplishments of established organizations in areas where none exist. In addition to expanding the role of local government,

the Federal Military Government has established programs which seek to build an informal system of governance (as distinct from a fourth tier of government) below local government. As noted above, the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure is seeking to register a community development association in each of Nigeria's local communities. At the same time, the Directorate of Social Mobilization is seeking to inform rural dwellers of their rights and obligations as citizens of Nigeria especially the standards of performance they should expect from local government. Both programs were established by the military government to promote local participation and strengthen the capacity for direct action at the grassroots level.³¹

The Federal Military Government views the strengthening of local government and the formation of community development associations as local counterweights to the states. By encouraging the proliferation of community associations, the military government also hopes to increase the level of accountability by local governments to the rural population. The process of "thickening" the web of associational life across the rural areas, is therefore a process of empowering rural dwellers and residents of small towns vis a vis all levels of government. For this reason, the spread of associational life is considered by advisors to the military government as an important precondition for a successful return to civilian rule.³²

This view of the value of community based associations is consistent with the "bulwark against the state" perspective of civil society, but whether the Federal Military Government can succeed in

³¹ Babogunje, Akin L. "Last Things First" Re-Appraising the Fundamentals of Nigeria's Development Crisis". (Lagos: Federal Government Printer, 1985).

³² Babogunje, Ibid. Community development associations are viewed as a "hedge" against future local government authorities under civilian rule. Local governments are almost totally dependent on the block grants they receive from the federal and state governments, and these funds may be sharply reduced once a civilian regime starts to divide the budgetary pie.

nurturing the spread and effectiveness of such organizations, especially in the North, is questionable. While there has been a long tradition of community based associations in both Western and Eastern Nigeria, hometown associations have only been successful in those towns where a critical mass of returning "sons of the soil" have involved themselves in community development work, and where the local organization has received continuous financial support from branch organizations in the urban areas. It is important to remember that although they are numerous, hometown associations do not function in every or even in most rural communities. Whether the military government can succeed in its effort to nurture the spread of associational life is problematical, because the process is fundamentally one of engineering the emergence of grassroots associations from above. In essence, a military regime is attempting to empower the poor to achieve a "bottom-up" result from the "top-down."

Common Patterns

Our three case studies of hometown voluntary associations suggest that the following patterns emerge in organizations of this type: (1) Hometown associations are most likely to emerge where four conditions are simultaneously present: (i) The local population does not expect the state to provide for its basic needs. (ii) A modest, yet significant number of young men and women, "sons and daughters of the soil," have migrated to the cities. (iii) Notwithstanding long periods of residency in the urban areas, "sons and daughters of the soil" continue to regard their town of origin as "home," and define their identities accordingly; they founded branches of the hometown organizations in their areas of residence, and they periodically return to their hometown and/or remit financial support without which the hometown association could not sustain its activities. (iv) The existing structure of social stratification and authority is not rigid. (2) Hometown associations are dominated by local notables and prominent outsiders; participation in the organization is voluntary, but not equal. There is a tendency toward elite rule. Ordinary citizens contribute willingly to the implementation of a wide variety of projects, but the choice and

organization of these projects are determined by leadership. Although the rank and file has little say about day-to-day decisions, it enjoys an informal veto power to the extent that the organization is incapable of carrying out its activities without their support. (3) The services provided by hometown associations are enjoyed throughout the community; local elites may benefit more from a particular project than non-elites, but on the whole the rural poor gain the most--which is why they provide critical support to the association in their community. (4) Communities which have a history of organizing successful development are those which are most likely to do so in the future; to this extent hometown associations contribute to an uneven pattern of development in the rural areas. (5) Hometown associations tend to monopolize civic activities in so far as they seek to control all voluntary activity in the town. (6) The ability of the hometown associations to sustain and institutionalize themselves over a long period of time depends on their ability to replace the founding generation of leaders with new ones, and to replace the second generation of leaders with a third. The future of hometown associations is thus dependent on the extent to which the "sons and daughters" of the current leadership maintain their affective ties to their place of origin. Hometown associations must also make a transition from organizations which provide social welfare services and basic infrastructure to those which raise productivity. (7) State led initiatives to nurture the proliferation of community development associations in areas where associational life is not yet established will lead to increased competition between local communities, the outcome of which is uncertain. (8) The most critical issue for the state in its effort to nurture either existing associations or new ones will be the extent to which decentralized and accountable structures of government emerge with which these organizations can interact.

Implications for Civil Society

The hometown associations discussed in this article may be viewed simultaneously from several different perspectives. These associations were built upon a strong attachment to community and place felt by the "sons and daughters of the soil" who ventured to the urban centers and abroad.

Their leadership and resources set the initial agenda for these associations and their contributions were largely expressions of civic pride and, in some cases, repayments to the community for support received early in their lives. There remains a great sense of "civic pride" in the communities of western Nigeria which is a potent force for mobilizing community resources to meet specific needs. It is simply "right" to support one's hometown; failure to do so is seen as an abrogation of responsibility and at times a denial of one's identity.

As hometown associations became a common feature of the social landscape, they also became the loci of local struggles, both political and economic. Local political elites sought to use them as bases for political power. In some communities the association was an effective mechanism for mobilizing political action to make claims on the state. In others, it became the arena of political squabbles. At the same time, local business elites and contractors sought to use the associations as local growth machines to promote their special interests.

Over the past thirty years, the Nigerian state has also sought to use the local communities and their associations for its own purposes. The most recent manifestation is the effort by the Federal Military Government to support the activities of the local communities through programs of the Directorate for Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure. Some may see this as yet another effort to create a "shadow state" at the grassroots of Nigerian society while others will regard it as an effort to hold even the lowest governmental authorities accountable to the public.

Throughout the history of these associations one function has remained important--its role as an intermediary between the local community and each of the three levels of government that constitute the Nigerian state. Despite Nigeria's turbulent political history, and perhaps because of it, hometown associations have emerged as one of the few (perhaps the only) institutions at the community level which enjoy a high level of legitimacy in the eyes of the local populace.

The findings reported in this limited study of hometown associations in Western Nigeria suggest the desirability of further comparative work to determine the extent to which the patterns discussed are manifest elsewhere in Africa. Hometown associations and similar organizations are found across the continent, and are not unique to Nigeria. The strong attachment to place which motivates the residents of Nigeria's urban areas to support developmental activities in their hometowns is also not unique. Nor are the linkage and brokerage roles performed by these organizations. At a time when issues of effective governance and the prospects for democratic rule are of increasing concern to Africanists, more attention should be given to those organizations which offer the greatest prospect of contributing to the emergence of such polities.

The findings reported in this report are of a preliminary nature and are intended to provide a general overview of the situation. The data presented here are based on a limited number of interviews and observations and should not be taken as definitive. The purpose of this report is to provide a general overview of the situation and to identify the key issues that need to be addressed. The findings are based on a limited number of interviews and observations and should not be taken as definitive. The purpose of this report is to provide a general overview of the situation and to identify the key issues that need to be addressed.

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