

## "A recurrence of structures" in collapsing Nigeria

[Radical Egalitarianism: local realities, global relations](#) [publisher page], edited by F. Aulino & al., 119–36 with consolidated volume endnotes and references (Fordham University Press, Bronx, New York, 2013, ISBN 0823241904). Revisiting §4.4 of [my dissertation](#) and applying Tambiah's idea of galactic polity to the Niger Delta. [cover page plus 17pp. prefinal proofs of main text plus 4pp. A4 of individual endnotes and references, last modified 18 February 2012.]

**ABSTRACT:** If the Southeast Asian galactic polity is defined by centripetal–centrifugal pulsation between modalities of power (Tambiah 1976), something similar is true of West Africa's 'Asiatic' social formations — indigenous tributary monopolies that flourished during the transatlantic slave trade before becoming encapsulated in British rule (Otite 1975). Structural ambivalence explains how Fortes & Evans–Pritchard (1940) could lump stateless Igbo and nomadic Nuer together into the acephalous political type. This paper reviews three southern Nigerian examples of evanescent hierarchy. In April 1979, Ikenchúku the youthful ruler of Ágbò Kingdom died from nocturnal gunfire during a land case and an electoral campaign, as an elderly chief was rewriting Ágbò history to push back the pendulum from absolutist primogeniture towards collective lineage rights. In November 1995, the writer Ken Saro–Wiwa was eliminated by judicial murder — ostensibly because he had denounced a list of ten Ogoni chiefs — four of whom were subsequently lynched — as having sold out to Shell Oil Corporation and General Abacha. In November 2000, an Igbo anthropologist was roughly rebuked by an Igbo historian for refusing to parse the slogan *Igbo énwé ezè* 'Igbo has no paramount ruler' as synonymous to colonial clichés like Biafran society is traditionally egalitarian (Ójúkwu 1969 cf. Meek 1937). Instead of treating these perturbations as unrelated events, Tambiah's framework suggests they are causally linked in a long–term social formation, within which the entrenchment of local political brokerage is complemented by the steady collapse of nationalism.

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE:** The main descriptive source of this study is Chief Augustin Ègwabó Idúúwè's *History of Greater Ágbò[r]*. That irreplaceable text remains unpublished today, three decades after the author entrusted the manuscript to me, so I belatedly and apologetically post it [here](#) in its unfinished form of circa 1982. An unattributed ten–page paraphrase/extract of [Idúúwè's manuscript](#) is included in J. Butcher & al. A critical analysis of the royal chronicle of Ágbòr (*Benue Valley Project Paper 13*, Dept. of History, Dalhousie University 1975). According to the introductory comment by Professor J. Webster, the material was forwarded by an unnamed history graduate of Ibàdàn University.

Correction: as now [debunked](#), the Possible image of a salon in General Babangida's *château* presented in an earlier draft of this paper as §5 6 actually shows a California mansion. Nevertheless Babangida's immense personal wealth has [no legal explanation](#).

UPDATE1: The issues reviewed in this paper receive a less political take in a 25–minute TV documentary, [George Osòdi: Kings of Nigeria](#), eliciting my response: [Dèin in Abachan drag?](#) .

UPDATE2: In northern 9ja, the British *rāj* ended Sokoto vassalage in 1902–03 (Smith 1960, 201), but Lugardian indirect rule breaks down in a context of democratic opposition, thus in June 2014 the APC state governor [blocked the Abuja PDP from imposing a client, filial successor to the Kano emirate](#).

Smith, M. [1960]. [Government in Zauzau: a study of government in the Hausa chiefdom of Zaria in Northern Nigeria from 1800 to 1950](#). Oxford University Press.

UPDATE3: [Further evidence](#) has emerged that Shell guided General Abacha's terror campaign against the Ogoni protest movement.

**TYPOS:** In the caption of Fig. 8.1 (p. 126), the final, acute tone mark of *òfò* 'Detarium microcarpum or senegalense' and the initial, acute tone mark of *Ònwùjéìgòwù* are both misprinted as grave accents.

# Radical Egalitarianism

LOCAL REALITIES, GLOBAL RELATIONS

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“A Recurrence of Structures”  
in Collapsing Nigeria

*Victor Manfredi*

*From Tambiah to Nigeria*

According to a leading school of anthropological thought, Lévi-Strauss (1945) deployed Jakobsonian structuralism to split the “atom of kinship”—an emic node of “arbitrary” mental representations organizing small human groups. Then Leach (1954) adapted this idea to analyze four centuries of “structural variability” among part-time kingdoms in Burma’s Kachin Hills, and Tambiah (1976) further expanded the view, positing a Maussian “totalization” of “dialectical tensions” through two millennia, from Aśokan India to Southeast Asian Buddhist states. In shifting the visual metaphor from microscopy to astronomy, Tambiah also updated the implied linguistic analog of social relations, from a phonological feature grid to a syntax of recursive rules (“transformation yet felt continuity”; 1976, p. 527) generating infinite outputs (“the set or family of occurrences . . . that particular Southeast Asian religio-political systems [as indeed individual actors] portray in varying mixes and strengths”; 1976, p. 516).<sup>1</sup> These innovations notwithstanding, Tambiah’s treatment of politics remains Lévi-Straussian in other respects: diachrony is intrinsic to

the model, and the proper object of analysis is internal to the mind (“La parenté . . . n’existe que pour se perpétuer. . . [N]ous sommes en plein symbolisme”; Lévi-Strauss 1945, pp. 49, 53). There is also carry-over of ethnographic substance (“the production of wider systems of social solidarity and political integration” involves “[m]arriage or unions . . . as has been demonstrated by Lévi-Strauss, Leach and Needham”; Tambiah 1976, p. 117 n. 13), and even an echo of the maestro’s Olympian style (“[M]yth and reality are closer than we think”; Tambiah 1977, p. 74).

Having already met these themes in Tambi’s classroom thirty-something years ago, I should have immediately perceived the significance of a typewritten history of Ágbò (“Agbor” in colonial spelling) which was handed to me in September 1976 by the anthropologist M. A. Ònwùjéjògwù (“Onwuejeogwu”) when he introduced me to the author, Chief A. E. Ìdúùwẹ. Ònwùjéjògwù had written a preface highlighting Ágbò’s multimodal politics and noting that the phenomenon is not rare. Nearby examples include the Ìgbo-speaking Óru (“alluvial”) mini-states (Ñzímìro 1972); Okpẹ, the Ùrhobo (“Sobo”)-speaking kingdom of which Otite drily says that its “political system cannot be regarded as being in equilibrium” (1971, p. 56); Işẹkiri (“Jekri”), the Yorùbá-related enclave which went from having “[i]n 1800 . . . a highly centralized government” (Lloyd 1963, p. 207) through an 88-year interregnum before the crown was revived in 1936 in the multi-ethnic crossroads of “Warri” (Ikimẹ 1969, pp. 253–70; cf. Moore 1936, 1970; Edevbie 2004, p. 265f.; Imobighe et al. 2002; Eke[h] 2007); and Èdó (known to Europeans as *Benin* and to Ìgbos as *Ìdúù*), the antique and pluridynastic imperial capital that the British pillaged in 1897 before restoring its monarchy in 1963 (Bradbury 1967, 1968).

This cluster of political ambivalence in the Atlantic trade zone of southern Nigeria, cutting across linguistic and ecological lines, attests to the overlap of two larger subregional patterns: i) crowned priests of tutelary divinities in Èdó- and Yorùbá-speaking walled market towns (Fádipẹ 1940, 1970), and ii) gerontocratic lineages in Ìgbo-speaking and Cross River horticultural villages practicing the “occasional state”—a temporary union of autonomous communities facing external threat (Áfiigbo 2006, p. 40). The empirical blurring of these divergent types was noted by the government folklorist N. W. Thomas (1910, and later amplified in Bradbury 1969), although Thomas was sacked when his grassroots research threatened to undermine the conceptual footings of Indirect Rule (Lackner 1971). Saving the di-

chotomy of “centralized authority” versus “stateless societies” (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940, p. 5; cf. Meek 1937, pp. 3, 185) needed studies like Forde and Jones 1950—a classic of the trend to lump proto-states together with “tribal” organization (Fried 1957; Sahllins 1961). Thanks to official groupthink, Lugard’s 1914 contraption called Nigeria stayed stuck in an orientalist “kingdom- and empire-oriented . . . straitjacket” (Áfiigbo 1996, p. 3f.), and, eventually rebranded as a sovereign state, it failed to attain the “amalgamation in . . . culture . . . and even cosmology” (Áfiigbo 2003, p. 46) wished for by nationalists and modernization theorists alike. Instead it spawned a distinctively crumbling civic ethos and a new sociological term of art: “the chaotic complex” (Láwúyí 2002; cf. Áfiigbo 1972, 2005b; Òláníyàn and Àlào 2003; Eke[h] 2007).

Successor regimes became successively more top-heavy (Fáwólé 2003) and more adept at gerrymandering the federating units (Èlá[h] 1983), yielding to date 37 insolvent states and more than 740 unaccountable local jurisdictions. Proliferation of vacuous administrative domains may be ethnographically insincere, but it obeys an unassailable double logic: to defuse game-theoretic power blocs at the center (Dudley 1973) and to instrumentalize public goods at the periphery. The money interest is hard to exaggerate. In 2007, for example, one local chairman in Èdó State disposed of an unaudited annual “security vote” equal to US\$100,000 (roughly the same as his official salary) plus had a free hand to distribute cars and other valuables irregularly sourced by the state house from ruling party godfathers.<sup>2</sup> Commodification of customary politics is even more blatant in the Efik-led trade kingdom known to Europeans for 400 years as “Calabar”:

[T]here was a Palace Crisis in 2004 over the matter of fake clans and villages. A number of *Etuboms* [kingmakers] maintain long lists of villages that do not exist, on account of which they themselves are considered Clan Heads. . . . One of the *Etuboms* owns 22 fake villages and is personally paid for 18! . . . All the *Etuboms* who were either not part of this scam or were suspected of harbouring sympathies for those who wanted to stop the malpractice have since been shut out of the Palace. . . . The total effect of this exclusion is that seven out of the 12 Efik Principalities are not represented at all. (Edem and Ekeng 2008, p. 7f.)

In sum: for at least a century, historic palaces in Nigeria’s Atlantic fringe—sometimes called the “South-South”—have been continually

reshaped by the respective occupying power; but why?<sup>3</sup> What “deep structure” regenerates this flickering phenomenon through time and space? Before turning to particular cases, here’s a general guess.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, under the financial stimulus of slave exports and the civil pressure of raids (Rodney 1969), the ancient gift economy gorged itself on inflated rents and marriage fees (Fálólá and Adébáyò 2000, p. 100f., citing Fádìpè 1940) and entrenched “the necessarily political character of middlemen” (Manfredi 1993, p. 4). As chiefly *pourcentage* became the format of retail politics in Atlantic Africa, a distinctive jargon evolved for trade-inducing bribes: first as *comey* (from Portuguese *comer*, “to eat”), then as *custom* and *dash* (Geary 1927, p. 82; Jones 1958, p. 52), and now more gerundively as *seeing* and *settling*. Graft by whatever name was hardwired into the Royal Niger Company’s 19th century gunboat concessions and grandfathered into the post-1914 chieftaincy “warrants” which the occupier doled out along with the right to siphon export rents on vegetable fats (cocoa and palm oil), precursors of today’s smuggled hydrocarbons. Periodically, systemic gravitation aligns these mediating networks into galaxies, big and small.

That a politics sustained in this way tends to fluctuate, follows by analogy with the Asian cases cited above. Small scale structural “oscillation” of the Kachin conical clan (Leach) can be explained as neomarxist “evolution/devolution” in a context in which social reproduction is not locally assured (Friedman 1975). And in Buddhist capitals, “outcomes of a pulsating kind” expressed in a “cosmological idiom together with its grandeur and imagery . . . [are] a realistic reflection of the political pulls and pushes of these center-oriented but centrifugally fragmenting polities” (Tambiah 1977, p. 74). So too in Àgbò, Ìdúùwẹ the titled organic intellectual willingly donned the mantle of a “*gumla* revolutionary leader” (Leach 1954, p. 263) as a partisan of “voluntaristic action” conscious of “many pasts and . . . an open-ended future” (Tambiah 1992, p. 170).

This paper retells the story of Àgbò (§3) in between briefer comments on better-known Ogoni (§2) and Biafra (§4). An appendix (§5) provides excerpts from Ìdúùwẹ’s remarkable manuscript.

### Vultural Ecology

In the current league table of “blood for oil,” Nigeria can’t compete with occupied Iraq, but the rankings may change if Africa’s western

equatorial coast becomes “the next Gulf” (Rowell et al. 2005; cf. Ghazvinian 2007). Anticipating such a development, U.S. planners recently predicted Nigeria’s “outright collapse” (National Intelligence Council 2005, p. 16), but their presentism is misplaced: a “tendency towards disintegration” (Rodney 1969, 24) has marked the West African sub-region since the 16th–19th centuries, when tributary lineage systems met the nascent capitalist world-economy, and the same anomic quality persisted throughout a long 20th century of fruitless nation-building. In recognition of this, a more reasonable question is not when “outright collapse” will arrive, but why it hasn’t yet.

No answer can ignore chiefly corruption (N̄zímíro 1984). This issue was at the root of the “judicial murder” of nine Ogoni citizens, including the world-class writer Kenule Saro-Wiwa, in Port Harcourt on 10 November 1995 with the apparent complicity of top management of Anglo-Dutch Shell (Ámadí 1996, p. 161; cf. Ghazi 1995; Lean 1995; Wiwa 1996; Rowell 2009). General Abacha’s “Special Tribunal” held Saro personally responsible for the lynching on 21 May 1994 of four Ogoni chiefs who “were on a list of 10 ‘vultures’ that Mr. Saro-Wiwa had made public the previous October because of what he said was their opposition to his aggressive campaigning for Ogoni rights against Shell” (Lewis 1996; cf. Òkòntà and Douglas 2001, Òkòntà 2007b, p. 226).<sup>4</sup> The marsupial court invoked an Orwellian doctrine of guilt-by-presumed-conspiracy (Ámadí 1996), and then Saro’s executioner prolonged Ken’s hanging with repeated flubs (Ọlórúnyòmi 1996, p. 24). Nor did Nigeria’s collective torture mercifully end when Abacha himself dropped dead of unknown causes on 8 June 1998. During the next eight years of “President” Ọbásanjó—the khaki-clad boss of 1976–1979 dredged up from retirement in 1998 and draped in proverbial *aqbádá iná* and *ẹwù ẹjẹ* (Délánò 1966, p. 11) by the anti-democratic and unpopular People’s Democratic Party (PDP)—“more than 10,000 Nigerians . . . died in violent clashes along intercommunal lines” (Human Rights Watch 2007) and “more than three million Nigerians were internally displaced” (Reuters 2006). Some of these killings were at state hands (Fálána 2002, Ìgè 2008) but most of the mayhem was dished out by auxiliaries, in tune with global trends (Smith 2001; cf. Ágbù 2004, Pratten 2006; Òkòntà 2007a).<sup>5</sup>

Saro-Wiwa’s incandescent tragedy illuminates Nigeria’s political landscape. He began his literary career in 1962 as a scholar at University College Ìbádàn. Classed as an ethnic “minority,” he spurned the Ìgbo-led National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC) of

his “own” Eastern Region (see §3) to join the relatively exotic Northern People’s Congress (NPN) representing the Sókótó Caliphate (Òmòruyì 2008). Escaping doomed Biafra in 1969, he signed on as a civil commissioner in army-run Rivers State, but became disenfranchised by federal reassertion of “the Crown’s rights over minerals and land” in 1973 as had been first claimed by the “Obnoxious Ordinances” of 1945–1947 (Coleman 1958, p. 282; Saro-Wiwa 1989, pp. 217, 387). Saro’s public disaffection from the extractive state may explain why he was “cheated of the opportunity” to participate in 1977 constitutional talks, after which he “avoided all political parties” (Saro-Wiwa 1996, p. 73). The 2nd Republic unraveled at the end of 1983, and General Babangida seized power in 1985 and coopted Saro in 1987 to run an ill-defined parastatal of “mass mobilization” with the bulky acronym of MAMSER. Saro resigned from MAMSER in 1988 and in 1990 launched the nonviolent Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (with an oddly similar acronym, MOSOP) in five out of the six Ogoni districts—also called “kingdoms” or “clans” (Saro-Wiwa 1995, p. 66; Òbí 2001; Òkòntà 2007b, pp. 179, 209). MOSOP launched anticorporate campaigns, joined the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, and boycotted Babangida’s military-to-civilian “transition without end” (Diamond et al. 1997). The grinning general’s *chakkavatti*-like conceit was to draw in effect a “cosmological topography” (Tambiah 1976, p. 102) of dual parties, center-left and center-right, planted like ornamental shrubs in symmetrical cement bunkers in more than 700 local government headquarters across Nigeria. Presidential nominations were repeatedly aborted by micromanagement, but in June 1993 the procrastinations ran out, Chief Moshood Abíólá swept the vote, and the army pulled the plug (Òmòruyì 1999). After a few months, General Abacha emerged from behind the curtain (but never from behind his aviator shades) and Saro soon met his martyrdom in the glow of “sHellish” flares.<sup>6</sup> Babangida, after recycling Òbásánjò in 1999, withdrew to his home town of Minna and into a German-built custom labyrinth.

These events were dramatic but not new. Southern Nigerian peasants had deposed their chiefs in 1904, 1929–1930, and 1968–1969 (Gailey 1970, Áfiḡbo 1972, T. Adéniran 1974, Beer 1976, Òhadíké 1991, Pratten 2007) and more generally “the presence of classes within the lineage mode of production” (Terray 1975, p. 96) is documented in a literature extending from Crowder and Ikime (1970) to Vaughan (2000) and Watson (2003), supporting the thesis that “kinship as-

sumed the role of state surrogate during the centuries of the slave trade” (Eke[h] 1990, p. 661; cf. Meillassoux 1986). External entanglement caused medieval West Africa to miss out on any counterpart of the “feudal revolution”—the internal process by which medieval Western Europe passed from rogue knighthood to fiefdoms with financial accountability (i.e., from personal to territorial-bureaucratic authority) (Duby 1962, p. 68f.; Bisson 1994, p. 39). That transition was forestalled by a system whose “terrible logic . . . caused the African chiefs to cling to the Atlantic slave trade as their staple economic activity, even after it had become an anachronism . . .” (Rodney 1970, p. 118). Thus Joseph (1987) could find “prebendal politics . . . in the Second Republic” of Nigeria and Saro (if not misquoted) could spot human “vultures” scavenging the delta’s political terrain. In wider perspective, West Africa’s “patrimonialism” (Reyna 2007) resembles South Asia’s “fetishized” political Buddhism (Tambiah 1992, p. 59) as the vehicle of waxing and waning power.

### *Ágbò in Its Firmament*

Ágbò Kingdom covers Ìká North and South Local Government Areas in the present Delta State (Ònyéché 2002). Its capital, Íme-Óbí, “the king’s precinct” (< *ime* “inside,” *ò-bí* “dwell-er”), perches at the delta’s northwest edge on a sandy plateau where the east-west road crosses Òrogodó stream. Next door is the sprawling market whose official name, Bójìbojì, commemorates a waterside bivouac of colonial expeditionary troops (< Yorùbá *bòjù-bòjù* “face-washer”). In 1901 the British camped in front of Ágbò palace, but the post retreated to Bójìbojì in 1906 after an angry crowd killed District Commissioner Crewe-Reade (alias “Rédi”) in revenge for beating a old man to death while press-ganging Ágbò youths as load carriers. Ìdúuwe writes that Rédi’s violent end gave Ágbò an “official reputation for truculence.”

Ìká North East and South together have just 5% of the population of the whole delta region—today’s Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers States—but Ágbò Kingdom is not culturally atypical of its neighborhood. Ìgbo-style *òfò* (patrilineage symbols of indigenous bamboo ringed in iron bands; Figure 1) coexist with Èdó-style coral and brass regalia (referencing royal monopolies on salt-water wealth and the death penalty; Figure 2).

The dualism extends even to dance steps: aerobic Ìgbo acrobatics (Beier 1957) coexist with the lead-foot Èdó choreography performed by



Figure 8.1. *Ògwá ndi ichèn*, Ògbe N̄mù Déin, Ágbò, 1982. (Photo by V. Manfredi.) In the *ògwá ndi ichèn* (elders' parliament), the oldest lineage male sits before the *òfò* sticks offering food, chalk, and money to the collective ancestors, *ndi nmò* (cf. *Ọnwẹjìò gwù* 1981, p. 39). In the royal lineage N̄mù Déin (Déin's descendants), the oldest male is called *Íregwàì*—a name that might be glossed as “the tongue that informs us.” Here, *Ídúuwẹ* is two seats from the *Íregwàì Èbónmà*, but he eventually attained *Íregwàì* status before himself becoming an ancestor.

dancers wearing cowrie-laden *ùbulúku* smocks depicting the dry-land locomotion of *Óloókún*, the fish-tailed ocean god (Galembo 1993).

As *Ídúuwẹ*'s manuscript makes clear, Ágbò was the transmission gate between Èdó and Ìgbo. Although this intermediation is largely overlooked today (N̄zìmiro 1972, Èjìofò[r] 1982, Ọhadiké 1994, Okpehwo 1998), the fractal pattern of dispersion is proved by abundant evidence and is well suited to a Tambian metaphor comparing Ágbò's position between its Ìgbo-speaking satellites and the wider orbit of Èdó to a small solar system in a bigger galaxy.

For example, the big trading town of Ọnịcha (“Onitsha”) now calls itself “*Àdó City*” (see for example <http://ikmartins.su.com/>) because it claims to have been founded by “*Èzè Chiiima*” from Èdó (automatically pronounced “*Àdó*” in the Ọnịcha dialect of Ìgbo; cf. Èmènanjò 1971). But this attribution is imprecise. Èdó has no name resembling *Chiiima*, but Ágbò still recalls the eastward escape of “*Prince Kímé*” circa 1700 during a succession dispute (*Ídúuwẹ* ms.; cf. Meek 1937, p. 11 fn. 1; Ọnwẹjìógwù 1972; Oguagha 1992, p. 363; Manfredi 1991, p. 278f.). By



Figure 8.2. *Íkenchúku*'s father *Òbíkà* in festival regalia outside the Ágbò palace. (Photo reprinted from Beier 1963, p. 190f.; courtesy of the Ulli and Georgina Beier Center for Black Culture and International Understanding, Ọsogbo, Ọşun State, Nigeria.)

regular phonetic shifts, the closest match in Ọnịcha for [kímé] is precisely [chiiima]. Three other separate details confirm that Ágbò, and not Èdó, was the direct model for the Ìgbo-speaking “*Èzè Chiiima*” states. First, *Àbò* claims that its founder and Ọnịcha's were brothers who “left [Èdó] together, separating at Ágbò” (N̄zìmiro 1972, p. 7). Second is the presence in one of the “*Èzè Chiiima*” towns of a ward called “*Ògwá Chimè*” (“*Chimè's assembly*,” Èjìofò 1982, p. 345), with the final [e] making a telltale match to the Ágbò form of the proper name. Third, Ágbò's royal lineage is called *N̄mù Déin* (“*Déin's children*”) after the founder of the current dynasty, and *Ụmù Déin*—the Ìgbo translation of this phrase—is also the name of a royal line in *Àbò*, Ọnịcha, and *Úgwutà* towns (N̄zìmiro 1972, pp. 29, 196, 217), whereas no name like *Déi(n)* can be found in Èdó.<sup>7</sup>

Èdó influence in Ágbò is extravagantly dramatized in the Ágbò festival called *Ọsị́ Èzi* (“A friend from outside.”<sup>8</sup>) (See Ìdúùwẹ́ ms.; Figure 2; Beier 1963; Ìmáhìagbe 1981). Less obviously, however, the “centralized” polity of Èdó shares some basic structures with the “stateless” east. At Èdó’s ritual apex sits *Ọmọ̀n N’Ọba* (“Ọba’s legitimate child”), the culture-heroic king, but there are three more chiefly sets to reckon with (Bradbury 1956, 1967, 1968). The *kingmakers* are autochthonous and hereditary; the *town chiefs* are “big-man” commoners who exchange wealth for lifetime knighthoods (cf. Sahlins 1963); the *palace chiefs* are royal dependents, hereditary or appointed, with the formal status of house servants but from a household that covers half of the old imperial capital (Bradbury 1969). Two of these Èdó grades—kingmakers and town chiefs—have counterparts throughout the “stateless” Ìgbo-speaking east.

Predictably, Èdó’s political authority was most fluid in 1897 after the British toppled *Ọba Ọvọ̀nrànmwẹ̀n* and sacked the palace of its brass and ivory treasures. To quell civil resistance, the occupiers had to ally themselves with town chiefs and condone de facto “joint rule” between their client *Ọba Èwẹ̀ka II* (whose father *Ọvọ̀nrànmwẹ̀n* died in exile) and the *Íyàsẹ̀* (the Yorùbá-style town leader). But abuses by the town chiefs disadvantaged their party, the Action Group (AG, led by Yorùbá Chief *Ọbáfẹ̀mi Awólọ̀wọ̀*, alias “Awo”) in the 1951 Western Regional elections, which were won instead by the National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC, led by the Ìgbo Chief *Ñnàám̀dì Àzìkàíwẹ̀*, alias “Zik”). During the 1951 campaign, *Ọwegbe*, the palace’s masonic auxiliary, “unleashed a wave of violence throughout Benin Division” (Bradbury 1968, p. 247) against the AG’s elite cadre, the Reformed *Ọgbóni Fraternity* (a Christianized form of Yorùbá freemasonry). In 1963, Èwẹ̀ka’s son *Ọba Àkẹ̀zùà II* endorsed the NCNC’s plebiscite to remove the Midwest from the Western Region (Vickers 2000), which had the effect of substantially restoring Èdó monarchy after 66 years. The Midwest secession also deemphasised the monarchy’s mythical link to *Ifẹ̀* (called “*Úhẹ̀*” in Èdó) and this remains a sore point, earning the current *Ọba* a public smackdown from the Yorùbá establishment (*Àjáyì 2004*; cf. *Èrédiaùwá 2004*, *Àlùkò 2004*, *Èghàrevba 1934*, *Ryder 1965*, *Horton 1979*, *Adédìran 1991*, *Ọbáyẹ̀mí 1991*).<sup>9</sup>

That such kingdoms fluctuate between “a weaker form, which was perhaps the more usual state, and a stronger form, which was perhaps achieved during exceptional periods” (Tambiah 1977, p. 82) is borne out by yet another example, which I observed at first hand. On 8 Sep-

tember 1976, my mentor M. A. *Ọ̀nwẹ̀jìọ̀gwù* presented me to A. È. Ìdúùwẹ̀ (Figure 1; Figure 3), an accomplished elder of Ágbò’s royal lineage.

Ìdúùwẹ̀ had by then already been an activist for half a century, since helping to found *Ágbò Patriotic Union*, a club of migrant literates in Lagos. In 1939, he wrote to the British in his capacity as APU secretary, that “... apart from language, Ágbò people have everything in common with the Yorùbá and the Benin [= Èdó]. And we pray you do not listen to irresponsible grumblers and newspaper men.”<sup>10</sup> These disparaging epithets transparently refer to *Zik*, who founded the *West African Pilot* in 1937 and who in 1949 told the Ì[g]bo State Union that “the God of Africa has specially created the Ì[g]bo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the Ages” (Coleman 1958, p. 347). In 1948 the colonizers disregarded Ìdúùwẹ̀’s advice and reclassified *Ágbò Kingdom* as an Ìgbo-style cluster of ten “*Ìkà clans*,” ensuring that “clan heads rotated the post of presidency in the district council” (Ìdúùwẹ̀ ms.; cf. Coleman 1958, p. 314).<sup>11</sup> But in 1960, Ìdúùwẹ̀’s pro-Yorùbá sentiments were rewarded by the *Ágbò monarch Ọ̀bìkà* (1916–1967; Figure 4), an AG minister at the time, who conferred on him the title *Ọ̀díí*, glossed as “leader of [the king’s] legion and deliverer of the royal gifts.”<sup>12</sup> Around the same time, Ìdúùwẹ̀ wrote “History of Greater Ágbò,” whose title diplomatically conveys the pre-1948 centripetal idea of *Ágbò Kingdom* without technically contradicting the decentralized constitutional position of the day.

After the 1963 plebiscite, *Ọ̀bìkà* switched parties to become a Minister in the NCNC’s Midwest administration.<sup>13</sup> This was inevitable: “Just as the British colonial government expected kings and chiefs or native authorities to ensure its success among their people, so did the Midwestern State government expect the same type of rulers to promote its interests” (Otite 1975, p. 78).<sup>14</sup> But two army coups ended civil rule in 1966, and when the Ìgbos finally lost the Biafran War in 1970, *Ọ̀bìkà*’s son *Ìkẹ̀chúku* felt autonomous enough to sell a large tract of lineage land to Chief *Vincent West Ègbárin*, a multi-industrialist with the portentous alias *Ọ̀rìkàézè* (“He [who] resembles a king”). In October 1976, *Ìkẹ̀chúku* celebrated the *Ọ̀sị́ezì* festival in high style on national TV, and the lineage assembly (Figure 1) sent Ìdúùwẹ̀ to contest the land sale in court as a violation of collective usufruct (cf. *Úchẹ̀ndù 1977, 1995*).<sup>15</sup>

On the morning of 9 September 1976, as state radio announced the death of Mao Ze Dong, Chief Ìdúùwẹ̀ invited me to see “where my



Figure 8.3. Chief Augustin Ègwabọ Ìdúùwẹ in front of his house in Ògbe Ñmù Déin, Ágbọ, 1982. (Photo by V. Manfredi.)

father is buried.” We crossed the old highway, a war-torn moonscape where ducks bathed in puddles between paved spots, and entered a sandy path, when two motorcycles zoomed up. The riders, scrawny *ìchásùn* (palace lackeys), accosted my elderly host and knocked him to the ground. As I helped him to his feet they called me a spy and

grabbed the portfolio containing my passport. That evening, Chief and I discussed the assault with Ònwụẹjìógwù, and the next day I walked alone to the palace, primed with a repertoire of antiquarian blandishments for the king:

Dóo Dein, ágwọ ekèlikà, éka oghei, ògí-ázụ gbome Òhimi, nwá tùtù!

[Hail dynastic founder, multicolored snake, unchecked hand, whose domain extends up to the Niger, demonic child!]

My performance amused the *ìchásùn*, but Íkenchúku returned my passport only on condition that I conduct my studies in a distant village under loyal supervision.

By my next visit in 1980, much had changed. In 1979, General Òbásanjọ rigged Awo’s party (then called UPN) out of the presidency and handed Lugard’s baton back to the Caliphate’s NPN—resuming the script of 1960 that had been interrupted by coups and war. Also in 1979, Chief Òrìkaézè dropped dead in an NPN meeting and Íkenchúku was mysteriously shot at night somewhere outside of Ágbọ. Following an autopsy in the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (O. Èbọhón, p.c.), Íkenchúku’s corpse was refused legitimate burial by Ògbe Ñmù Déin (Ìdúùwẹ manuscript, excerpted below), complicating the succession of his infant son (Figure 3). Ìdúùwẹ’s lawsuit was granted by default, following the respondents’ deaths.<sup>16</sup>

After these decisive events, Ìdúùwẹ finished rewriting his “History of Greater Ágbọ,” but he still had to collate the different drafts prepared during the kingdom’s successive phases. While we fiddled with scissors and paste, another editorial problem arose. Ìdúùwẹ still used a colonial-era spelling, which had been overtaken in the 1960s and ’70s by the official orthography with subdots (Èkére 1961, Ògbàlù 1975, Elugbe 1984, Williamson 1985), but this well-argued policy was scarcely known, far less applied, in a small speech community like Ágbọ. The job was over my head and beyond my means, but Ìdúùwẹ was patient and in January 1982 presented me to his *ògwá* in ebullient mood.<sup>17</sup> The NPN was overthrown by populist soldiers at the end of 1983; then in August 1985 General Babangida turned the wheel of *dhamma* once again, spinning Nigeria further down the drain. Meanwhile both Ìdúùwẹ and Ònwụẹjìógwù have joined their ancestors, and Íkenchúku’s son has assumed the Ágbọ throne. Ìdúùwẹ’s book remains unpublished, to my great regret.





Figure 8.4. The infant K̄iagb̄økúzi three years after his father Íkenchúku's reign. (Photo culled from a local almanac.)

### “The Ìgbo Have No Kings”

When General Abacha's dead hand slid off the lever of power one June night in 1998, a tangential consequence was to relieve the annual Ìgbo studies conference which had been banned by an eccentric satrap in Ímò State, the very pentacostal Colonel Zubairu (Ílozùè 1999). The next meeting in November 2000 was thrown in turmoil,

however, as Ìgbo's twinkling political constellations morphed into a neo-Biafran Rorschach test. The thesis of the 16th Àhìajìòkù Lecture, delivered by a professor of physics, is adequately represented by the following excerpt:

The precolonial traditional government of the Ìgbo without kings imbued in them the characteristic traits that prompt the saying that “Ìgbo ènwé ezè.” . . . Most Ìgbo governed themselves without giving power to chiefs or kings. . . . Nobody had any special privilege because of ancestry. . . . Perhaps we should say more about self-reliance, which is strongly influenced by the legacies of Ìgbo ènwé ezè. . . . The Biafran war tested the self-reliance of Eastern Nigerians, especially the Ìgbo, to its limit. . . . Then Biafran scientists and engineers began to fabricate grenades, mines, bombs, mortars, rockets, pontoons, plated vehicles etc. . . . We find some parallels between scientific culture and the legacies of Ìgbo ènwé ezè. Scientific culture recognizes no kings and chiefs with divine knowledge . . . Our conclusion is that the implications of Ìgbo ènwé ezè are democratic, self-reliant, scientific, modern and in tune with the best traditions of humankind. (Ònwùmèchili 2000)

Prof. Áfiìgbo, then the dean of Ìgbo historians and co-organizer of the event, reports that this hackneyed panegyric was rewarded with a “vile attack” (2002, 2005a, 478) from Prof. Ònwùejìògwù (2001) in the form of a reply entitled “Ìgbo nwe ezè, Ìgbo Have Kings: The Evolutionary Development of Complexities in the Ìgbo Political System.” Áfiìgbo himself replied with a more social-science inflected restatement of Ònwùmèchili, resting on two remarkably traditional planks.

Áfiìgbo's Plank One is the diffusionist idea that “advanced social technology (more centralized political systems)” was not indigenous to Ìgbo-speakers but the result of external “conquest” by a “second wave of migrants . . . who came in from the middle belt savanna” (Áfiìgbo 2002, 2005a, 483). The sole evidence cited for this story is an imaginative equation of the ethnic term Ìgbo LL with “the phoneme [sic] gbó . . . found among the Yorùbá to be indicative of bush” (p. 482). To be taken seriously, the etymology would have to explain the opposite tone of the two roots, *L* versus *H*—but Áfiìgbo doesn't mark tones—and would also need to justify the reconstruction of a word spanning the unrelated meanings of *farmland* and *forest/bush* (p. 482)—but no such word exists in any Nigerian language known to me.<sup>18</sup> Linguistic howlers aside, Áfiìgbo's story is a neat ideological

match for Ònwùmèchili's premise, that any example of Ìgbo-speaking kingship is an "exception" (2000), echoing civil war propaganda that "Biafran society is traditionally egalitarian" (Òjúkwu 1969) and rehashing Meek's Hamitic theory that "[k]ingship is not and never was a feature of the Ìgbo constitution. Where it occurs it is clearly of exotic origin" (Meek 1937, p. 185). Once upon a time, Áfiḡbo had called Meek's idea "prejudiced" and "based on rather very slender evidence" (Áfiḡbo 1981; cf. Zachernuk 1994), but by 2002 he had decided that it provided "some of the key to our problems" (Áfiḡbo 2002, 2005a, p. 482). What had changed meanwhile?

Áfiḡbo's Plank Two is equally familiar from 19th century and colonial literature. He puts it as follows:

Ìgbo political theory, by which we mean the theory which underpins and supports the Ìgbo polis, is . . . basically organic and natural being based on blood descent. . . . With such a political theory it is not surprising that in an Ìgbo polity, the *number one* political authority is that which derives from correct standing in or descent from the blood line. (2002, 2005a, p. 484, emphasis original)

A few pages later, Áfiḡbo repeats the idea that "traditional rulership in Ìgboland" is based on principles related "to hereditary rights, to ascription, to the blood line" as distinct from "charisma and achievement" (p. 488). One hundred forty years before, a counsel to the British Rāj in India wrote: "The history of political ideas begins, in fact, with the assumption that kinship in blood is the sole possible ground of community in political functions" (Maine 1861, p.129).

Áfiḡbo's 2002 thesis has one great difficulty, apart from its disfigurement with childish taunts.<sup>19</sup> Any attempt to marginalize Ìgbo examples of "centralized kingship" at the same time that one asserts the ubiquity of Ìgbo "traditional rulership" based on a pre-contract, tribal organization based on "blood" is an incorrigibly static position that must attribute all change to the *deus ex machina* of immigration. Áfiḡbo may have missed the words *evolutionary development* in the title of Ònwùjejìògwù's 2001 pamphlet, and he probably also overlooked the main point of Ònwùjejìògwù's 1981 book which contextualizes Ñri within the wider Ìgbo-speaking area by showing that its centralized political structure was not an isolated "exception" (Ònwùmèchili's term) to the stateless tribal stereotype. Building on Ñzímìro (1972), Ònwùjejìògwù disproved the colonial theory that Ìgbo politics can be reduced to "mutually balancing segments" (Fortes and Evans-

Pritchard 1940, p.16) and showed on the contrary that "where wealth differentiation and associational groupings are marked, . . . segmentary opposition becomes a minor feature of the political process" (1981, p. 134). This is not a matter of Ñri alone: differentiation and association of this kind runs right across the Ìgbo-speaking area, and not just in the big trading entrepôts. Áfiḡbo's quaint appeal to "organic and natural . . . blood descent" also ignores an elementary ethnographic point unknown to Sir Henry Maine, that all kinship terms are in principle *classificatory* and not limited to literal, "organic," or *biological* reference (cf. Ònwùjejìògwù 1981, p. 135 fn. 15). By insisting, on the contrary, that kinship is objectively separate from politics, Áfiḡbo can blame the hubristic and authoritarian Lord Lugard for the "careerism and impudence" of Ìgbo "warrant chiefs" in 1912–1929, characterizing that era as "the time when the principles upholding the Èzè-ship institution in precolonial Ìgboland were violently breached (Áfiḡbo 2002, 2005a, pp. 487, 491). But to be consistent, Áfiḡbo should also blame the hubristic and authoritarian Lord Òbásánjò for the "careerism and impudence" of today's Ìgbo-speaking "political godfathers" of the PDP, such as the Anambara State brothers Chris and Nnàmdì "Andy" Ùbá[h] (Ñnànnà 2004, Ayòdé 2006). Áfiḡbo never considers the possibility that these monstrous "big men" are not aberrations, but predictable expressions of long-standing Ìgbo political order.

Intellectual vacuity is plain whenever a historian resorts to *post hoc propter hoc*. Offering the excuse that "since 1896 much water has run under the bridge," Áfiḡbo pardons the failure of the committee by "the military administration of the defunct East Central State appointed in 1975" with himself as "Chairman . . . to restore to the institution [of traditional rulers] in Ìgbo land its 'tradition[a]lness' by laying emphasis on the correct genealogical position of an occupant of the stool" (2002, 2005a, p. 490). Continuing the self-pity, he laments that "[f]or some time we have been sliding back into the warrant chief era" (p. 490)—as if the verification of genealogy is a job for the army. The worst thing that Áfiḡbo manages to say about Ònwùjejìògwù's culturally and historically grounded 1981 study of Ìgbo kingship is that "only the first chapter does not address a political question," and that it is "*by and large* political anthropology *more or less along the lines of high-noon colonial anthropology*" (1996, 12, emphasis added). Maybe high noon is when the national clock stopped.

## Appendix

## Excerpts from Ìdúùwẹ’s “History of Greater Àgbò”

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In the late forties political parties sprang up. [Òbìkà] remained neutral for sometime, while his subjects supported the two parties NCNC and AG. The majority became NCNC partisans. They wanted their natural rulers to support them but this honourable ruler hesitated to support any political party, as he is the father of all. They then victimised him with the false slogan that he caused the Western Nigerian government whose party was AG to increase taxation. They marched to his palace, caused damages to his car and property and attacked some of his chiefs—Akpara, Oguden and others—and drove them into the woods. The leaders of the party were arrested and jailed in 1954.

Òbìkà’s character was undaunted despite all his worries, and he was obliged to become an AG partisan. In the election of 1959 he showed himself as an able leader and won for the AG 5 seats out of the 14 seats in his clan, and the majority in the Ika Local Council of 42 seats in which the AG won 22 against NCNC’s 20. The Òbì was therefore congratulated and the Western Region Government made him a Minister of State without portfolio and Edward Anuku a junior Minister in the Ministry of Economic Development and Planning. But because of the crisis of 1962 in which the Government of Western Nigeria was seriously involved, the Òbì crossed the carpet to NCNC during the campaign for the creation of Mid West, and the Òbì won for his new party great support for the Midwest Region. The Government of the new Region made him to continue as Minister of State.

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The installation and coronation of Íkenchúku was marked with the greatest enthusiasm ever witnessed in Àgbò, despite the cloud of the civil war which had begun in 1966. . . . He proved himself a patriot during repressive incidents in the civil war. Íkenchúku could be called a saviour of his people and of the strangers within his gate. . . .

At last after the third year he became despotic and oppressive and there was unrest in the kingdom. He died on 29th April 1979 survived by 4 daughters and two sons of 2 and 1 year old. He was not given the usual burial ceremony but his son was untimely crowned privately by the palace chiefs without the knowledge of his royal family Ògbe Ñmù Déin people and [kingmakers] Àlì Íjèmìsì.

2. For more detail about their trade history, see Cooke 1985, Ven Spengen 2000, and Ratanapruck 2007.

3. There is a small but growing body of literature on the continuity of transregional commercial networks of Asian merchants. See for example Bhattacharya et al. 2007. This work is a contribution to that body of literature.

4. I am using the 1984 translation by Lord: Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

5. Aristotle wrote in *The Politics*, “[M]an is by nature a political animal. Hence [men] strive to live together even when they have no need of assistance from one another, though it is also the case that the common advantage brings them together, to the extent that it falls to each to live finely. It is this above all, then, which is the end for all both in common and separately; but they also join together, and maintain the political partnership, for the sake of living itself” (*Politics* bk. 3, ch. 6; Bekker no. 1278b, 18–24).

## COSMOLOGIES OF WELFARE: TWO CONCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA

James Ferguson

1. There is some anthropological work on welfare, of course, especially on welfare in the “global North” (see, e.g., Edgar and Russell 1998). The apparently low level of anthropological interest in the topic (especially in the topic of welfare in the “global South”), however, remains striking.

2. The discussion that follows is a condensed version of an argument that I have made at greater length elsewhere (see J. Ferguson 2007 and 2010).

3. See Fine 2000 for a useful critique of “social capital” theory.

## “A RECURRENCE OF STRUCTURES” IN COLLAPSING NIGERIA

Victor Manfredi

In memory of two mentors. Anthropologist Michael Angulu Ònwẹ-jìógwù of Ígboúẏò (“Ibusa”) was Professor in the University of Benin and eventually Vice-Chancellor of Tansian University. Historian Augustin Ègwabò Ìdúùwẹ was Òdì of Àgbò (Agbor) and eventually Íregwài of Ògbe Ñmù Déin. The first draft of this paper was presented at the AAA panel “Violence and the Scope of Rationality,” honoring Stanley Tambiah, on 30 November 2007. Thanks to the organizers of that day, to the editors of this book, and to H. Abíólá, D. van den Berselaar, P. Eke[h], J. Guyer, M. Íghílẹ̀, B. Wuloo Ikari, S. Jell-Bahlsen, I. Miller,

S. Moore, L. Murphy, O. N̄dibé, the late I. N̄zímíro, E. Ochonu, I. Òkòntà, 'D. Ọlórúnyòmí, Ọ. Ọmórúyì, O. Owen, and M. Vickers. Where possible, I replace “Western errorist” transcriptions of African words with more modern spellings. Tonemarks: [ ˊ ] = high, [ ˋ ] = low. Tone conventions: in Yorùbá and Kanà, no mark = mid; in Ìgbo, Ágbò, and Èdó, no mark = same as previous mark, and a sequence of two high marks = intervening downstep. In Ágbò, the [ + ] sign indicates antiodownstep.

1. Although I'm unaware of any published reference by Tambiah to Chomskyan syntax, he mentioned it often in class, and his [1979] 1981 essay cites the generative concept of “sequencing rules” from the formal pragmatics literature. Staal (1986, p. 190) explicitly contrasts Tambiah's “syntactic” approach to ritual with Geertz' behaviorist view. The quotation in the title of this paper is taken from the larger phrase “a recurrence of structures and their transformations in systemic terms” (Tambiah 1976, p. 5), in which a syntactic metaphor can also be inferred.

2. Informal description by anonymous People's Democratic Party lawyer at the Èdó National Association meeting, 29 August 2008, in suburban Boston.

3. In Nigeria, “South-South” denotes the four states of the delta (Èdó, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers) plus Cross River and Akwa Ibom.

4. The four incinerated chiefs included Saro's brother-in-law Sam Orage and his prominent benefactor Edward Kobani.

5. President-elect Abíólá resisted four years of torture in solitary confinement, during which his wife Kudirat was gunned down on Abacha's orders; then on 7 July 1998 Abíólá expired under marathon hectoring by Tom Pickering and Susan Rice of the Clinton State Department (Eghagha and Oyèébámi 2008). Claims were pursued under the Alien Torts Act against General Abusalami for Abíólá's persecution unto death, and against Shell for complicity in the murder of the Ogoni Nine (Ikari 2006, pp. 44–54). Abíólá's autopsy gave no answers (<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/report-1998-07-06.html>) and Abacha's death, a month before Abíólá's, was never publicly investigated. During a March 1998 trip to South Africa, Bill Clinton openly encouraged General Abacha to moult into a civilian dictator (Apple 1998), and such sympathy was probably not unrelated to the Clinton Foundation's admitted receipt of “between 1 and 5 million dollars” from Abacha's in-law, Gilbert R. Chagoury, via Dr. Susan Rice (Baker and Savage 2008). A published account of 1998 remarks by ex-ambassador Donald Easum at Foggy Bottom (Ọgún 2009, pp. 131–35) shows U.S. government eagerness for Abacha and Abíólá to be jointly liquidated (“Supposing the two of them were not there, who would you see as a successor?”) in prepara-

tion for re-injecting General Ọbásanjó into the contrived power vacuum (thanks to Dr. Ebe Ochonu, in the comments thread to his 2009 *Sahara Reporters* review, for this critical information).

6. See Íkòrò (1996, p.4f.) for the term *Ogoni*, and Rowell et al. (2005, p. 65) for the Shell inferno image in an Ogoni anthem: “The flames of Shell are flames of Hell/We bask below their light/Nought for us serve the blight/Of cursed neglect and cursed Shell” (2005, p. 65).

7. *Déin* has no clear etymology; one possibility is the univerbation of an Ágbò phrase meaning “our master” (< *dí* + *èyín*).

8. “Friend from outside” euphemizes Èdó intervention, approximately along the rhetorical lines of the “Fraternal Soviet Liberation” of Hungary in November 1956. The Èdó footprint is even more vivid: the term *òsì*, “friend,” may be a quotidian word of Ágbò, but it has no cognate in the rest of the Ìgbo cluster, and was almost certainly adopted from Èdó *òse*, “friend, lover” (Melzian 1937, p. 169).

9. Prof. Àjàyí seems to accept the Ifè foundation myth verbatim, and censured my use of the term *ethnohistory* in the course of a dinner table discussion in 1993. The Ọba's junior brother has pushed back against Àjàyí in literary form (Ákẹnzùà 2008).

10. Notes taken in 2006 by Dr. Dmitri v.d. Bersselaar, University of Liverpool (p.c.) from [Agbor Dist. I AG 219], Nigerian National Archives, Ìbàdàn branch.

11. *Ìká*, pronounced “Èká” in Èdó (Egharevba 1934; Melzian 1937, p. 33), is an ambiguous, outsider's term that can denote all Ìgbo-speakers west of the Niger—including also the Ànìọcha, Ùkwuàni, and Òshimili districts (Forde and Jones 1950; Ọhadíké 1994, pp. 69–96). Ágbò's 1938 demotion was still resented by Òbikà's son and successor Íkenchúku (1938–1979), who griped about it in 1976 while giving me a lift to Benin-City in the royal Peugeot 604. Ọnwùejíọgwù told me of confronting Jones in his Cambridge University retirement about the (1956) reclassification of southern chiefs—a move which Jones admitted was designed to favor Zik at the expense of Awo, who was officially regarded as a dangerous communist.

12. The name *Ìdúùwẹ* itself transparently means “brought from Èdó.”

13. In 1981, an Ògbe N̄mù Déin elder who had been an NCNC stalwart playfully asked me to remind Zik—by then a septuagenarian grandee who was my neighbor in the Ìgbo university town of N̄sùkà (“Nsukka”)—of a thirty-year-old promise to supply a revolver!

14. An instructive precedent occurred in 1956 when the Western Region deposed the Alááfin of Ọyọ who was refusing to join the AG. Similarly in 1963, the Midwest exiled the “Olu of Warri” Erejuwa II due

to “his personal and institutional conflict with certain NCNC party stalwarts” (Otite 1975, p. 75). One effective lever on customary chiefs is the monthly stipend paid by the regional or state government; Àzìkàíwe recognized the practice as creating a conflict-of-interest “dilemma” (1976, p. 6).

15. Lawsuits aside, Ògbe Ñmù Déin pressed a second complaint against Òbí Íkenchúku, that he was stubbornly monogamous and took too long to produce an heir. When one arrived, he was provocatively named Kìygbòkúzi, “What can Ágbò say now?” The boy’s mother feared for the infant’s safety and raised him in exile, permanently impairing his fluency in the language.

16. Only temporarily, because a new expropriation had already begun: before relinquishing power the first time, Qbásanjò had made the Land Use Decree of 1978 “abolishing the customary proprietary rights of families and individuals—and traditional rulers—over both developed and undeveloped land” (Vaughan 2000, p. 149). Qbásanjò was not the only generalissimo-turned-agroindustrialist who managed to profit from this self-administered windfall.

17. A brief clip of a dance Ìdúùwẹ arranged for me that day can be heard at <http://people.bu.edu/manfredi/Orogodo.mov>.

18. There’s at least a *phonetic* match between the root syllables of Yorùbá *ìgbó* MH “forest” and western Ìgbo *úgbo* HH “farm” (2002, 2005a, p. 482), but the latter is a transparent loan into Ìgbo from Èdó and the connection is tangential to his argument, notwithstanding the semantic mismatch noted above.

19. Áfiìgbò demeans Qnwùejìògwù for “the difficulty he usually has with the use of the English language” (2002, 2005a, p. 478), and repeated the slur near-verbatim in a footnote (p. 492). He also bemoans Qnwùejìògwù’s proofreading abilities: “Even his name, Michael, is wrongly spelt at least once” (p. 478), although Áfiìgbò himself in the same paper twice misspells the Ìgbo verb *enweghi*—truncating it as *enwegh* (pp. 480f.)—not to mention the many OCR-typoes in the multi-volume Africa World Press reprints of Áfiìgbò’s collected papers. Then there are the literary oddities in other recent works which can’t be blamed on hourly workers in Trenton, New Jersey; e.g., “Ogrugru” (Áfiìgbò 1997, p. 6 and *passim*)—a toponym which is spelled better as *Ogurugu* even on ordinary road signs in the university town of Ñsúká where Áfiìgbò had lived for more than a decade before writing “Ogrugru.” Áfiìgbò also mocks Qnwùejìògwù for producing a “self-edited, self published and self-distributed journal, *Qđinanì*, the journal of his [sic] museum at Ñri” (p. 481), without irony, only one page after defending Qnwùmèchili’s

peaen to “Biafra[n] . . . self reliance and scant respect for authority” (p. 480f.). The historian also gets basic facts wrong about Qđinanì Museum, which was founded in 1972 not by Qnwùejìògwù but by the same University of Ìbàdàn (photo, Qnwùejìògwù 1981, p. 58) where Áfiìgbò had acquired his own terminal academic credential just nine years before.

PEOPLE AND IDEAS TRAVEL TOGETHER: TAMBIAH’S APPROACH  
TO RITUAL AND COSMOLOGY IN BRAZIL

Mariza Peirano

1. See Peirano 1998 and 2008 for a general guide to anthropology in Brazil.

2. For a re-analysis of Malinowski’s Trobriand ethnographic material, see “The Magical Power of Words” (Tambiah 1968b) and “On Flying Witches and Flying Canoes” (Tambiah 1983b); for the re-analysis of Evans-Pritchard’s Zande material, see “Form and Meaning of Magical Acts” (Tambiah 1973). All three essays are reprinted in *Culture, Thought, and Social Action* (Tambiah 1985b). See Tambiah 2002 for the intellectual biography of Edmund Leach.

3. Tambiah’s approach to ritual inspired a great part of the large research program “An Anthropology of Politics: Rituals, Representations, and Violence” sponsored by Núcleo de Antropologia da Política (NuAP), which lasted from 1997 to 2005 and resulted in the publication of more than thirty books. See NuAP 1998, and [www.ppgasmuseu.etc.br/museu/pages/nuap\\_publicacoes.html](http://www.ppgasmuseu.etc.br/museu/pages/nuap_publicacoes.html).

4. I am referring to Tambiah’s trilogy on Thailand, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand* (1970), *World Conqueror and World Renouncer* (1976), and *Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets* (1984).

5. See especially Tambiah’s “A Performative Approach to Ritual” ([1979] 1981), later included in *Culture, Thought, and Social Action* (1985b).

6. *Leveling Crowds* received two reviews in Brazil (Comerford 1998 and Chaves 1999), and was the subject of a longer essay (Peirano 2000).

7. See Sahlins 2005 (a version of which appears as Sahlins’s contribution to this book) for a pioneering use of these two notions.

PARADOXES OF ORDER IN THAI COMMUNITY POLITICS

Michael Herzfeld

1. I am indebted to Charles (“Biff”) Keyes for pointing this out to me when he visited the community with me at an early point in my thinking about its problems.

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