THE YORUBA LANGUAGE IN WESTERN NIGERIA: ITS MAJOR DIALECT AREAS

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ABSTRACT

This study is the first attempt to establish the nature and the location of the major discontinuities within the Yoruba language area. Yoruba belongs to the Kwa group within the Niger-Congo phylum of African languages; its many dialects are spoken by about 10.2 million people in Western Nigeria.

On the basis of linguistic and ethnohistorical criteria, the area in question is subdivided into three major dialect groupings:

(a) Northwest Yoruba (NWY) comprises the Ibadan, Oyo, Egba, and Oshun areas and is historically a part of the Oyo Empire. Here, lineage and descent are unilineal agnatic; traditional government is based on a division of power between civil and war chiefs. Linguistically, "negation" is expressed with {ko}; tense and aspect distinctions are made largely by the use of "preverbs": {N} for the continuative aspect, {yio} and {a} for the indefinite tense, etc. In the phonology, ProtoYoruba (PY) /ɣ/ and /gw/ have merged and become /w/; furthermore, the upper mid vowels of PY, both oral and nasal, were raised and merged with the high vowels. Here also the sibilants /s/ and /š/ are confused, except in the Abeokuta area.

(b) Southeast Yoruba (SEY) is made up of the Ondo, Owo, Okitipupa, and parts of the Ijebu area and was long part of the Benin Empire. In contrast to NWY, lineage and descent are multilineal. Traditional government operates through a system of graded societies, and the NWY division of chieftaincy titles is unknown. Linguistically, SEY is less innovating than NWY: negation and tense-aspect distinctions are made by pronoun vowel change; PY /ɣ/ and /gw/ are retained and the upper mid nasal vowels have been lowered to /ɛ̃/ and /ɔ̃/.

(c) Central Yoruba (CY) consists of the Ife, Ilesha, and Ekiti areas and is characterized by a series of transitional phenomena. It shares the ethnographic features of SEY, and, to a large extent, the lexicon of NWY. In other respects, it is unique. It polarizes negativeness and positiveness in its short singular pronouns, and retains a system of vowel harmony in which the cooccurrence of vowels in successive syllables of the word is determined by features of laxness or tenseness. In its oral vowel system, it is the least innovating of the three dialect groups.

The theoretical base for this study consists of the principles of structural dialectology, formulated by Uriel Weinreich (Is a Structural Dialectology Possible?", Word 10 (1954), 388-400), and applied in Marvin Herzog's The Yiddish Language in Northern Poland, Bloomington (1965).

We have, however, suggested another goal for dialectology: the search for the classificatory matrix that explicates the naive stereotype of speaker's attitudes towards dialects

and their boundaries. This goal is meant to supplement and not to supercede the traditional goal. Admittedly, little is done in the present work to realize this new objective. However, some evidence is presented to show that dialect boundaries as projected by the native speaker are not always supported by linguistic reality, indeed, that dialect areas delimited by linguistic criteria alone are not necessarily the most useful entities. It sometimes appears that group identity and ethnological homogeneity are the sole determinants of the native speaker's conception of his language area, especially where no objective linguistic difference can be found to justify his claim concerning the existence of a dialect boundary.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of the Study

This study seeks to characterize the nature and the location of geographical discontinuities of subsystems within the Yoruba language in Western Nigeria. Though Yoruba Dialectology exists in wordlists and these are very limited in their coverage, a cursory inspection of them yields the awareness that there exist certain sound-meaning correspondences among certain geographical areas. The task of this study is to discover more fully these sound-meaning correspondences and to account for their development. From this, certain further questions arise. Do other levels of the language show similar patterns of cleavage as the phonology? And what about the non-verbal aspects of the people's culture: do these also show some divergence parallel to those of the linguistic? What "explanations" as contact, migration, diffusion, and entailment within a structure can be adduced for some of these differentiations?

1.2 The Theoretical Basis of Dialectology

The progress of dialectology has been centered, within the last decade, around Weinreich 1954. Indeed, "Is a Structural Dialectology Possible?" marked a turning point in two ways; the full theoretical implications of that article have often been overlooked by both the adherents and the critics of that paper. First, Weinreich makes one aware that dialectology could be a science backed by a potent theory and that the methodological procedure could be in some cases structural. Herzog (1965) represents the high water mark of structural dialectology. In The Yiddish Language in Northern Poland Herzog constantly makes one aware of the extent to which the structural entailment of dialect features can be utilized as a determinant of change. Herzog's order of presentation of the data and their analysis starting first with the highest plane down to phonology is motivated by the awareness that structural hierarchization might itself be fruitfully employed to yield the sought-for criteria of dialect classification. Finally, Herzog's choice of criteria, external and linguistic is such that the sequence of dialects arranged geographically somehow corresponds to a sequence of innovations. In other words, Herzog shows that a structural dialectology is possible, and its achievement may be significant, especially when its results are so arranged that they fit a historical sequence.

But the view that dialectology could be a science backed by a potent theory raises some problems. Traditional dialectology had as its goal the study of the complex diversity of language features in both time and space dimensions. It

also sought to account for the evolution of the diversity.

A theory on which such a study is based has to accommodate the continuous growth or development of language in time and space, since diversity can be seen as a historical development as well as a geographical continuum. But traditional dialectology hardly concerned itself with these theoretical problems. It grew up hand in glove with the Stammbaum model in historical linguistics, which fostered the view that stages and regions of language are discrete entities. It favored the reconstruction of a protolanguage as a system unique and discrete at least in space, it being axiomatic that a dialect-free protolanguage was to be reconstructed. Furthermore, traditional dialectology assumes for the history of the language discrete points along the time axis. Hence a protolanguage A's development into daughter languages B and C and the diversification of B and C, in turn, into dialects D E, F G, respectively, tended to be regarded as leaps in the dark between one point in the development and another: a "good night" protolanguage and "good morning" daughter languages. Correlatively, language changes were regarded as unobservable; in fact their causes unknown unless explainable in terms of external influence from another language.

Moreover, the orientation of traditional dialectology was towards the history of the language. When the validity of the blind regularity of sound laws came to be doubted--as a result of dialectological studies, dialectology turned to a study of word history. Dialectology became an exercise

in phonetic vagaries while isogloss plotting on the basis of the narrow phonetic rendering of words became the practice. The choice of isoglosses as dialect boundaries remained essentially arbitrary, and the view that a dialect may have a system was not fully explored. Therefore, the unity of the dialect which was regarded as the basis of comparison evaporated on the map in which isoglosses ran in all directions. Isogloss plotting on the basis of individual features destroyed the very concept of dialect.

Structural linguistics hoped to supply synchronic structural criteria for dialect classification (see Weinreich 1954 for references) but the consequence would be another meaningless mosaic (see Herzog, 1965: 274,275). It was the purpose of Weinreich's 1954 paper to seek a way of preserving the concept of dialect unity on both the geographical and temporal axis. That is, it sought a theory which would be pliable enough to accommodate the unity within a geographical continuum as a diasystem, while showing up the more or less unified local varieties within this continuum as discrete systems. In essence, it proposed that structural dialectology be concerned with the synchronic aspect of the language continuum and the interrelationship of the variations within the diasystem. "A specifically structural dialectology would look for the structural consequences of partial differences within a framework of partial similarity" (Weinreich 1954:390). That is, the problem a diasystem is required to solve is that of uniting discreteness with continuity on the

geographical synchronic plane.

Carried to its logical extreme, a language itself is a diasystem because of the shared features among the many varieties it contains: "a 'diasystem' is experienced in a very real way by bilingual (including 'bidialectal') speakers and corresponds to what students of language called 'merged system'" (Weinreich 1954:390). Of late, Weinreich's suggestion that diasystems could be constructed has been little used because the author's claim was such that he did not exploit all its possible uses. Granted that as the mainstay of a structural dialectology, the construction of diasystems may sometimes obscure the historical perspective of language change (Moulton, 1962), a situation arises where in a contiguous geographical area, a koine is used alongside of the 'indigenous' dialects of a language. Any one informant who uses this koine along with his own local dialect becomes 'bidialectal', and for him the construct 'diasystem' would be useful. This applies in the Yoruba case to children of school age and educated adults. We take up one diasystem of such behavior in Chapter 6.

Another problem dialectology has always faced is that of the delimitation of a dialect area. We believe that a dialect is 'real' to the native speaker of a local variety of a language. It is hardly expected that traditional dialectology in its arbitrariness of the choice of classificatory criteria could come up with a reasonable definition of a dialect area. Nor can structural dialectology with its

reliance on inventory of linguistic features. Structural dialectology would classify together all varieties sharing a common inventory of, say, phonological items irrespective of the differences in the utilization and distribution of individual items in the inventory by the different varieties. The nature of the diasystem formula itself is such that it may be unable to handle the distribution of the items it displays. Nevertheless the proviso that structures be set up for each variant constituting a system in the diasystem before comparisons be made and that each element of the constituent system be first understood in terms of the system to which it belongs makes it possible that the distribution of individual items in a system is also understood.

But many existing dialect studies have failed in matching their delimitation of dialect areas with those delimited by native speakers' attitudes. Different dialect boundaries have always emerged depending on the analyst and the choice of criteria. Dialectology, both traditional and structural, has given us palpable understanding of language history while on the other hand it has failed to define what a dialect is. Yet, dialectology would probably not have existed were there not the belief in the 'reality' of the dialect. That our delimitations of a dialect boundary on linguistic criteria alone have failed to explicate the native speaker's "feelings" about his dialect and its geographical boundary must make us aware that the reality of a dialect does not rest on criteria based on verbal features alone.

We may therefore envisage for dialectology another goal: the search for criteria of dialect classification which would precisely explicate the naive stereotype of speakers of the dialects about their own speech and its boundary. We believe that a dialect is the product of a people's ethnohistory as well as their verbal behavior. Dialectology has concentrated on describing the verbal features of areal cleavage. The inclusion of non-verbal material in dialectological work at least since the 1920's is motivated by the search for such criteria inasmuch as the recognition has come that the forces fragmenting an area act upon both the linguistic and non-verbal features of a people. The dialect is a product of many historical processes and it may be studied as an interlocking network of ethnohistorical and linguistic change.

It may be questioned whether linguistic theory as held at present can accommodate the type of dialectology proposed in the pages above: (a) the search for criteria of dialect classification that would precisely explicate the naive stereotype of speakers of the dialects about their own speech and its boundary; and (b) the study of the complex diversification of language features and accounting for their evolution. (a) above straddles language and culture, and may be assigned to ethnolinguistics. The relevant body of data is only partially linguistic: the inclusion of non-verbal culture as in Chapter 2 can hardly be justified by a purely linguistic study. And indeed, there are those for whom such a consideration is non-linguistic; (b) on the other hand has

always been in the mainstream of dialectology and historical linguistics. The application of structural linguistic methodology for dialect comparison is the motivation for Weinreich's construct of the diasystem. We shall mention in Chapter 6 what structure inheres in dialectology to permit this.

The theoretical problem of dialectology arises because of the very nature of the study which straddles language and folk culture. Moreover, the range of continuity of the data along the axes of time and space makes the methodology applicable to their analysis only partially structural.

The limitations attendant on our particular study cannot be overemphasized. As the first attempt ever in Yoruba dialectology, this study is self-contained. Our inability to interpret fully the data to be presented along the lines discussed above, the many areas in which only tentative conclusions can be reached and those in which interpretations are deferred, result largely from the lack of precedent in Yoruba dialectology.

1.3. Choice of the Area

In furtherance of the work done for an M.A. thesis (Adetugbo, 1965), we have elected to study Yoruba dialects in a more detailed and exhaustive way. The Yoruba language is native to the author, who has a knowledge of the koine and some other geographical varieties of Ondo and Okitipupa.

The Yoruba linguistic area is one of marked dialect differentiation, but surprisingly enough, the work that has so far been done on Yoruba dialectology is almost negligible. Notwithstanding anthropologists' interest in folk language, we have only three works bearing on Yoruba dialects and these deal exclusively with the phonology. (These works are mentioned in Chapter 5, p. 144.

Yoruba in Western Nigeria is spoken by about 10.2 million people. We have included in this study the whole area of Western Nigeria excepting the Badagry sector to the east of Lagos and the border areas between Western Nigeria and the Midwest region of Nigeria. Even though the people in the areas excluded regard themselves as Yorubas (Yoruba designates both the language and its speakers), we have no convincing reason to regard their dialects as belonging to the Yoruba language; this reasoning is based on casual observation. Further investigation is called for, but this could not be made in the short time our field trip afforded us.

The Yoruba language has a standardized form. This form has an orthography bequeathed to it by the efforts of the missionaries in the last century. It is only by this standardized form that Yoruba is known outside Western Nigeria. The standardized form itself achieves some measure of uniformity as a literary koine. The findings from our field work suggest that as a spoken language, this uniformity of the koine lags behind the written.

1.4. Acquisition of the Material

This study is based on data acquired first hand through interviews with informants who are native speakers of the local form of Yoruba. Each interview lasted three to four sessions of between two and a half and three hours each. The interview was with either a single informant, a whole family, or a group of interested people with one of them acting as a leader who often welcomed discussions with the others. Prior to standard informants' sessions mentioned above and the evolution of a standardized questionnaire, we had had discussions with Yoruba students in the Universities of Ibadan and Lagos and in Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, all in Western Nigeria. After this series of interviews with a makeshift questionnaire, a first tour of our area was made. Almost all the settlements were visited and recordings of responses to our makeshift questionnaire taken. From these evolved our final selection of important localities and the final standardized questionnaire.

1.41. The Questionnaire

Our final questionnaire contained only 500 items. Of these, the questions bearing on non-verbal culture were topically arranged. Even though this questionnaire evolved after three months' familiarization with the area and was geared towards the confirmation of known or suspected features, it also succeeded in bringing to light previously unsuspected

features and in discovering known facts as existing in areas where they were not expected.

The major factor aiding the preparation of the questionnaire was the author's previous knowledge of the native speech of Oyo and Ondo provinces. This, coupled with our three months' preliminary survey in which the speech of the areas not already known was emphasized, gave us a knowledge the scope of which enabled us to settle for such a short questionnaire. It is doubtful if a study of this nature could have been carried out without a previous knowledge of the area. A questionnaire drawn up on such basis may at best uncover phonological features; to elucidate the differences in the higher levels of linguistic cleavage, it would have to grow to unmanageable size. Would the results of a "blind" approach offset the waste of time involved?

The questionnaire was arranged in such a way as to allow free discussion. More often, if an unsuspected feature was discovered, the order of the questionnaire was suspended to allow the elicitation of more forms exemplifying the new feature. Since most of our informants were educated, it was not difficult to isolate the new feature and ask for more exponents. With illiterates and unidialectal people, recourse was had to the naming of objects when necessary.

1.42. The Records

Each interview was tape recorded on a Uher 400 Report S,

both electric and battery operated tape recorder. The advantages of the tape recorder for linguistic research have been discussed by Bottiglioni (1954) and Fischer-Jorgensen (1962). Its most significant use is for the historical record, "of the forms of speech which might be otherwise lost due to pressures of standardization" (Herzog, 1965:8). Another advantage is that the researcher can return to it again and again to check up the facts he is working with.

But we made sure that we transcribed the responses to our questions direct from the informant in phonetic script. The tape recorder therefore became a secondary source by which we could validate our transcriptions. This simultaneous phonetic transcription, though arduous, offsets transcription from the tape recorder, away from the informant. The latter procedure takes about three times the time spent in the field. And what if the tape recording is faulty or unclear?

1.43. Selection of the Informants

Our preliminary discussions with the adult students of the three institutions mentioned above made the task of finding informants a little easier than expected. Students from each area gave us names of people to be contacted, usually between three and five in each location. The qualifications of these potential informants as to age, education and linguistic background were reviewed in advance. It was sometimes

the case that when contacted, some of these potential informants were unwilling to help. Nevertheless, we were privileged to have a sizeable number of people to choose from.

Our favorite type of interview was with a whole family, with the parents above fifty and showing little, if any, traces of dialect mixture, and with their children ranging between fifteen and thirty-five years of age. These children are usually educated, so that a cross section of the language behavior in the locality is taken. Differences in response resulting from age, sex and education are weighed. What linguistic differences there are are usually phonological; they are fully described in Chapter 5, p.144. We also made sure of obtaining a cross section of the linguistic behavior in each locality by interviewing at least two such family units.

1.44. Selection of Locations

The selection of our locations is somewhat arbitrary. Nevertheless, it is not random. All towns with a population of 30,000 or more are included. Moreover, after our first preliminary tour, we informally ranked all settlements in the order of importance according to the dialect differences that separated them from their neighboring settlements. As a result, all settlements in the transitional zones were included, no matter what the population. We also made sure that not more than 30 miles would separate two settlements included. One other factor that was made use of is the

traditional subtribal grouping. At least, two settlements were chosen from each sub-tribal area. Figure 1:1 shows this sub-tribal grouping as well as the areas visited. Figure 1:2 shows our classification of the area into major dialect groups. These major dialects we have labeled North-West Yoruba, South-East Yoruba and Central Yoruba, henceforth NWY, SEY, and CY respectively.

This is the first classification of Yoruba dialects ever made. Even though the body of the evidence upon which this classification is based can only emerge in the following chapters we present a few of them below.

Isoglosses 1 and 2 may be regarded as phonological isoglosses depicting the changes of Proto Yoruba *ɣ*. Isoglosses 1 and 2 mark the preservation of *ɣ* in SEY, and its change to *w* in NWY. Between NWY and SEY is the area hemmed in by isoglosses 1 and 2. Here PY *ɣ* has become *ø*. These two isoglosses which we have taken as representative coincide with a number of cleavages. For instance, the area designated CY operates with grammatical vowel harmony whereas other areas do not. Negation is expressed with *kò* in NWY, fronting of pronoun and tense-aspect formative in CY but largely by tone change in SEY. The amount of convergence of the discontinuity at every level of our description will be shown later.

It is also noteworthy that there is some degree of coincidence between some lines of the subtribal grouping and isoglosses 1 and 2. SEY, delimited by isogloss 1 running

Fig. 1:1
Areas Visited and Sub-tribal Grouping

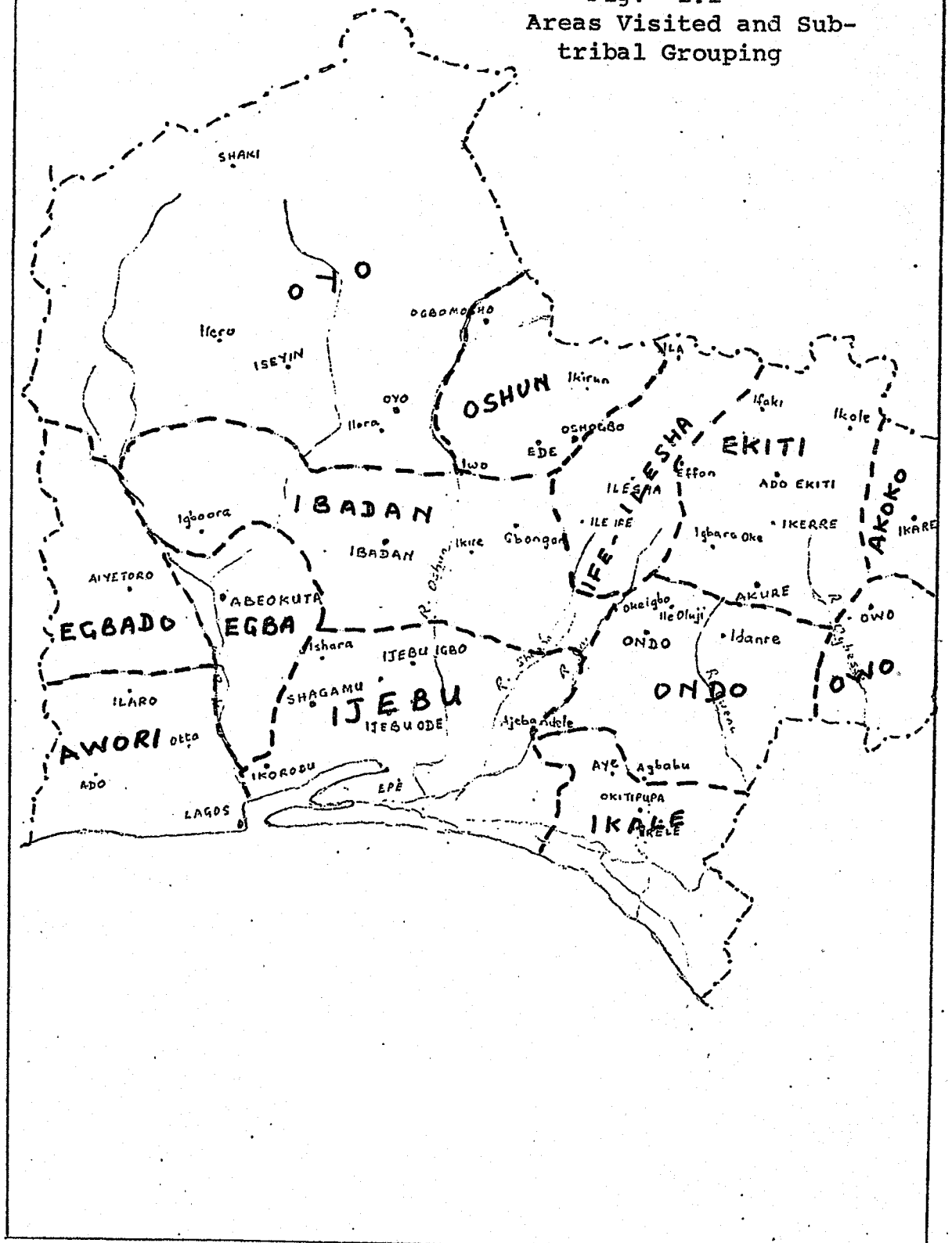
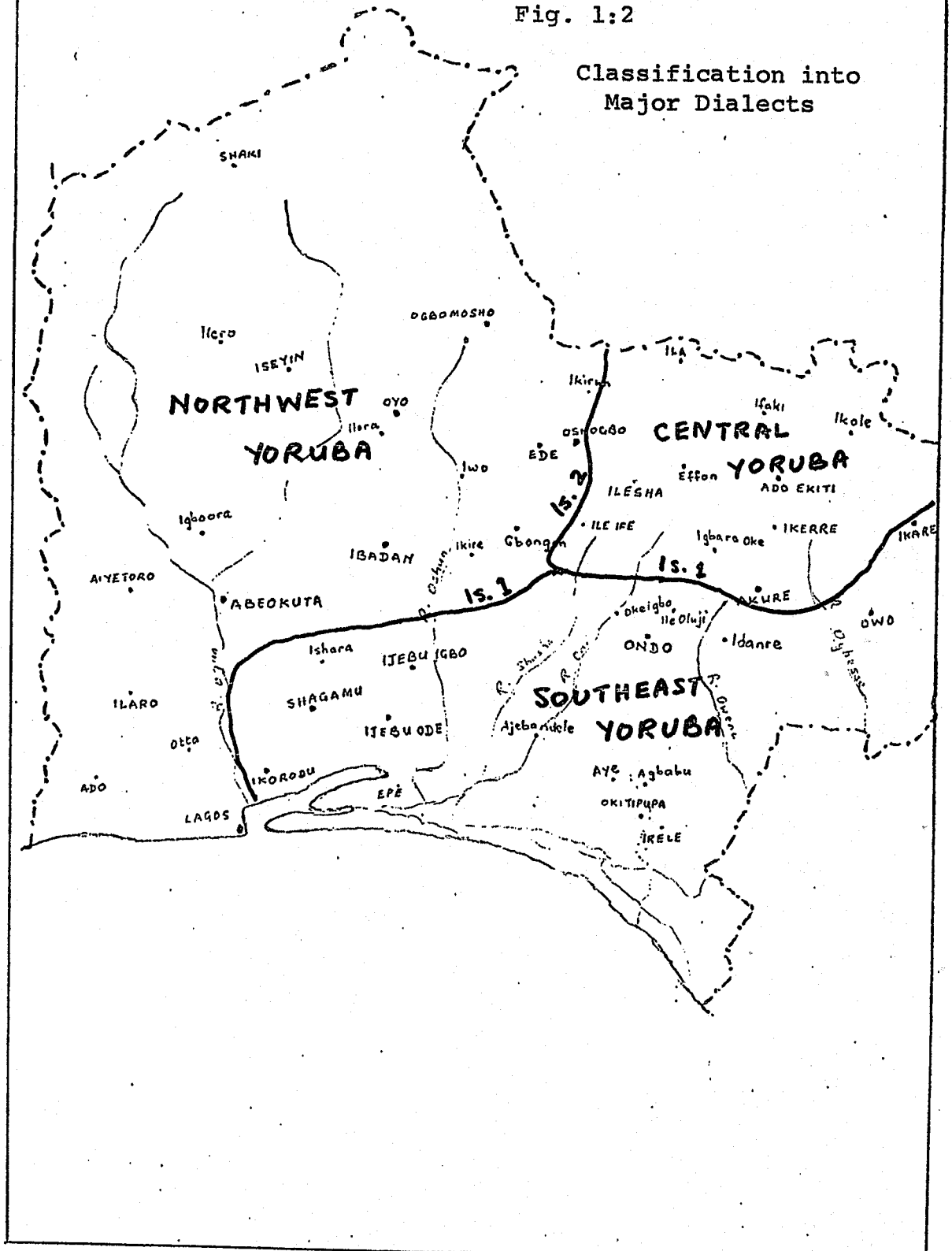


Fig. 1:2

Classification into Major Dialects



Southwest to Northeast encloses Ijebu, Ondo, Ikale, Owo and Akoko subtribal groups. CY is made up of Ife, Ilesha and Ekiti subtribal groups while NWY comprises Oyo, Egba, Ibadan and Oshun peoples. In Fig. 1:3 we superimpose Fig. 1:2 on Fig. 1:1.

We should mention that other classifications of this area are possible. For instance, the southwest corner of the linguistic area, made up of Awori, may, in another analysis be regarded as a major dialect area. We have not done this here because even though this particular area is sometimes characterized by transitional features between SEY and NWY, it will be seen from the discussions in the following chapters that the Awori area shares the bulk of its linguistic features with NWY.

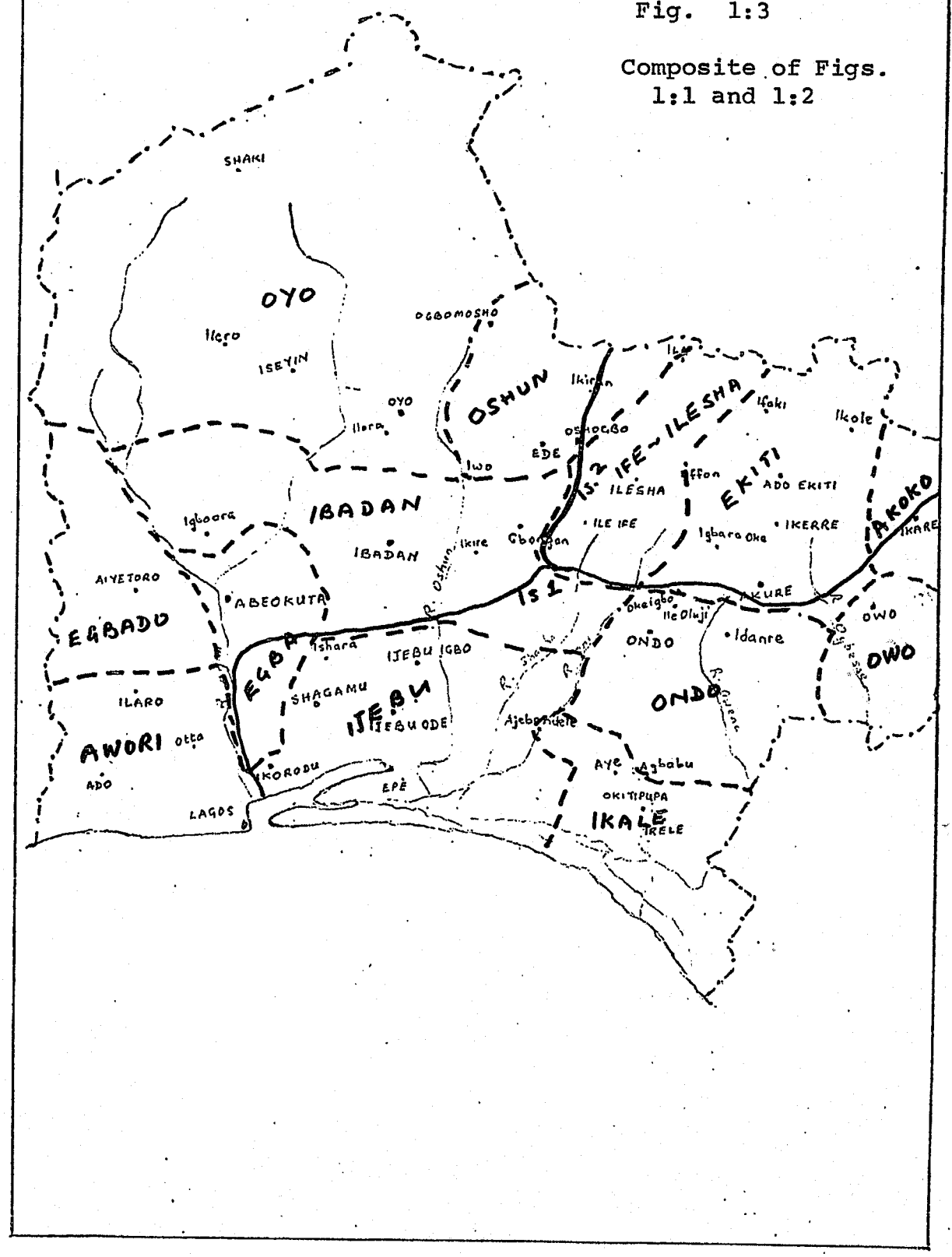
1.5. Plan of Presentation

We start first with the most general areas of description, the non-verbal culture (Chapter 2), where contact and migration probably play the major role, and where the mutual entailment in a structure of some of the items discussed could at best be regarded as different from those shown by linguistic features as, say, phonology.

We proceed from here to the description of the language itself (Chapters 3 - 5) starting with the most loosely structured level, the lexicon (Chapter 3). Even though some structural patternings are made use of here in "explaining" the evolution of lexical innovations, the major factor of dialect

Fig. 1:3

Composite of Figs. 1:1 and 1:2



differentiation within the lexicon is seen to be contact.

Chapter 4 deals with the grammar, that is with morpho-syntax, while in Chapter 5 we describe the phonology. In these two chapters, structural pressures are made use of to the fullest as determinants of the course of change, though contact and diffusion are not discountenanced.

We conclude this study with Chapter 6, where we bring together a reasoned resumé of the known history of the Yorubas as a test for the validity of the course we have charted for the development of the different dialect groups. We also suggest what the implications of the insight this study has afforded us are for the future development of Yoruba dialectology.

CHAPTER 2

NON-VERBAL CULTURE

2.0 Preliminary Considerations

The concept 'dialect' involves more than linguistic considerations. In its widest use, it embraces both verbal and non-verbal phenomena. What linguistics does is to describe its verbal aspects. But the recognition has always been with us that dialect boundaries are not necessarily delimited by linguistic cleavage alone and that our delimitations of a dialect area hardly ever matches that delimited by the native speaker's intuition. With this understanding has come the linguist's recourse to the use of non-verbal culture along with the linguistic in the analysis of a speech community in its geographic aspects. More than this, there has come the awareness that the "forces fragmenting an area affect both the language and the non-verbal culture of its inhabitants. It would be of some interest to the linguist as well as the anthropologist to examine the degree of coincidence among the lines of cleavage in both domains" (Herzog, 1965:17).

The ultimate goal we envisage for dialectology as a discipline, apart from its enriching our insight into the mechanics of language change, is to find what the significant determinants are that help the naive native speaker perceive

his dialect as an entity. The inclusion of non-verbal culture partially satisfies this goal.

2.01 Data Collection on Yoruba Traditions

In the description of anything 'traditional' as it relates to the Yoruba people, the immediate problem faced is one of reconstruction. Two things make this task an arduous one. First among these is the very rapid rate at which the Yorubas have absorbed foreign cultures. Two foreign cultures seem to have been dominant in determining the Yoruba ethnographic outlook today; in some areas these two influences are mutually exclusive while in others they are in cut-throat competition. These foreign cultures are Western civilization, the greatest single element of which is Christianity; and Arab culture, through the influence of Islam.

While Christianity has had a more direct influence in the wholesale elimination of traces, in its converts, of Yoruba culture, the influence of Islam has been through the medium of "holy wars" which routed peoples from their homes, gave birth to new settlements with systems alien to the Yoruba established traditions. Christianity gave schools and European ways of life while it associated anything Yoruba, such as carvings, ritual chieftaincy and secret societies with heathenism, with the threat of afterlife hell for people who were engaged in these "works of darkness and evil."

The result today is that while Western civilization

has made of many Yorubas more superficially westernized people in their religious beliefs, political institutions, dress and outlook than there are in, say, Britain, Islam has incorporated in its teaching many of the Yoruba traditional tenets, such as polygamy, ritual sacrifice of animals, and sàárà (traditional sharing and provision for the poor).

The second factor militating against the collection of data on non-verbal culture is linked with the one already mentioned: inevitable change. Even if there were no external influences of the scope of those already mentioned, it is inevitable that there would be change in the outlook of a people as time went by. The change in which our area has been engulfed was only hastened by these external influences mentioned above.

The search for informants for this section of our fieldwork was the most frustrating venture of all. Because most of the educated people in our area have equated tradition with backwardness which should be scoffed at, and because in fact many of these people are ignorant of these traditions, recourse had to be made to the use of very elderly and naive people as informants for non-verbal culture. Still, the availability of these elderly people was no guarantee for success. First, the elders enjoy having their traditions shrouded in mystery, and heaven help the researcher going to these people in western style dress. The frustration that

has all the time dogged the steps of researchers into Yoruba traditional healing is an eloquent testimony to this. Secondly, the past has become glorified and mythologized by the elders who see nothing but decay in the present, so that in their narratives one has to be very careful to sift facts from fiction.

In view of these limitations, we have been very careful in the selection of the materials to be presented; careful not only in the choice of informants but also in double-checking (where, for instance we were satisfied with three or four informants for the language, we had to make use of not less than five for non-verbal culture). And we present below only those aspects of non-verbal culture in which the veracity of our description can still be checked. Fortunately, many sociologists have dealt with some of the features of Yoruba culture that we present here, although some of their works give us a composite homogeneous picture without recognizing subethnic differences.

2.02 Method and Order of Presentation

We order our data topically in this chapter. The methodological merit of this procedure is that we shall be able to offer as an introduction to each subsection a brief outline of the general structure of that aspect of the non-verbal culture we are describing, before we deal with the areabound differences. This not only gives the reader a view of the

dynamics of the culture we describe but also later affords him the basis for a cross-dialect comparison. This topic ordering can be done for the first two subsections - lineage terminology and rights, and traditional political systems. In the third subsection we discuss a number of disparate elements within which there are regional differences. At the close of the chapter, we offer a summary of the trend of the lines of cleavage that might have been drawn.

2.1 Kinship and Lineage

The Yoruba social structure is primarily based on kinship, itself derived from a peculiar lineage system. The concept of the family comprising, as in Western culture, the father, mother and siblings is almost lacking. In its place is the lineage which might be thought of as an "extended family," made up of all who trace their descent from a historical figure at the apex of the structure.

> The framework of the Yoruba kinship system is the lineage structure. A Yoruba lineage, commonly termed ìdílé is a strictly unilineal descent group which....comprises all those persons, male or female, who trace descent from an acknowledged male ancestor through known or putative agnatic antecedents. A Yoruba patrilineage is a corporate localized unit differentiated from all other like groups by common and reciprocal rights, duties and privileges. Membership in a lineage is one of the primary determinants of an individual's social, economic, and political roles. (Schwab, 1958:301.)

It should be noted that Schwab based his conclusions on findings at Oshogbo, a NWY town. From this, he made generalizations which do not hold for all areas as will be seen below.

2.11 Descent

Fig. 2:1 corrects Schwab's impression. While it is true that in many areas lineage is traced exclusively unilineally and descent is agnatic, in Ijebu, Otta and Ondo lineage is traced multilineally and descent is cognatic. That is, in these SEY areas people trace their descent both patrilineally and matrilineally and one person may belong to two lineages. One is usually more active by choice in one lineage rather than in the other. The writer himself still attends lineage meetings of both his father's line and his mother's. In Ijebu, certain chieftaincy titles are still restricted today to matrilineal descent, and reserved for the son of a daughter of a ruler. Rights to land inheritance in Ondo can be had either by patrilineal or matrilineal descent. In Ekiti and other NWY areas, the situation is as Schwab has described it: patrilineal inheritance only.

2.12 Segmentation of the Lineage

Lineage segmentation seems to have been of the same structure all over our area, such differences as there are being terminological.[1] The lineage, **idílé**, is resolved into smaller groups through differentiations of generation and common immediate ancestors.

Fig. 2:2 shows the terminological difference in the resolution of the lineage into smaller groups by reference

[1] We present in this chapter rather than in the chapter on the Lexicon the lineage terminological differences. Presenting our discussion of the lineage fully in one place has the advantage of eliminating repetition and helping the reader to grasp the structure more easily.

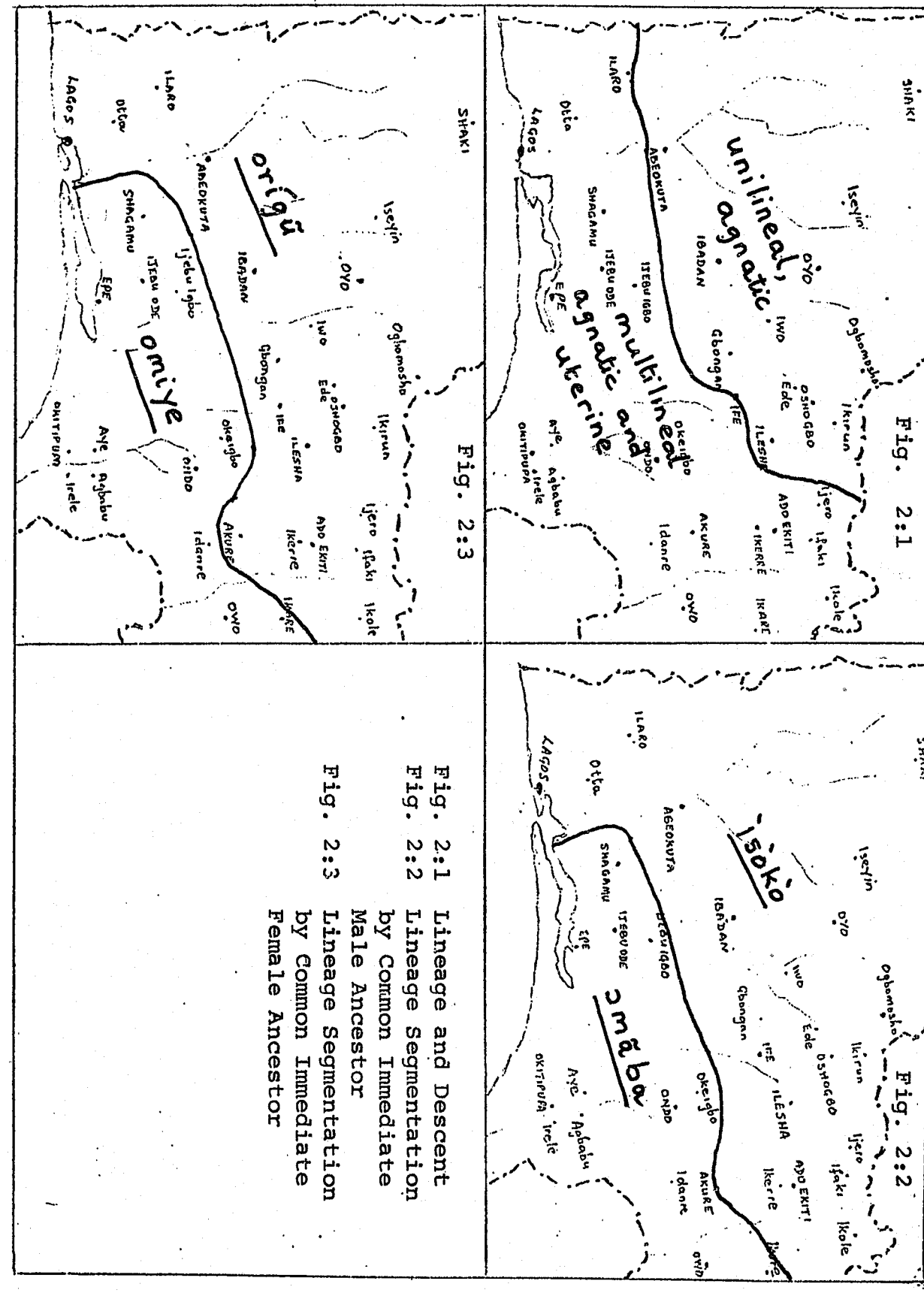


Fig. 2:1 Lineage and Descent
Fig. 2:2 Lineage Segmentation by Common Immediate Male Ancestor
Fig. 2:3 Lineage Segmentation by Common Immediate Female Ancestor

to common male ancestor. Isòkò in the north is the term for a segment so delimited while such a segment in the south is called omãba.

Fig. 2:3. Those in the north claiming a common uterine segment of a lineage refer to themselves as orígũ while in the south they are known as omiye. While the orígũ in the north cannot have inheritance rights, in the south the omiye have such rights. This difference is shown in Fig. 2:4.

2.13 Further Segmentation of the Lineage

The lineage system as we have described it is the widest unit of social and political organization among the Yoruba. It was often the case that the founding of a settlement was by a single lineage, if that lineage was large enough, or by many lineages which had loose descent ties or affinal relations. The range over which kinship relationships are recognized is usually so extensive that a lineage still has to resolve itself into yet smaller segments by criteria other than common immediate male or female ancestor. Many lexical items exist for indicating relationship within the genealogical structure, but the specialized use of some of these words is lost to us. Among these are ɛbí and ìbátõ. Schwab (1958: 303) remarks that "Yoruba employ the term ibaton to express kinship ties between cognates," and that agnates are distinguished by the term ebi.

Fig. 2:5 shows, however, that in both CY and SEY areas,

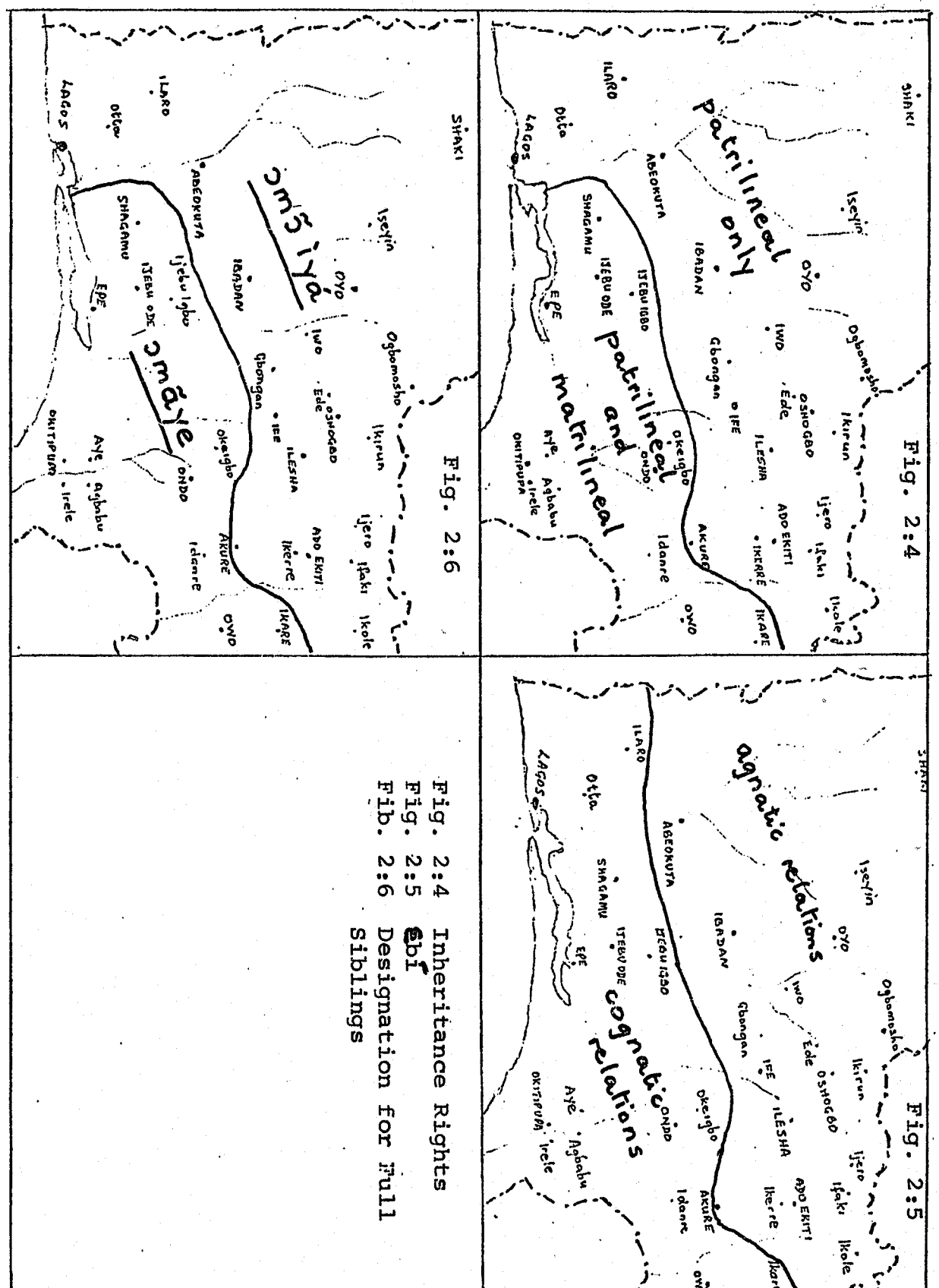


Fig. 2:4 Inheritance Rights
Fig. 2:5 ɛbí
Fib. 2:6 Designation for Full Siblings

ɛbí designates close cognatic relationship across any other boundary of lineage segmentation.

The lineage is further resolved by generation differences. The Yoruba are a gerontocratic people and the near-immediate family of father, wives, and children is recognized from the wider lineage. We mention here, to eliminate misunderstanding, that usually all members of the same lineage live together in large compounds of many houses overlooking either an open courtyard or, if the lineage is made up of too many members for this to be possible, they live together in large quarters made up of such compounds. Farmland and these houses are corporately owned and held in trust for all the members of the lineage by the oldest person, so that the nearimmediate family of the type described has no independent existence separate from the lineage as a whole.

Yoruba society is a predominantly polygamous one and siblings can have a common father but different mothers. Even though divorce was rare, it was still possible for a woman to bear her children to different men since remarriage to a close kin of the husband was guaranteed the woman on the death of her husband. This near-immediate family thus distinguishes children born

(a) as full siblings

(b) of the same man by different wives

(c) of the same mother but of different men.

The difference among the dialects is here again a matter of difference in terminology. Fig. 2:6 shows that while full siblings are called ɔmɔ ìyá in the north, the south calls them ɔmãye.

Fig. 2:7. Half siblings of a common father but different mothers are designated bàbákɔ̃ in the north and ibakɛ́ in the south.

Fig. 2:8. Half siblings of a common mother but different fathers are called ìyɛ̀kɔ̃ in the north but omiye in the south.

Fig. 2:9 shows one more difference, this time an ethnological one. In the north, while siblings address one another by name, this practice is restricted in the south to elders addressing younger people only. Younger people in the south cannot address elders by name. Instead, they call them ɛ̀gbɔ́ or ɛ̀gĩ. Everywhere in Yoruba, however, everybody who is as old as one's parents is addressed as bàbá 'father' or ìyá 'mother', the same terms used for one's parents.

2.14 Pattern of Cleavage

The discontinuity that emerges from Figs. 2:1, 2:4 and 2:9 as shown in the composite Fig. 2:10, is a cleavage between the north and the south running congruent to the phonological isoglosses mentioned in chapter 1. It is particularly satisfying to us that our major dialect boundaries are established on corroborative evidence based on both linguistic and ethnohistorical data. We shall further refer to this in chapter 6.

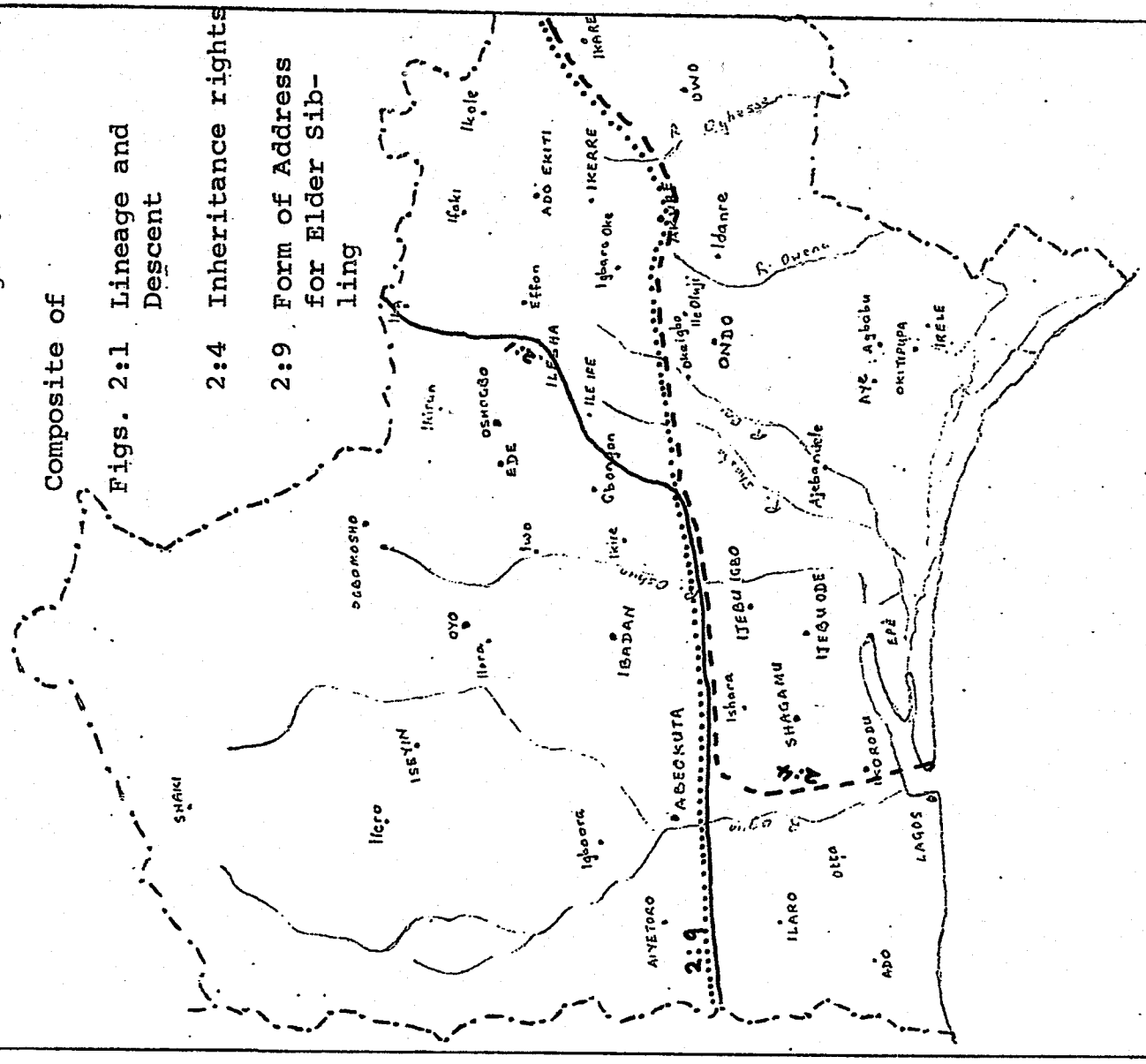
Fig. 2:10

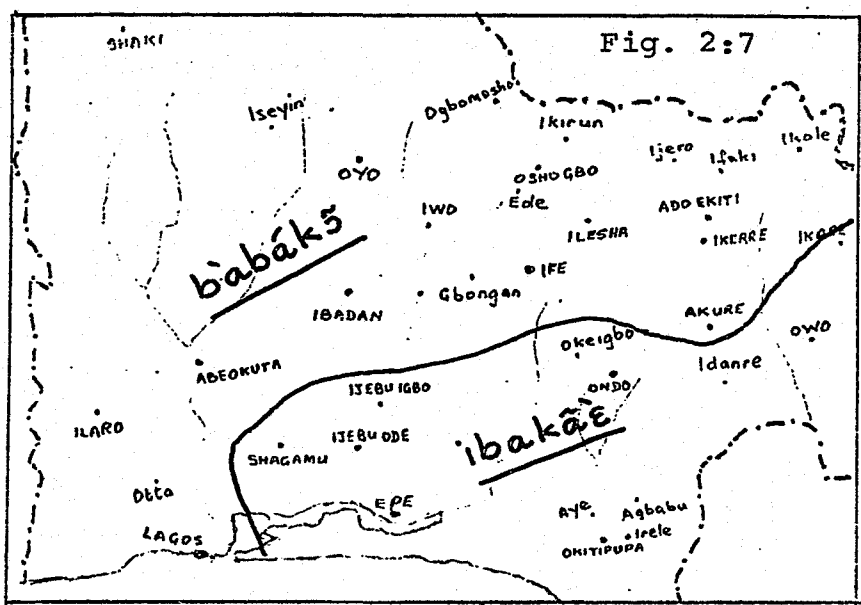
Composite of

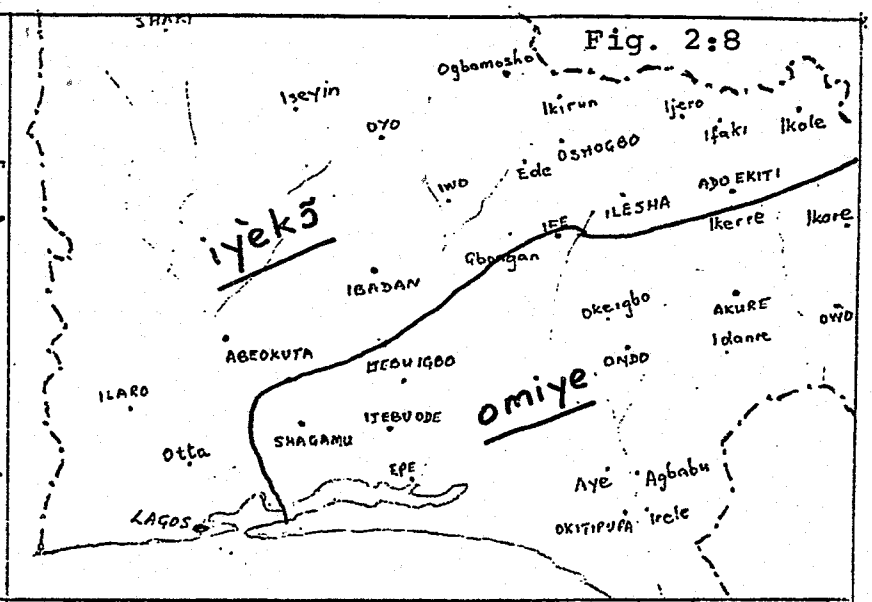
Figs. 2:1 Lineage and Descent

2:4 Inheritance rights

2:9 Form of Address for Elder Sibling







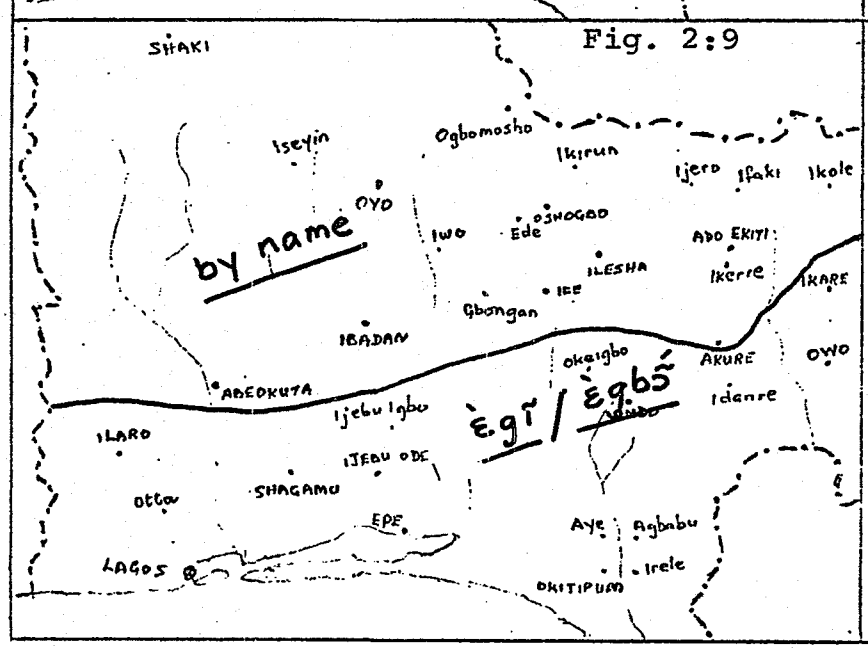


Fig. 2:7 Half Siblings of Common Father

Fig. 2:8 Half Siblings of Common Mother

Fig. 2:9 Form of Address for Elder Sibling

2.2 Social and Political Structure

As already mentioned, both the social and the political systems of the Yoruba are more or less rooted in the lineage structure. To give a generalization of how this works would probably lead to a misrepresentation of the whole structure and its cross-dialect differences. Both the political and social structures and the function of each unit within the structures differ slightly from place to place, even though they are known by the same names almost everywhere in Yorubaland. What is common to all Western Nigeria Yoruba is the institution of kingship and the graded chieftaincy systems.

2.21 Graded Organizations Below Chieftaincy

Apart from the lineage system, other organizations do exist and these in some areas play almost as important a role as the lineage system.

2.21.1 The Age Set (Fig. 2:11).

In Owo, Ekiti, Ondo and Ijebu, every man belonged to an ɛgbɛ́ or age set whose functions were primarily social. Members of a man's ɛgbɛ́ often helped him in his farm work, and he invited them to his household festivities, and sometimes to the rituals. The ɛgbɛ́ was constituted every three years, which was usually the time span between the birth of full siblings, so that full brothers could not belong to the same age set. A boy was initiated into his age set along

with others of about the same age when he reached his ninth birthday. The king gave each age set a name reflecting a memorable event and later a leader was elected by the members of the set on account of his unusual ability. The ɛgbɛ́ met at regular intervals to discuss current issues and personal problems.

Today, ɛgbɛ́ exists everywhere in Yorubaland with great modifications as social clubs, but their membership is no longer automatic nor defined by age. The traditional ɛgbɛ́ seems to have been absent from NWY areas where its modern form should be viewed as a modification of SEY traditional ɛgbɛ́ brought to NWY areas through contact and diffusion.

2.21.2 The ɔtú or Grade System (Fig. 2:12).

The ɔtú was a series of grades through which a man passes from adulthood to elderhood. Unlike the age set, a particular one to which a man belonged exclusively for life, the ɔtú had a life span of nine years, and a man rose from one ɔtú into another according to his age. The responsibilities of every ɔtú were also different. Each grade carried its own duties: youth grades were assigned to weeding; another grade was assigned to road making, while in the fourth and fifth grades, a man was available for war duties.

Traditionally the institution of the ɔtú like the ɛgbɛ́ was also restricted to the southwest and central Yoruba areas.

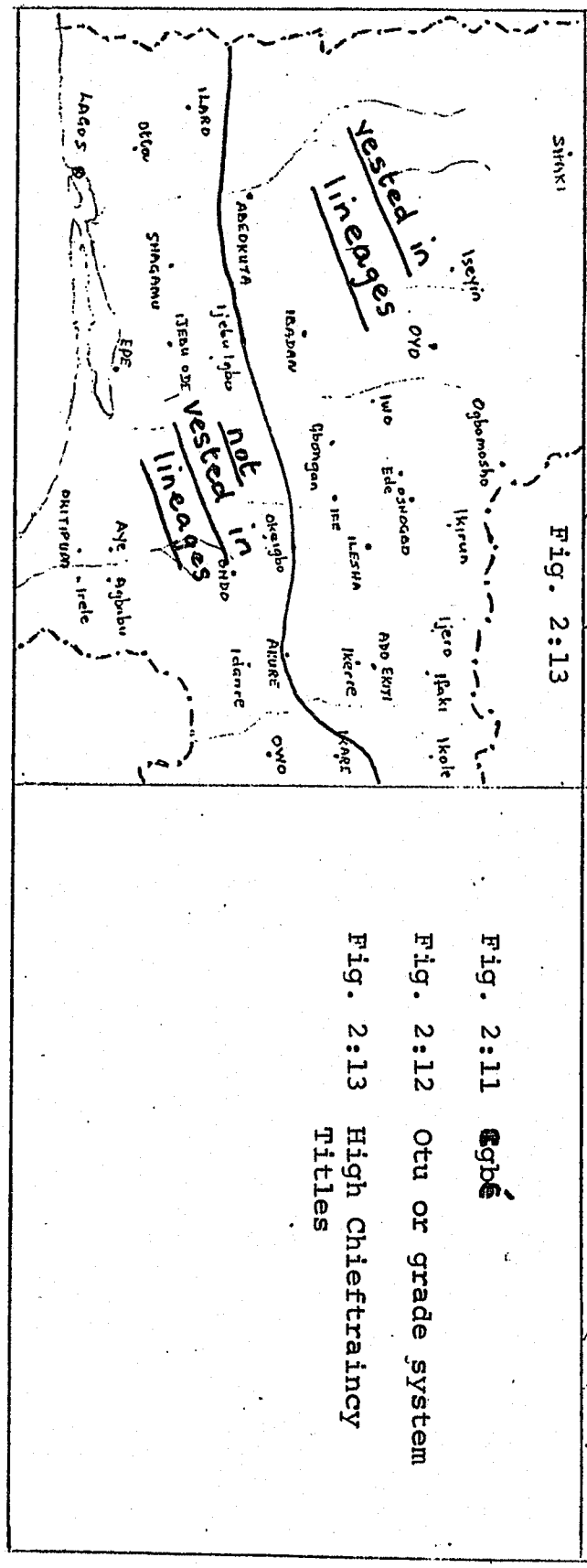


Fig. 2:11 Egbé

Fig. 2:12 Otu or grade system

Fig. 2:13 High Chieftraincy Titles

The organization of the ọ̀tú had consequences for the political administration of the area in which it was present. In the areas in which it was absent its functions were fulfilled by other institutions.

We may note that the fact that the ẹgbẹ́ and the ọ̀tú traditionally occupied the same territory probably implies that there was a functional relationship between them. Such a relationship we have been unable to reconstruct. It is also evident that while the ẹgbẹ́ has diffused to NWY, the ọ̀tú has not. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the ẹgbẹ́ has been modified with respect to definition of membership in NWY.

The Abeokuta area presents some difficulty of interpretation. It is a location with both NWY type of ẹgbẹ́ and SEY ọ̀tú. As will be seen in our later chapters, Abeokuta is full of such discrepancies. These are probably explainable by the fact that Abeokuta consists of peoples from the different areas under discussion.

2.22 Government of the Town

In the traditional government of the Yoruba town, all the component parts of the social structure already described--ìdílé ẹgbẹ́, and ọ̀tú, chieftaincy and kingship, wherever they exist-- are all wedded together.

2.22.1 Lineage Chiefs

Because of the strong reliance on the lineage as a main

unit in the social setup, the baálé or 'lineage head' usually had a chieftaincy title which gave him recognition beyond the confines of his lineage and, usually because he was old, established him as a wise man who could bear part of the responsibility of town government. Practices differed from town to town.

In Ekiti, even with its strong institution of the grade system, the high chieftaincy titles were still vested in the lineage system; but here as in Oyo, and Ibadan, for the lineage chieftaincy title which had political functions, the lineage head may be superseded and the holder of the title vested in the lineage elected by the popular vote of all the male adults of the lineage. Thus it seems that in the government of the town every lineage was represented in both Ekiti and Oyo.

In Ondo and Ijebu the lineage as a unit had less prominence than in Ekiti. Lineage heads and chiefs rarely had functions beyond the moral discipline of their lineage members. Fig. 2:13 shows the extent of the areas in which this dichotomy in the function of lineage chiefs exist. Government of the town was also by chiefs as in Ekiti. Where lineage chieftaincy carried political functions, government was through the lineage. In other areas, the chiefs responsible for government were men and women chosen not through their loyalty to their lineages but are people who had risen through a series of grades in the title societies as a result

of prowess and wealth and promise. Thus in the north the lineage was more important in town government while in the south, the title societies were the more important.

This difference between the north and south is reflected in prevailing patterns of inheritance. While in Ondo and Ijebu in SEY hereditary ritual chieftaincies could often pass directly from father to son (though not necessarily to the oldest son), in northern Yoruba, the title could be transferred to any lineal descendant of the first holder by the members of the lineage who usually met to elect the new chief, (although the Ifa oracle could often be used to sway the people's choice).

2.22.2 The Council of Chiefs

In the hierarchy of the political setup, the lineages and grade systems were basic and were immediately followed by the council of chiefs. Chieftaincy was and is still a common institution among the Yorubas. But chieftaincy titles and their organization were different according to the locality. In Ekiti, Ondo and Ijebu, senior chiefs, as distinct from lineage and hereditary chiefs, had a three-step gradation into ìwàrèfà, ìjòyè, ɛlégbé, in descending order of importance. The ìwàrèfà chiefs constitute, with the ọba as head, the supreme council in SEY. The ijoyes are quarter chiefs charged with the responsibility of maintaining law and order in particular sections of the town. The ɛlégbés had the duty of organizing the grade systems and the supervision of civic duties.

As Fig. 2:15 shows, this threefold division of chieftaincy is nonexistent in NWY areas. The organization of chieftaincy titles here is into civil as against war titles. Within each division, the titles are ranked in order of seniority. At the apex of the organization, linking both civil and war chiefs together, is the king. In Oyo and Ibadan, even today when civil wars are virtually passé, the title of Bashorun [bašorũ], the traditional war chief, is still conferred.

The twofold division into civil and war chiefs had consequences in NWY absent from SEY. First was the fact that the war chief, charged with the responsibility of recruiting and maintaining soldiers, often became more powerful than the king and was usually his rival. There were instances in which the war chief became powerful enough to displace the king. To offset this possibility, the king took many precautions, which included the establishment of a royal army as well as the conferral of patronages on powerful citizens to win their support.

Fig. 2:16. In SEY areas, the organization of the army was in the hands of the ɛlɛ́gbɛ́ chiefs; there were no permanent standing armies, no professional soldiers. Consequently the ɛlɛ́gbɛ́ chiefs could not be powerful enough to challenge the authority of the king.

2.23 Kingship

The Yoruba king was the ruler of his town. He was

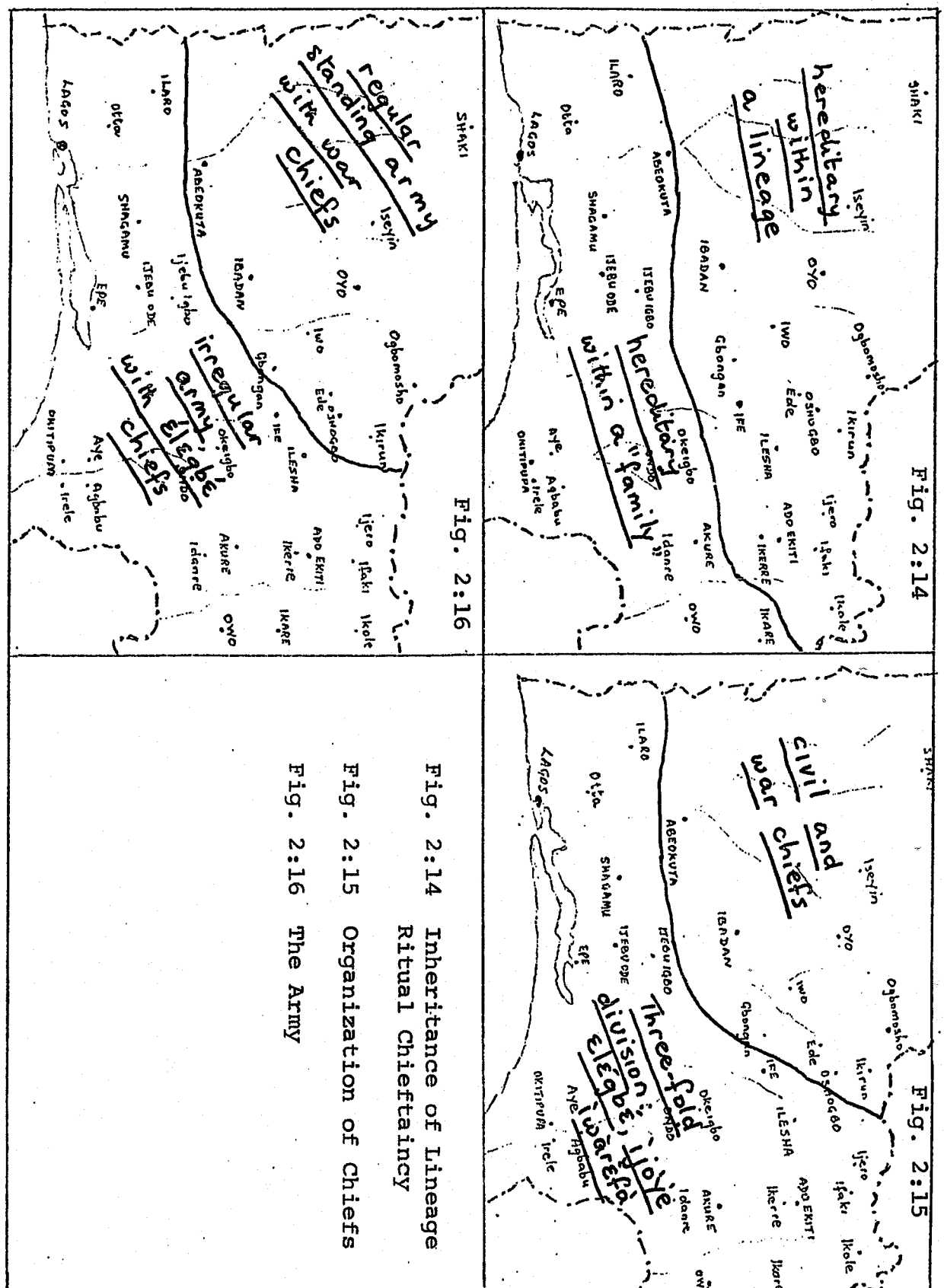


Fig. 2:14 Inheritance of Lineage Ritual Chieftaincy

Fig. 2:15 Organization of Chiefs

Fig. 2:16 The Army

more or less sacred and was the personification of all that was his town. Every Yoruba town in Western Nigeria has a king whose functions have now been more circumscribed than those of his ancestors.

Kingship is hereditary within a lineage which can trace its origin patrilineally to either the founder of the town or its conqueror. The ruler of every town today is a king, although there is ample evidence that some towns have had ruling queens in the past, and even today in some places the regent at the death of a king is usually one of the king's widows. The successor must be a son born to a long-deceased king while he was on the throne. Thus the succession may often bypass the first son. Also, there are many segments to the royal lineage and each segment in turn presented its own candidate for the throne. The final selection of the monarch was made by the senior title chiefs.

2.23.1 The Divine King

Fig. 2:17. The divinity of the oba was a belief held by many of his subjects. In the Ekiti and SEY areas this was always the case and the king was usually secluded from public view after his enthronement. He was always in his palace and could be visited only by the chiefs of the supreme council. He rarely showed himself to the public except during special rituals; then he masked his face. In NW Yoruba areas the king is not regarded with much reverence.

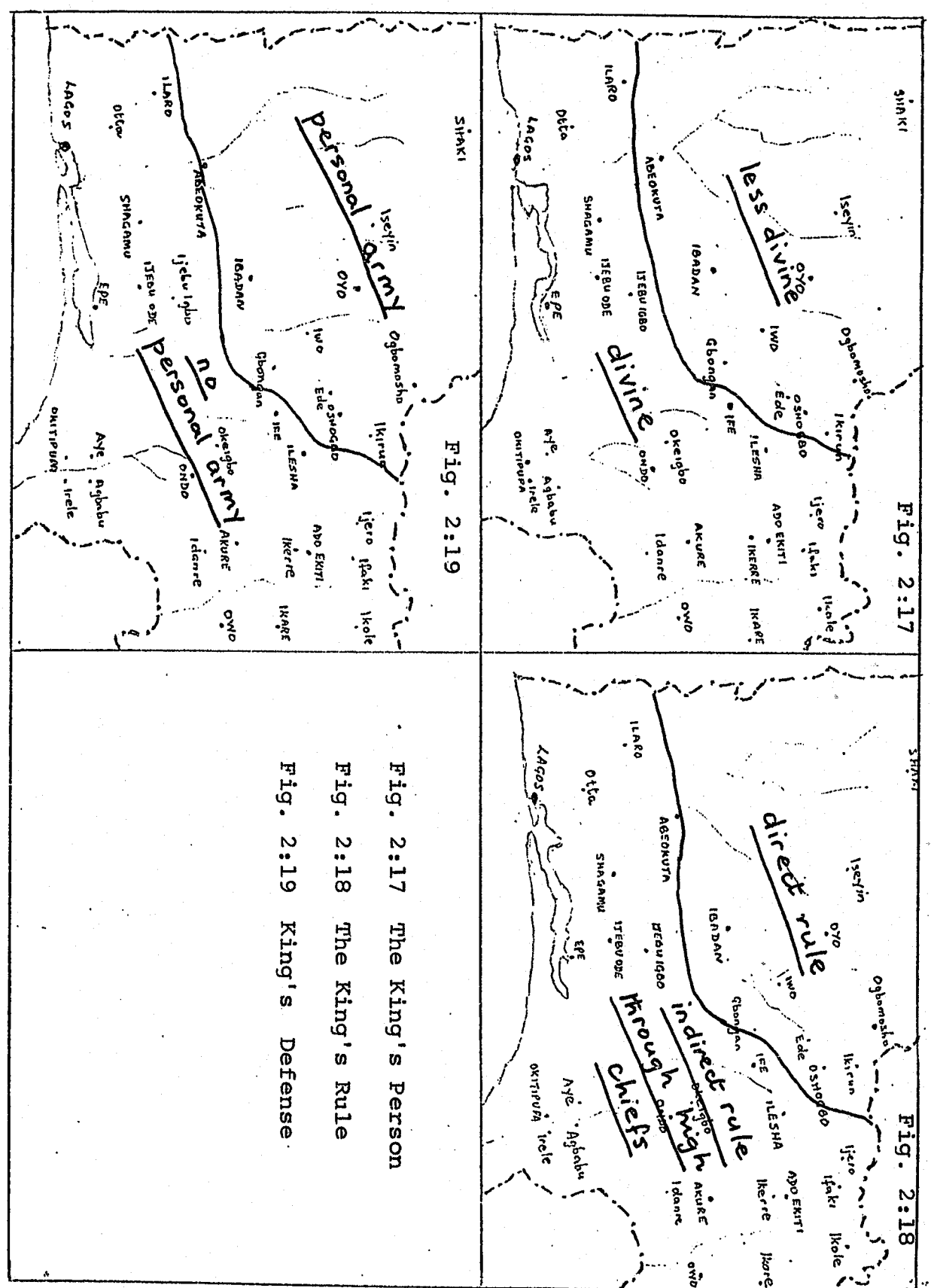


Fig. 2:17 The King's Person

Fig. 2:18 The King's Rule

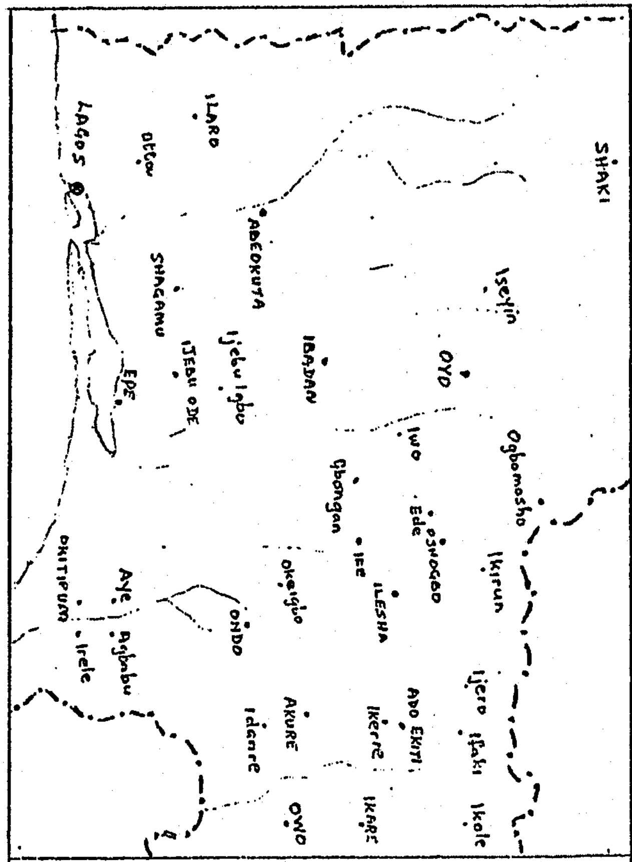
Fig. 2:19 King's Defense

He was involved in the day to day affairs of his town and so had to appear to his people more often.

Fig. 2:18. A consequence of this is found in the way the king ruled his subjects. In Ekiti, Ondo and Ijebu, the king ruled through his high chiefs who were always loyal to him. The high chiefs took advice from the lower ranking chiefs; their decisions, whatever they are, would then be transmitted to the people with the sanction of the king. In NWY areas, the king with the war chiefs at his throat could not take things for granted. He became directly involved in the decisions to be taken and most often acted without the advice of his chiefs. In fact he usually became autocratic; he had to show enough strength and ruthlessness not to leave room for any rivalry.

Fig. 2:19. The organization of the king's household also differed regionally. In Ekiti, Ondo, and Ijebu, the king had servants and household policemen who were also messengers and who were recruited by the ɛlɛ́gbɛ́ chiefs; in Oyo and Ibadan, he had a standing army of mercenaries and slaves who served as his bodyguard in case of an assault on his palace by his rivals.

Fig. 2:20. The position of members of the royal lineage ɔmɔba shows some differences also in these areas. In SEY, the ɔmɔba had no privileged status in the society different from that of the ordinary citizen. In fact, the ɔmɔba must have been somewhat lower in status. He was debarred



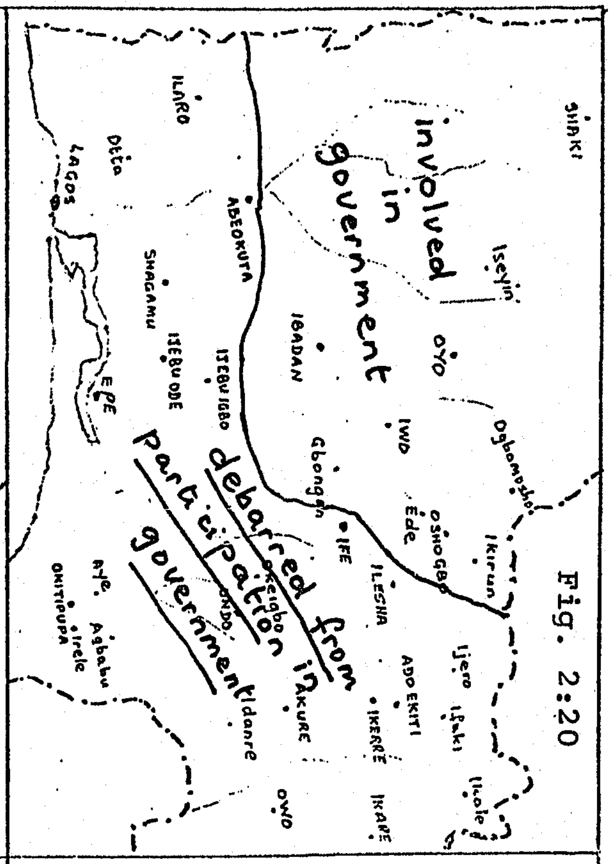


Fig. 2:20

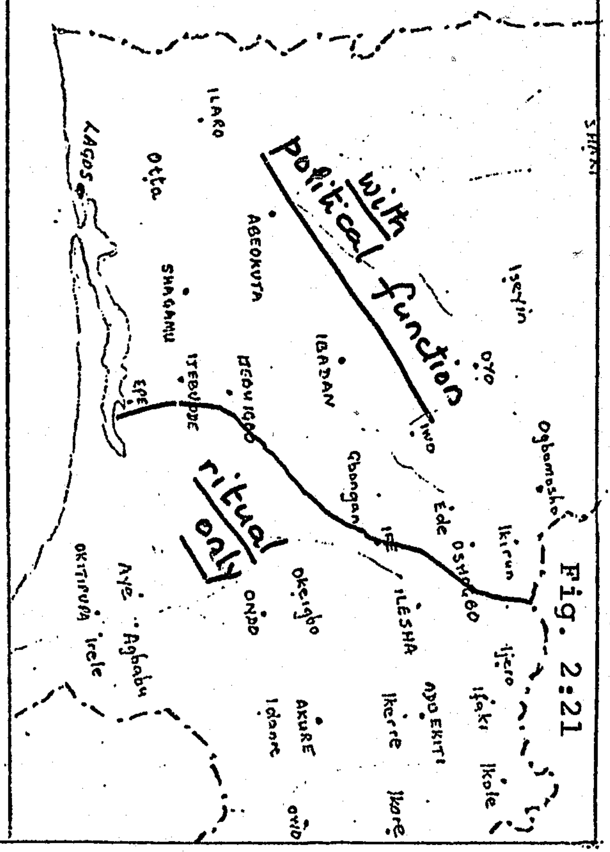


Fig. 2:21

Fig. 2:20 Members of Royal Lineage

Fig. 2:21 The Ogboni Cult

from most of the chieftaincy titles and the king could not bestow on his relations any patronage. In the NWY areas, however, the king had to buttress his position by the conferring of patronages on those who would be loyal to him, and these included members of the royal lineage. Thus, members of the royal lineage could be chiefs and even share with the king the perquisites of his office.

2.24 The Ogboni Cult

The Ogboni is a secret society existing everywhere today in Yorubaland. It has shrunk in status from what it was traditionally--a privileged society invested with both political and ritual functions. It claimed among its membership all the senior chiefs and a small quota of women. Its secret is in its ritual worship. It believes that the Earth, ilɛ, existed before the gods and that since everything eventually returns to it, ilɛ, and the dead, not the gods, are the sources of moral law and hence the objects of worship. So the Ogboni worships the Earth as a spirit. Apart from the mode of worship, which may not be revealed to a non-member, this is probably its most important secret.

Williams (1954) reports about the cult that;

"(a) It has a secret in virtue of which its members claim mystical and hence secular power and privileges with regard to non-members;

(b) it has a selected membership, to qualify for which some sort of achievement is necessary;

(c) it has the right to impose sanctions on those who reveal its secrets and procedures to others."

The political functions of the Ògbóni stem from the fact that most of its membership are made up of high chiefs, the king, its constitutional head, was excluded from personal appearance at its proceedings.

Fig. 2:21 shows the areas in which the Ògbóni exercised political functions, i.e. in Oyo, Ibadan, Ijebu and possibly in Ife. In the other areas, it was only a ritual society.

The existence of the Ògbóni should probably not be viewed as independent of the other socio-political organizations. Some of its functions in Oyo, for instance, parallel those performed by the Ìwàrɛ̀fà in SEY. When, for example, people became dissatisfied with the rule of a king, the Ìwàrɛ̀fà in SEY ask the king symbolically to sleep. The king then committed suicide. In Oyo, it is the Oyo misi (the highest ranking members of the Ògbóni) who send the king a covered calabash to indicate that he should commit suicide. It will thus be seen that some of the functions performed by the Ìwàrɛ̀fà in SEY areas are taken over by the Ògbóni in NWY.

But we find it difficult to reconstruct how the Ògbóni an essentially NWY feature relates to the ɛgbé and the Òtu

in areas where it overlaps these SEY features as in Ijebu.

Figs. 2:22 and 2:23 give us composites of some of the figures in section 2.2. The different political systems sketched above show partial similarities and differences. It is most probably the case that the institutions of SEY preserve greater relics than those of NWY.

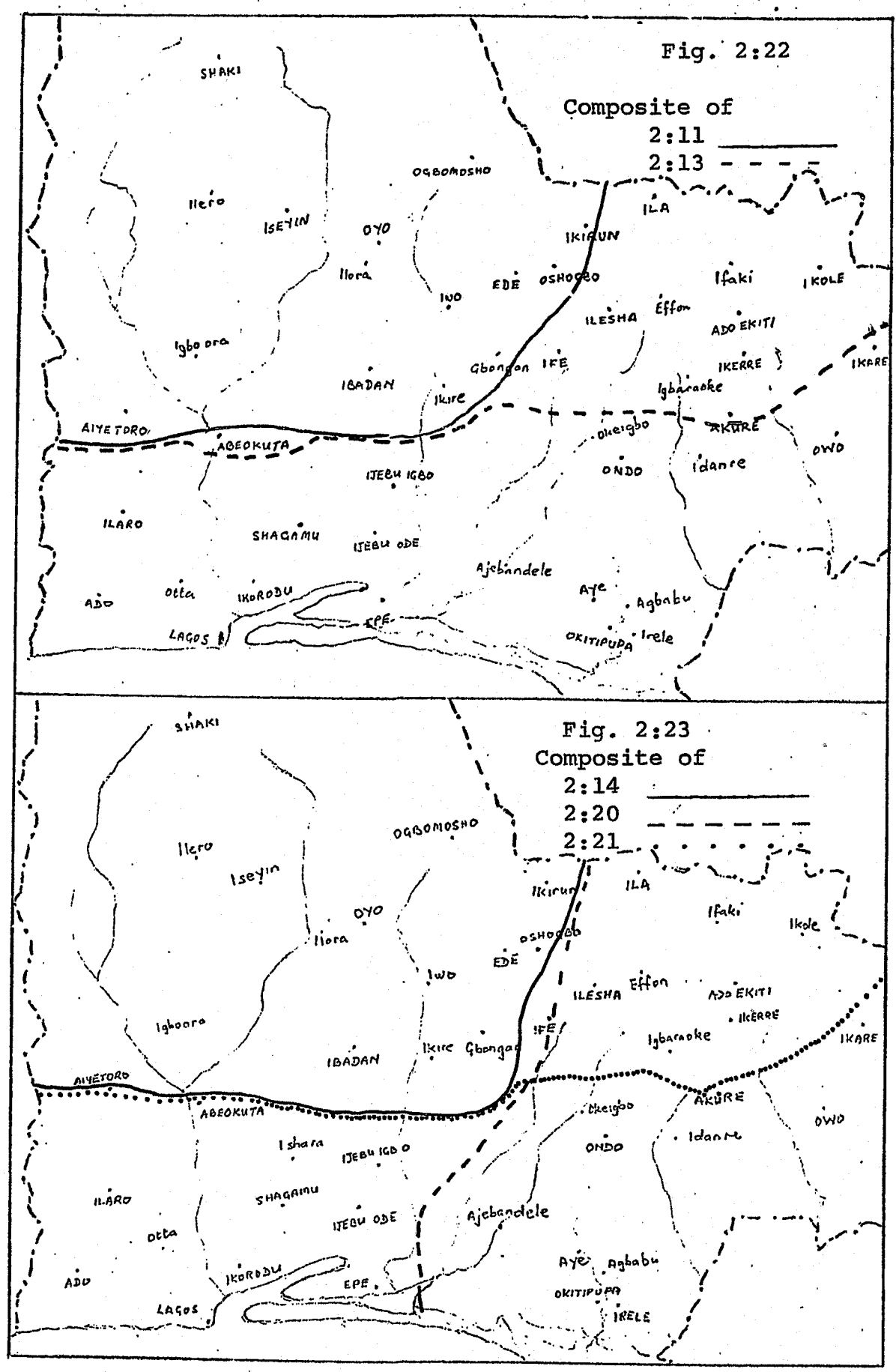
2.3 Other Features

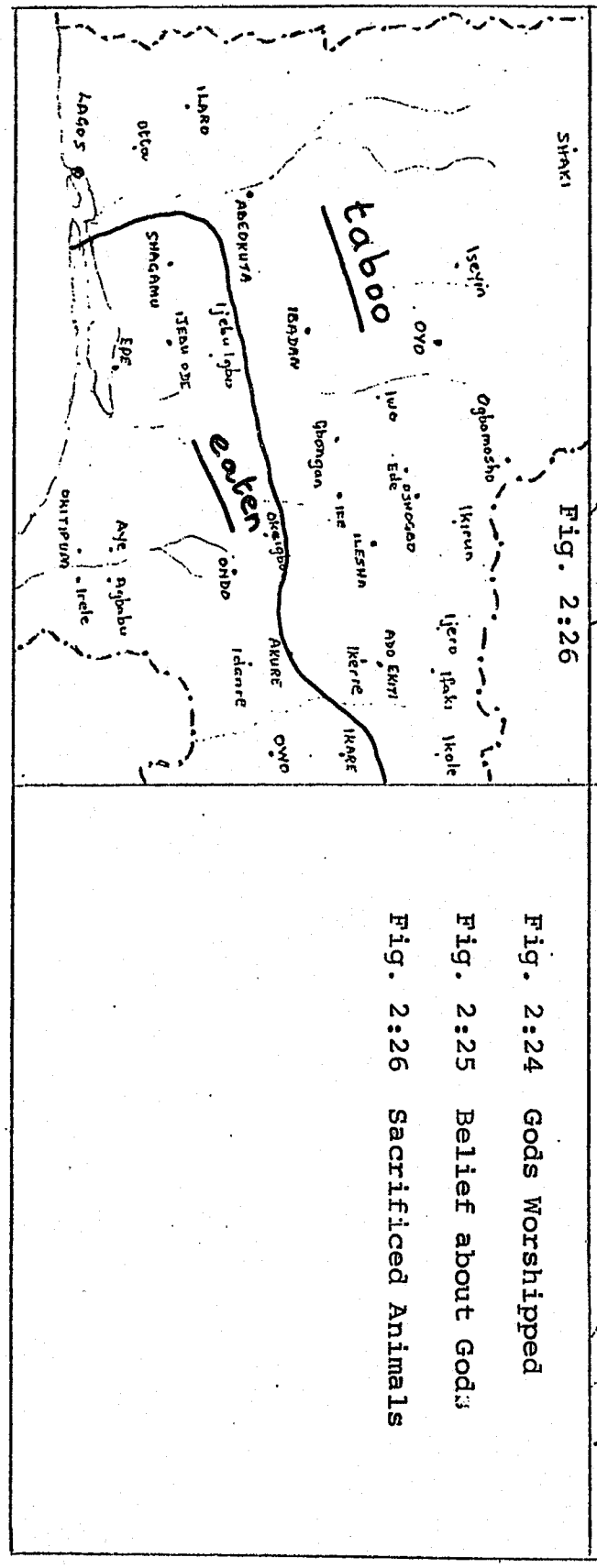
We take up in this section some minor features which can be easily understood outside the systems in which they exist. These include beliefs and taboos, food and tribal marks.

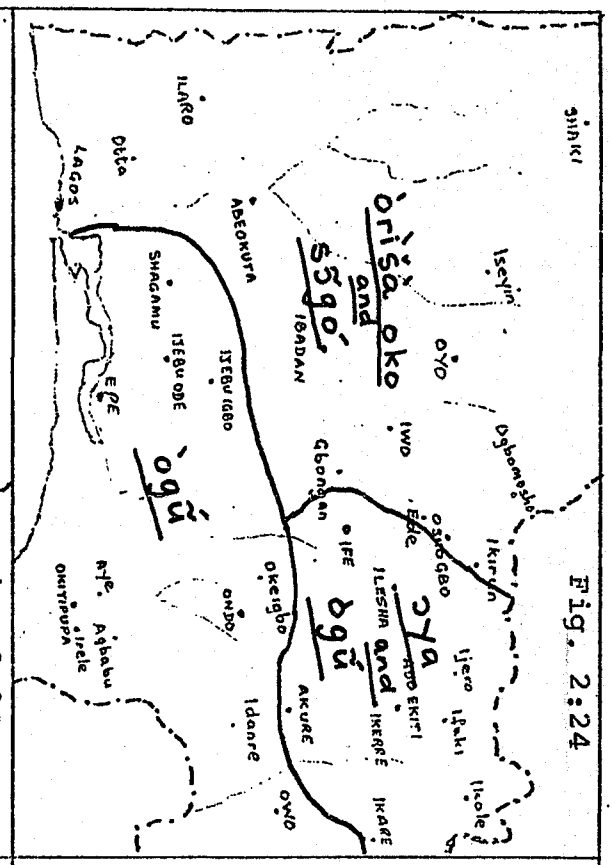
2.31 Beliefs and Taboos

The Yorubas worshipped many gods. Each lineage had its own shrines and could worship as many gods as the Ifa oracle prescribed. Also each town had its own gods, the guardian of which was the oba or his appointee. Of these gods one or two constituted the major deities for each town. Fig. 2:24 shows the major deities for each of the areas under consideration. In Ondo, Owo, Okitipupa and Ijebu, Ogun [ọgũ] 'god of war' was the major god worshipped. Ilesha, Ife, and Ekiti, had both Oya [ọya] 'river deity' and ọgũ while Ibadan, Oyo and Oshogbo had the god of farming ọrìṣà oko and ṣàngó 'the god of thunder'.

Fig. 2:25. Beliefs about the gods also show a cleavage along the NWY/SEY line. In NWY, the gods were regarded







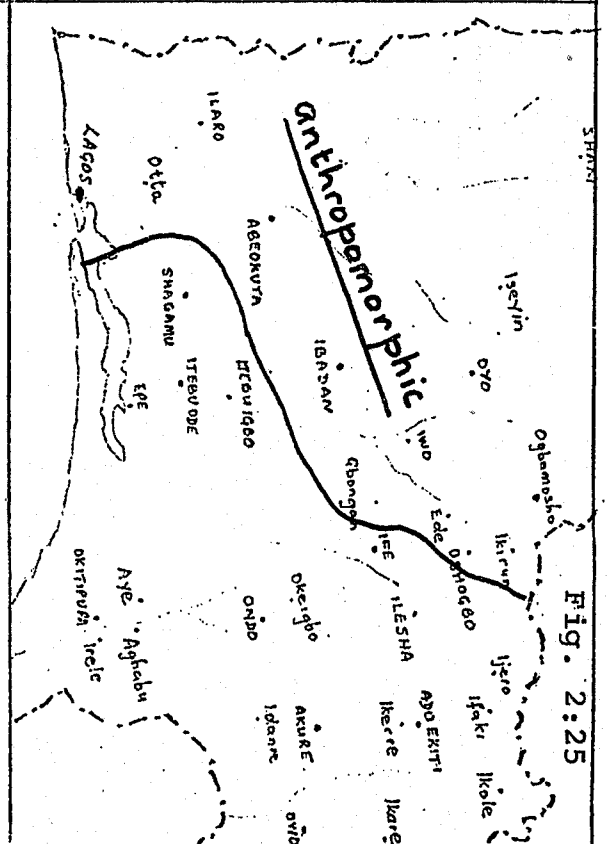


Fig. 2:24 Gods Worshipped

Fig. 2:25 Belief about Gods

Fig. 2:26 Sacrificed Animals

as anthropomorphic. Thus šɔ̀gó was born of yemɔ̀ja 'a river goddess' and dàda 'god of nature' was his younger brother. Šɔ̀gó also had wives ɔya and ɔ̀šũ, who were river deities. This anthropomorphism does not exist outside NWY.

Fig. 2:26 shows that sacrificed animals were eaten in many areas of SEY by anybody present during the slaughter of the animal whereas in other areas eating of sacrificed animals was taboo to all except the ritual priests.

Staple Food--Fig. 2:27

The staple food of the Yorubas also shows marked differences along the major dialect boundaries. The staple food in NWY is àmɔ̀là. In Ijebu and surrounding areas it is gàrí, made of cassava flour. (Gàrí also exists everywhere, but is not eaten as commonly as it is in Ijebu.) In the CY areas as well as in Ondo and Owo, the staple food is iyã́, pounded yam. In Ikitipupa, kpúkpúrú is the common food. It is also made from cassava, as is the case with gàrí. While with gàrí the tuber is peeled before fermentation and thereafter grated, for kpúkpúrú the cassava tuber is allowed to ferment before the back is removed.

The three types of stews shown in Fig. 2:28 are confined to the major dialect areas. In NWY it is gbɛ̀gìrì made of blackeye peas. In Ijebu, the stew is of melon, while elsewhere okro soup is the main sauce.

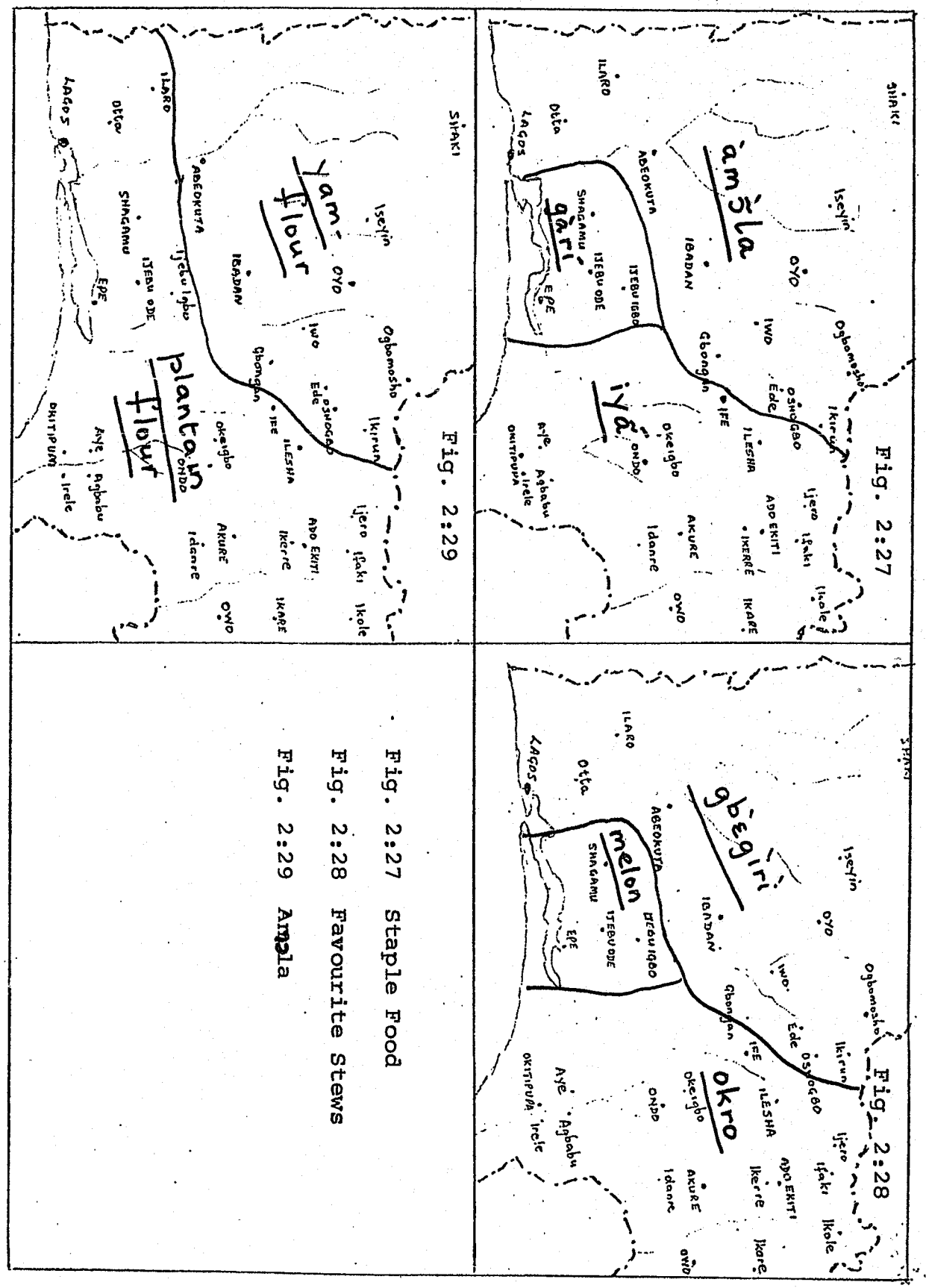


Fig. 2:27 Staple Food

Fig. 2:28 Favourite Stews

Fig. 2:29 Amala

Fig. 2:29 ámàla: In Oyo, Ibadan and Abeokuta, ámàla is made of yam flour. Elsewhere it is made of plaintain flour. It is, as already mentioned, the staple in Oyo and Ibadan while elsewhere, it is not commonly taken.

Fig. 2:30 shows the different practices as regard tribal marks. The Yorubas tattooed their faces for recognition as belonging to the same clan, especially in times of war. Military uniforms and other easily recognizable insignia were said to have been absent. In their place were permanent scarification of the face in different shapes and patterns according to what pattern a particular people chose. Facial marks differ according to the town or the lineage one comes from.

Thus in the CY and SEY areas a particular set of tribal marks is common to each town or township, in the NWY areas however, each settlement has many different sets of facial marks within each settlement.

Fig. 2:31. Age of Children at Circumcision. Circumcision and clitoridectomy were performed on children in NWY areas on the eighth day after birth, whereas in the other areas these ranged in time from three months to three years after birth.

Fig. 2:32. Night vs. Day Markets. The Yorubas had two systems of markets. A periodic market was held weekly or once in two weeks (the Yoruba week had four days).

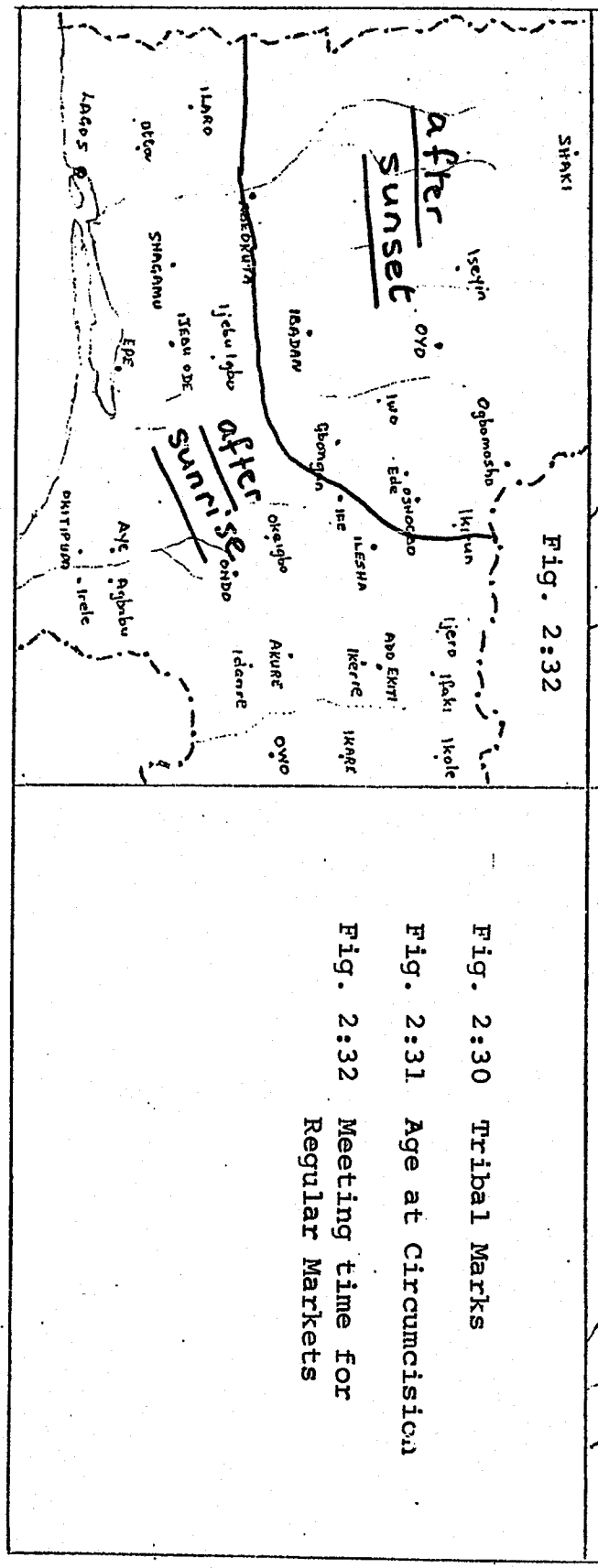


Fig. 2:32

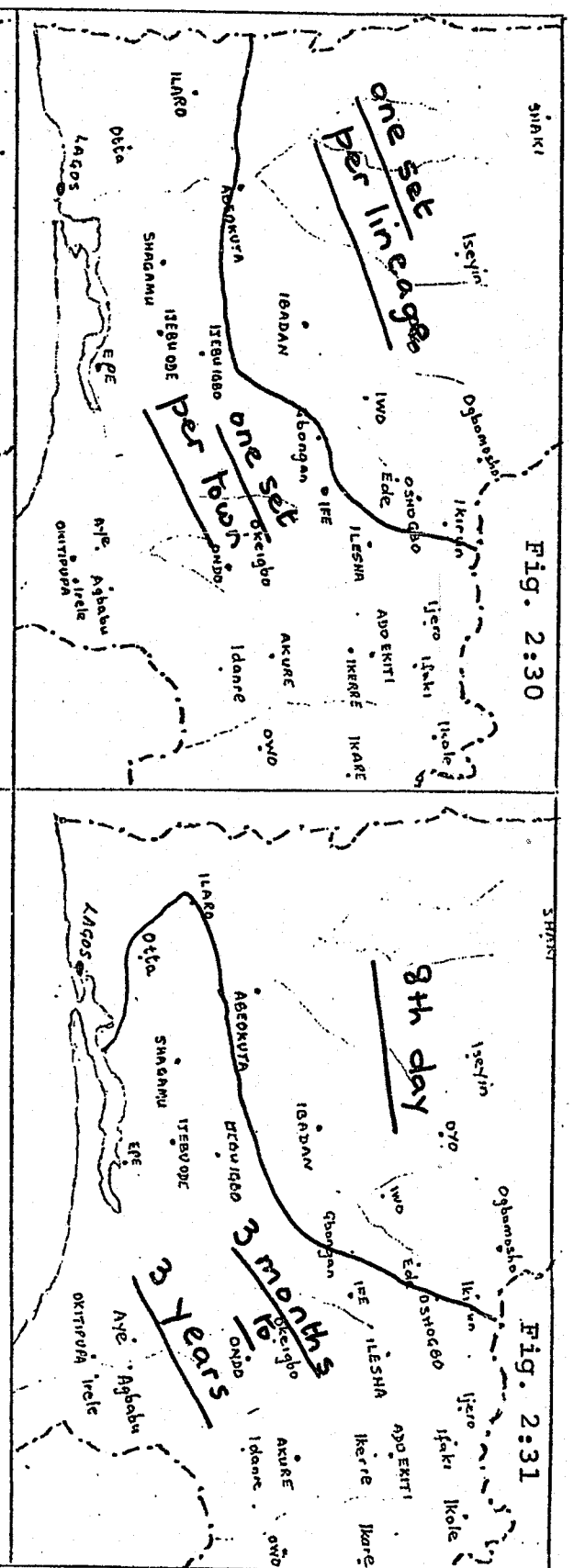


Fig. 2:30

Fig. 2:31

Fig. 2:30 Tribal Marks

Fig. 2:31 Age at Circumcision

Fig. 2:32 Meeting time for Regular Markets

and served the needs of big countrysides. On the appointed day, neighboring villagers came with their wares and the market met from sunrise till sunset. In addition daily markets serving the needs of fewer people than the periodic market were attended by people in their immediate neighborhoods. In NWY the daily market was held in the evening just after sunset; elsewhere it met in the daytime.

2.32 Modern Religion

We mention briefly here the line of cleavage between Islam and Christianity, the two modern religions held by the Yorubas today. Fig. 2:33 shows that the NWY area is predominantly Moslem while SEY is predominantly Christian. Later evangelising in the 20th century has done very little to alter this boundary, and we feel that the barrier to communications responsible for our general dialect differentiation has also had something to do with the differential areal receptiveness to one form of religion as against the other.

Fig. 2:34 Composite of Figs. 2:24, 2:25 and 2:27 and 2:31.

This composite figure shows that the break we are dealing with in section 2.3 is similar to what we have already shown in sections 1 and 2.

We have presented above the non-linguistic features that we feel help differentiate our area. In our Figures

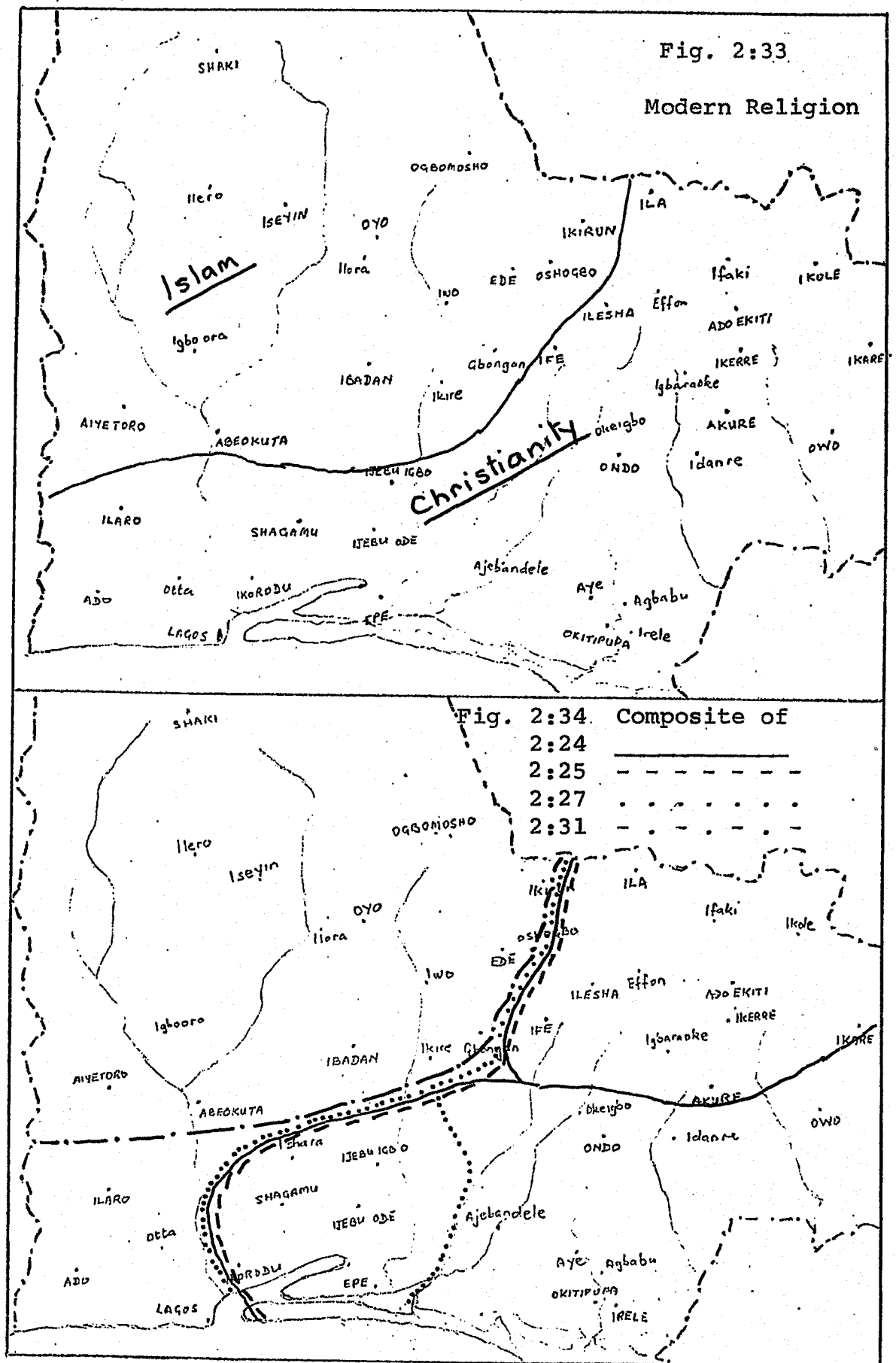


Fig. 2:33

Modern Religion

Fig. 2:34 Composite of

2:24 ———————

2:25 - - - - - - - -

2:27 . . . . . .

2:31 - . - . - . -

we have shown where the lines of cleavage run. It will be evident from the chapters that follow that some of these lines coincide with the lines of linguistic cleavage. The general implications of this correspondence are discussed in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 3

THE LEXICON

3.0 Introductory Remarks

3.01 Structure of the Lexicon

Lexical items are necessarily more atomistic than grammatical items. The search for a structure in the lexicon, comparable with, say phonological or syntactic structure, is yet to lead to fruitful results. It is conceivable that a structure exists in the lexicon but the intriguing question is: what type of structure? It is most probable that the nature of lexical structure is completely different from the types of structures existing in other domains of language. This structure has continually eluded our discovery because it may not lend itself to the same methodology serviceable for uncovering the structures of phonology and syntax. Indeed, this is probably the case: a different structure needs a different set of discovery procedures, and our frustration over the theory of the structural relationships that inhere in the lexicon results from our carrying over a set of assumptions and procedures that do not apply. This is necessarily reflected in the description below. Structural relationships that

are of immense help in understanding to some extent the causes of phonological change for example cannot be called upon here.

3.02 Lexical Maps

In its role of uniting the signifier with the signified via sound symbol the linguistic sign permits us to differentiate between two types of lexical maps: semasiological and onomasiological. Semasiological maps display the variety of meanings assigned to a single form while onomasiological maps show the variety of forms for a given meaning. These two types of maps are involved in an 'implicational chain':

> If a form has more than one meaning, the semasiological question implies a further onomasiological question and vice versa. (Herzog 1965:49)

Following Herzog also, we are making use of a third type of lexical map which, in fact, is a subtype of the semasiological map, but which is not involved in any implicational chain. The occurrence map, as this is called, simply shows the distribution of a word (i.e. a form-and-a-meaning) with limited geographical occurrence.

3.03 Lexicalized vs. Phonological Phenomena

The problem of determining which item among the formally different words should be treated as lexical as against phonological will not be settled in this work. We

are circumventing this problem, however, by including in this chapter only items with great phonological differences which, we suspect, phonological rules cannot account for. Conscious of the fact that our phonology has not accounted and cannot account at this stage for all the historical processes involved in the evolution of the different dialects as they are today, we are reserving some materials we feel may later be accounted for by phonological rules when the study is broadened to include all the Yoruba dialects not included here. Such forms as cannot be accounted for by systematic phonetic rules are, for the time being classified as lexical innovations.

3.04 Arrangement of Lexical Items

Lexical items can be grouped in a number of ways, according to whether the criterion is semantic or geographical. For the presentation here, however, the overriding criterion for the arrangement of our items is geographical; that is, all items which in their different isoglosses show similar configurations are grouped together. This sort of arrangement guarantees a historical perspective in the sense that the bundling of isoglosses for many items can be explained together. But usually the lexical items which display similar bundling of isoglosses show random, if any, semantic relationships with one another; that is to say, words presented together are culled from disparate semantic

configurations with very loose structure and the sense of semantic thematic unity is lost. But the thematic unity that would be achieved if our items were grouped together on a semantic basis, though it would be considerable, would not compensate for the inevitable distortion of the resulting geographic picture. Thus, we feel that the geographical criterion serves better.

3.05 Order of Presentation

Generally speaking, in many instances, lexical isoglosses seem to divide our area into two subareas, and not into three, as is the case with most grammatical and the phonological isoglosses. Yet the lexical isoglosses show a wider range of distribution types than either the phonological or the grammatical. Thus the lexical discontinuity displayed may be SW vs. NE, North vs. South, East vs. West, etc. Since the majority of the isoglosses are, however, of the (S)W/(N)E type, we show these first, and proceed to other configurations later.

3.1 The North-East/South-West Discontinuity

As already mentioned, many lexical isoglosses run roughly diagonally from North-East to South-West, thus dividing our area into two unequal parts. Often, these lexical isoglosses separate SEY from NWY and run through CY, showing that CY may be a transitional zone part of which shares features with SEY and others with NWY. Occasionally,

however, CY either completely goes with NWY or with SEY.

Of two lexical items separated by the NE/SW discontinuity, we shall usually assume one to be an innovation and try to determine the direction of the innovation. Once we determine our innovation as originating either from NWY or SEY, we shall be able to suggest that the direction of the diffusion is towards SEY or NWY respectively. That is, those diffusing westwards spring from SEY and those diffusing eastwards originate from NWY. It will usually be understood that this diffusion, especially in the case of forms of eastern origin, is not necessarily taking place at the present time since a trend towards the recession of all dialects has already been actuated in this area by the imposition of the standardized dialect. Thus, the present limits of most of the innovations originating from the East may represent a retreat from a previously more advanced location; the isogloss on the other hand may represent a line of stagnation between two alternants. Also in many cases where the NWY form is the same as for the standardized dialect, the isogloss reflects the limit of the occurrence of the SEY form.

3.11 Innovations Diffusing Westward

Fig. 3:1 'all'. Of the two alternates NWY gbɑ̀gbɑ and SEY dede, we find it difficult to determine without some doubt which one is the original innovation. We know,

however, that the 'aggressive' form is dede, which is on the advance. For all its impact on the other dialects, the standardized dialect with gbogbo is seen as succumbing to the incursion of dede. The earliest writings in Yoruba, which date back about 100 years, all have gbogbo and not a single occurrence of dede. In fact, with our knowledge of the literature, it does not seem that this word has received literary acceptance. Yet it is found in the speech of many people in NWY.

Fig. 3:2 'very, many, much'. The alternants kpúkpɔ̀ and yeye are usually used as adjective intensifiers, i.e., in forms like ó burú kpúkpɔ̀ "it is bad much"

ó burú yéye i.e., 'it is very bad'

They are infrequently used as adjectives, as išu kpúkpɔ̀, yéye 'many yams'. As for kpúkpɔ̀, the reconstructed phonological selection rules would have given us kpukpu, since open and close vowels could not co-occur in successive syllables of the same word. Moreover, intensifiers in most of our dialects are derived by reduplication of the root morpheme, in this case kpɔ 'to be many' the reduplicated form of which would be kpɔkpɔ. Yéye, on the other hand, which looks like a reduplicated *yé, has no corresponding root morpheme *ye 'many' and yé in this sense is not attested. Another fact is that as an intensifier, yéye always follows kpɔ̀ as in o kpɔ̀ yéye 'it is very many'. If we were compelled to distinguish between which form is a relic and

which an innovation, we would say that kpúkpò is probably the relic because of close phonological similarity to the expected form *kpokpo and that yéye might be a borrowing.

The form yeye is advancing westwards while not completely displacing kpukpo, which is being carried eastwards in the local varieties of the standardized dialect but not to the indigenous forms of speech.

Fig. 3:3 'good'. Of the forms dára and sǎ the latter is the innovation diffusing westward. While many informants in both NWY and CY have the two forms as alternants--the conditioning factors of the choice of either for a particular situation could not be determined--informants of SEY rarely know of the existence of dára except in Standard Yoruba literature.

Fig. 3:4 'incantation'. The line between ọfọ and èsègèdè cuts deep into NWY territory. That is, èsègèdè is not only the form used in SEY and CY, it is also the form prevalent in NWY areas bordering CY and SEY. We believe that this division is not only lexical but also cultural. The NWY form ọfọ 'incantation' most often, also means 'word, matter, talk' and is used in SEY as a euphemism for èsègèdè. The chanting of magic spells seems to have been restricted to SEY areas only. Even here, the word èsègèdè is taboo in many homes and its function is taken over by ọfọ Egede is seen as a survival whose limit of usage was more restricted than it is today.

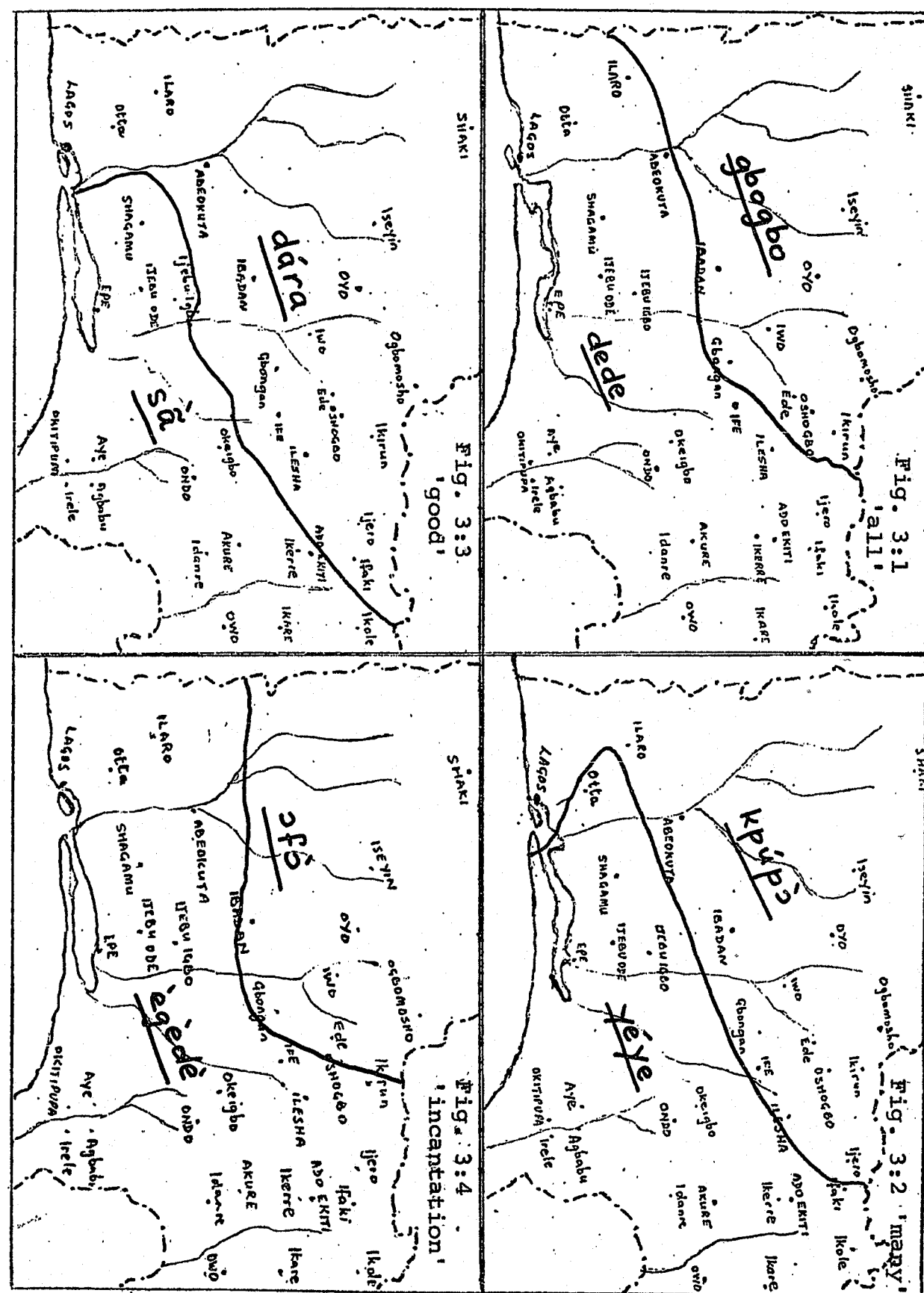


Fig. 3:5 Composite of 3:1 - 3:4. We see from Fig. 3:5 that figs 3:1 and 3:4 represent extremes of the NW/SE discontinuity and it will further be seen from the other figures to follow that many lexical isoglosses lie in between these two extremes. Note also that between these two extremes lies CY.

3.11.1 Elimination of Synonymy

Fig. 3:6 'chewing stick'. The designations orí and kpákò refer to the material used for brushing teeth. This is usually a tender twig or root or even sticks split into pieces of usually not more than 1/6" in diameter. The head is bitten into and pulped by chewing, and this pulped part is used as a toothbrush. While orí is the general name for toothbrush in SEY and CY, kpákò in those areas in which it exists along with orí usually refers to the last mentioned type. In the NNW orí is little known. The location of the isogloss is more than a line of contact between the two forms. In fact, on either side of the isogloss, the two forms are in use: to the north as synonyms, and to the south as already mentioned kpákò is becoming specialized. The two forms are therefore seen as advancing, not one to the extinction of the other, but as complementary. But because orí in advancing retains its general meaning while in its South-East diffusion kpákò is taking on a specialized use, it is orí which is really advancing while kpákò in the Southeast and Northwest should be viewed as a different lexical item.

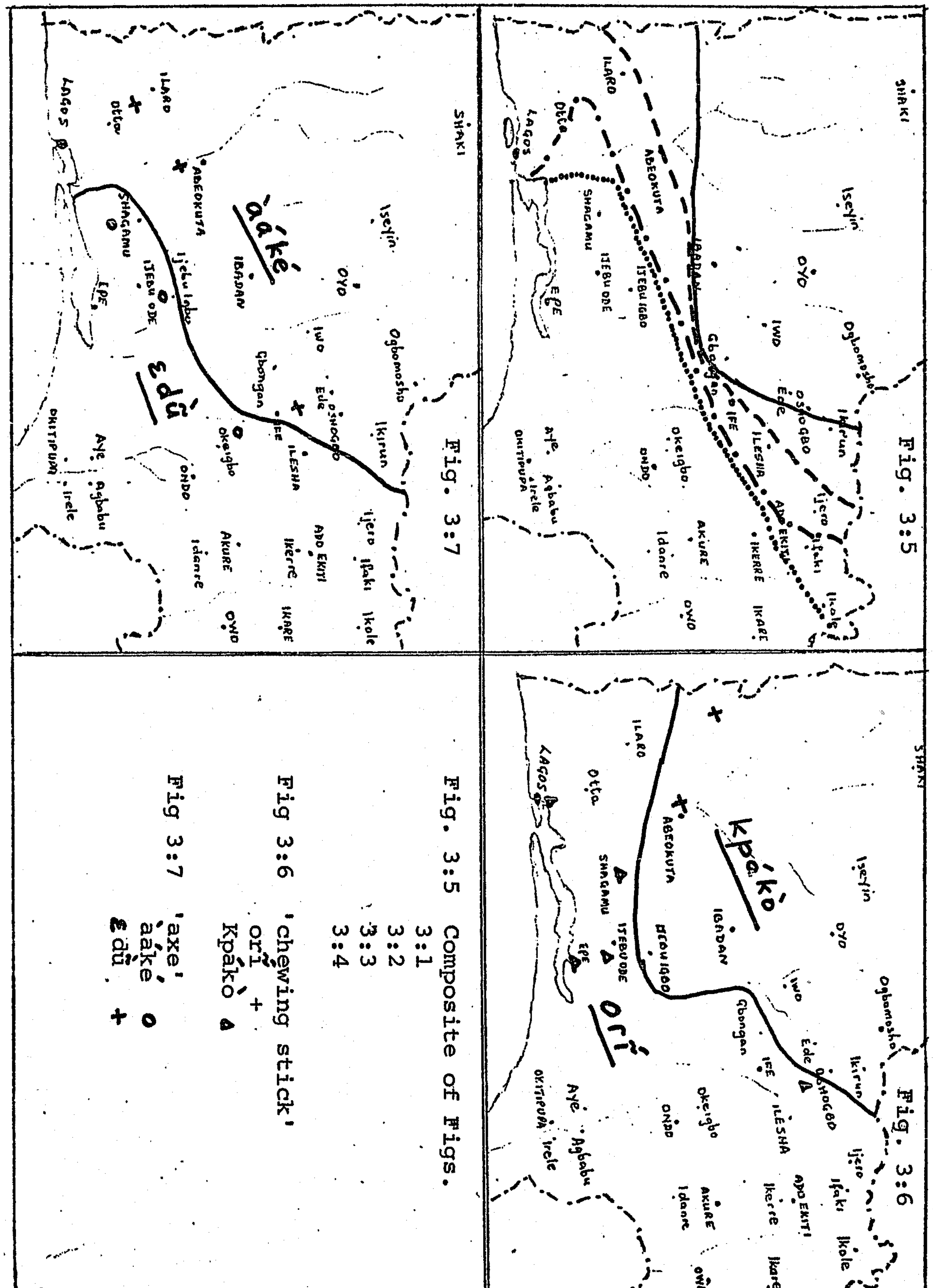


Fig. 3:7

Fig. 3:5

Fig. 3:6

Fig. 3:7 'axe'. àáké and ɛdũ̀ are both regarded as innovations since neither of them preserves the phonological unity of the word in this language. Our vowel harmony rules (see chapter 5) preclude the occurrence of [a] and [e] in successive syllables of the same word, and the same rules make the existence of [ɛ] and [u] in the same word improbable. However, both àáké and ɛdũ̀ have slight regional deviations. Besides àáké we have àíké and àéké, while alternating with ɛdũ̀ we have ɛdù and ɛdɔ̃̀. It is apparent that ɛdũ̀ in its various forms today is a survival; the protoform *ɛdũ is still attested in CY. Because of the shift /ũ/ to /ü/ in NWY, where the word exists, it is /ɛdü/ while /ũ/ shifting to /ɔ̃/ in SEY gives us /ɛdɔ̃̀/, the form prevalent in Ondo, Owo and Okitipupa. *ɛdù, the protoform which is also the form prevalent in CY, has diffused northwestwards in the form ɛdũ̀ and it alternates with àáké in free variation. Àáké in its southeastward movement has taken on a specialized meaning as a designation for 'English axe', which has a wider blade and stronger handle than the local axe.

3.12 Innovations Diffusing Southeastwards

These innovations are by far more numerous than those of the westward trend. This is accounted for most probably by the expansion of the standardized dialect of NWY origin to all other areas of the Yoruba language in Western

Nigeria. This is also responsible to a very large extent for the very great disparity between the lexicon of the aged, who are relatively unexposed to the standardized dialect and those of educated youths who are slowly losing their local dialects.

Fig. 3:8 The lexical items--NWY ahéré and SEY awúré--glossed as 'hut' designate temporary houses built on farm sites and used as shelter from the sun and storage for farm implements. Ahéré also has an alternant aéré in NWY (for the regional loss of h in NWY, see phonology, chapter 5). The isogloss represents the northwest limit of awúré; ahéré is diffusing.

Fig. 3:9 'village'. Villages were like country homes even though the buildings were of a less permanent nature than those found in towns. Where the distance from the town to the farm was more than three hours' walking, i.e., about 10 miles, villages were built and resided in for a greater part of the year. But the farmers usually journeyed back to towns for important festivals while their wives brought the farm yields to towns for sale on market days, usually every four or eight days.

The isogloss marks the limits of both abà, the NWY form and egurè, the SEY form.

Fig. 3:10 'temporary settlement'. Another type of settlement called 'temporary' is designated by abúlé in the

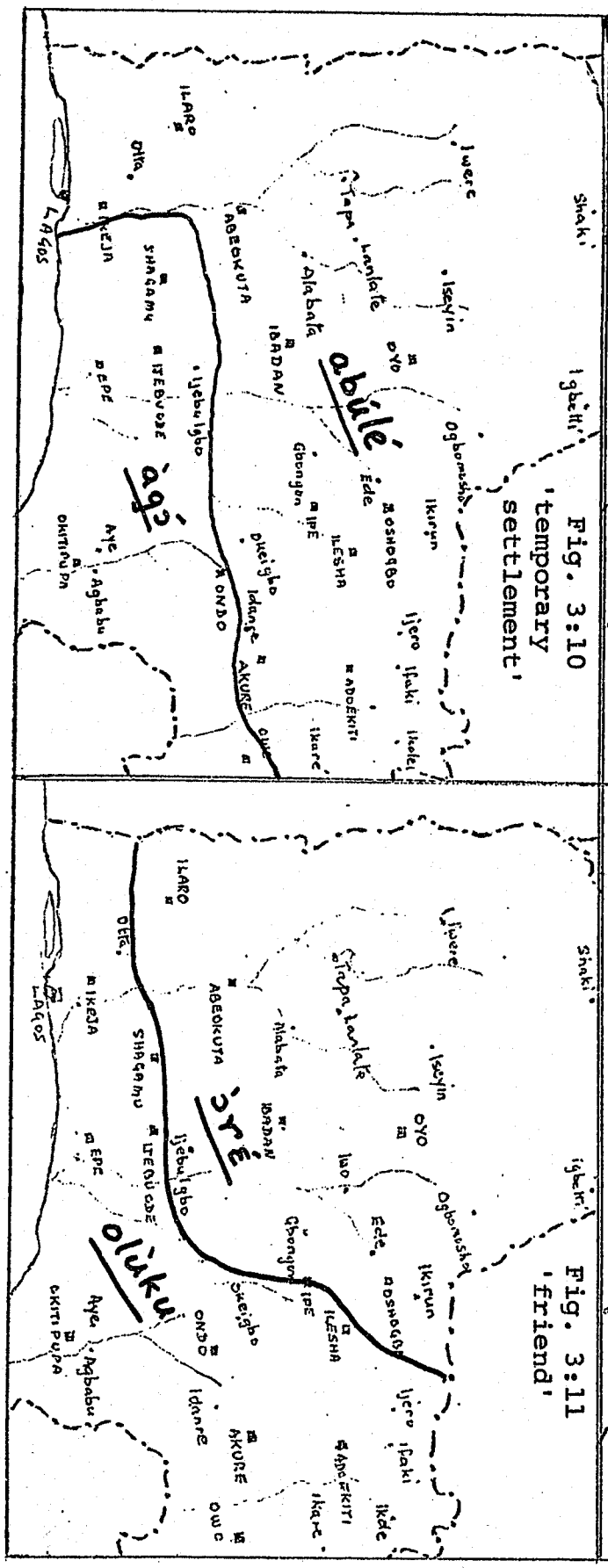


Fig. 3:10 'temporary settlement'

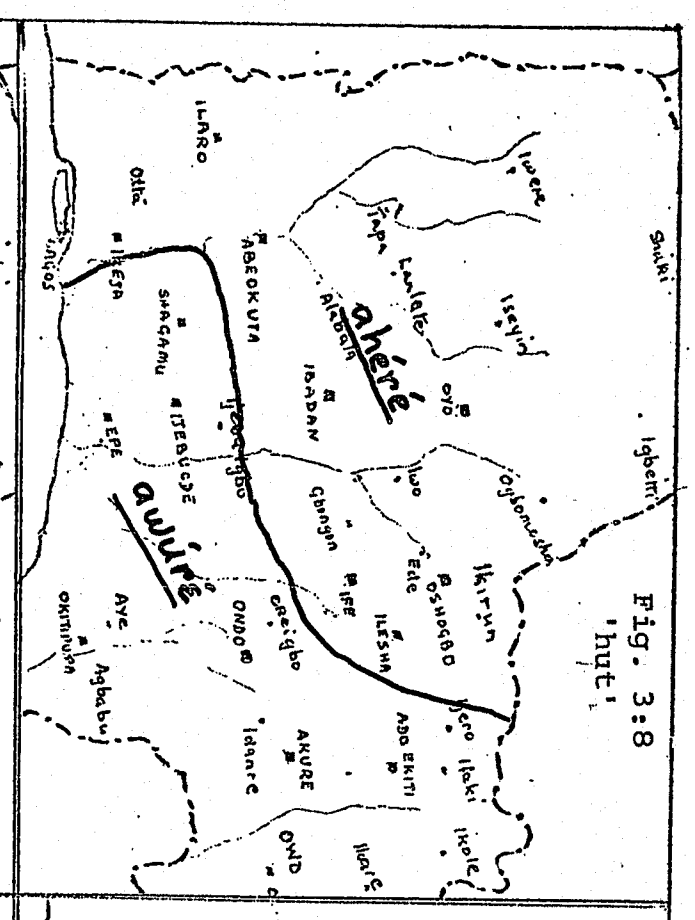


Fig. 3:8 'hut'

Fig. 3:11 'friend'

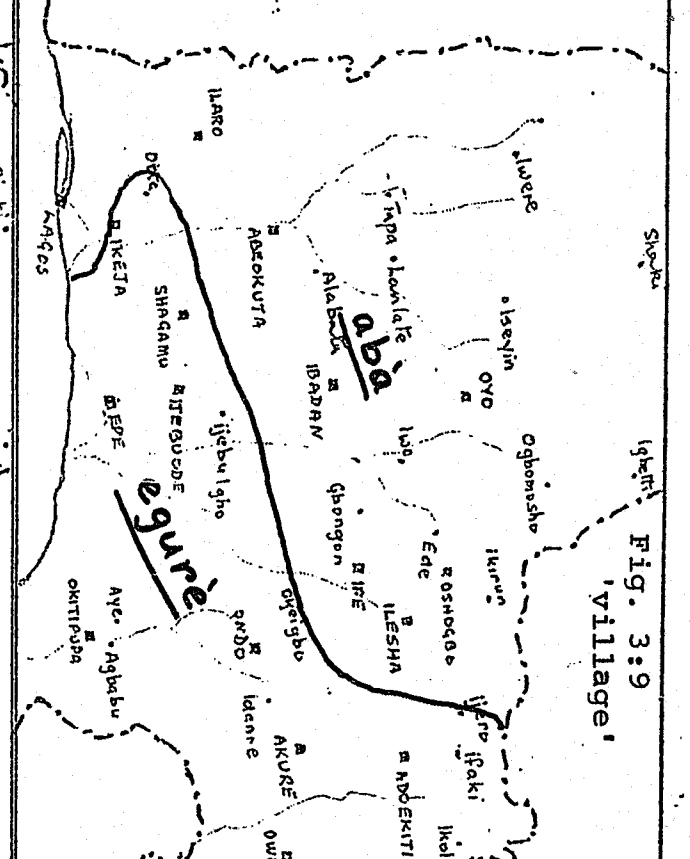


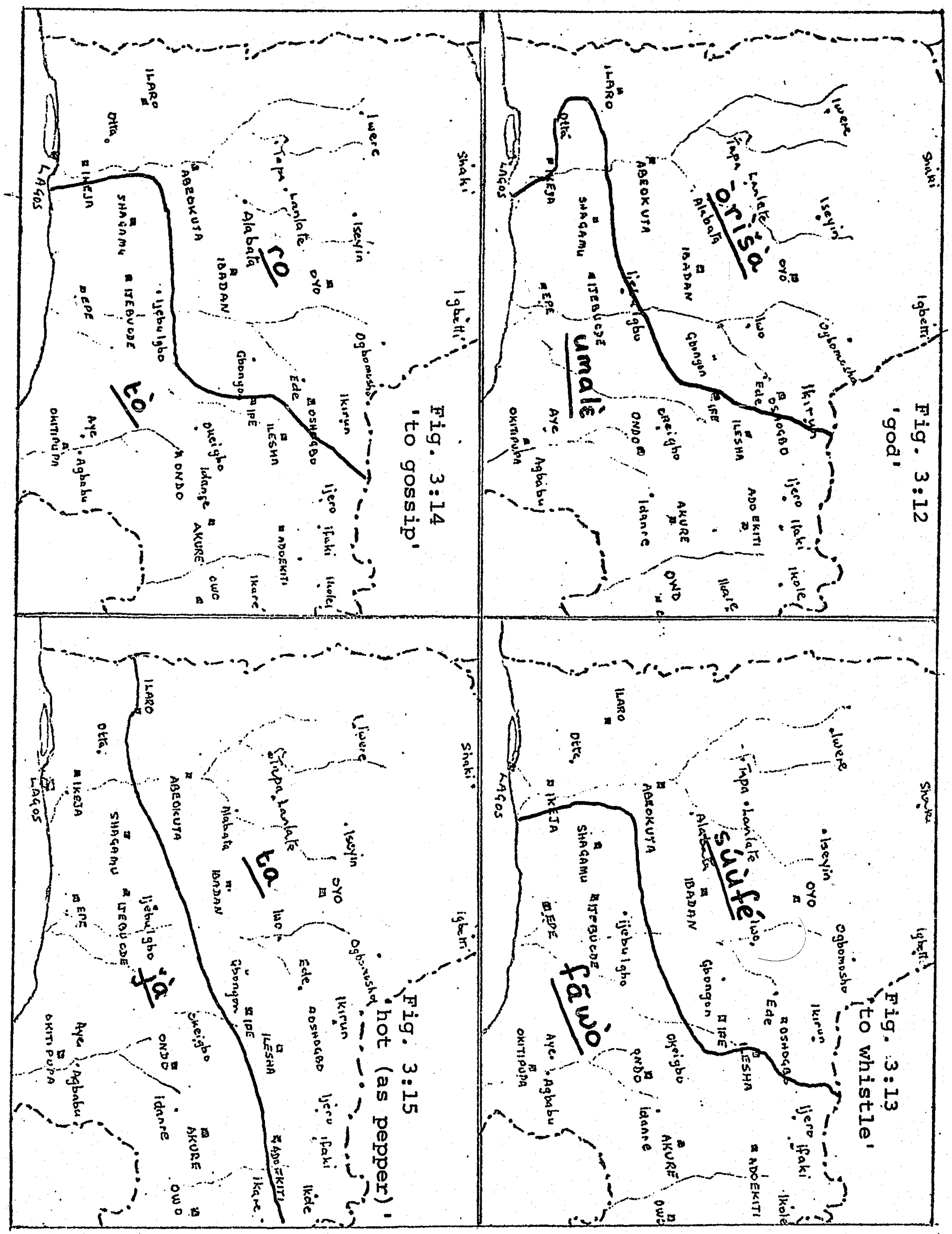
Fig. 3:9 'village'

Northwest and àgó in the Southeast. Such settlements were usually motivated by communal labor. For example, if a river that could not be easily forded lay between a settlement of a permanent or semipermanent nature and the farming area, and if the river was some distance away from either, the people erected a settlement close by the river to serve for shelter for the period it took to build a bridge across it. Abúlé and àgó also designate farm settlement of a temporary nature.

Fig. 3.11 'friend'. Koelle, in his Polyglotta Africana (1852) records both òré and olùku for 'friend' but the significant thing is that the area of usage for olùku has thinned remarkably within 100 years after Koelle's work. Olùku is still in use in the speech of elders all over SEY and CY. It is almost unattested in the speech of educated persons, however.

Fig. 3.12 'god'. The Yorubas have many designations for God, but the general name for their carved images is either òrìšà in NWY or umalè in CY (SEY umalè by the regular shift of ù > u). Both forms, òrìšà ([orišà] in some CY areas) and umalè, may be relics as their sound patterns suggest. The form umalè is yielding to òrìša.

Fig. 3.13 'to whistle'. The form sûûfé in NWY looks unusual. To describe the setting up of air vibration in anything like a trumpet, for example, Standard Yoruba uses



the verb fɔ̃ (SEY [fā]). Thus, in NWY we have fɔ̃ ikpè 'to blow a trumpet', fɔ̃ ikũ 'to blow off nasal congestion', yet 'to whistle' is súùfe. The SEY-CY form fá wo (fā 'blow' - uwò 'hole') is the morphological form expected. Yet by its deviation from the normally expected form, súùfe too may be a relic.

Fig. 3:14 'to gossip'. The forms tò and rò seem close enough to make us suspect a protoform from which both might have differently developed. Such a search, however, has not proved fruitful, since we are unable to find other correspondences of t ~ r . While we find forms like títò, 'talking', and etítò, 'gossip' which are related to to, ro is unique because the expected noun riro turns out as 'thought, thinking'. The isogloss dividing these two forms seem to be a stagnating one. Ro alone does not occur in SEY except again in educated speech.

Fig. 3:15 'hot (as pepper)' 'Pepper' in Yoruba is ata and the verb expected for 'to be hot as pepper' would be ta in the NWY form. SEY and parts of CY have ja, the etymology of which we do not know. As expected, ta is the form diffusing because it is also the form used in Standard Yoruba.

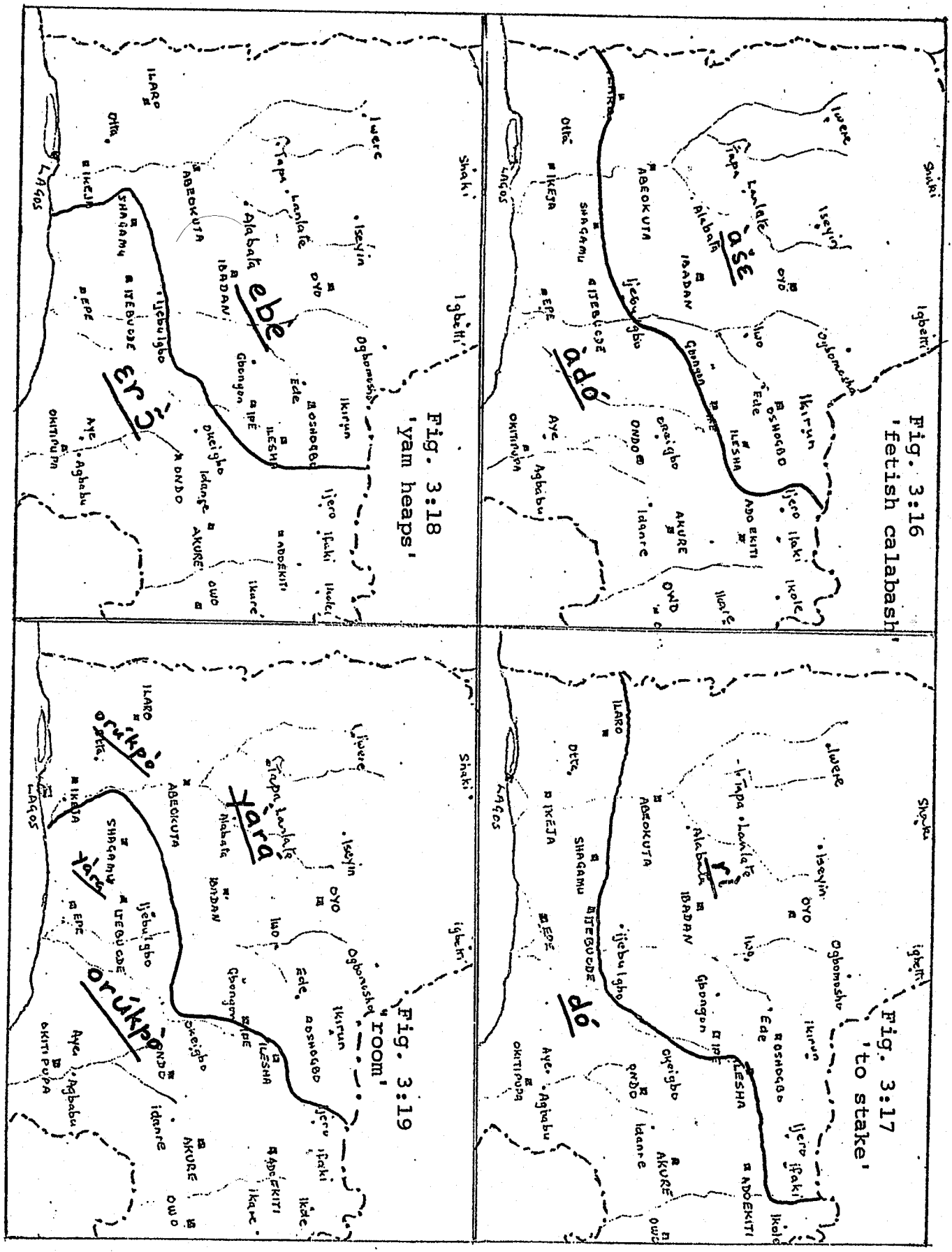
Fig. 3:16 'fetish calabash'. This is a small gourd in which concoctions, àšɛ, are put. The isogloss showing the line between àšɛ and àdó may also be taken as an ethnographic one. This type of concoction is not common in SEY except in the Ijebu area, and this may be due to contact with

NWY. The name ànó itself suggests a borrowing from the Benin (ɛdó) conquerors from the East.

Fig. 3:17 'stake'. Yams are staked to prevent them from creeping. The stakes, called èdó in all areas, are fixed in the ground. The process is referred to as ri èdo in NWY and dó èdó in SEY. The difference in the forms may at first glance suggest an underlying morphological process, i.e., that in SEY the derivation of nouns is directly related to the verb or vice versa, while there is a different process in NWY (in many of Yoruba dialects, and also in Standard Yoruba many structures of the form /VCV/ are nouns, the initial /V/ being a nominalizer. We have ìjà 'fight' from jà 'to fight' òkú 'the dead' and ikú 'death' from kú 'to die'. Thus èdó 'stake' from dó 'to stake). We should suggest that the SEY form dó èdó is what is expected and that ri as used here is being extended in NWY from its normal use everywhere to mean 'drown', 'submerge'.

Fig. 3:18 'yam heaps'. As expected, the form ɛrã, the SEY form, is yielding to ebè, which is also the Standard Yoruba form.

Fig. 3:19 'room'. The line separating orúkpò from yàrá seems static. In fact, while yàrá has crept into the speech of many people in SEY it has not displaced orúkpò and a near synonymy has arisen. Orúkpò, on the other hand, is a second form in NWY but seems to be gaining the meaning

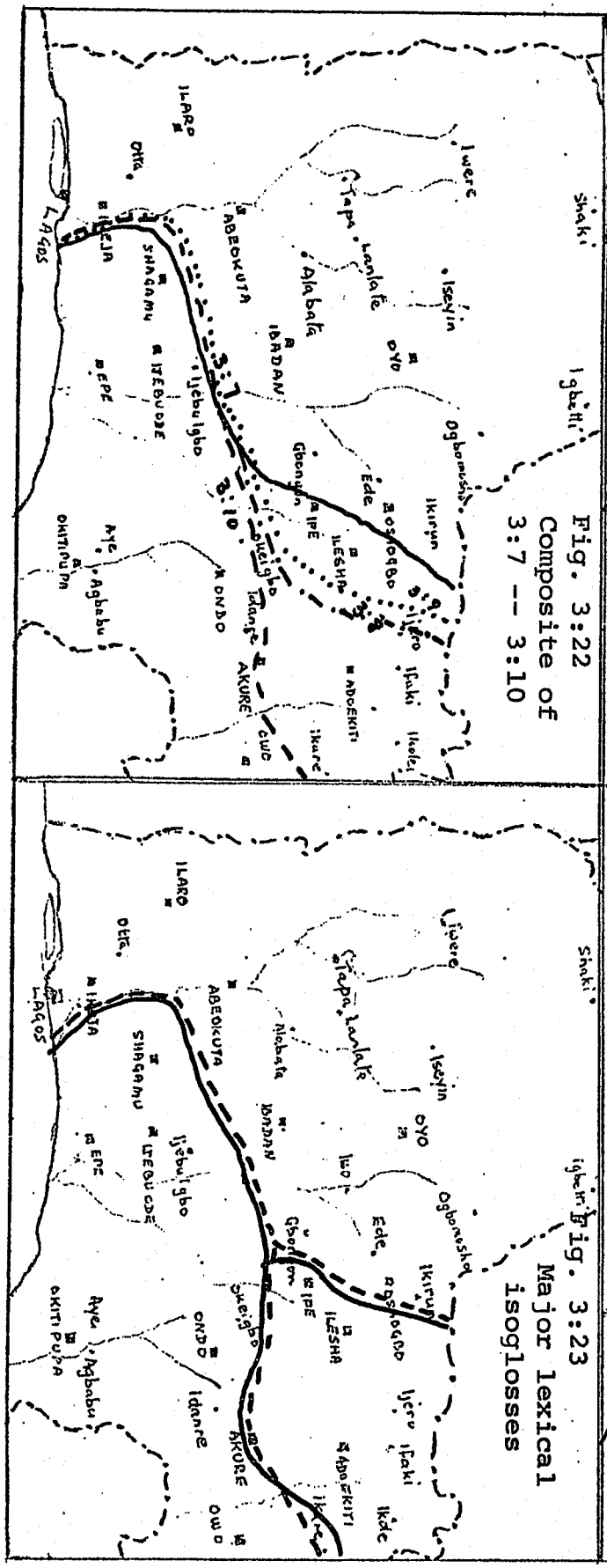


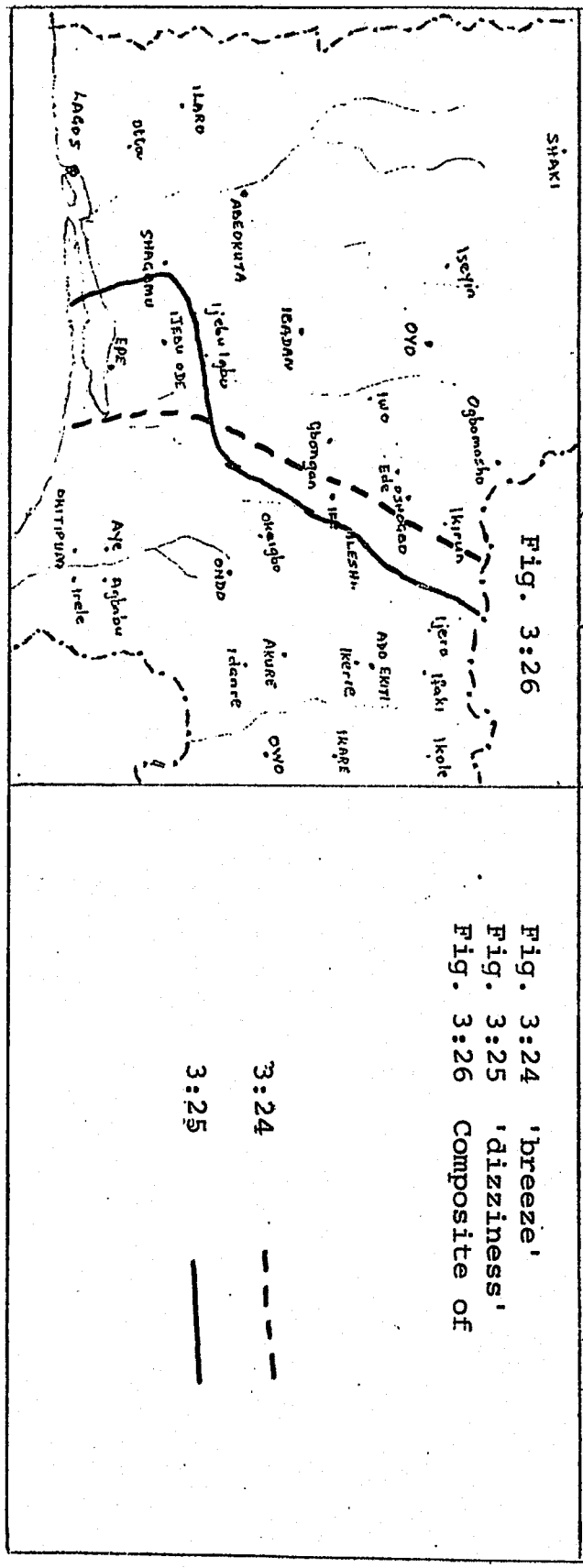
of 'inner room'. Orúkpò is attested in one literary work of NWY origin with this meaning, but it is also listed in Abraham's Dictionary of Modern Yoruba (1958).

Fig. 3:20 'outside'. While NWY has the command form jáde (< já òde) 'out!' it has this peculiar form ìta for 'outside'. SEY and parts of CY have òde and jáde for 'outside' and 'get out', respectively. We take òde to be a relic and ìta as an innovation moving eastwards.

Fig. 3:21 'faeces'. The NWY form ìgbé looks like a euphemism for 'faeces' based on the term for 'bush'. Yà gbé, which ordinarily means 'to visit the bush or forest' (from yà 'visit' and ìgbé 'bush'--yà gbé by elision of i in ìgbé), is also in NWY 'to defecate'. The NWY form is diffusing to all parts of Yorubaland as a high society koine term.

Fig. 3:22 Composite of Figs. 3:7-3:10. This composite display of Figures 3:7-3:10 almost parallels the one shown in Fig. 3:5. From this similar bundling of lexical isoglosses we extract our lexical isogloss 1 (see figure 3:23), which follows almost the same course as phonological isogloss 1 (Chapter 1) and we also extract our lexical isogloss 2. The correlation between the isoglosses at all levels--non-linguistic, phonological, lexical and grammatical--is part of the motivation for dividing our dialects into three major groups.





3.2 North/South Discontinuity

The patterns to be discussed below, in contrast to the isoglosses discussed so far, show more or less a West/East cleavage. They should, however, be seen as a time-modified confirmation of the SW/NE discontinuity. We should mention that the position of Lagos in relation to the hinterland has increased the communication pressure on the thin strip of land separating it from NWY and has helped in swiftly removing traces of SEY from this area. Lagos has been a centre of importance in relation to other towns in Western Nigeria since about 1850 when it became the British headquarters for the administration of the coasts of Nigeria and Ghana. It drew its people from the big towns in Western Nigeria--Ibadan, Abeokuta, Oyo, Oshogbo, to mention a few, which are also towns of NWY, because of its strategic location for trade with Europeans (Lagos is on the coast and has a fine harbour) and because it offers employment opportunities for the elite. Thus NWY speech became the speech of Lagos and has in turn influenced its hinterland.

As may be expected, all the NWY or western forms to be presented below are diffusing eastwards.

Figs. 3:24 'air, breeze' and 3:25 'dizziness' are schematized below:

	West	East
'breeze'	afɛ́fɛ́	òyɔ̀
'dizziness'	ɔ́yɪ́	ùyèjú

We find that the form for 'air' in the East is the form for 'dizziness' in the West. In the East also, especially around Okitipupa, ọ̀yì means both 'air' and 'dizziness', although ùyèjù for 'dizziness' is also attested.

Fig. 3:26 - Composite of Figs. 2:24 and 2:25.

This composite also shows some form of the implicational chain in which these two lexical items are involved. Thus in Ife and Ilesha areas, ọ̀yì becomes a synonym for 'breeze' and dizziness. In Ijebu on the other hand, ọ̀yì is not attested--afɛfe designates 'breeze' and uyeju dizziness.

Figs. 3:27 'river' and 3:28 'valley, depression'.

These two items are best considered together. Omi 'river' in the East is also the designation for water. The West has odò 'river' which turns out to be the designation for 'valley' in the East. Diagrammatically, we have

	West	East
'water'	omi	omi
'river'	odò	omi
'valley'	ìsàlẹ̀	odò

Compared with Figures 3:24 and 3:25, the semasiological implications are clear: in the West polysemy is being eliminated and this results in the transposition of lexical items between West and East, i.e., the lexeme for dizziness in the West, (Figure 3:25), is that for 'air' in the East, (Figure 3:24), while odò in the West designates 'river', (Figure 3:27) and 'valley' in the East, (Figure 3:28). The resultant synonymy in the East is also being eliminated by the diffusion of the western forms eastwards.

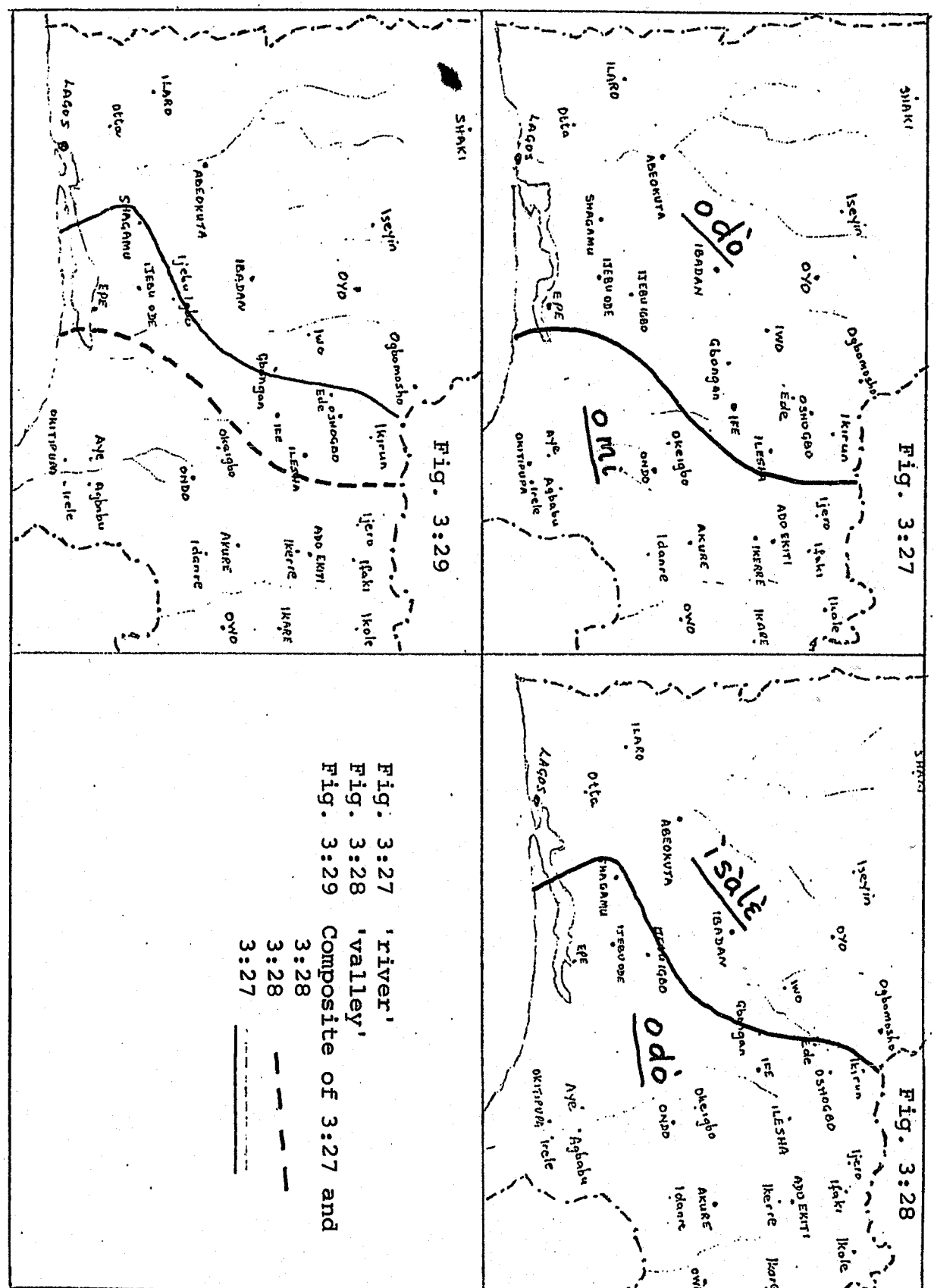


Fig. 3:27

Fig. 3:28

Fig. 3:27 'river'
Fig. 3:28 'valley'
Fig. 3:29 Composite of 3:27 and 3:28
3:28 — — —
3:27 ———

Fig. 3:29 shows the composite of Figs. 3:27 and 3:28; the implicational chain in which these lexical items are involved is clear. We would think that the variety of designations for 'river' and 'valley' would be geographically in complementary distribution but Fig. 3:29 contradicts this assumption.

Fig. 3:30 'quarrel, insult'. The eastern form gwí by regular sound shift turns up in the West as wí with the meaning 'to narrate'. This meaning is also preserved in another situation in the East, but the predominant usage of gwó is to insult as in ó gwí lé mɔ̃ í 'he insulted me'. This turns out in the West as o sɔ̀rɔ̀ sí mi.

Fig. 3:31 shows the semasiological implications of (g)wí. In the West wí means 'to say, tell, narrate' while in the East it means to insult.

Fig. 3:32 'to tell a lie'. kpurú, the standard Yoruba form is the form ousting sɔ̀rɔ̀. Sɔ̀rɔ̀, on the other hand, is probably a euphemism because, apart from the meaning being discussed here, it has the basic meaning 'to talk', from sɔ 'say' and ɔ̀rɔ̀, a cognate object of the verb. From Figure 3:31 also we see that sɔ̀rɔ̀ is the form which turns out in the special expression of abuse in the West. 'A lie' turns up in all the dialects as irú or urú and never ɔ̀rɔ̀, the noun that would have been expected from sɔ̀rɔ̀. A special form ɔkɔ̀bɔ̀, the origin of which is unknown, is used along with irú in the Ijebu areas.

Fig. 3:33 sɔ̀rɔ̀. As shown in Fig. 3:32, sɔ̀rɔ̀ in the southeast means 'to tell a lie'. sɔrɔ occurs often in the NWY

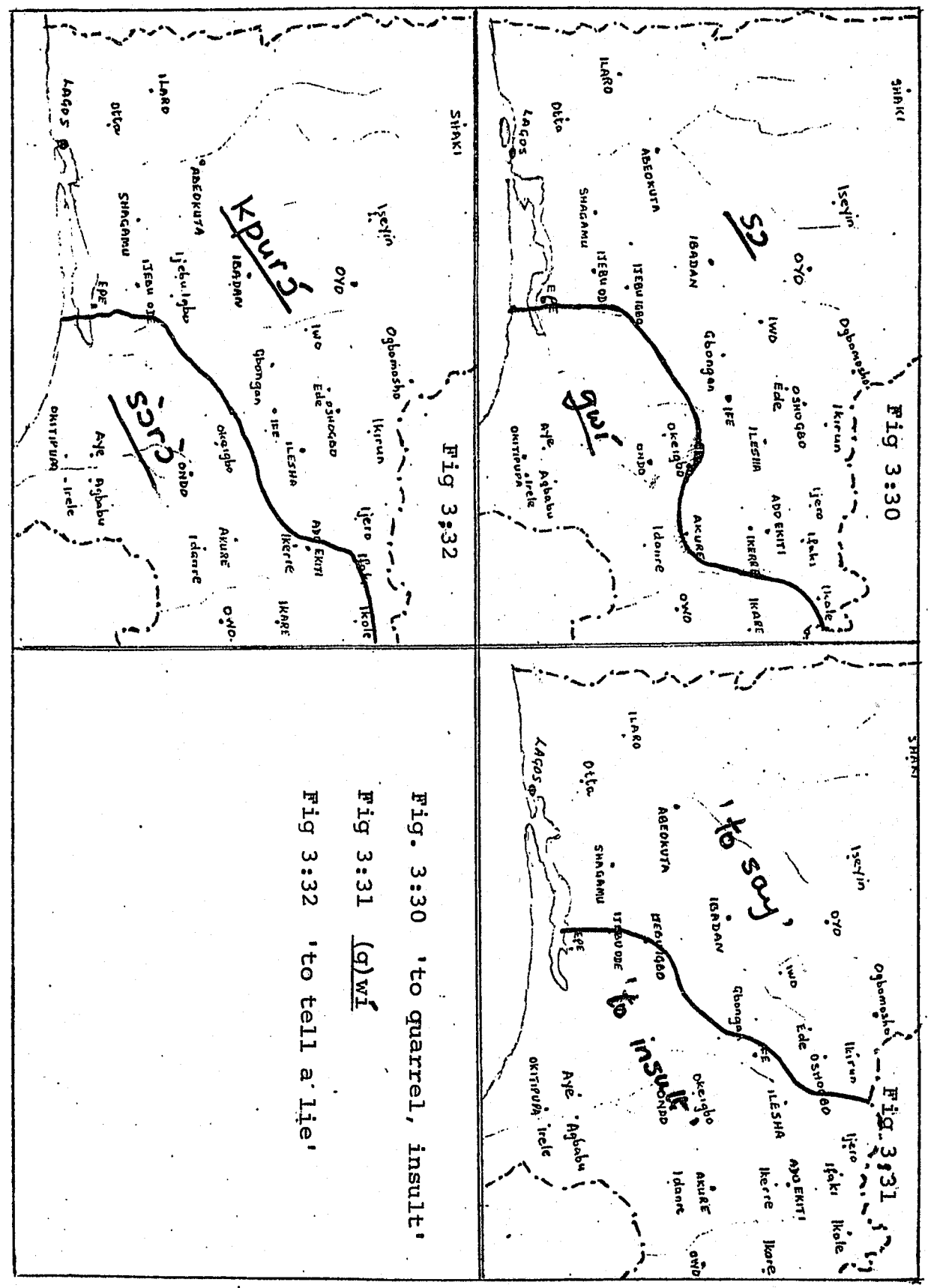


Fig. 3:30 'to quarrel, insult'
Fig 3:31 (g)wí
Fig 3:32 'to tell a lie'

and CY areas, but always with the meaning 'to narrate, tell'.

Fig. 3:34 'to return'. The form bɔ in the East is probably a relic, since it turns up in the greeting kúàbɔ Káàbɔ̀ or Kúùbɔ̀, meaning 'welcome' in all the dialects. Bɔ̀ also turns up in the greeting o dabɔ̀ 'till you return', i.e., 'see you again!' Despite the retention of this greeting everywhere, the West's form of 'to return' dé is displacing bɔ̀.

Fig. 3:35 Occurrence of yú 'to go'. yú is found occasionally used in all tenses and aspects but its preferred use is in the negative and the indefinite tense--all in CY and SEY. Thus, while the average Ondo speaker would say mɛ̃ lɔ he would negate this by saying mɛ́ɛ̀yú. Our suspicion is that yú is a relic and is being displaced by lɔ. This is reinforced by yú occurring in a form of greeting, wa yú iye, 'go well'. Since the Yorubas have different greetings for every act and since in many instances these greetings are suspected to be really old, the test of the age of lexical items can be made from their occurrence in forms of greeting. We do not know whether lɔ occurrs in any greeting form.

Fig. 3:36 'debt'. Both the western form igbèsè, and the eastern ɛwɛ̀ must be regarded as innovations: the former because it does not enter the usual morphological device for nominalization of such special verbs and the latter because of its phonological shape. 'To be in debt is jɛ gbèsè,

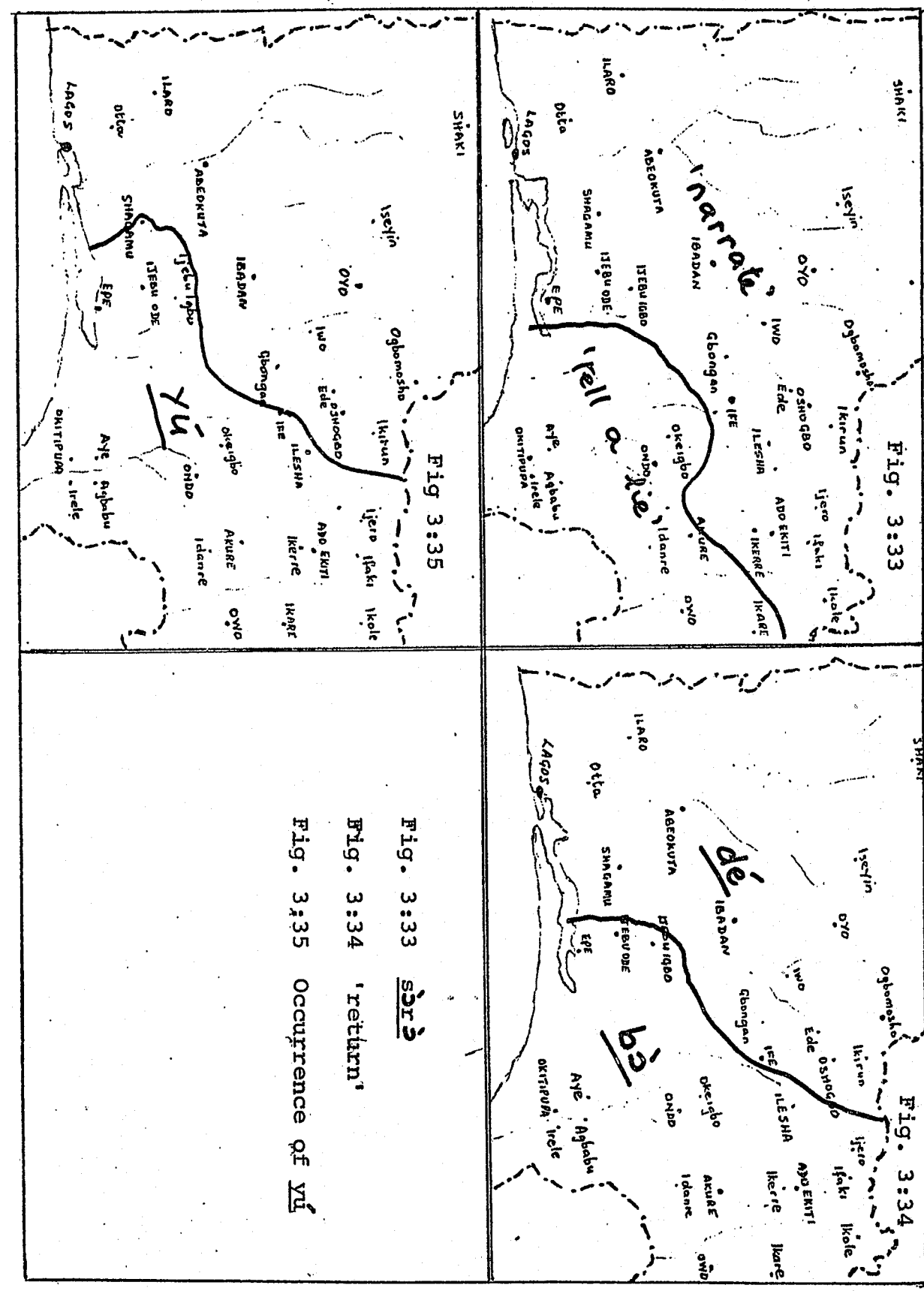


Fig. 3:33

Fig. 3:34 'return'

Fig. 3:35 Occurrence of yú

and 'a debtor' would be *ọ̀jɛ́ gbese which is not attested in NWY. The form ọ̀jɛ́wɛ̀, however, occurs in the East. The eastern form is suspected as an innovation because it turns up with [w] a later development from [ɣ] in SEY (see chapter 5 phonology).

Fig. 3:37 'ghost'. The belief in ghosts is widespread in our area and has given rise to many differentiations between types of apparitions. The generic designation is what is discussed here. Diffusing eastwards, iwí is displacing ẹbora. And, in fact, ẹbora is attested only in the speech of elderly people unexposed to the encroachment of the standardized language.

Fig. 3:38 'big'. The line between tóbi and lála seems a static one, approximating the dividing line between NWY on the one hand and SEY and CY on the other. While tobi is attested in some CY and SEY areas in cultivated speech, it is not accepted in homes and market places. Perhaps there is something in the nature of certain semantic items that make them more resistent to elimination more than others.

Fig. 3:39 'person'. [ènlyọ̀], occurring in some areas as [ọ̀nlyọ̀], [èèyọ̀] cannot be broken down into smaller morphological components as one expects of multisyllable words in Yoruba. The many phonetic shapes of this word attested in different areas make us suspect that it may be older than

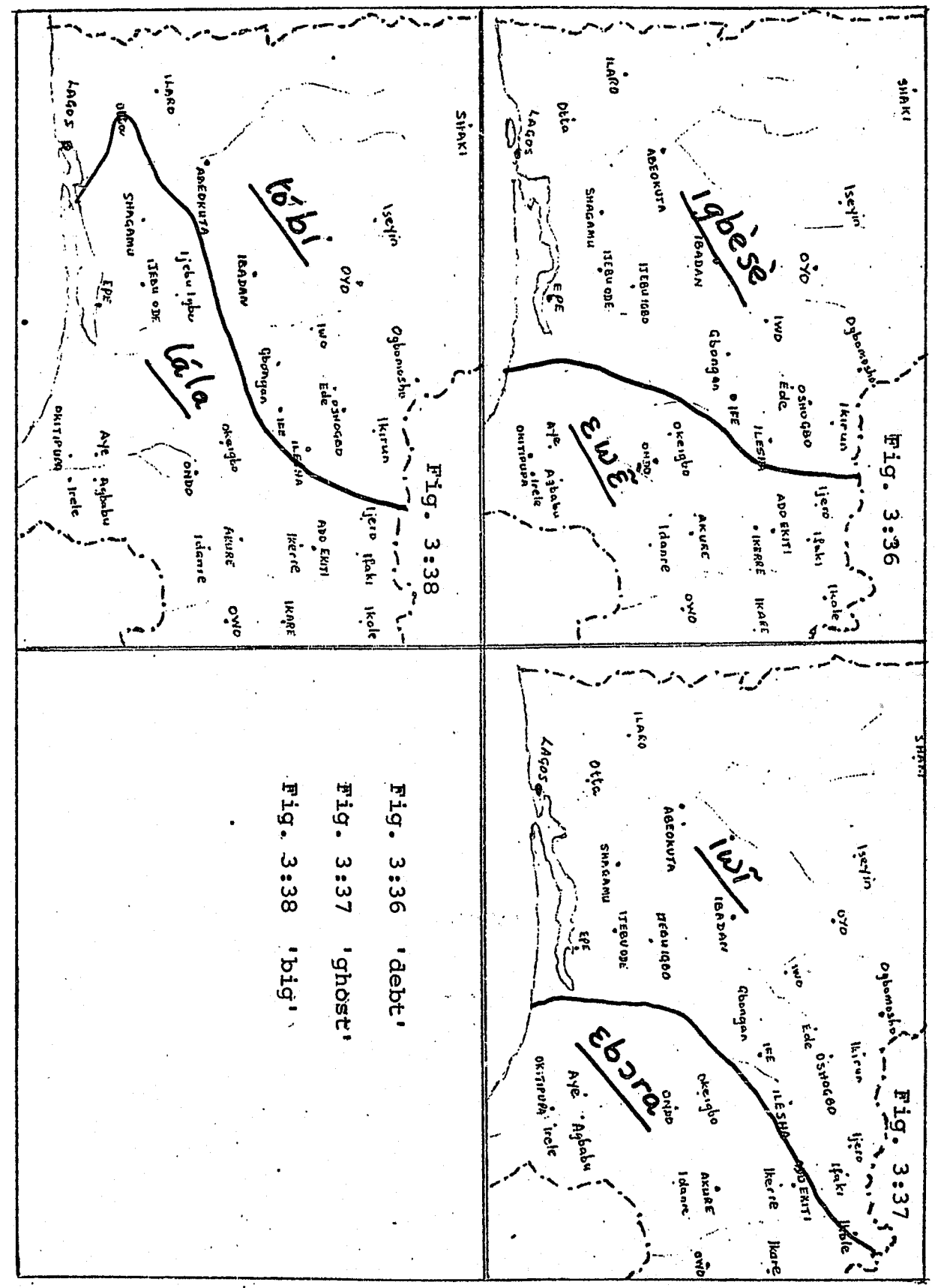


Fig. 3:36 'debt'

Fig. 3:37 'ghost'

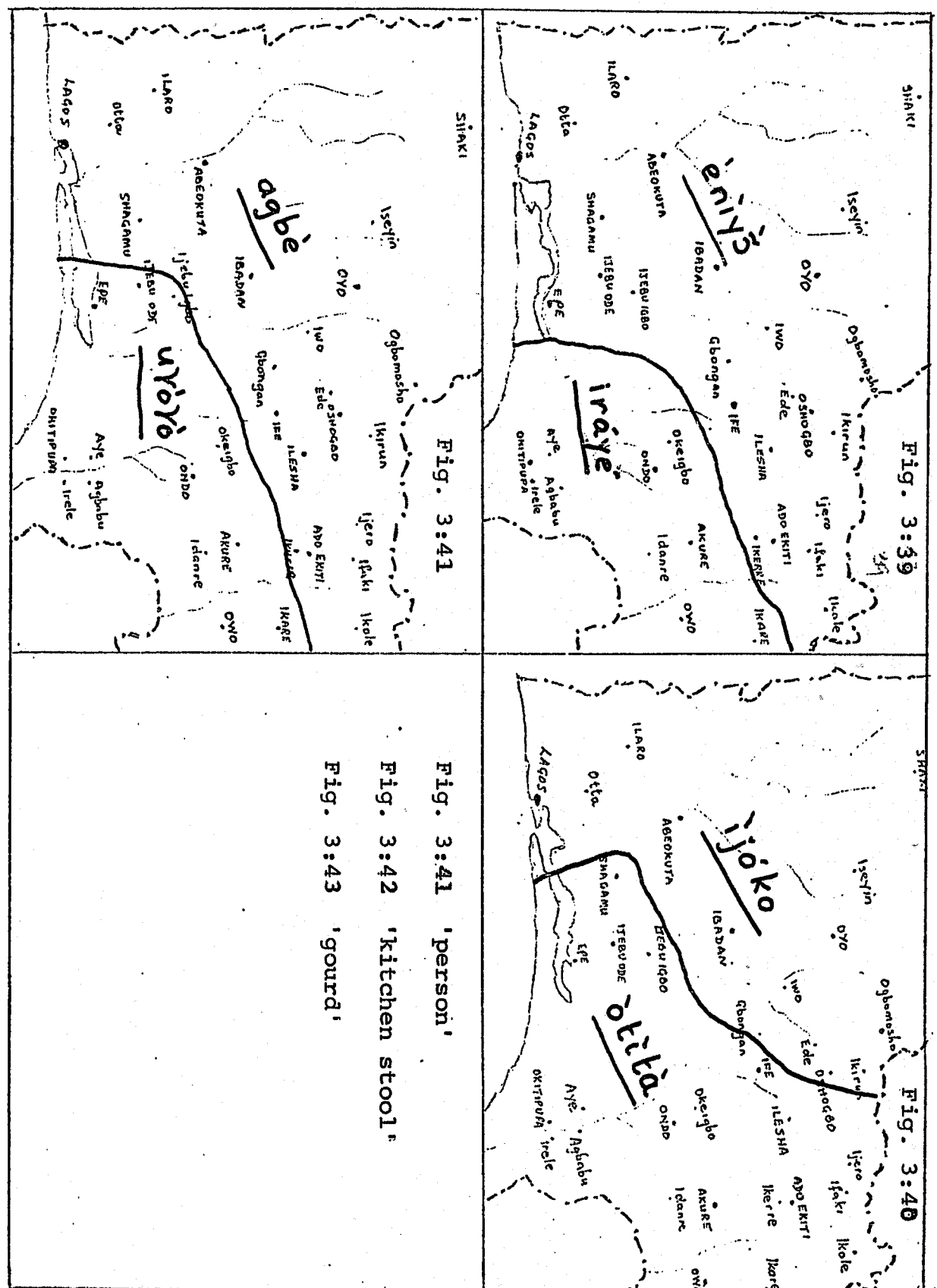
Fig. 3:38 'big'

the eastern form irâyé. Irâyé itself is made up of [irá~arâ] 'person' and [ayé] 'world', i.e., 'dweller in the world'. That this word is a noun-compound is in keeping with what obtains in noun derivation in Yoruba, [arâ ayé] is also attested in most areas of NWY with a slightly different connotation: 'humanity'.

Fig. 3:40 'kitchen stool'. Ìjókó, generally 'seat', is a noun formed from joko 'sit' by the regular derivational process in Yoruba. Ìjókó as a generic term for 'seat' is also found in all the dialects we are comparing. In the East, however, a special type of seat, a kitchen stool, is designated òtìtà, while this distinction is absent in the West. One would have expected that since there are many types of stools used, òtìtà would diffuse westwards in its specialized specification and thus prevent synonymy of designation for all types of stools. But this is not the case, since in its eastward movement ìjóko is eliminating òtìtà.

Fig. 3:41 'gourd'. agbè/uɣòɣò is a big gourd used for storing palm wine and water. Uɣòɣò the eastern form looks like a survival because it preserves ProtoYoruba [ɣ] (see phonology Chapter 5).

Fig. 3:42 'sweat, perspiration'. We are unable to find the etymology of either òógún the western form diffusing eastwards or aífó the eastern form probably doomed for extinction. The two forms in competition also employ unique



verbs; 'to perspire' in the West is <u>là ọ́gũ̀</u>, while in the East it is <u>kpa afɔ́</u>.

Fig. <u>3:43</u> 'remember'. The isogloss as shown hardly tells all the story. In the East, <u>rãtí</u> is heard everywhere but <u>yèrè</u> persists in folk songs and ritual language. This, then, is a testimony to its being the earlier form in this area. It is, however, not easily recalled by educated people and young children who are exposed to the influence of the standardized form of the language (which has <u>rõtí</u>.). <u>Yèrè</u> was heard only once west of the line, in Shagamu, where it was recorded from an octogenarian.

Fig. <u>3:44</u> 'sore, ulcer'. <u>ọjuju</u> and <u>egbò</u> coexist in Ijebu and Otta. Otherwise, <u>ọjuju</u> is restricted to the east of the line and <u>egbò</u> to the west. <u>Egbo</u> also occurs in cultivated speech in the East.

The two patterns we have discussed above, i.e., the Northeast/Southwest discontinuity (3:1) and the North/South discontinuity (3:2) must be viewed as aspects of the same general trend in the differentiation of Northwest Yoruba from the Southeast dialects. The similarity of the direction of the isoglosses bears this out. The effect of a cumulative display of the isoglosses of selected forms, Fig. <u>3:45</u> shows a bundling which is not surprising. We remark that the elimination of the southwesternmost corner of our area from SEY is very recent indeed and it is due to the influence of Lagos, that the bundling east-west isoglosses reflect

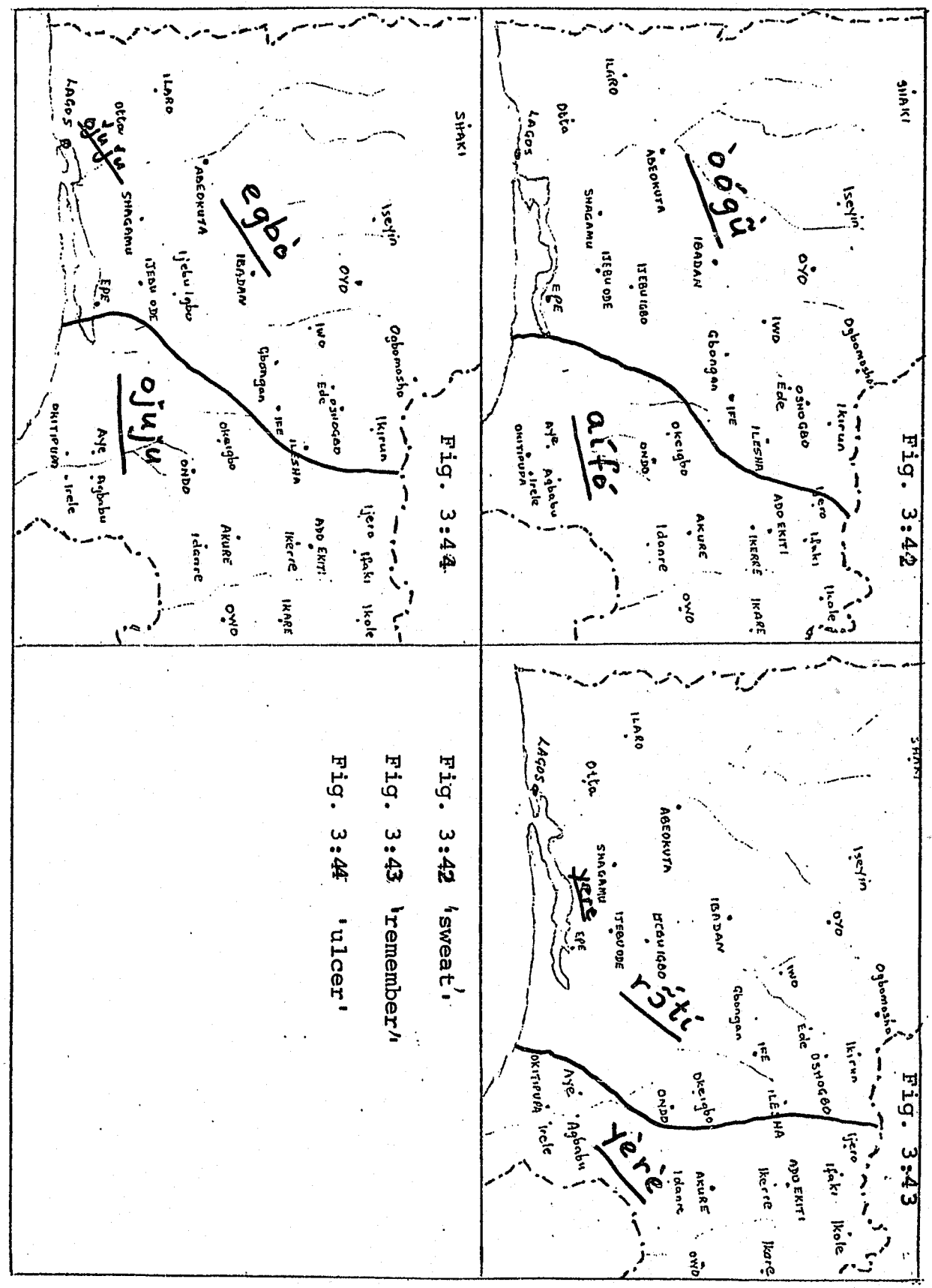


Fig. 3:42 'sweat'
Fig. 3:43 'remember'
Fig. 3:44 'ulcer'

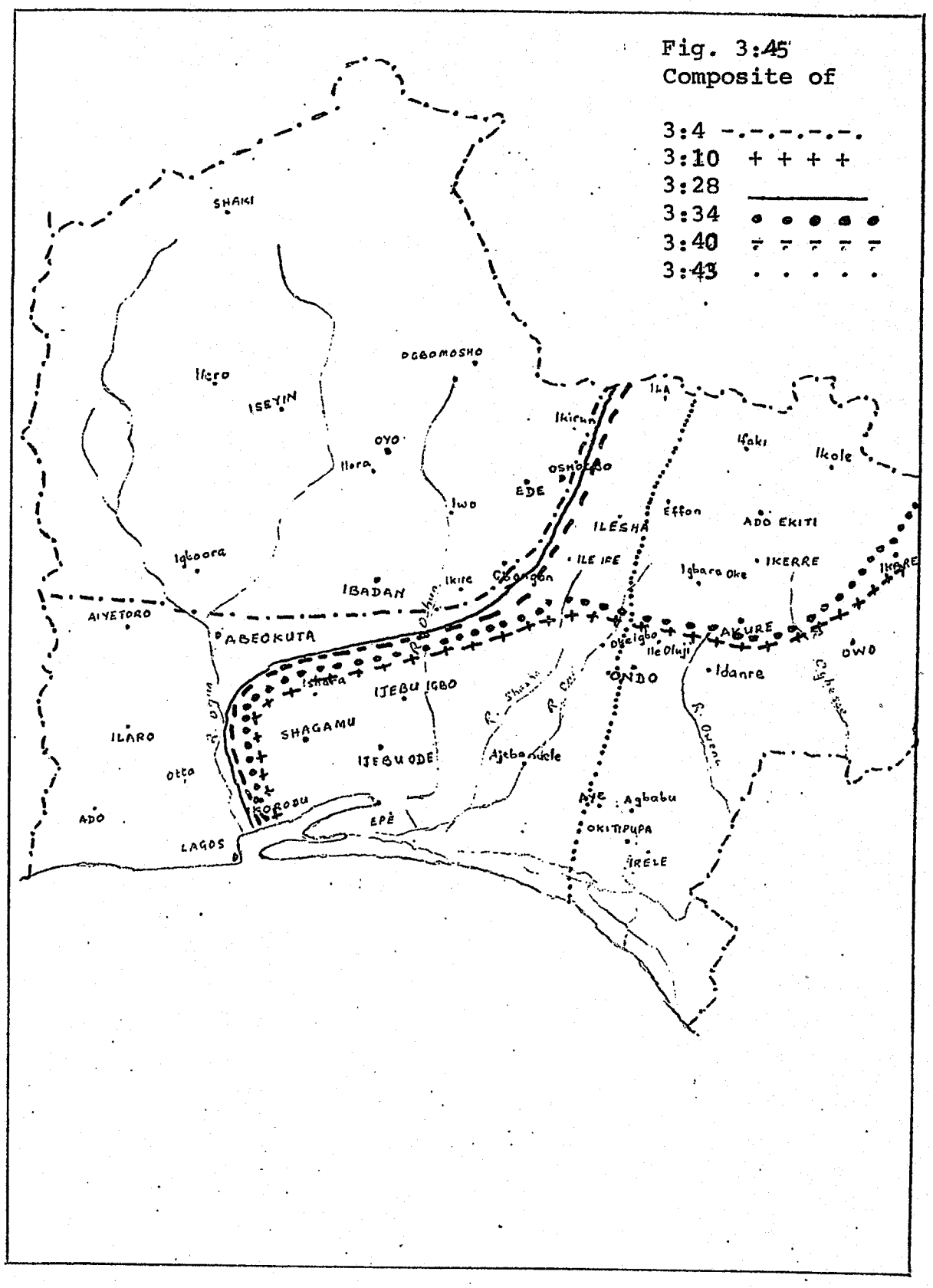


Fig. 3:45
Composite of

3:4 -.-.-.-.-.
3:10 + + + +
3:28 ———————
3:34 ● ● ● ● ●
3:40 = = = = =
3:43 . . . . .

the earlier stage of the division of our area.

3.3 Other Patterns

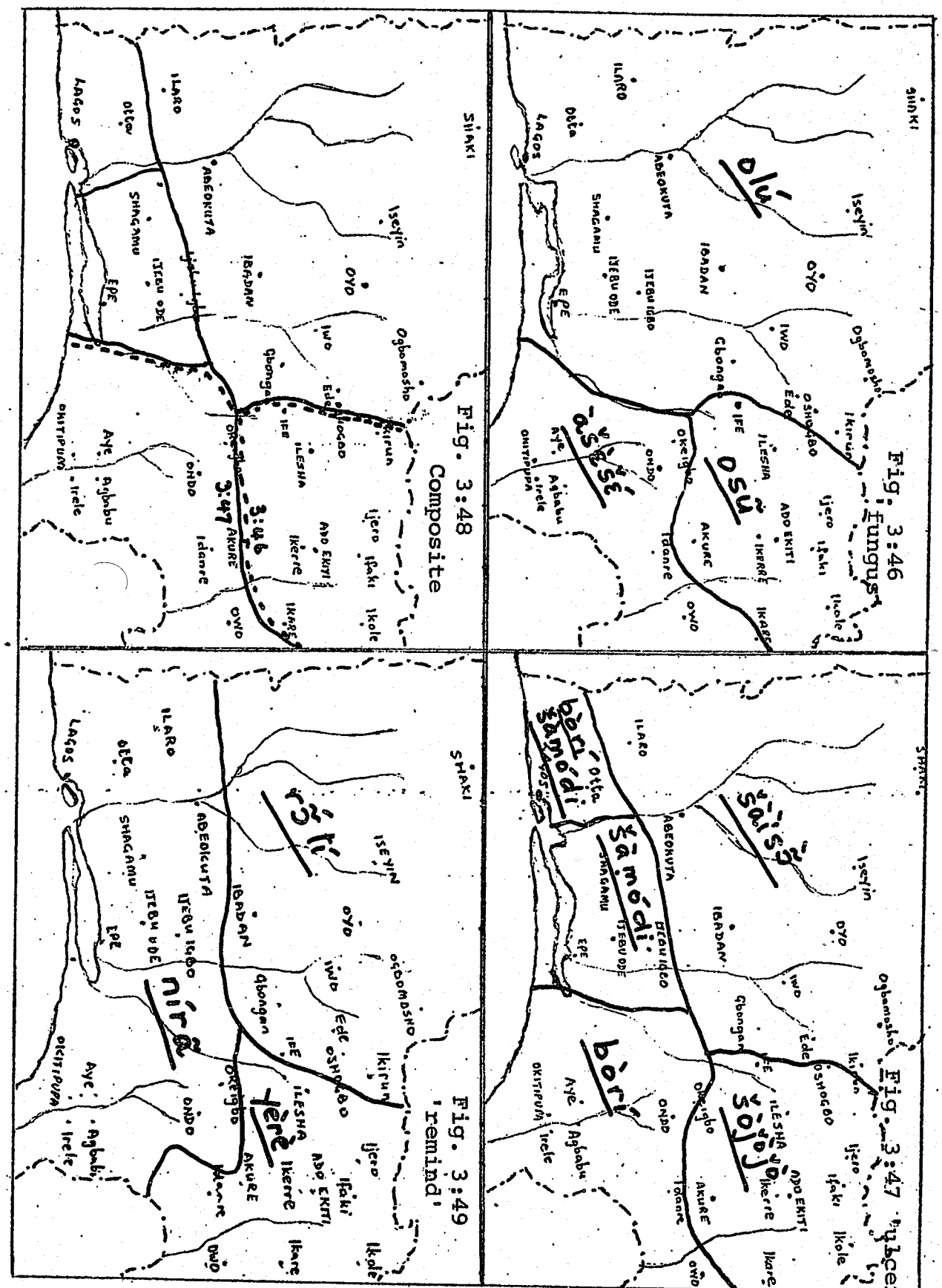
The many patterns to be presented below differ markedly from the ones already discussed. Some of these bring some confirmation for the existence of three major dialect configurations. Various other patterns cannot be neatly grouped. The picture that emerges will, at first sight, seem to confirm the slogan that every word has its own history; a close look will, however, make us understand that these lexical items are guided by the same dynamics of change as those which are responsible for the creation of the other levels of dialect configurations.

3.31 Lexical Confirmation for Three Dialect Groups

Fig. 3:46 'fungus' Olú to the West, ẹ̀ṣ̀ẹ̀ṣ̀ẹ̀ to the East and osũ in the central area all depict 'fungus'. Note also that the boundaries correspond with those delineated by isoglosses 1 and 2, (Chapter 1).

Fig. 3:47 'to be ill'. The lexical forms presented here--NWY ṣẹ̀ìṣõ̀, CY ṣòjòjò, SEY bòrí and Ijebu area ṣàmódi--are verbal compounds. The are analyzed as:

še	'do'	+	ẹ̀ìsõ̀	illness
še		+	òjòjò	"
še		+	ẹ̀módi	"
bò		+	orí	"



The SEY verb form bɔ̀ does not turn up in any other verbal compound with this meaning, nor does bɔ̀ occur in absolute form as a verb whose meaning can be paired with its designation in this compound. Because of this uniqueness, we hold the SEY form to be a survival. This claim is weak, because all the other forms may also be survivals.

Fig. 3:48 Composite of Figs. 3:46-3:47.

This composite display of Figs. 3:46 and 3:47 shows that lexical isoglosses bundle in a number of regions in this linguistic area. While some of these bundlings delimit some minor dialect areas we have held the firmer bundling of isoglosses (i.e. the bundling of isoglosses that delimit SEY, CY and NWY) as showing the lines of cleavage between the major isoglosses.

Fig. 3:49 'remind'. This figure simply reinforces the other two already presented. It is noteworthy that both NWY and some parts of CY have single words for the meanings 'to remember' and 'to remind'. (See also Fig. 3:43.) In NWY both are designated rɔ̃tí while in some areas of CY both are yèrè. Most areas of SEY, however, have distinct designations for each of these. While SEY shares rɔ̃tí (here [rãti]) 'remember' with NWY, nírá is unique to it. Because of the polysemy in NWY (rɔ̃tí for both 'to remember' and 'to remind'), educated SEY speakers are mixing up rɔ̃tí to designate both verbs--a carryover from their standard Yoruba speech--and also employing, at random, nírá for both.

3.32 East-West Discontinuity

We also find a few lexical items for which isoglosses run from West to East, thus splitting our area into North and South. While some of the ethnographic differences in Yoruba have been explained by some ethnographers as climate-bound, there is little reinforcement for this in the nature of the lexical items which give us the North-South discontinuity. We may suggest, however, that the isoglosses to follow figures 3:50-3:60 most probably reflect the earliest major dialect boundary existing between NWY and what is now SEY. Many of these lines correspond to the northernmost limit of the rain forest; the limit is not an impossible boundary, but a separater of differently oriented populations and, therefore, a probable check to penetration from the North. The elimination of Egba and Egbado areas from the domain of SEY is explained by the earliest route linking Lagos with Ibadan having been made through this area, and the fact that the impact of the standardized dialect was first felt here.

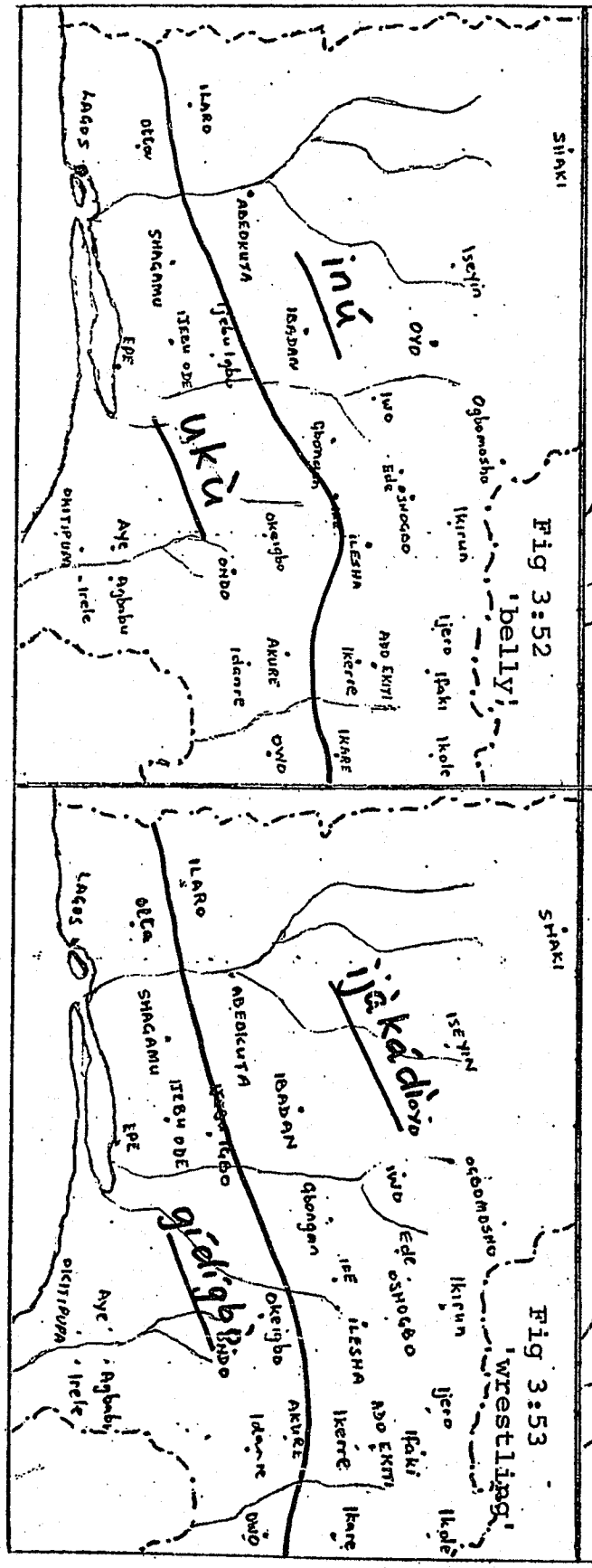
Fig. 3:50 'cane basket'. There are two types of cane basket. One has a lid and is used as a storage box by women, while the other, without a lid, is used for carrying groceries and farm materials. Both are called agbɔ̀ in the North. The former is also designated agbɔ̀ in the South but the latter is akpɛ̀rɛ̀. Even though standard Yoruba has agbɔ̀ for

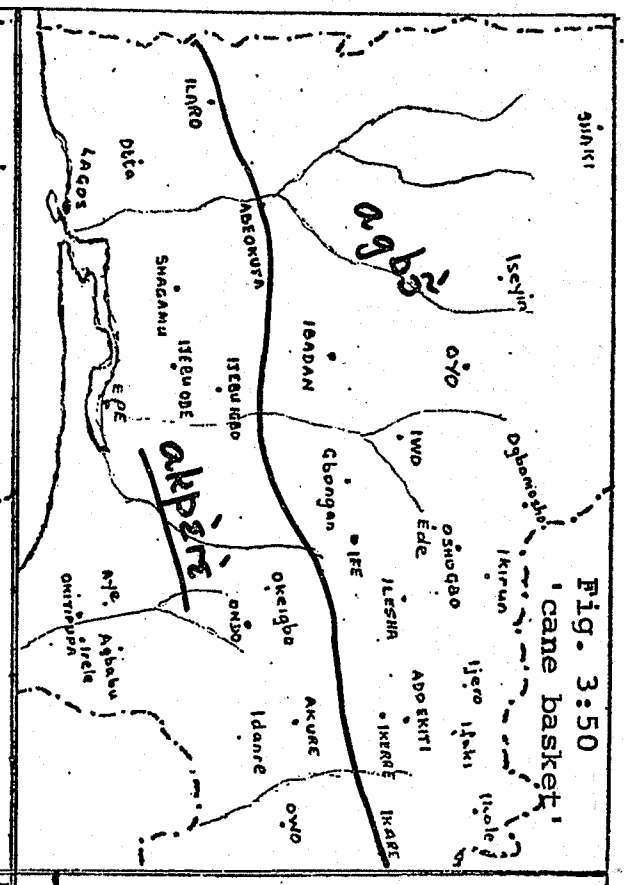
both types, akpɛ̀rɛ̀ is still kept in the South probably because it prevents the synonymy of designation which would have taken place were it eliminated.

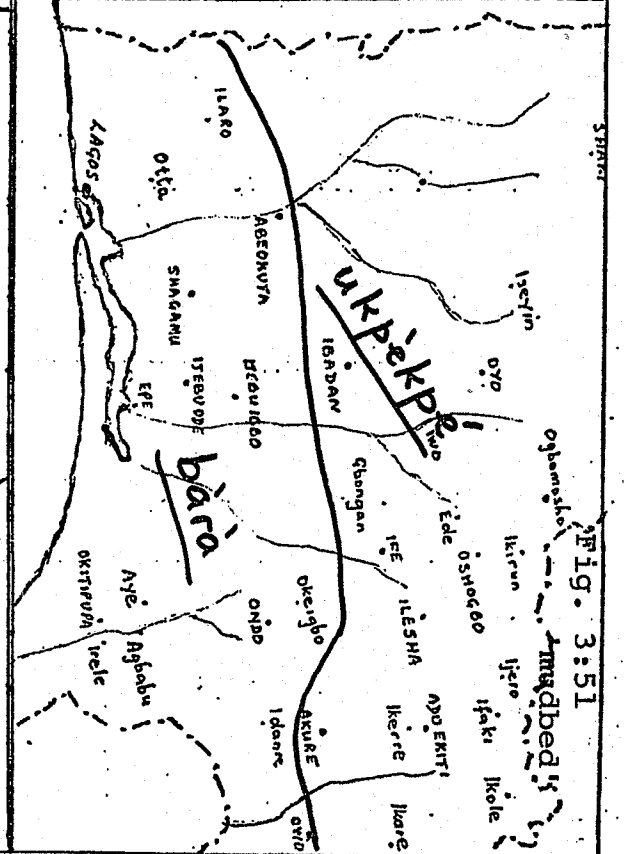
Fig. 3:51 'mudbed'. This refers to a sort of mud pavement raised about a foot above the level of the floor. With a mat spread on it, it serves traditionally as a bed. We are told by informants that mudbeds were not very common in the North as the preference was usually for cane couches and mats spread on the floor. Any raised pavement, either as a wall support or as a mudbed, is called kpɛ̀kpé or kpɛ̀kpélɛ in the North. 'Mudbeds' are designated bàrà in the South while kpɛ̀kpélɛ is a lowlying mud prop for the outer walls.

Fig. 3:52 'belly'. Koelle (1852) records the area covered by ukù as more extensive a hundred years ago than it is today, since ukù was the form used in Egba and Egbado areas which now have inú. The reasonsfor the elimination of ukù in preference for inú in these areas are presumably the same given for the diffusion of NWY forms into these places.

Fig. 3:53 'wrestling'. Wrestling forms part of a traditional festival in some areas of southern Yoruba, notably Ijebu, Ondo and Okitipupa. Young men band themselves together in groups and challenge other bands of youths to an exhibition of prowess in wrestling. The duration of this festival varies from seven to sixteen days in different places.







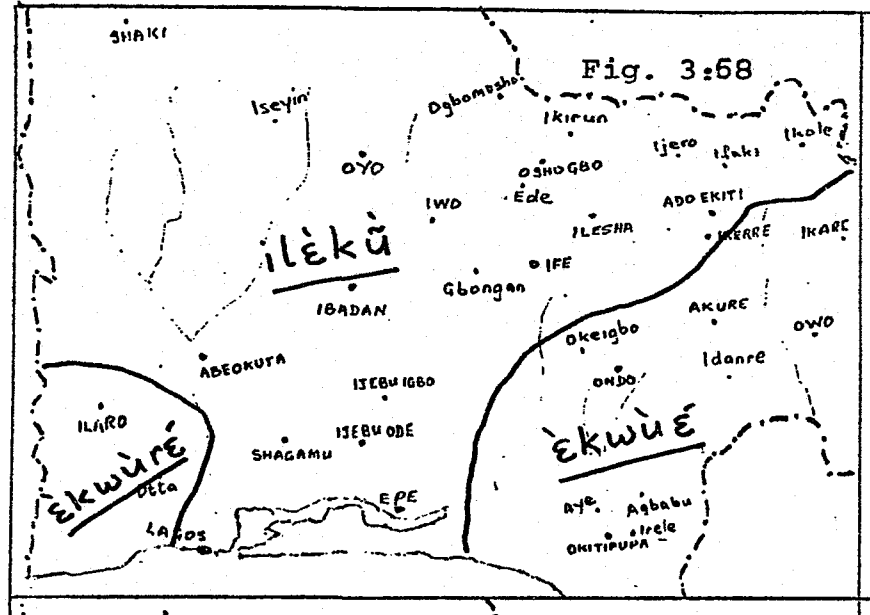
The South Yoruba form gídígbò sounds to us like an onomatopoetic word attempting to reproduce by sound the actual wrestling feat. The northern form ìjàkadì is a compounding of ìjà 'fight' and kadì, which is a dead morpheme meaning 'danterous'. It occurs today only in the northern compound ìjàkàdì. The southern form, judging by its nature, is probably a survival.

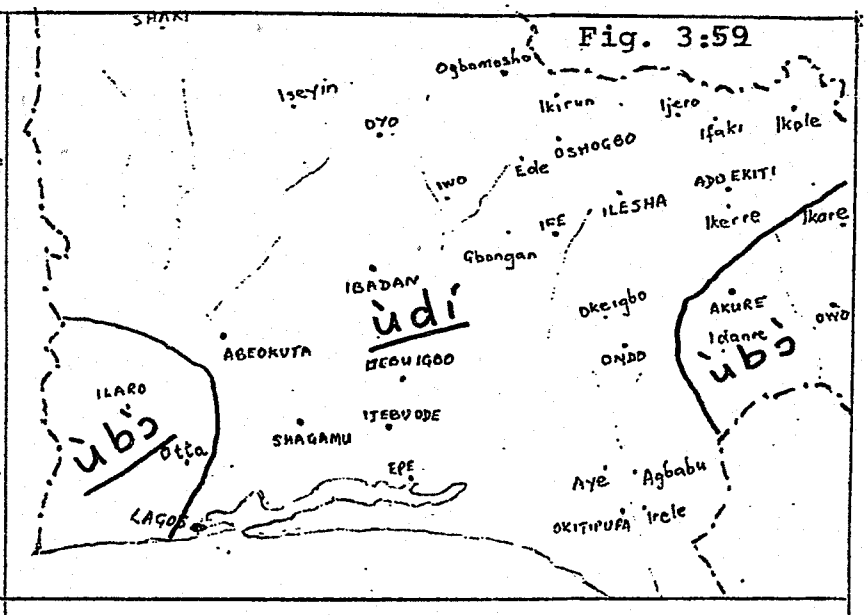
Fig. 3:54 'breast'. ɔmú in the North and ɔyà in the South are probably survivals. They are both nouns derived by the regular process of prefixing a vowel to the verb of the structure /CV/. To 'suck breast' in the North is mu ɔmú and in the South it is yã ɔyà.

Fig. 3:55 Occurrence of ɛri 'stream'. Note that ɛri, a suspected survival, is attested only in the extreme southern areas of SEY where rivers empty their waters into the sea in small delta-like formations.

Fig. 3:56 Occurrence of rè 'depart'. Rè may also be thought of as a survival, since it participates in the greeting ka rè wá or a rè wá 'depart and return', i.e., "see you again."

Fig. 3:57 'to tell'. Wí in NWY and western areas of CY, so in western section of SEY and to the east of SEY and CY fo give us a division we have hitherto rarely seen, a tripartite division of our area. Fig. 3:57 thus parallels the phonological division given in Chapter 1.





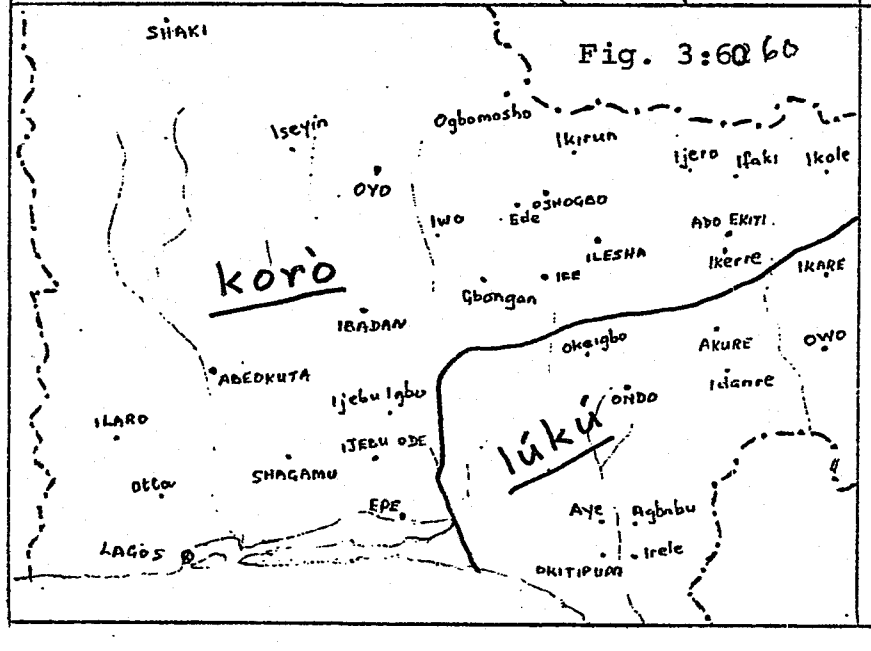
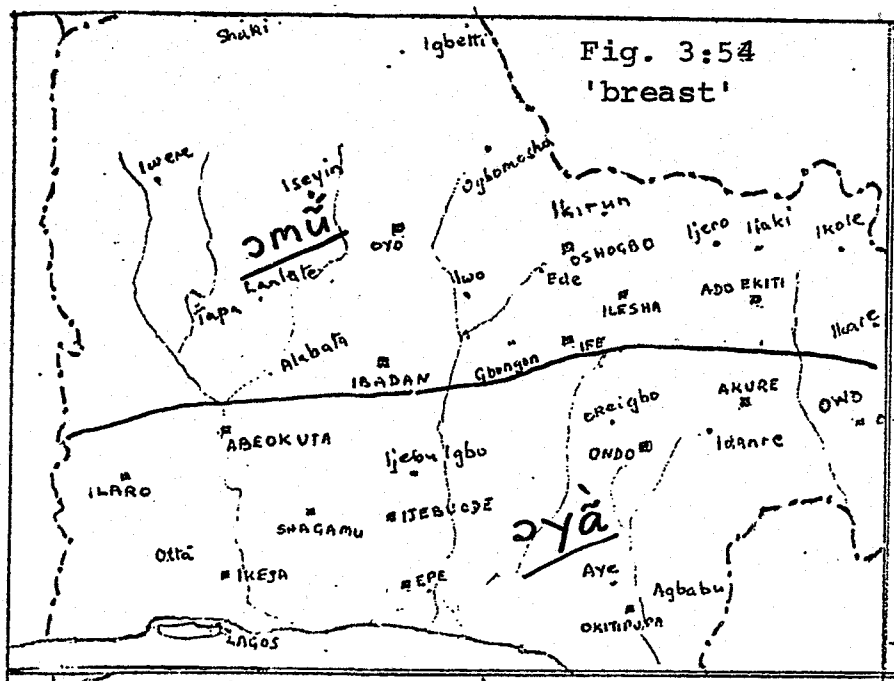
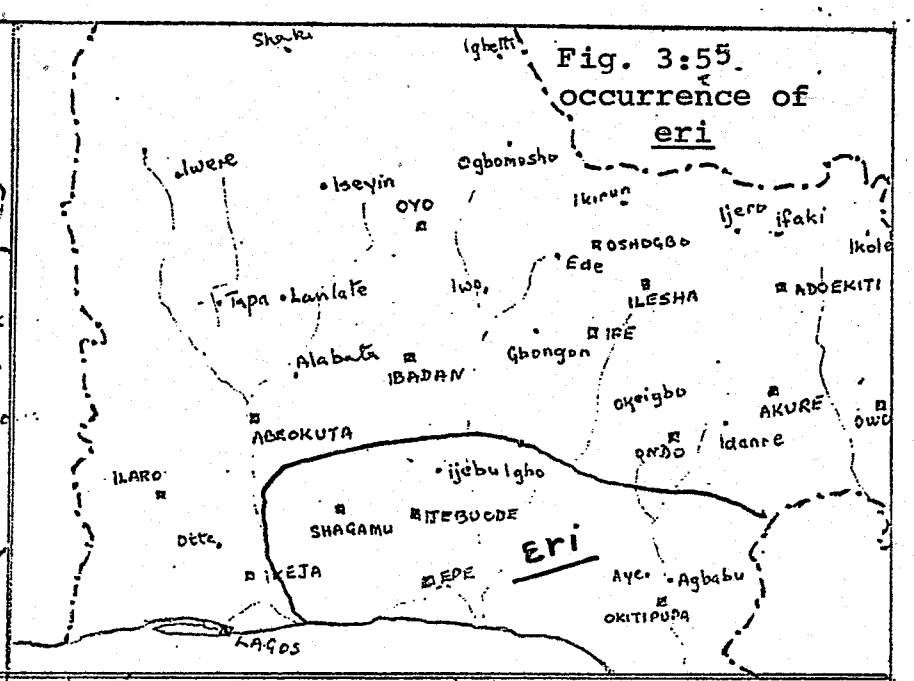


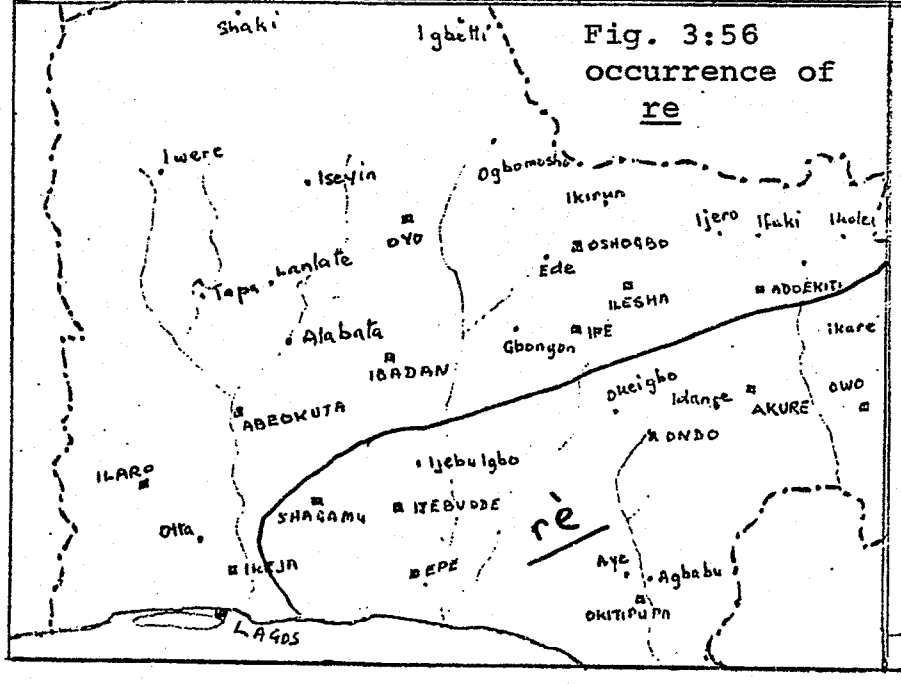
Fig. 3:58 'door'

Fig. 3:59 'buttocks'

Fig. 3:60 'bitter'







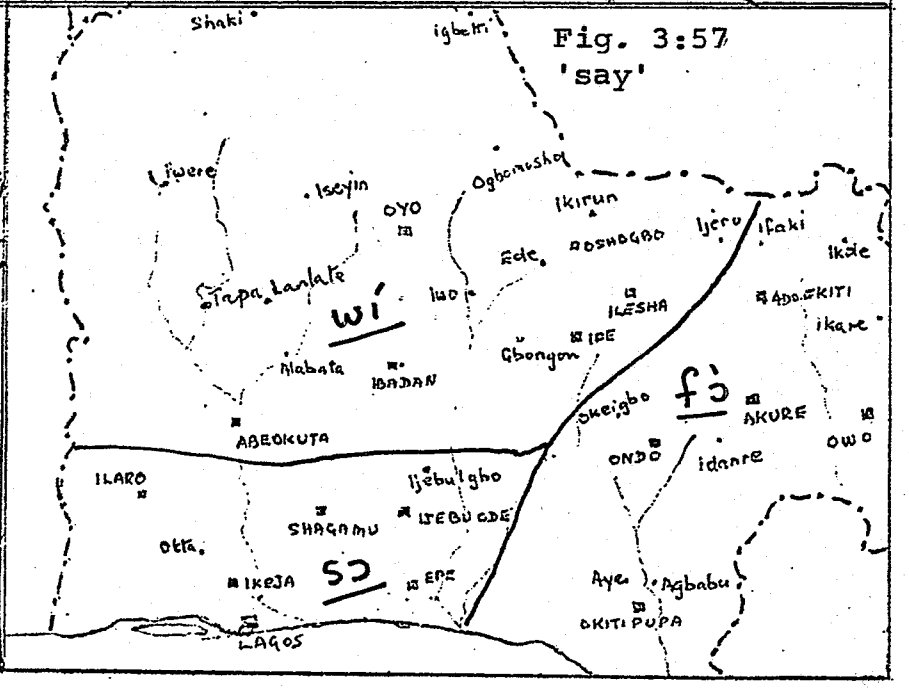


Fig. 3:58 'door'. The extreme southwestern corner of SEY and the eastern section of SEY both have ɛ̀kwùɛ́ while the Ijebu area has succumbed to the influence of NWY ìlɛ̀kù. ɛ̀kwùɛ́ is probably a survival.

Fig. 3:59 'buttock'. Ùbɔ̀ turns up in both the extreme southwestern and northeastern corners, ùdí/ìdí in all the other areas. By its occurrence in these noncontiguous areas, ùbɔ̀ is judged to be a survival.

Fig. 3:60 'bitter'. koro occurs all over NWY, CY and the western areas of SEY. lùku is found in other areas.

Fig. 3:61--Composite of the major lexical isoglosses.

The bundling of lexical isoglosses as shown in this chapter reinforces the tripartite division of our linguistic area into three major regions. The bundling and the direction of isoglosses in the next chapters also confirm that the major geographic discontinuities coincide at all the levels of our description.

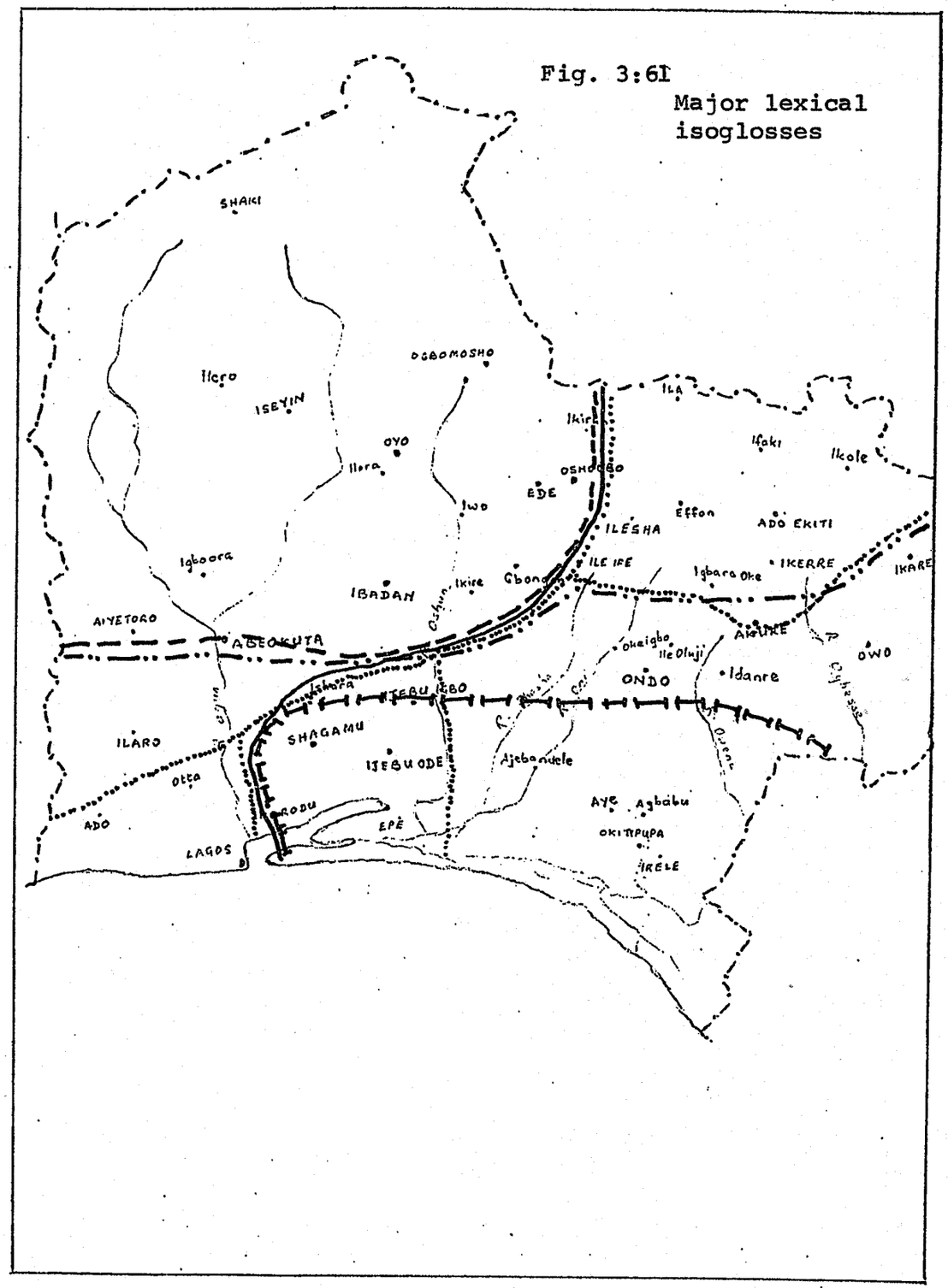


Fig. 3:61
Major lexical isoglosses

CHAPTER 4

GRAMMAR

4.0. Introductory Statement

The description of Yoruba grammar is still in a poor state. It is not that there is a dearth of expositions on the structure of the Yoruba language, but rather that the quality of the extant works is not satisfactory enough. None of the existing grammars[1] has struck the proper balance between explicitness and comprehensiveness. The problem is that some of these works spread themselves too thinly over large areas of the structure of the language and subsequently suffer from lack of depth, while others limit themselves to matters so narrow that the interdependence of the area covered with other areas of the language is lost sight of.

The ideal situation for a dialectologist would be to have as "given" a comprehensive and reliable analysis of at least one of the dialects with which he could compare the forms of the other dialects. Unfortunately, this ideal cannot be satisfied at this stage in the development of Yoruba dialectology.

Viewed against this background, both the doubts expressed and the tentative nature of the conclusions drawn

[1]The noteworthy works in Yoruba Grammar are: Bamgbose (1966), Delano (1958) and (1965), Rowlands (1954) and (1955), Siertsema (1958) and (1959) and Ward (1952).

in this chapter may be excused. Moreover, we do not attempt a comprehensive coverage of all the structural differences among the dialects. Even under ideal conditions, a measure of selectivity is inevitable.

4.01 Plan of Presentation

In section 4.1, we present the pronominal systems of the dialect groups in traditional grammatical terms. In section 4.2 we discuss the relationship between pronouns, tense particles, and preverbs. Here, we offer a reinterpretation of the traditional analysis of the short pronoun system. Section 4.3 deals with the processes of negation, while in Section 4.4 we discuss a few minor differences.

4.10 The Pronominal System

The Yoruba pronoun distinguishes three persons and two numbers. Moreover, there are for each person and number two sets of pronoun forms: the long pronouns and the short ones.

Long Pronouns--Subject

		Northwest	Southeast	Central
Singular	1	èmi		
	2	ìwɔ, ìrɛ, èyĩ	ùwɔ	ìwɔ
	3	ɔ̀ũ	ɔ̀(ɣ)ũ	òũ
Plural	1	àwa		
	2	èyĩ	ẹ̀wã/ɛ̀wɛ̃	ẹ̀ĩ/ɛ̀ĩ
	3	àwɔ̃		ìɔ̃

Short Pronouns--Subject

		Northwest	Southeast	Central
Singular	1	mo,ma,mi	mɔ̃,mɛ̃,ma	mo,me,ma
	2	o,wa	wo, we, wa,	
	3	ɔ́,a	ɔ́,é,á	
Plural	1	a		
	2	ɛ	ɛ̀ɛ̀/ɛ̃ɛ̃	ĩ
	3	wɔ́		ɔ̃

4.10.1 Distribution of Long and Short Subject Pronouns

For any single dialect, the distribution of long and short pronouns is rather complex, but the short pronouns are more freely used than the long ones. In all dialects, the defective verb nĩ 'to be, exist' permits only the long pronouns as subjects; however, subordinate relative clauses have as subject only the short pronoun forms. In NWY, the preverbs ɔ́ɔ̀, yíɔ̀ yɔ́ɔ̀ take as subject the long pronoun forms. In all other situations and for all the dialects, the long and short subject pronouns may be said to be in free variation.

4.10.2 The Object Pronoun

The object pronoun does not differentiate between short and long forms. Since in all cases the pronoun object is preceded by a word ending in a vowel, and since vowel elision is common in the language, it seems both feasible and reasonable to analyze the object pronoun as consisting of the second syllable of the long subject form, with or

without its consonant onset. That is mi 'me' in olu rí mi 'Olu saw me' is morphophonemically èmi, the initial vowel e having been dropped in the environment of a preceding vowel. The object pronouns are as follows:

		Northwest	Southeast	Central
Singular	1	mi		
	2	ɔ/ɛ	ɛ	ɔ̃
	3	identify with preceding vowel	ɔ,ũ,a	same as NWY
Plural	1	wa		
	2	yĩ	wã	ĩ
	3	wɔ̃		ɔ̃

4.1.1 Interdialect Pronoun Differences

4.11.1. Pronominal Systems with Two Plural Terms

Fig. 4:1 shows that many regions of SEY operate with only two formal distinctions in the plural pronoun system, as against three distinctions made in all the other dialects. The situation is that the forms for 2nd and 3rd persons plural have fallen together in some areas of SEY. The history of this merger will be considered along with that of a related problem in 4.11.2.

In Ondo, Okitipupa, Idanre and Owo areas, ǎwá wá means either 'they came' or 'you(pl) came'; Ade ri wã is also ambiguous, it is either 'Ade saw them' or 'Ade saw you (pl)'. The semantic ambiguity resulting from the formal merger of 2nd and 3rd plural pronouns is at best resolved by context.

4.11.2 The Pronoun of Respect

In all the dialects of NWY, in the Ijebu areas of SEY, in Ife-Ilesha and parts of Ekiti in CY, the 2nd person plural is the pronoun of respect both in formal and in colloquial speech. Thus in addressing an elderly person, boys say

ɛyĩ ni	'it is you'
ɛ wá	'you came'

ɛyĩ and ɛ are 2nd person plural pronouns long and short respectively.

Fig. 4:2 shows the areas where 2nd person plural pronouns are used for respect.

We may note here also that the other plural pronouns are also being used with singular meaning but with less frequency of occurrence in the same areas where the pronoun of respect occurs. A man talking about his father refers to him as wɔ́. When asked about the whereabouts of any elderly person, a boy usually replies wɔ́ wà nílé 'they are at home' instead of ó wà nile 'he is at home'. We find similar occurrences of awa and a 'we', for emi and mo 'I'.

The use of the 1st and 3rd persons plural pronouns for 1st and 3rd persons singular is seen as due to the influence of the widespread use of the 2nd person respect form. Both the 2nd person respect form and the use of the other plural pronouns for singular referents occur in the same

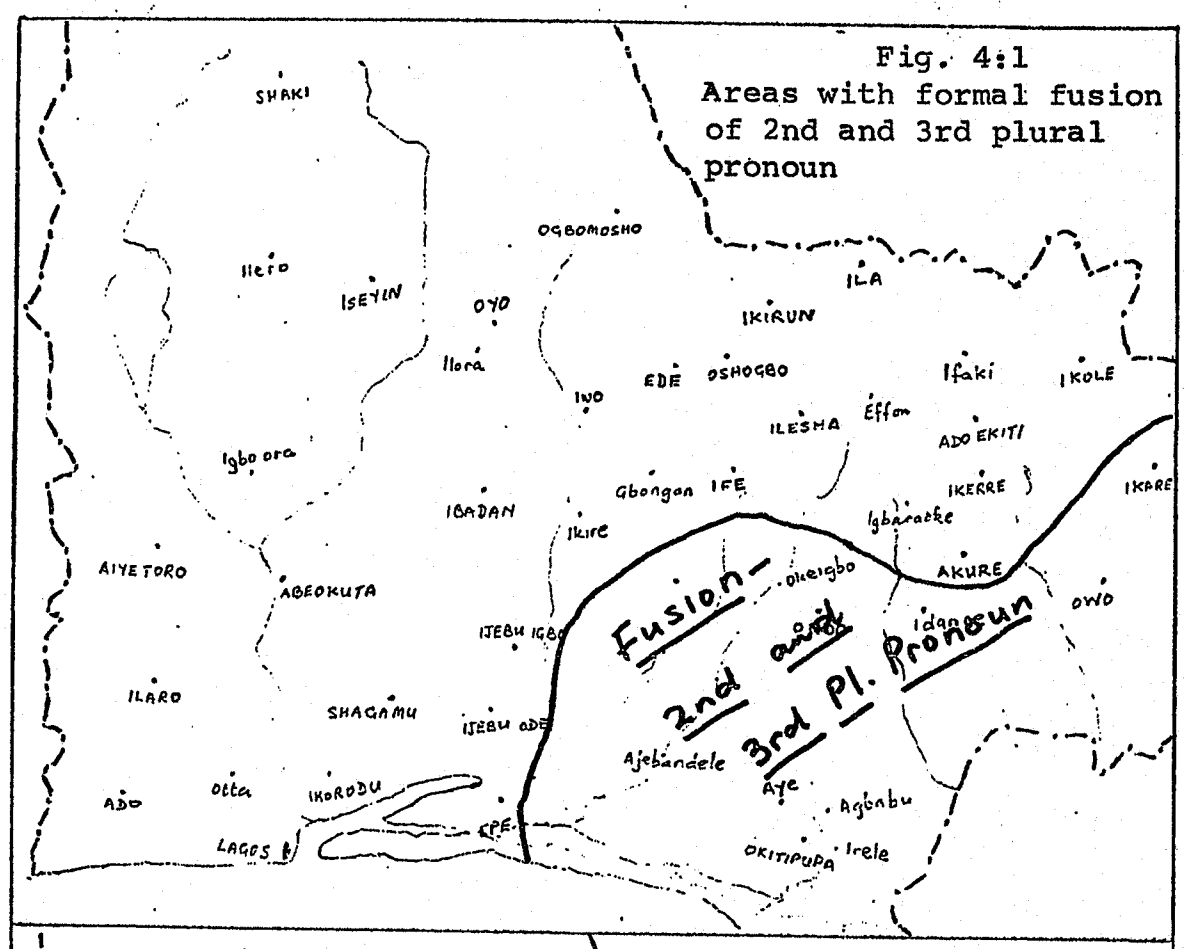


Fig. 4:1
Areas with formal fusion of 2nd and 3rd plural pronoun

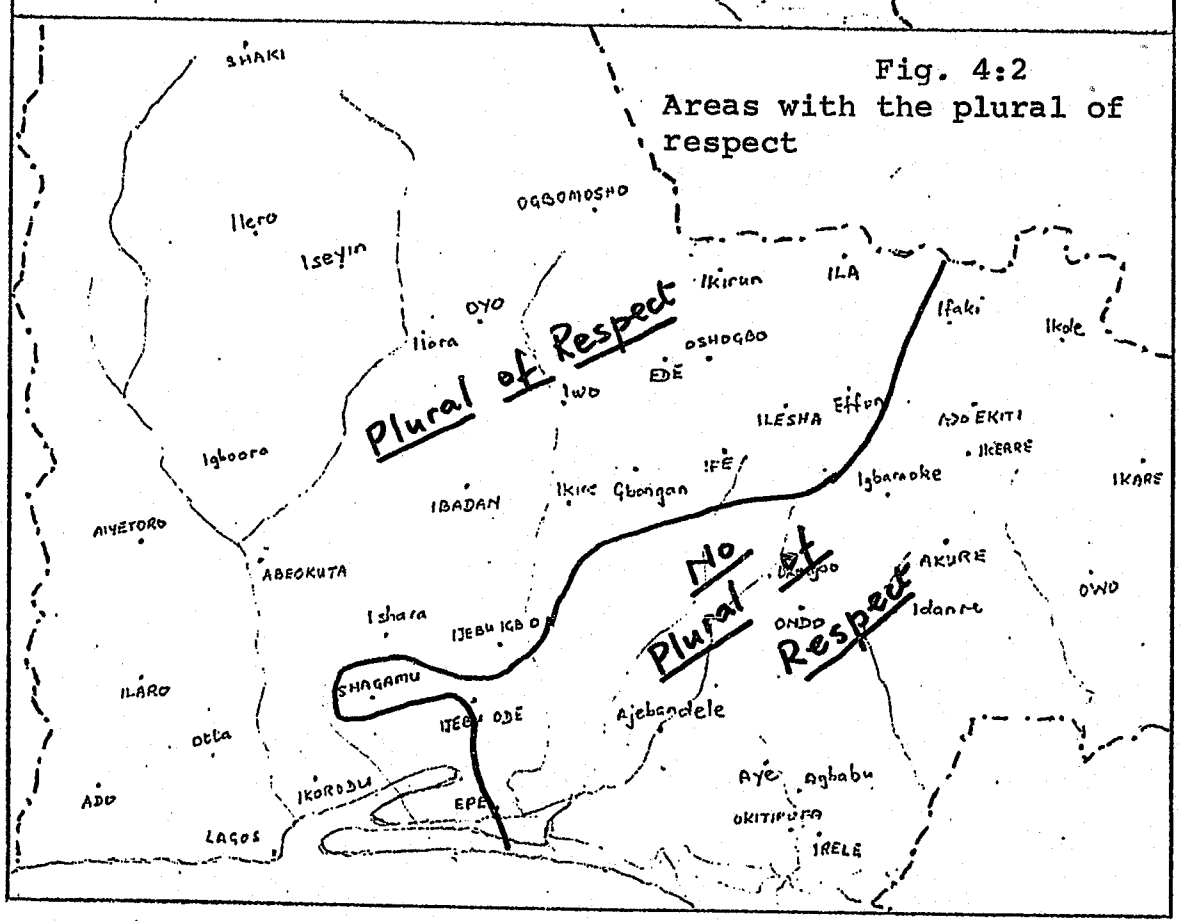


Fig. 4:2
Areas with the plural of respect

geographical areas. While the 2nd person respect form has gained acceptance in literary usage, the use of the other plural pronouns for singular persons has not. Fig. 4:3 shows the areas in which the other plural pronouns are used with singular meaning.

In those areas of SEY where the 2nd and 3rd person plural pronouns have coalesced (Fig. 4:1), there is neither a 2nd person pronoun of respect nor the use of plural pronouns for singular referents. An SEY speaker from any of the areas shown in Fig. 4:1 usually says

wo wá 'you came'

ó ɣu li 'he is at home'

in both familiar and formal contexts. (The speaker of NWY and CY considers the SEY speaker very rude when he carries over this familiar form into Standard Yoruba speech.) Yet, it is not difficult to see that it is the absence of a distinct form for the 2nd person plural which is probably partially responsible for the lack of the pronoun of respect in SEY. Were he to use the common form for the respectful second person, the SEY speaker would probably be left with a coalescense of three distinctions.

We suggest that the emergence of the 2nd person pronoun of respect dates back to contact with western culture and the introduction of the English language. We do not hold the English language itself as solely responsible, even though Nigerian English abounds in displaced pronouns as

respect forms of address in deference for the British overlord. High school students usually say to their teachers, "He is right" or "They are right" for "You are right." Another device in Nigerian English for showing respect is to use the title of the person addressed. A university student usually asks, "Is the professor sick?" instead of, "Are you sick?"

It is this search for a form of respect which is carried over into Yoruba, especially the dialects of educated speakers. As we have mentioned, we consider the practice to be very recent. If this practice was not carried over to SEY, the reasons may have been twofold. First, the pronoun forms for 2nd and 3rd person plural had coalesced before the advent of Western civilization and the teaching of English. Secondly, it is one of the areas in the Yoruba language territory which had relatively late contact with the West.

The coalescence of 2nd and 3rd person plural pronouns was itself in all likelihood an innovation moving westward from SEY; in the course of its diffusion, it collided with the eastward-expanding use of the 2nd person plural form as a form of respect. In turn, this new respect function for the 2nd person plural pronoun may be seen as the stabilizing factor which prevented the falling together of the 2nd and 3rd person plural pronouns of NWY and CY.

4.11.3 Phonological Selection Rules and the Pronominal Systems

In our analysis of Yoruba Phonology (chapter 5, below), we distinguish between dialects where vowel harmony plays a role in the grammar of the language and those where it does not. We have to anticipate that topic here in order to explain a geographic difference in pronoun systems.

In each dialect the vowels are divided into two subsystems as defined by their co-occurrence in successive syllables of the same word.

Oral Vowels

	Northwest Yoruba		Southeast Yoruba		Central Yoruba	
Tense	i	u	i	u	i	u
	e	o	e	o	e	o
Lax	ɛ	ɔ	ɛ	ɔ	ɪ	ʊ
	a		a		ɛ	ɔ
					a	

Nasal Vowels

Tense	ĩ	ũ	ĩ	ũ	ĩ	ũ
Lax	(ɛ̃)	ɔ̃	ɛ̃	ɔ̃	ɪ̃	ʊ̃
	(ã)		ã		(ɛ̃)	ɔ̃
					(ã)	

The parenthesized items are "marginal" in the systems in which they occur.

The phonological selection rule has immense grammatical consequences in CY whereas it has little effect on the grammar of the other dialects. In the CY dialects, the short subject singular pronouns each have two forms, depending on the tenseness or laxness of the vowel of the predicate verb to which the pronoun is assimilated. For example:

Singular	1	mo	rí	'I saw'	mo yú	'I went'
	2	o	rí	'you saw'	o yú	'You went'
	3	ó	rí	'he saw'	ó yú	'he went'

The verb rí 'see' and yú 'go' have vowels belonging to the tense vowel set, so the vowel of the pronoun must be selected from that set. On the other hand, rí 'laugh' and lɔ 'go' have lax vowels; hence they select lax vowel forms of the pronouns:

Singular	1	mɔ	lɔ	'I went'	mɔ rí	'I laughed'
	2	ɔ	lɔ	'you went'	ɔ rí	'you laughed'
	3	ɔ́	lɔ	'he went'	ɔ́ rí	'he laughed'

Fig. 4:4 shows areas where vowel harmony is fully operative. This selectional restriction, which in a way assimilates the pronoun to the verb, is restricted to the singular pronoun only and it is operative fully in all areas of CY. Relics of this are also found in the northern parts of NWY, e.g., in Oyo and Illa; but the alternation is almost

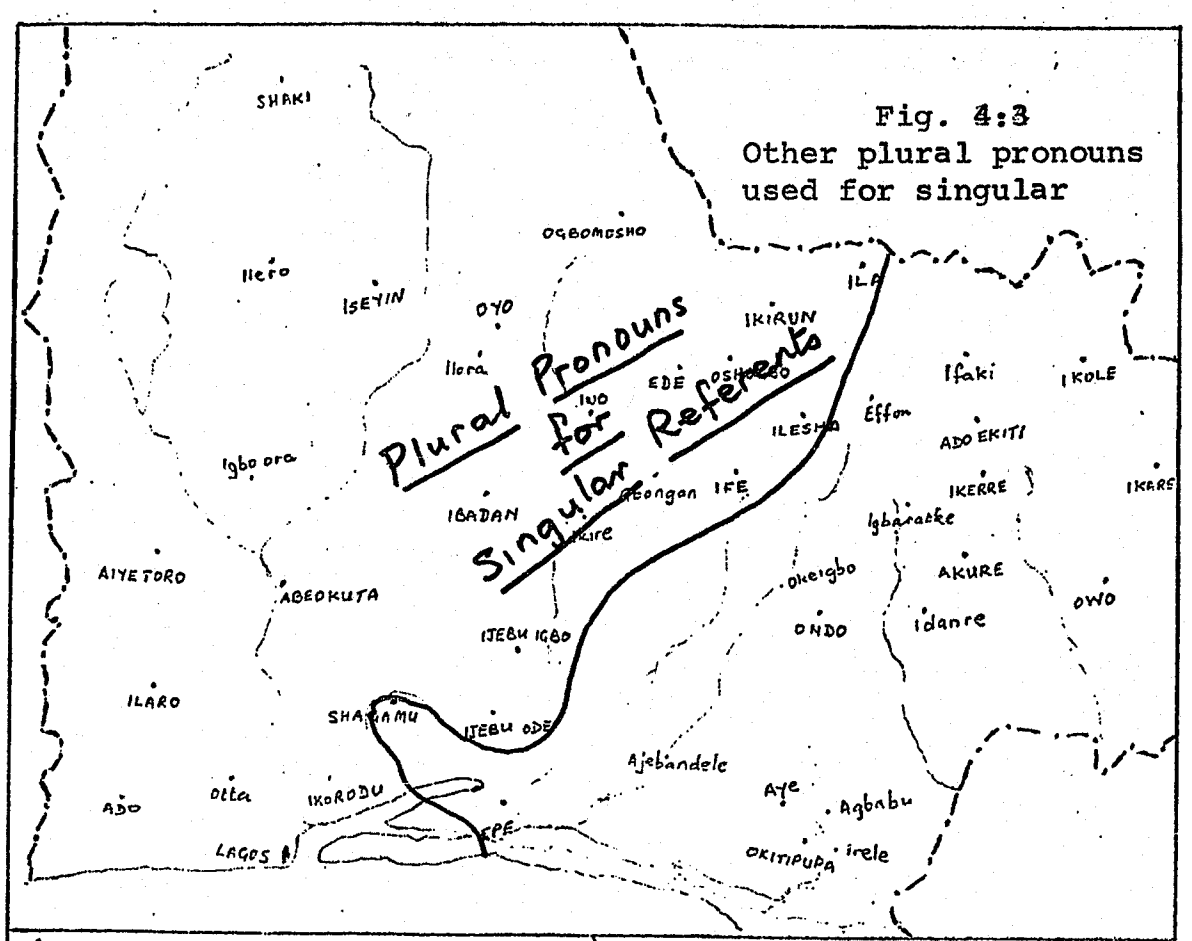


Fig. 4:3
Other plural pronouns used for singular

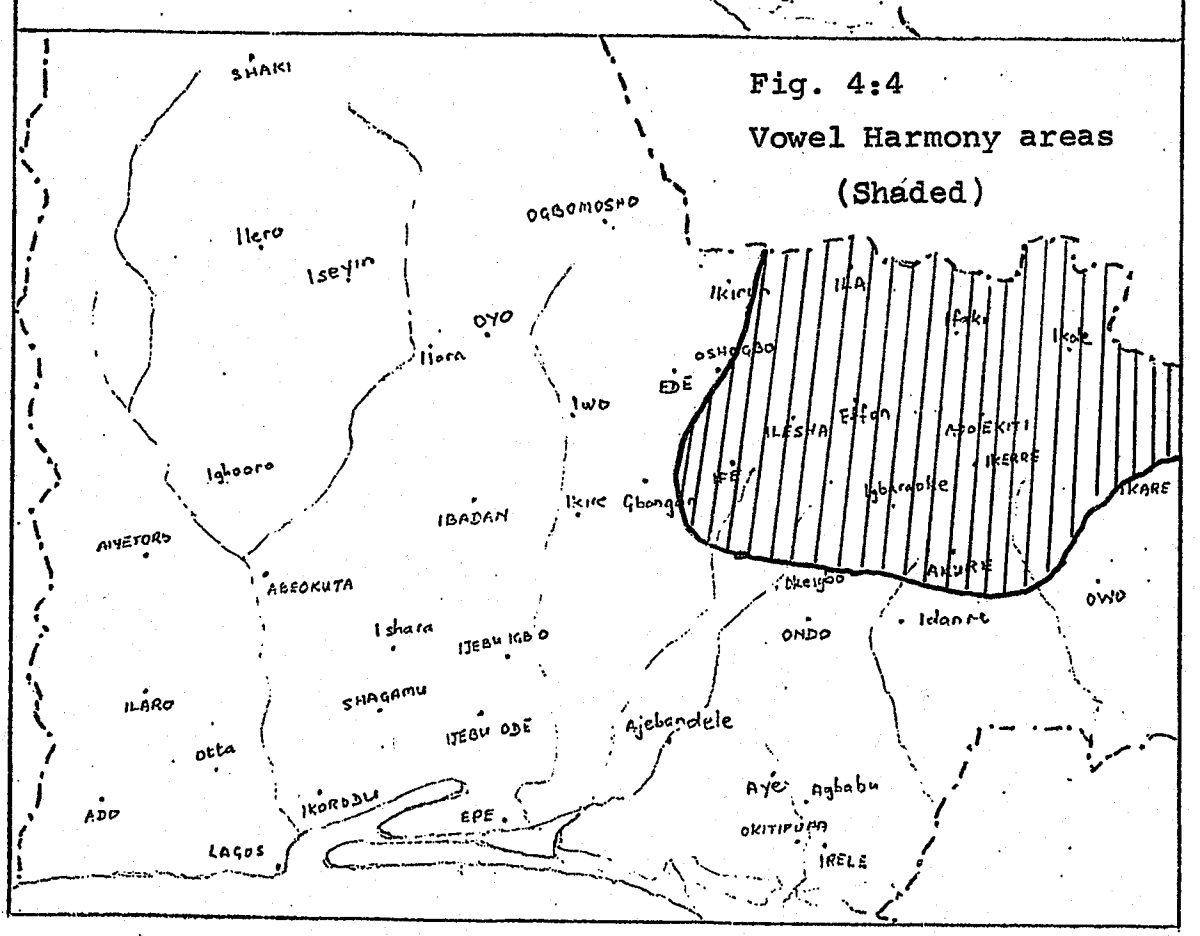


Fig. 4:4
Vowel Harmony areas
(Shaded)

completely absent from SEY. We hold this automatic pronoun allomorph alternation in CY to be a relic from Proto-Yoruba. We shall see in the section on Phonology that even where vowel harmony today plays less role in the grammar, the cooccurrence of vowels in successive syllables of the same word is covered by considerable restrictions. The elimination of vowel harmony in NWY and SEY is discussed in chapter 5.

4.11.4 Third Person Singular Object Pronoun

One of the many dialect-differentiating factors in Yoruba is the form of the third person singular object pronoun. As may be observed from the chart on page , most of the object pronouns in Yoruba, are regularly "derived" from the longer pronoun forms. We may note here two features of the object pronoun which seem to be common to most dialects:

(a) the direct-object pronoun always follows the verb directly;

(b) it must not have the same tone as the last syllable of the verb. The dissimilation has the following pattern:

Verb	Direct Object Pronoun
low tone	high tone
mid tone	high tone
high tone	mid tone

The 3rd person singular object pronoun in NWY and CY is always assimilated to the preceding vowel. Thus, we have

ó bú u 'he insulted him'

Ade rà á 'Ade bought it'

where a and u the 3rd singular object pronouns may be regarded as reduplication of the vowels of the preceding verbs but bearing different tones according to the pattern already given.

The Ikare and Owo areas of SEY operate with a segmental fusion of the 3rd singular pronoun object with the vowel of the preceding verb. We have forms as

ó bú	'he insulted'	ó bu	'he insulted him'
Adé rà	'Ade bought'	Adé ra	'Ade bought it'
Olú jɛ	'Olu ate'	Olú jɛ́	'Olu ate it'

We are able to distinguish between the verb used without an object pronoun and the verb with a 3rd singular object pronoun because of the tone change that the verb undergoes when it also expresses the 3rd singular object pronoun. That is, when used without the 3rd singular object pronoun, the verb appears with its underlying tone. With the 3rd singular object pronoun however we have this pattern:

underlying low tone or high tone verb becomes mid tone
underlying mid tone verb becomes high tone.

Other Southeast Yoruba areas on the other hand, have the following forms:

ó rɔ̀ ó 'he bought it'

ó tɔ̀ ó 'he sold it'

ó še ũ 'he did it'

ó rí ũ 'he saw it'

We can isolate two forms ɔ and ũ as indicating the 3rd person singular object pronoun. ɔ appears with verbs with final a in the underlying form. We may compare

ó tà mí 'he sold me'

ó tà é 'he sold you'

with ó tɔ̀ ó 'he sold him, it'

in which the a of the underlying verb tà has been assimilated to ɔ.

The other form ũ appears as object in other environments.

For all the forms cited as exemplifying the 3rd person singular object pronoun in SEY, there are alternants. Thus we have:

ó rɔ̀ ɔ and ó rà á

ó še ũ and ó še é

The alternants are the forms used in NWY-CY areas, and their diffusion to SEY is probably due to the influence of the standardized dialect.

Fig. 4:5 shows the different areas where different 3rd singular object pronouns occur.

We believe that any reconstructed form of the 3rd person pronoun object must account for the forms ɔ and ũ in

SEY as being the prototypes from which all the other dialectal forms developed. This conclusion is supported by the following considerations:

1. We have already shown that the objective pronouns other than the 3rd person singular correspond primarily to the second syllables of the longer forms of subject pronouns. Exceptions are 2nd person singular object ɛ for many dialects. We find, however, that in the Abeokuta and Egbado areas, there is irɛ for 'you (singular)', and this indeed is also a relic. All dialects express pronoun possession with ti + a pronoun object; and 'yours' for all dialects is tirɛ ~ tiɛ ~ tɛɛ. *iwɔ and *irɛ were probably in complementary distribution. The claim we are making here is that the form ũ for ɔũ served originally for 3rd person singular object. Because of its lack of consonant onset, it gradually became assimilated to the vowel of the verb preceding it, the high water mark of which is its coalescence with that vowel in many areas.

2. We have also shown that ũ has another alternant, o. As to the origin of this form, we are not sure. Today its distribution is limited to occurrence with verbs whose underlying forms end in the vowel a. In many of the SEY dialects, however, ũ as an extra syllable occurs in the corresponding position. It may have been the case that the distribution of ũ and o was defined by vowel harmony so that

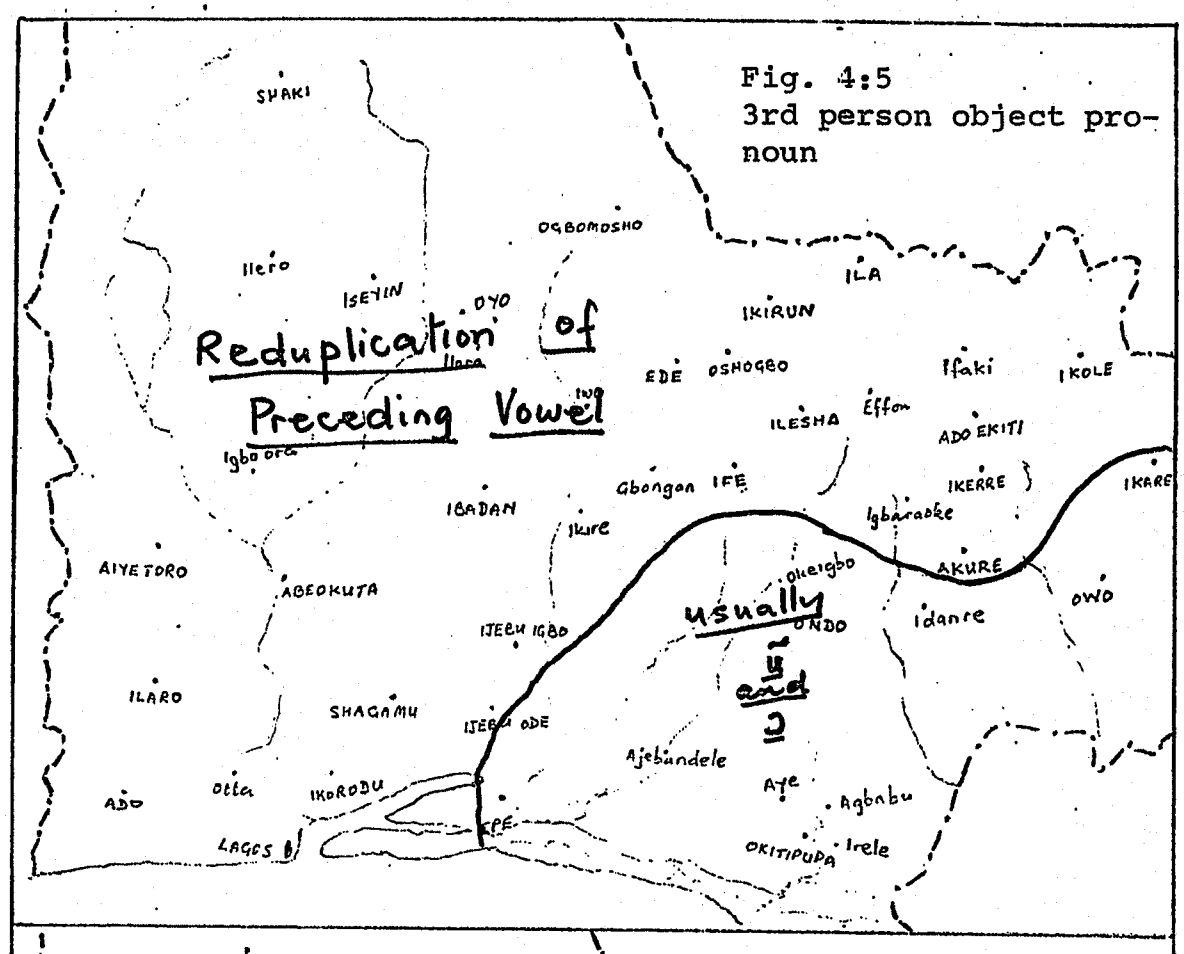


Fig. 4:5
3rd person object pronoun

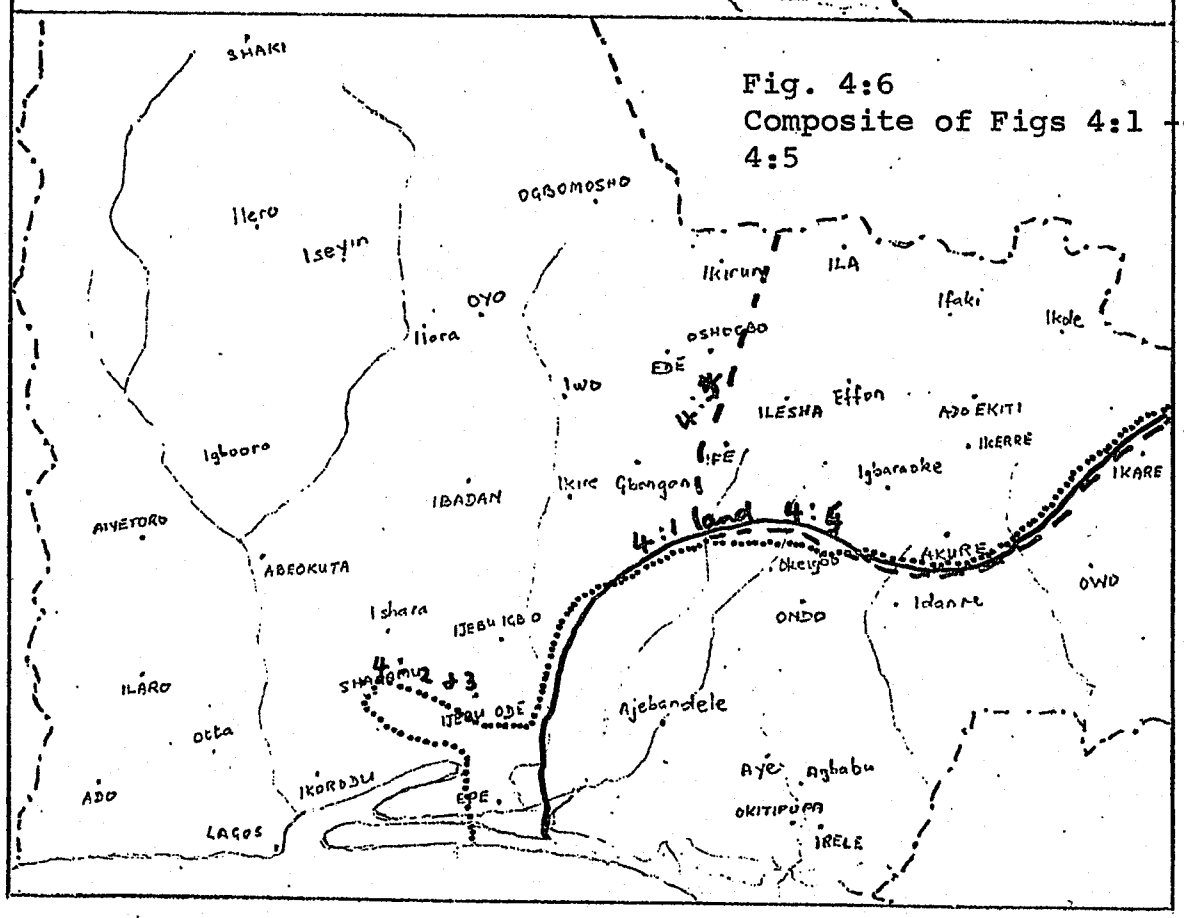


Fig. 4:6
Composite of Figs 4:1 - 4:5

ʊ occurred with verbs having tense vowels and ɔ with the lax vowels.

Fig. 4:6 gives us a composite of the pronoun isoglosses already discussed.

4.2 Tense, Aspect, and the Pronoun

A striking difference among the dialect groups we are considering lies in the different devices used by each dialect group to express tense and aspect distinctions. Some of these differences will become obvious when we compare the following tense-aspect paradigms of each of the three dialects with one another.

Northwest Yoruba

		Definite 'I etc. sold'	Indefinite 'I etc. will sell'	Habitual 'I etc. sell'	Def. Negated 'I etc. did not sell'
Singular	1	mo tà	ma/mà á tà	mo Ń tà	mi ò tà
	2	o tà	wo/wà á ta	o Ń tà	o ò tà
	3	ó tà	á á tà	ó Ń tà	kò tà
Plural	1	a tà	à á ta	a Ń tà	a kò tà
	2	ɛ tà	è é ta	ɛ Ń̌ tà	ɛ kò tà
	3	wɔ̃ tà	wɔ̃ á tà	wo Ń ta	wɔ̃ kò tà

Southwest Yoruba

		Definite	Indefinite	Habit. Def.	Def.Negated
Singular	1	mɔ̃ tà	ma tà	mɛ tà	mɛ ɛ tà
	2	wo tà	wa tà	we tà	wé è tà
	3	ó tà	á tà	é tà	é è tà
Plural	1	a tà	aa tà	ɛ tà	ɛ́ è tà
	2, 3	ã á tà	à á ã tà	ɛ̃ ɛ́ tà	ɛ̀ ɛ̃ ɛ̌ tà

Central Yoruba

We present two paradigms for Central Yoruba. Since vowel harmony assimilates the pronoun to the verb the shape of the pronoun is determined by the tenseness or laxness of the vowel of the verb.

Tense Verb rí

		Definite	Indefinite	Habit.Def.	Def.Negated
Singular	1	mo rí	ma rí	me rí	méè rí
	2	wo rí	wa rí	we rí	wéè rí
	3	ó rí	á rí	é rí	éè rí
Plural	1	a rí	àá rí	aá rí	áà rí
	2	ɪ rí	ɪ̀ɪ́ rí	ɪɪ́ ri	ɪ́ɪ̀ rí
	3	ɔ́ rí	ɔ̀ɔ́ rí	ɔɔ́ ri	ɔ́ɔ̀ rí

Lax Verb tà

		Definite	Indefinite	Habit.Def.	Def.Negated
Singular	1	mɔ tà	ma tà	mɛ tà	mɛ́è tà
	2	ɔ tà	wa tà	wɛ tà	wɛ́è tà
	3	ɔ́ tà	á tà	ɛ́ tà	ɛ́è tà
Plural	1	a tà	àá tà	aá tà	áà tà
	2	ɪ tà	ɪ̀ɪ́ tà	ɪɪ́ tà	ɪ́ɪ̀ tà
	3	ɔ́ tà	ɔ̀ɔ́ ta	ɔɔ́ tà	ɔ́ɔ̀ ta

We call attention, first of all, to the Habitual Definite tense for all the three dialects. Here, while NWY employs the preverb N as the indicator of this tense, both CY and SEY signal this tense by a change in the vowel of the

pronoun. While in CY this vowel change is effected only in the singular pronouns, the vowel change in SEY affects both singular and plural pronouns. Fig. 4:7 shows that tense aspect distinctions are largely made by preverbs in NWY but by pronoun vowel change in CY and SEY.

We also want to call attention to the differences in the use of vowel change for tense-aspect distinctions between CY and SEY. While, as mentioned above, pronoun vowel change is limited to the singular pronouns in CY, it is operative in all the pronouns in SEY. Fig. 4:8 shows the extent of the use of vowel change for tense-aspect distinctions.

Fig. 4:9 shows that while SEY indicates tense-aspect distinctions in the plural pronouns by pronoun vowel change, CY signals tense-aspect distinctions in the plural pronouns by reduplicating the plural pronoun morpheme but with a change in tone. For example, we have in SEY

Definite Tense: a wá 'we came'

Habitual Definite: ɛ wá 'we are coming'

where the tense-aspect distinctions are made by pronoun vowel change i.e. a 'we' for definite tense but ɛ 'we' for the habitual definite tense. In CY we have

Definite Tense: a wá 'we came'

Habitual Definite Tense: àá wá 'we are coming'

i.e. a 'we' definite tense but àá 'we' for the habitual definite tense.

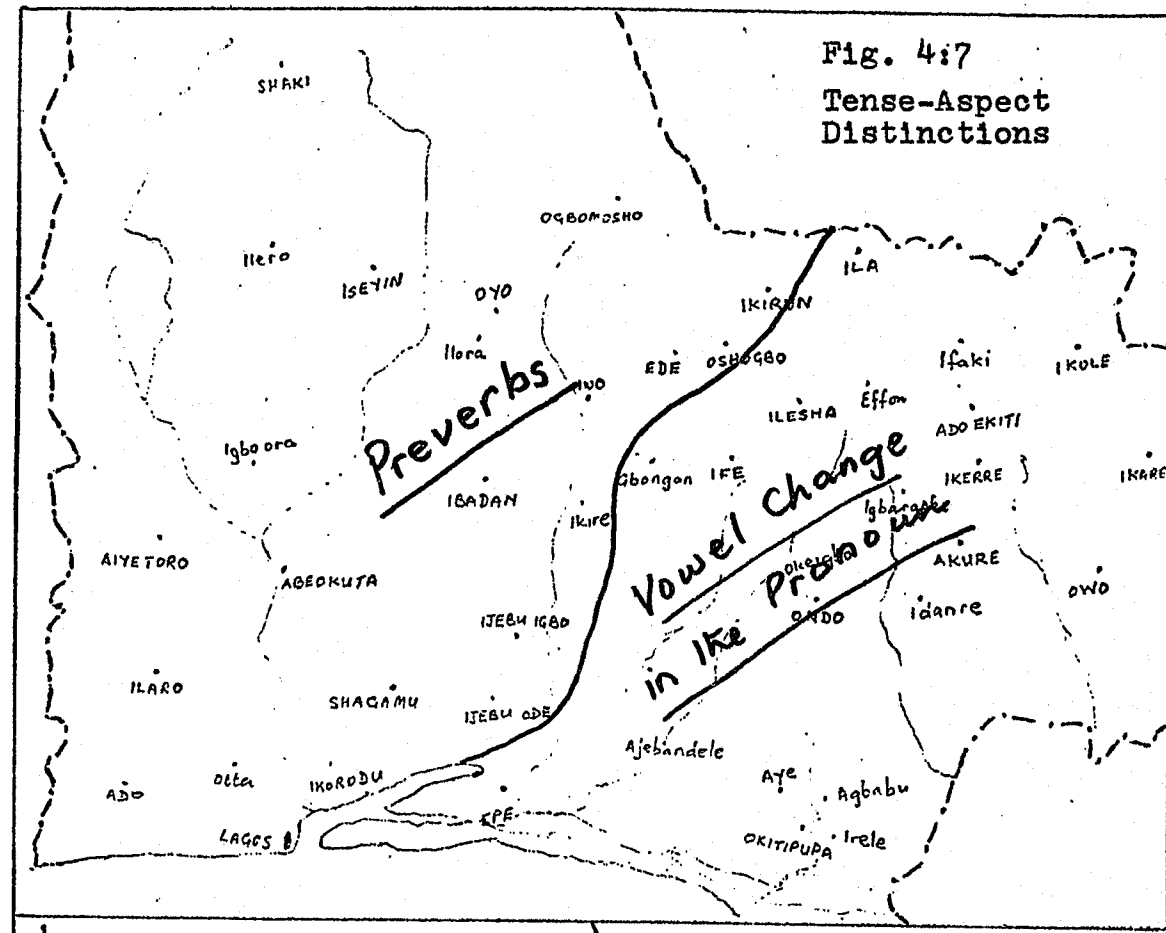


Fig. 4:7
Tense-Aspect Distinctions

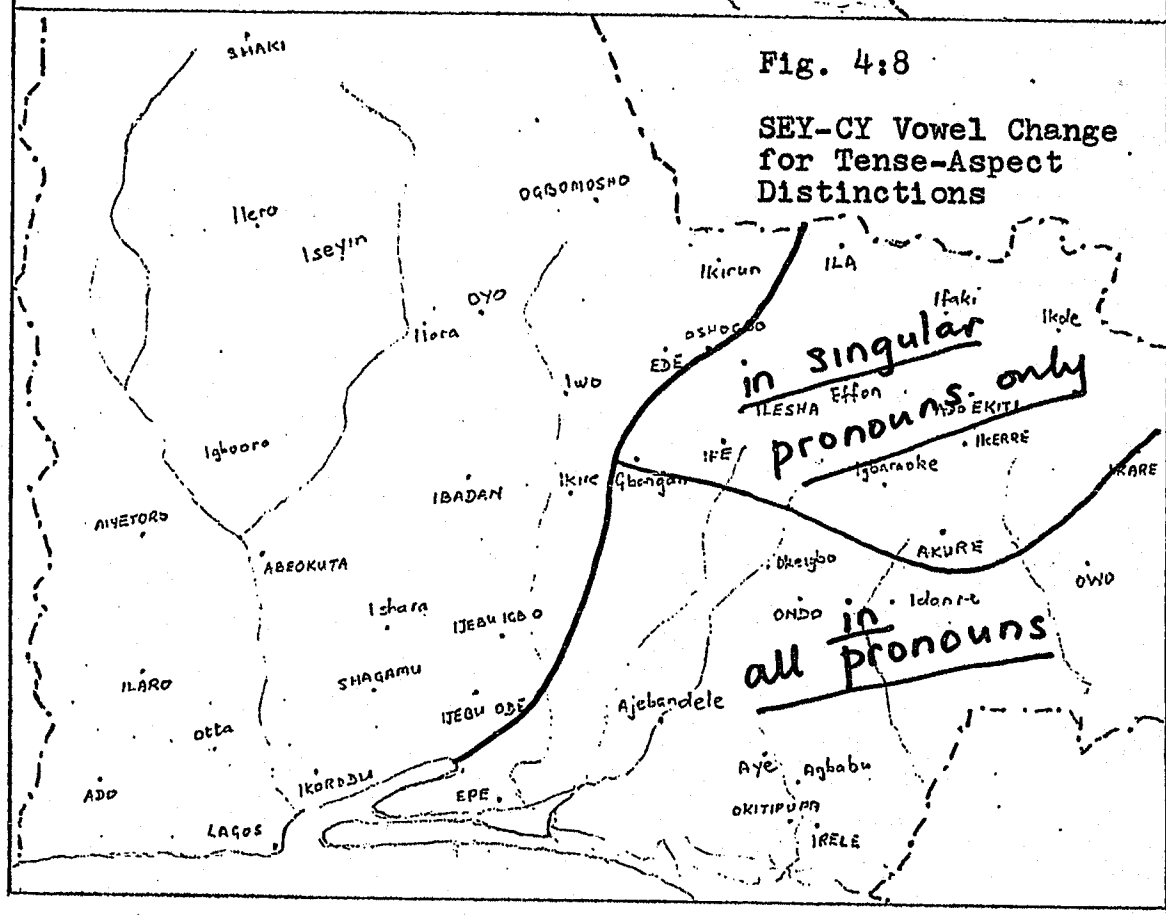


Fig. 4:8
SEY-CY Vowel Change for Tense-Aspect Distinctions

Use of Preverbs in NWY Fig. 4:10-4:11

As mentioned earlier (p ———) NWY indicates the habitual definite tense by the use of the preverb /N/, while SEY and CY employ vowel alternation only. Examples are:

NWY				CY		
mo	Ń	lɔ	[mo nlɔ]	mo	lɔ	'I go'
ó	Ń	bɔ̀	[ó m̀bɔ]	ó	bɔ	'he comes'
ó	Ń	gé	[ó ŋgé]	é	gé	'he cuts'

SEY

mɛ̃	'I go'
é wa	'he comes'
é gé	'he cuts'

NWY preverbs ó̀ɔ̀, yó̀ɔ̀, yí̀ɔ̀

Apart from the use of the particle a for the indefinite tense, NWY also employs, alternatively, the three preverbs ó̀ɔ̀, yó̀ɔ̀ and yí̀ɔ̀, not attested in the other dialect groups. We should note here, however, that only rarely does any of these forms occur in speech. But they abound in Standard Yoruba literature.

Fig. 4:12 gives a composite of Figs. 4:7-4:11.

4.3. Negation--Figs. 4:13 - 4:16

Another factor of differentiation among the dialects is the device for denoting negation. NWY uniquely uses the morpheme {kɔ̀} with allomorphs /kɔ̀/, /ɔ̀/, for this purpose. /ko/ is a preverb inserted between the subject of the utterance and the verbal group. For example:

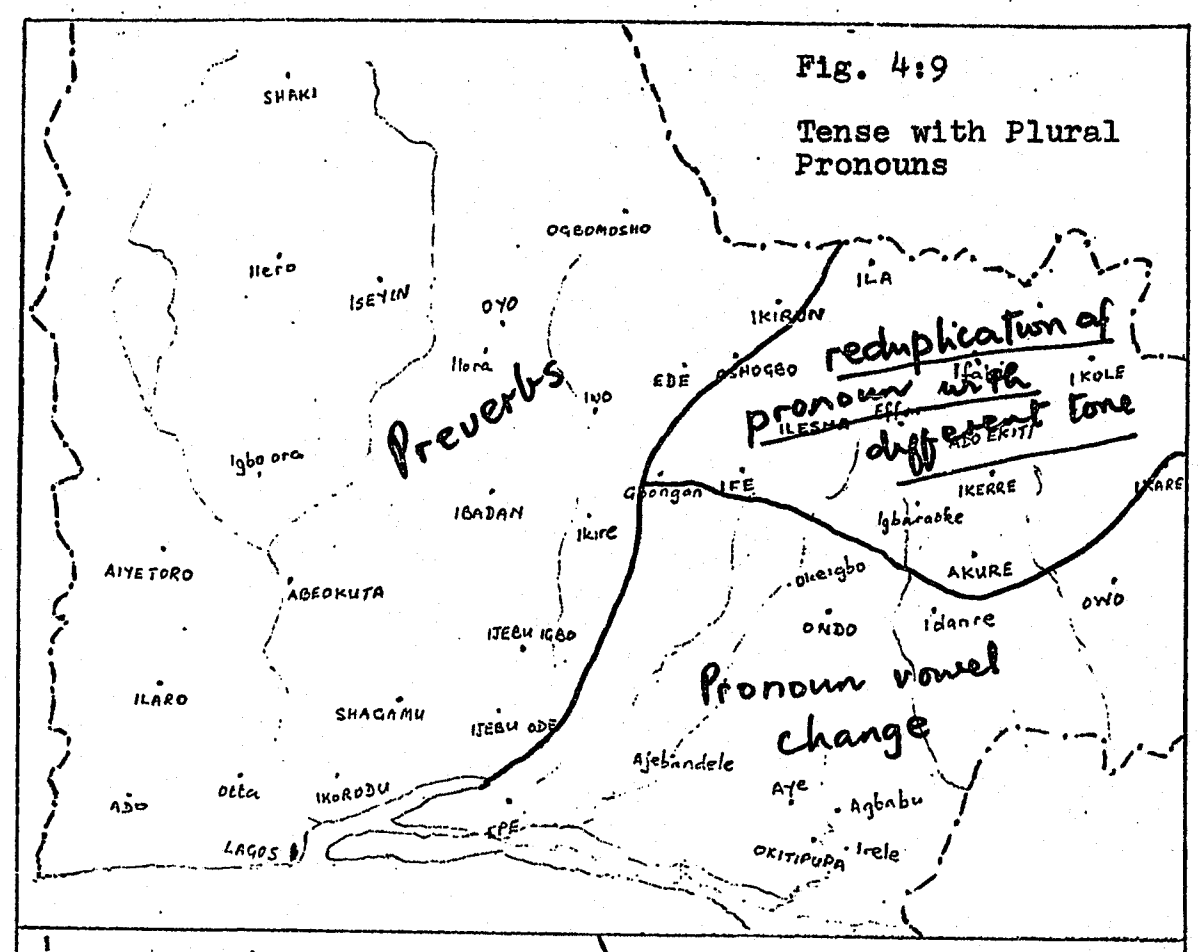


Fig. 4:9

Tense with Plural Pronouns

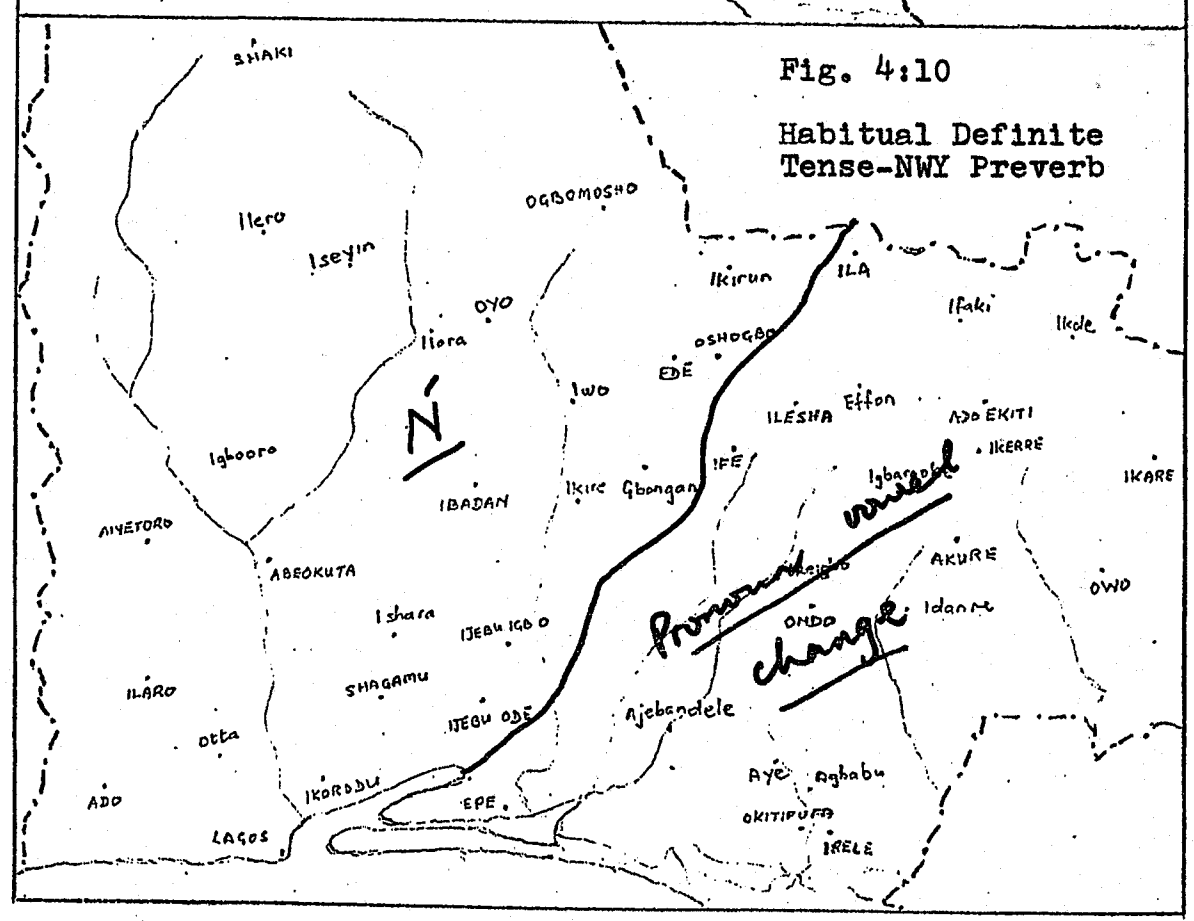


Fig. 4:10

Habitual Definite Tense-NWY Preverb

Affirmative			Negative		
èmí	wá	'I came'	èmi kò wá		'I did not come'
Òjó	wá	'Ojo came'	Ojo kò wá		'Ojo did not come'
a	wá	'we came'	a	kò wá	'we did not come'

The allomorphs /ko/ and /o/ are in free variation in most of their occurrences. We have both Ade kò wá and Ade ò wá 'Ade did not come'. An exception is the use of the negative with the 3rd singular subject pronoun, short form ó. With this pronoun, kò is always used, and in the environment of ko the pronoun itself has a zero exponent:

Affirmative			Negative		
ó	wá	'he came'	kò wá		'he did not come'
ó	wa	'he came'	kò wa		'he did not come'
ó	rí	'he saw'	kò rí		'he did not see'

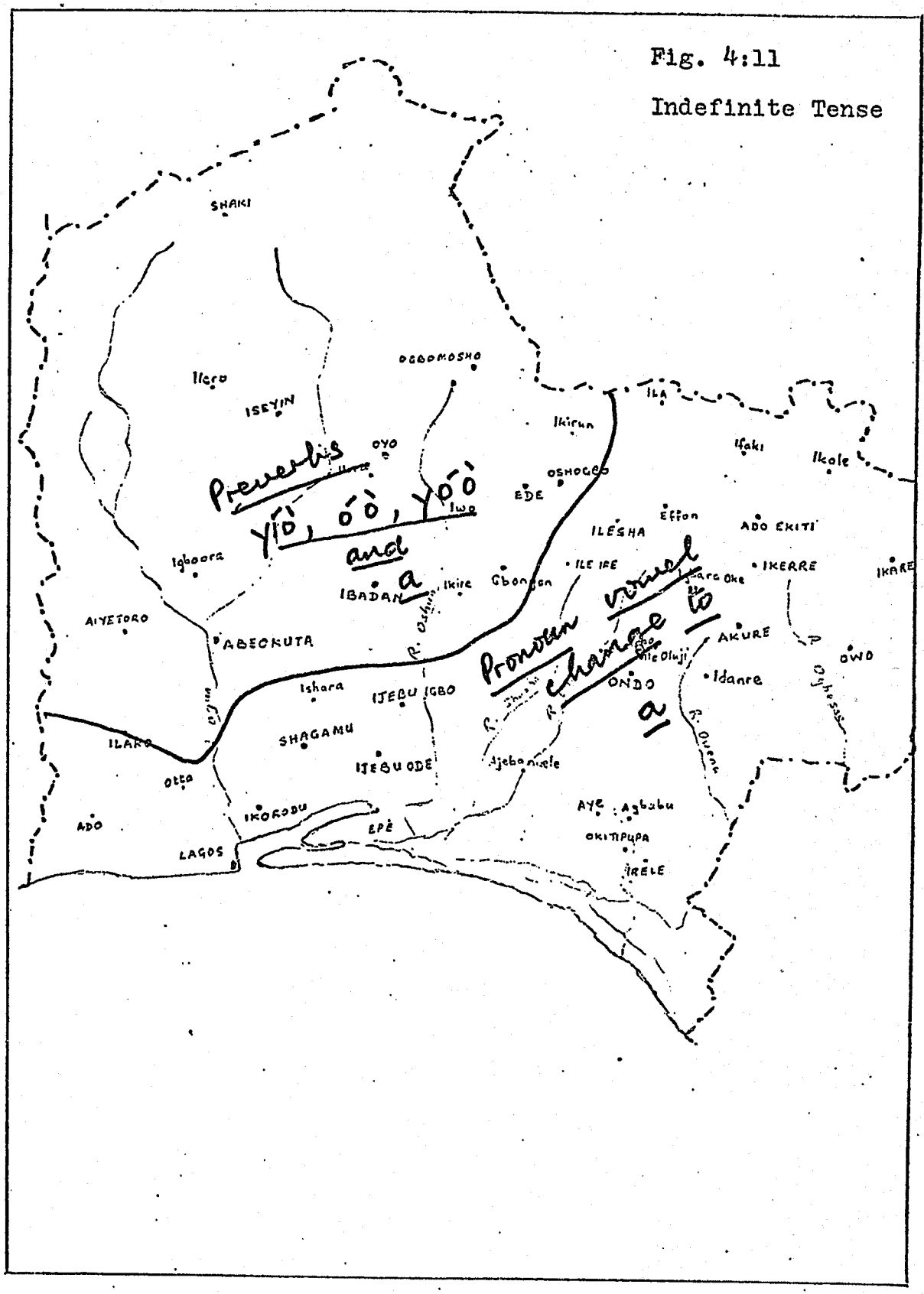
Fig. 4:13 shows the areas where negation is signalled by the preverb kò.

CY polarizes negativeness and affirmativeness by the use of distinct pronoun pairs and tone change. For each form for affirmative expression that each singular pronoun morpheme has, there is a corresponding form for negative expression, thus:

Person	Tense Vowel Affirmative	Tense Vowel Negative	Lax Vowel Affirmative	Lax Vowel Negative
I	mo	me	mɔ	mɛ
you	(w)o	(w)e	(w)ɔ	(w)ɛ
he	o	e	ɔ	ɛ

Fig. 4:11

Indefinite Tense



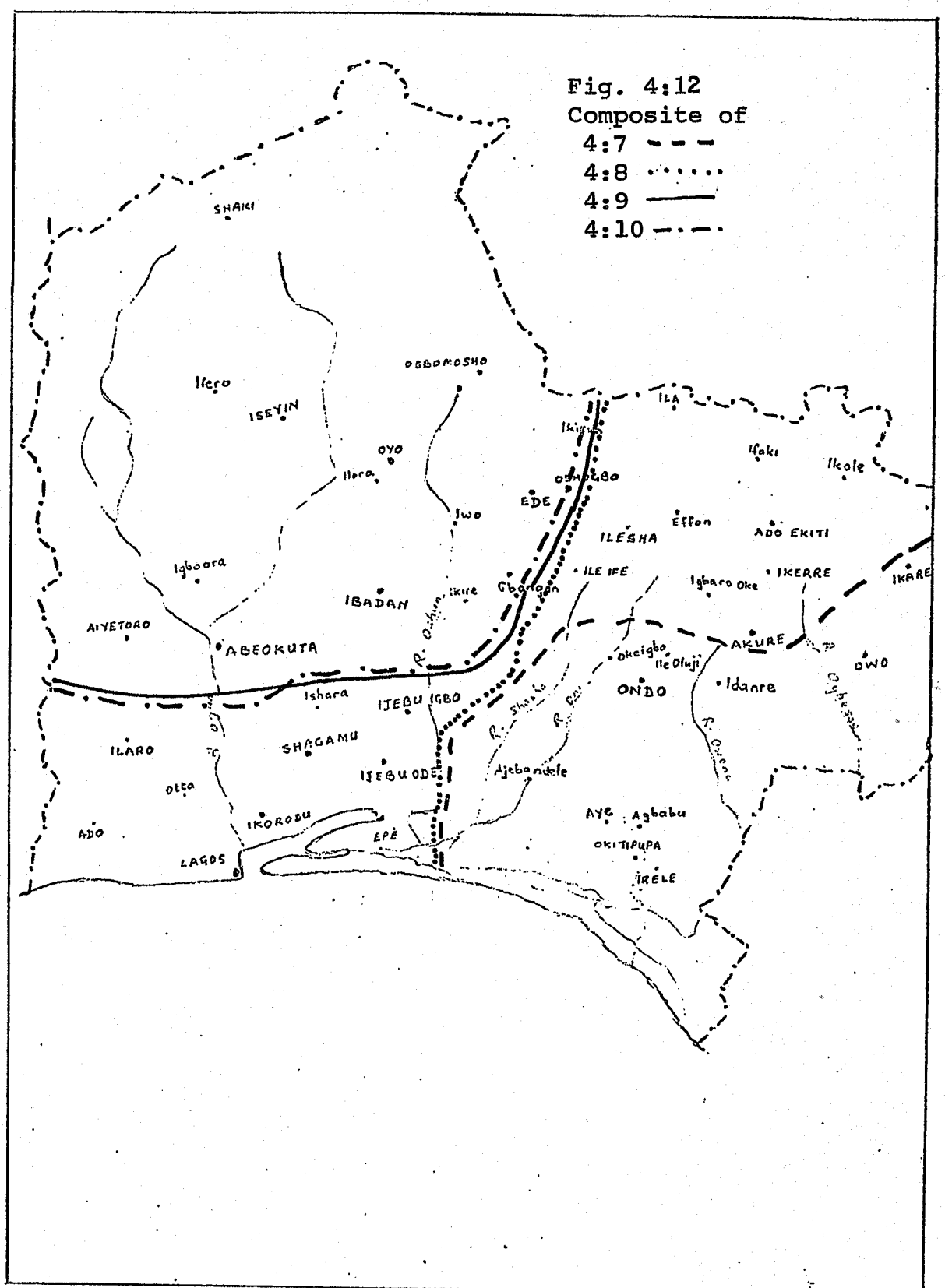


Fig. 4:12
Composite of
4:7 - - -
4:8 .....
4:9 ———
4:10 —·—·

That is, the vowel of the pronoun in a negative expression is the corresponding front vowel of that of the affirmative expression. Examples are:

Affirmative		Negative	
mo ri	'I saw'	mé è ri	'I did not see'
mɔ á	'I came'	mé è á	'I did not come'

Fig. 4:13 shows the geographical extent of the expression of negation by vowel change in the pronoun.

This vowel fronting for negation is again restricted to the short singular pronouns, the same pronouns which as discussed earlier are involved in the vowel harmony rules which assimilate the pronouns to the verbs. Neither the long pronoun forms nor any of the plural number pronouns are involved in vowel change for negation.

The other device made use of for negating any utterance is the placement of a low tone on the preverb. This feature is common to all the dialects. We have already seen that the negative preverb in NWY always bears the low tone. For CY we have:

Affirmative		Negative	
mo kpè	'I called'	mé è kpè	'I did not call'
mo fɔ̀	'I jumped'	mé è fɔ̀	'I did not jump'
mɔ rà	'I bought'	mé̩ è rà	'I did not buy'

While the preverb, where it occurs in affirmative expressions, is free to take either a mid tone or a high tone (depending on the lexicon), the preverb in the negative expression always takes the low tone.

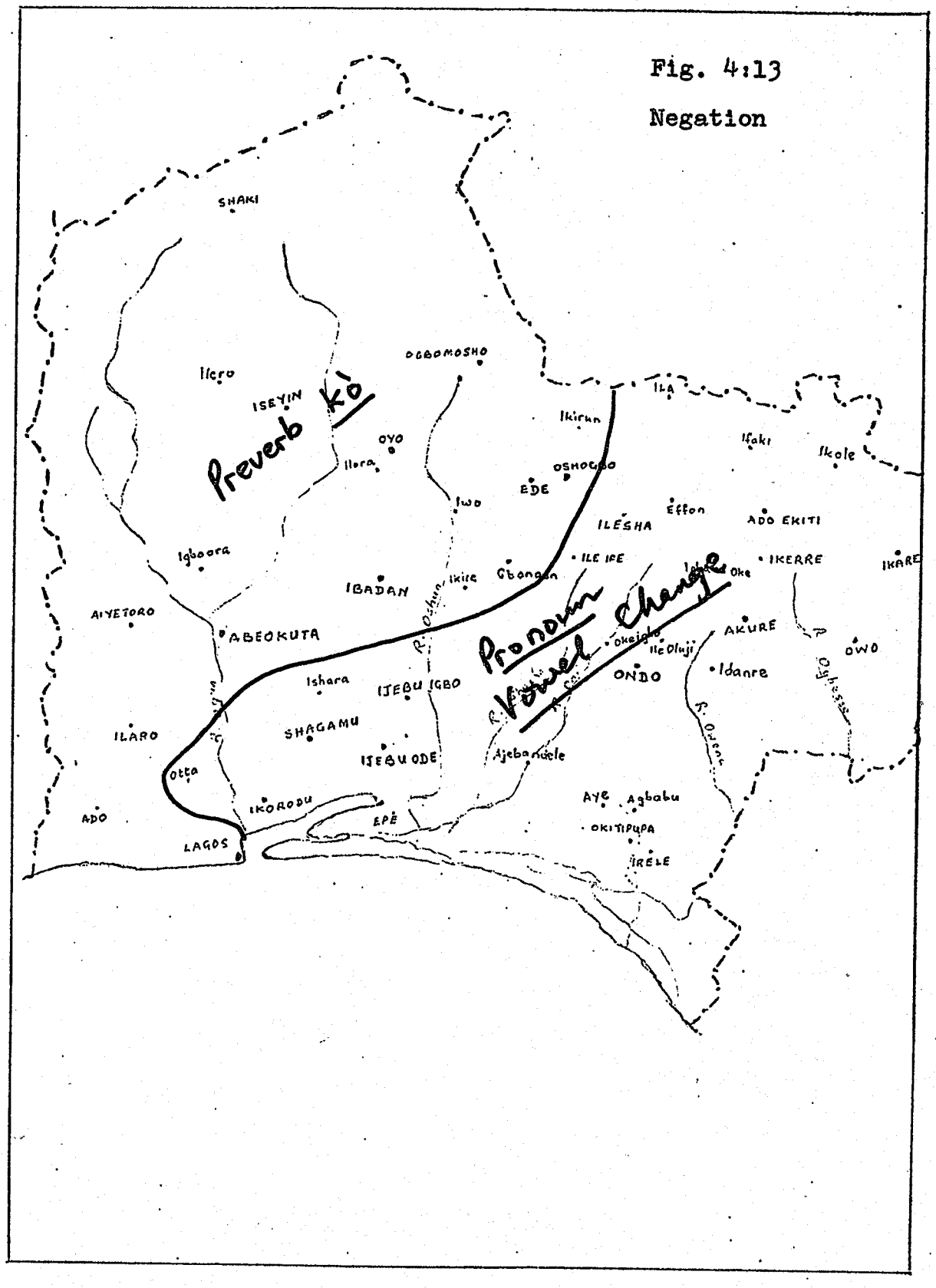


Fig. 4:13
Negation

SEY makes use of devices similar to those of CY to express negation, but tone change on the pronoun-tense particle is the more widespread:

Affirmative		Negative	
é wa	'he comes'	é è wa	'he does not come'
Ojo ti wá	'Ojo has come'	Oje ti wá	'Ojo has not come'

In the first example the high tone of the pronoun-tense particle e becomes low in the negative expression; in the second example the mid tone of ti in the affirmative expression becomes low in the negative.

Also, in SEY we find a few instances of vowel change in the preverb and subsequently the pronoun which is assimilated to it for the distinction affirmative-negative. This does not pattern as neatly as in CY, nor is it of such widespread occurrence. The range of occurrence is, however, greater in SEY than in CY, since the two plural pronouns are also involved:

		Affirmative 'I etc. came'	Negative 'I etc. did not come'
Singular	1	mɔ̃ wá	mɛ̃ ɛ̃ wá
	2	wo wá	wé è wá
	3	ó wá	é è wá
Plural	1	a wá	ɛ́ ɛ̀ wá
	2 and 3	ɔ̀ɔ́ wá	ɛ̀ɛ́ ɛ̀ wá

The long pronoun subjects are also involved in this vowel fronting:

		Affirmative 'I etc. talked'	Negative 'I etc. did not talk'
Singular	1	èmɔ̃ tɔ̀	èmɛ̃ ɛ̀ tɔ̀
	2	ùwɔ́ tɔ̀	ùwɛ ɛ̀ tɔ̀
	3	ɔ̀gɔ̃ tɔ̀	ɔ̀gɛ̃ ɛ̃ tɔ̀
Plural	1	àwá tɔ̀	ɛ̀wɛ ɛ tɔ̀
	2 and 3	ɛ̀wɛ́ tɔ̀	ɛ̀wɛ̃ ɛ̃ tɔ̀

The vowel alternation that emerges from the paradigm above is that where back vowels are employed in the pronoun for affirmation, a corresponding front vowel is employed for negation. We have:

Affirmative	Negative
o	e
ɔ	ɛ
ɔ̃	ɛ̃

/a/, the low central vowel, may be regarded for the purposes of this analysis as a back vowel when used with the pronoun for affirmative expression. Its corresponding front vowel used for negative expression /ɛ/.

Fig. 4:14 shows the areas where vowel change as the signaller of negation is extended beyond the singular pronouns.

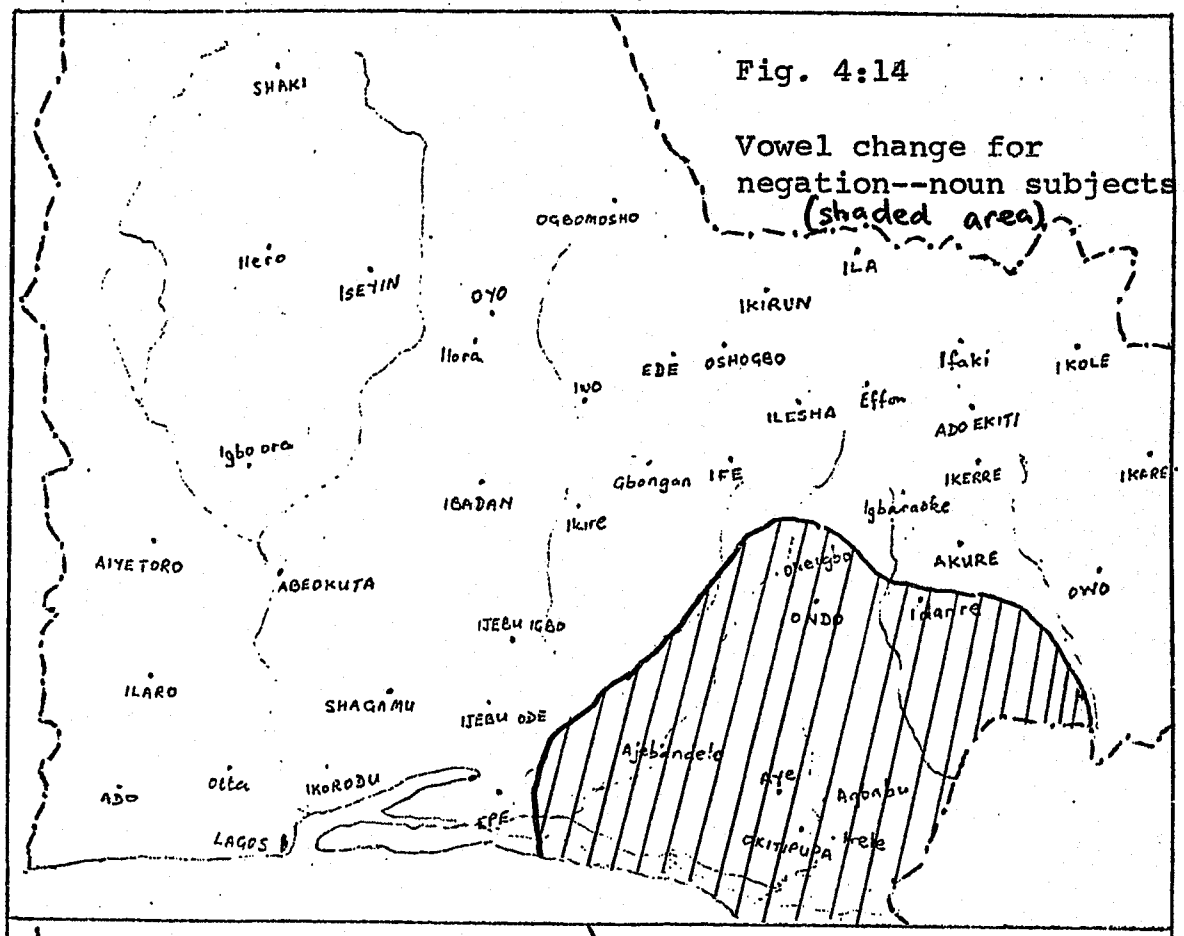


Fig. 4:14

Vowel change for negation--noun subjects (shaded area)

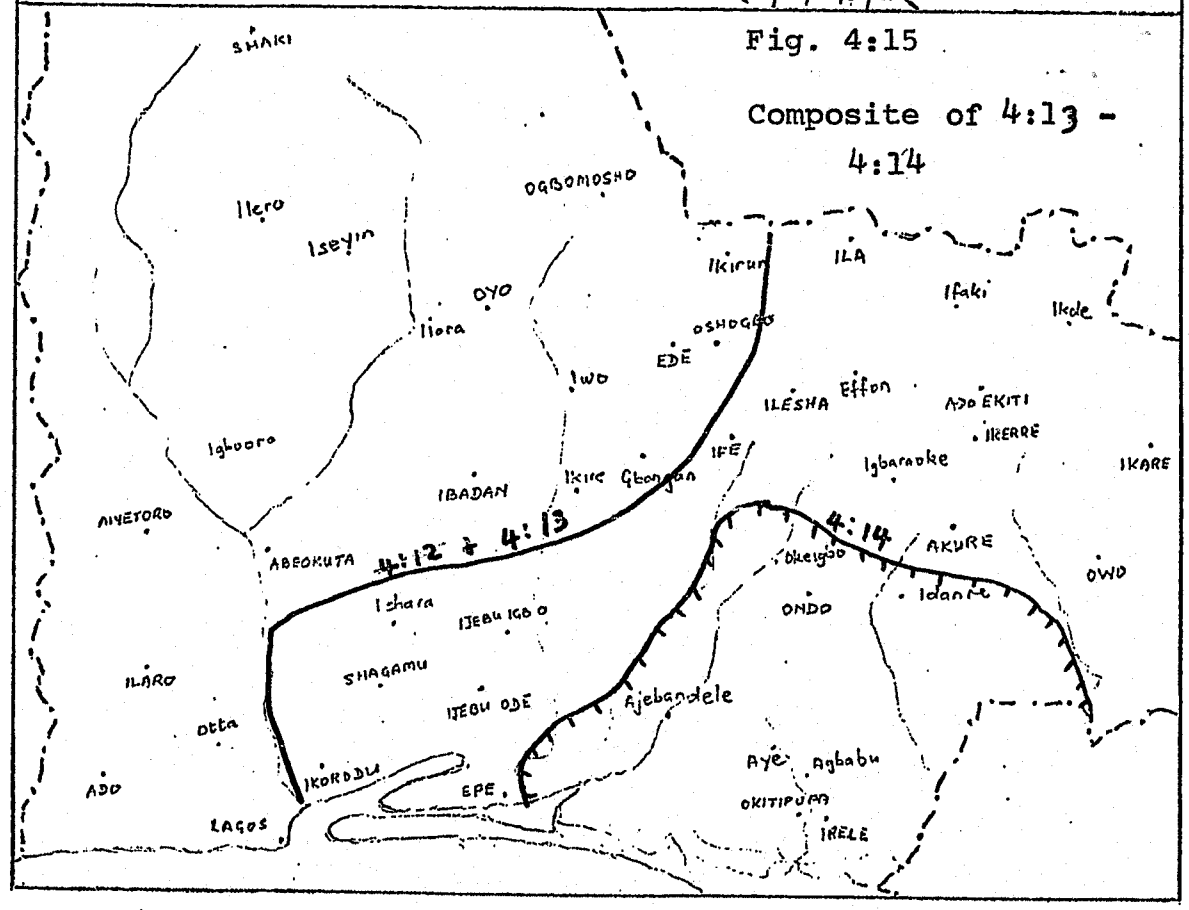


Fig. 4:15

Composite of 4:13 - 4:14

We suggest that the use of vowel alternation to polarize affirmation and negation in both CY and SEY may be older than the use of the preverbs kɔ̀, ɔ̀ in NWY. This ties in neatly with the implication that the use of many preverbs peculiar to NWY may be an NWY innovation. We have seen that the use of vowel alternation occurs in wider areas than the corresponding use of preverbs in NWY. In Chapter 5 we reconstruct an earlier stage of the Yoruba language in which vowel harmony was widespread; the vowel alternations discussed above, therefore, fit well within that system. The history of the development of preverbs must await the results of further research.

Fig. 4:15 gives a composite of the isoglosses that have been shown in section 4.3.

4.40 Other Features of Differentiation

In the remaining section of this chapter we shall discuss in less detail some other differences among the dialect groups. Some of these differences, such as those dealing with prepositional phrases and word order, are syntactic while others such as genitivization, and suspected call case with certain terms are morphological.

4.41 Prepositional Phrases--Fig. 4:16

Verbs of motion and a few others in Yoruba require as their object a prepositional phrase of the structure preposition + noun phrase.

Unlike preverbs, these prepositions always precede nouns and are distinguishable from preverbs of the same segmental structure by their post-verbal position. The ones we discuss below are high tone monosyllables.

In NWY areas, the post-verbal prepositional phrases are seen in the sentences below.

I ó bɔ̀ sí ilé

'he arrived at home'

II o wà ni oko

'he is in the farm'

III ko lɔ sí ibɛ

"neg. went to there," i.e. - 'he did not go there'

IV ó gé e ní orí

"he cut him in the head," i.e. - 'he beheaded him'

V o tɛ̀ mi lí ɛsɛ̀

"he stepped me on leg," i.e. - 'he stepped on me'

I and II each has the structure:

pronoun subject + verb + preposition + object noun.

III is of the structure:

/ø/ third person pronoun subject in the environment of ko + negative preverb + verb + preposition + noun object.

IV and V both have the structure:

pronoun subject + verb + pronoun object + preposition + object noun.

Compare these SEY forms:

I o bɔ́ ílí

'he arrived home'

II ó yí oko

"he is farm," i.e. 'he is on the farm'

III éè lɔ fbɛ̀

"he neg. went there" i.e. 'he did not go there'

IV ó gé yɔ̃ í

"he cut his head" i.e. 'he beheaded him'

V ó tɛ̀ m ɔ́sɛ̀

"he stepped my foot" i.e. 'he stepped on me'

In I-V, SEY has eliminated the preposition before the last noun of the utterance. But the function of the preposition is now signalled by tone change on the penultimate syllable of the utterance.

I NWY SEY

ó bɔ̀ sí ilé o bɔ̀ ílì

where the tone change in SEY is on the first vowel of ulí 'house';

CY straddles NWY and SEY practices. We have forms like:

ó bó ́ ílé 'he arrived home'

ó tɛ̀ m ésɛ̀ 'he stepped on me'

o bɔ̀ ílé 'you were not at home'

In all these the preposition has been eliminated. Sometimes, however, the behavior in CY reflects NWY influence. Thus, along with

ó gé mɛ sɛ̀ 'he cut my leg'

where the preposition has been eliminated, we have

ó gé mi lé ́ sɛ̀ 'he cut my leg',

with the preposition li (becoming /l/ by vowel elimination in the environment of a following vowel) retained.

We consider the elimination of prepositions in such structures as discussed above as an innovation originating from SEY. In fact, it has spread beyond CY into NWY areas and is fast creeping into the standardized language. We have, for instance, in Standard Yoruba ó lɔ èkó 'he went to Lagos', which Yoruba language teachers are at pains to condemn as a provincialism for ó lɔ sí èkó, with sí as the preposition.

4.42 Word Order in Syntactic Emphasis--Fig. 4:17

We suspect that the main vehicle of verbal emphasis in Yoruba is syntactic. The attraction of attention to any section of an utterance may be effected in other ways, i.e. by intonation or by choice of words. Neither mechanism has been studied for Yoruba. We think, however, that emphasis by intonation is not much employed because the range of intonation patterns in this language is limited by the ubiquity of inherent lexical tone contrast.

Syntactic emphasis is effected in Yoruba mainly by word order, the constituent of the structure to be emphasized usually being placed early in the utterance. We have

I mo rí aja ́ ní aye

"I-see-past-dog-at-Aye" i.e. 'I saw a dog at Aye'

as the neutral word order in the utterance.

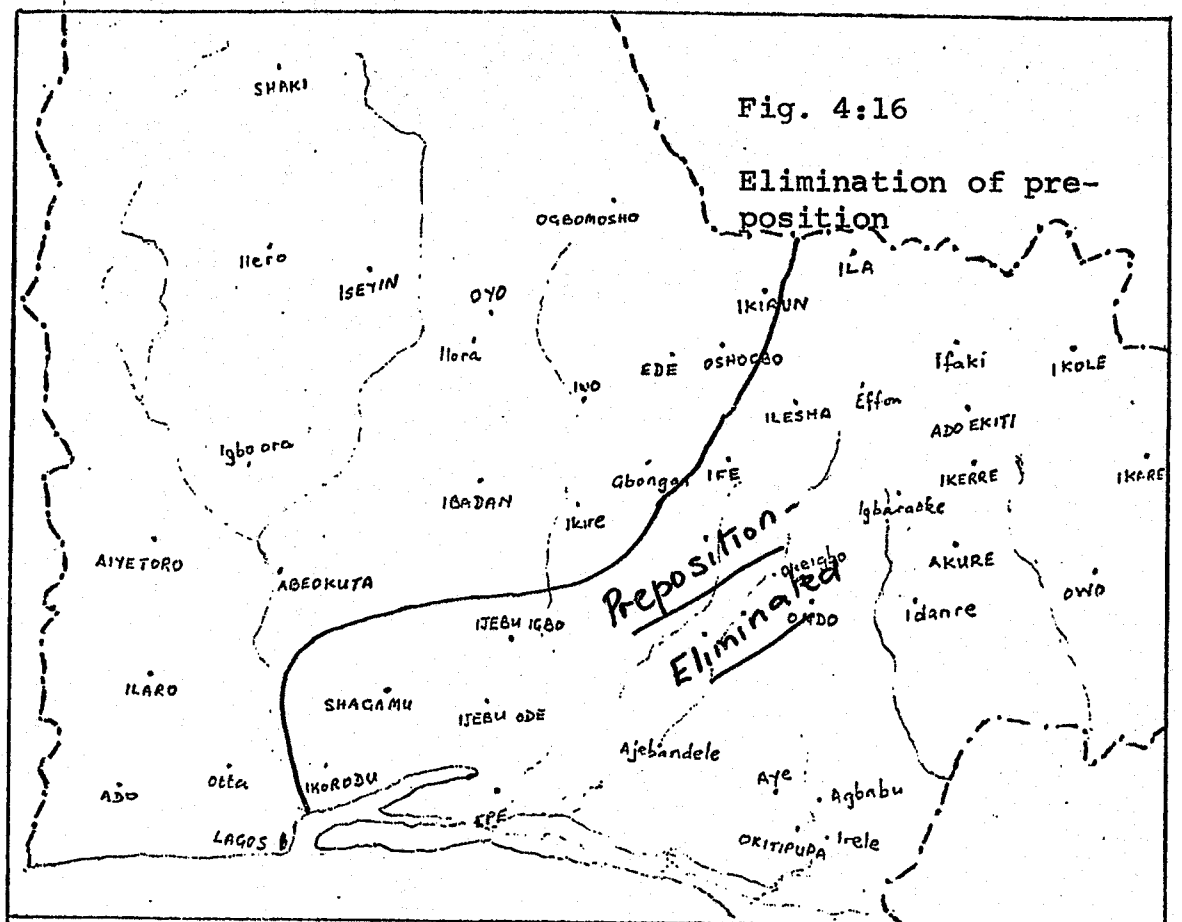


Fig. 4:16

Elimination of pre-position

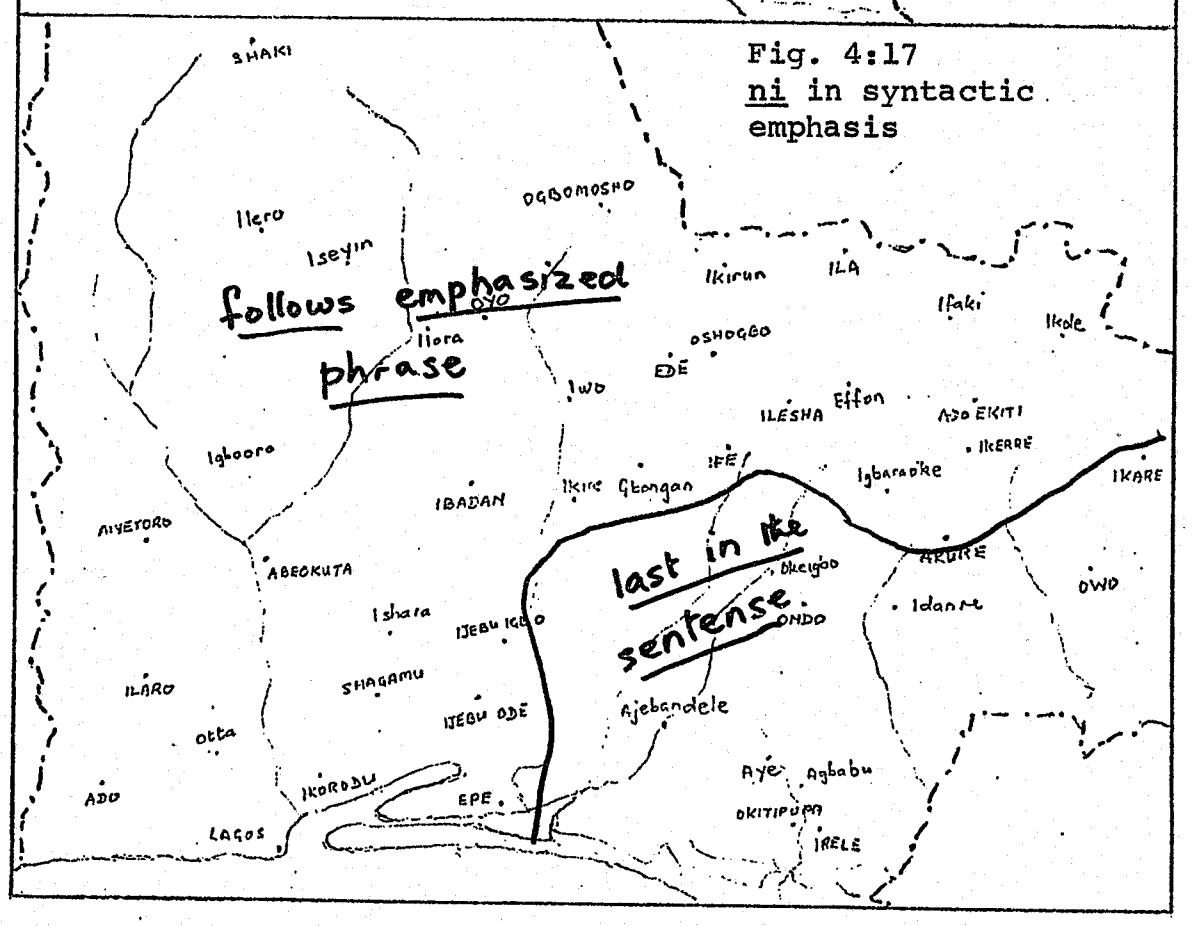


Fig. 4:17

ni in syntactic emphasis

In NWY and CY, any constituent of this utterance can be emphasized by being placed first in the utterance if a noun or noun phrase; if a verb it has to be nominalized and then placed first. The focus of the emphasis is then followed immediately by ni.

II ajá ni mo rí ní aye

'It was a dog (not e.g. a goat) that I saw at Aye'

III ní aye ni mo rí ajá

'It was at Aye (not Ondo) that I saw a dog'.

IV ríri ni mo rí ajá ní aye

'I really saw (I was not e.g. told about) a dog at Aye'

V èmi ni mo rí ajá ní aye

'It was I (not someone else) who saw a dog at Aye'

In SEY, the same process of emphasis is used but the word order is different. The emphatic /ni/ which in NWY and CY comes immediately after the emphasized constituent is /Ĩ/ in SEY and is placed last in the utterance. The corresponding SEY forms for I-V above are as follows:

I mo (r)í ajá ní aye but

II ajá mõ(r)í ni aye Ĩ

III ni aye mo(r)í ajá Ĩ

IV (r)i(r)i mo (r)i aja ni aye Ĩ

V emi ó rí ajá ni aye Ĩ

4.43 Genitivization with /li/--Figs. 4:18 and 4:19

In all dialects possession is indicated with /(V)lí/. Thus in NWY /ašɔ/ is 'cloth'; 'possessor of clothing' is /alášɔ/, i.e., /olí/ + /ašɔ/, with /o/ > /a/ by regressive assimilation and /i/ lost by elision. (Elision, widespread in Yoruba, is a process whereby two vowels in juxtaposition across morpheme boundary become one.)

In NWY before the high vowel /i/, /oli/ becomes /olĭ/ i.e. [oní]. Thus /olí/ + /išu/ > [oníšu] 'possessor of yams'; /olí/ + /igi/ > [onígi] 'wood trader'.

In all other cases /oli/ remains:

/oli/ + /owo/ > /olowo/ 'rich man' (possesor of wealth)

/olí/ + /oǔjě/ > /olóǔje/ 'possessor of food'.

In CY /oli/ does not change to [oní] before the high vowels but remains as [oli]; thus:

olí + ušu > olúšu 'possessor of yams'

olí + igi > olígi 'possessor of wood'

olí + ówó > olówó 'possessor of wealth'

olí + oǔjɛ > olóǔje 'possessor of food'

In ŚEY /oli/ has lost its initial vowel and remains as /li/:

li + usu > lúšu

li + igi > lígi

li + oyo > loyo

But we have no justification in SEY for setting up /l/ and /n/ as belonging to the same phoneme, since /li/ and /ni/ express different grammatical categories:

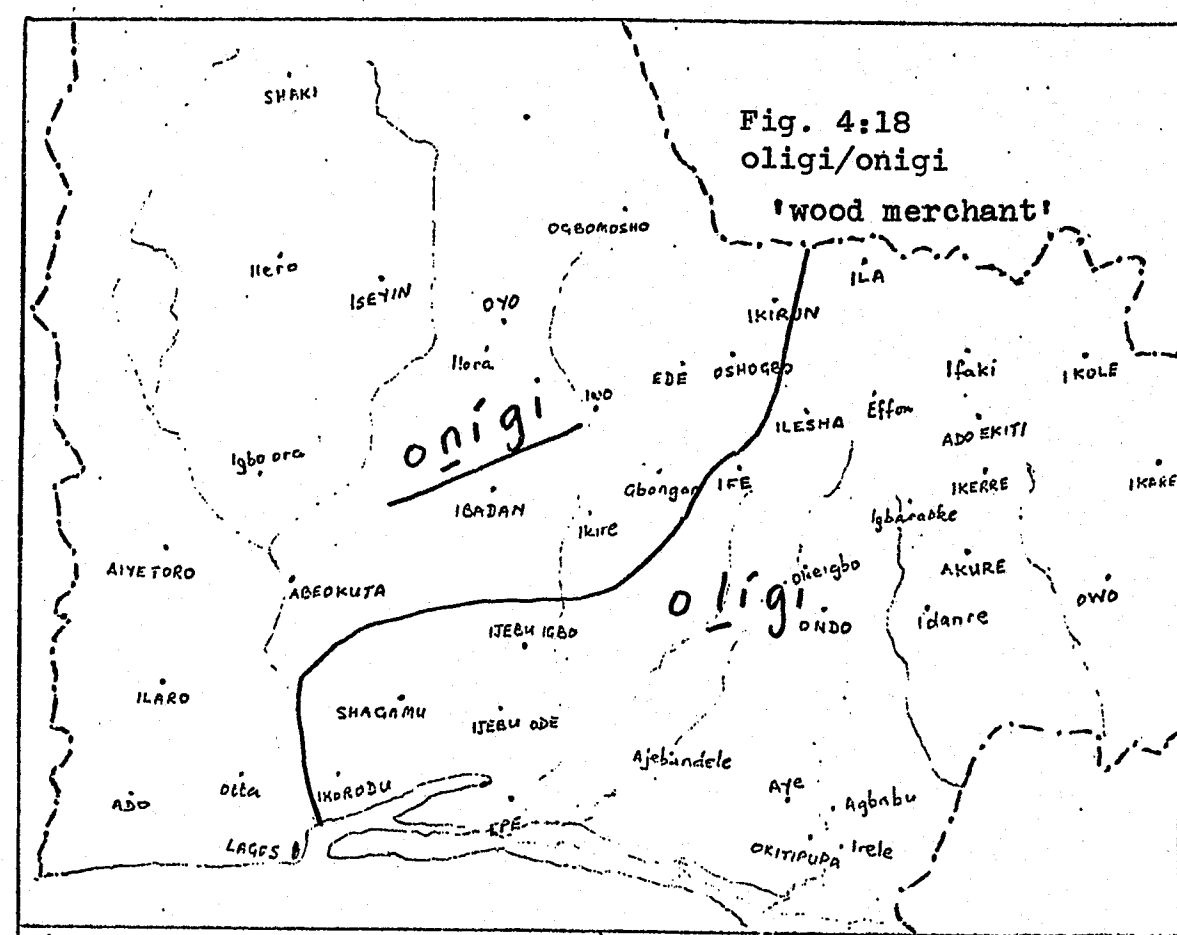


Fig. 4:18
oligi/onigi
'wood merchant'

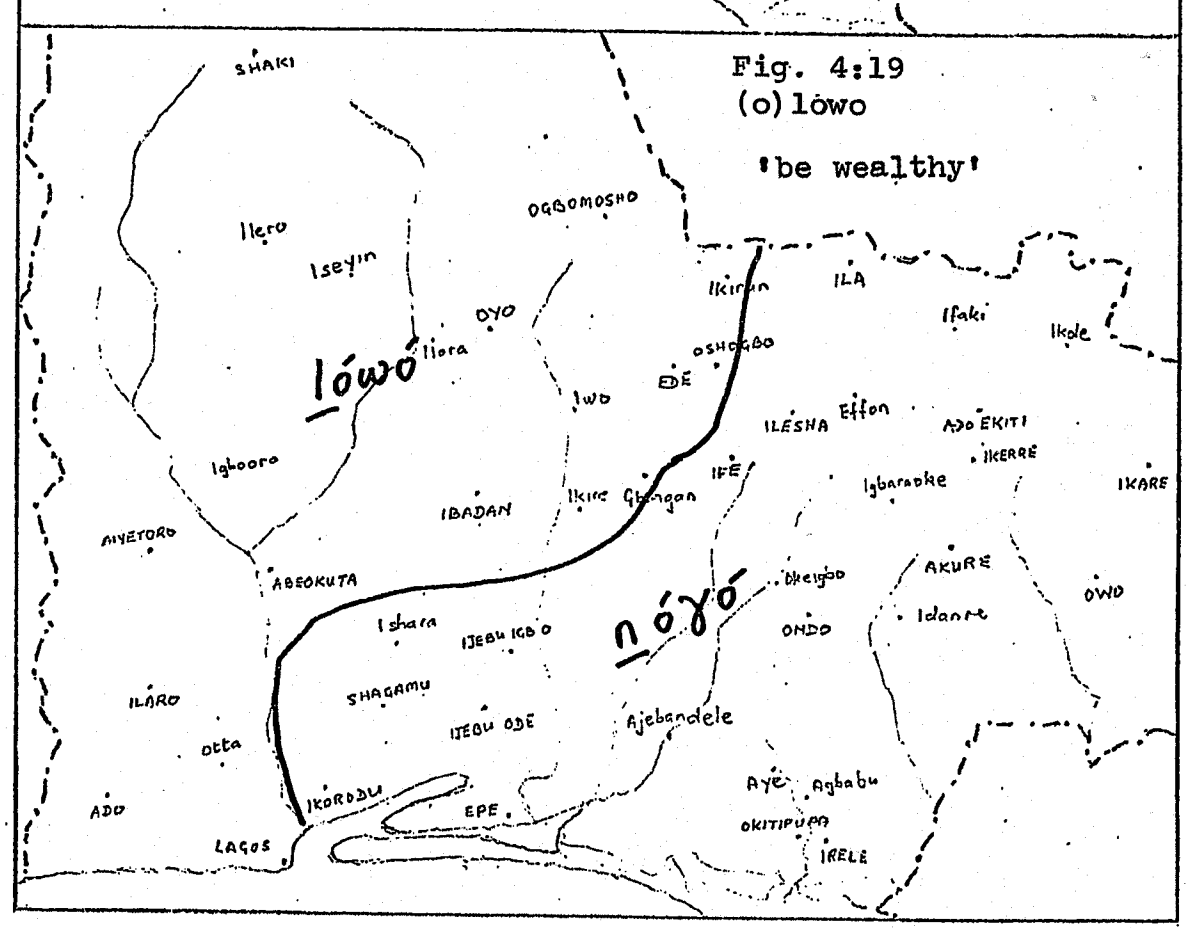


Fig. 4:19
(o)lówo
'be wealthy'

But we have no justification in SEY for setting up /l/ and /n/ as belonging to the same phoneme, since /li/ and /ni/ express different grammatical categories:

/li/ as 'possessor' and

/ni/ as the verb 'to have'. Thus

/loɣo/ is opposed to /noɣo/ as the 'possessor of money', 'wealthy person' is opposed to 'to have money'. The two are undifferentiated in CY.

Perhaps the SEY forms preserve the prototypes from which the CY and NWY forms have developed.

4.44 Vocative Case with Kinship Terms--Fig. 4:20

Yoruba nouns are known to be uninflected either for case, number, or gender. A few morphophonemic developments of tone change within certain syntactic environments are explainable within the phonological structure of the language. Others, such as the subject indicator and the pointer to the head in a two noun endocentric construction, are of limited occurrence and really could be taken care of within the phonology of the language also.

But certain kinship terms in SEY do have two forms each: one is normal, i.e. it is used as the subject and object of the verb, while the other is used as the form of address. These are the terms for 'father' /iba/, 'mother' /iye/, and 'elder sibling' /ẹgbọ́/. That is for these three words, we have two cases each:

	'father'	'mother'	'Elder sibling'	Example
Common case	iba	iye	ẹgbọ́	iba lọ 'father went'
Voc. case	bai	yei	ẹgí	bai,lọ 'father, go!'

The restriction of this call case is so narrow that we do not know what to make of it. Certainly, we are very wary of making general historical inferences from its occurrence and we should like to know what happens in other Yoruba dialects not yet studied.

Fig. 4:21 gives a composite picture of the major grammatical isoglosses discovered in Chapter 4. A comparison of this Figure with the major isoglosses found in Chapters 2 and 3 shows us that there is some measure of coincidence in the lines of cleavage at the levels we have so far discussed.

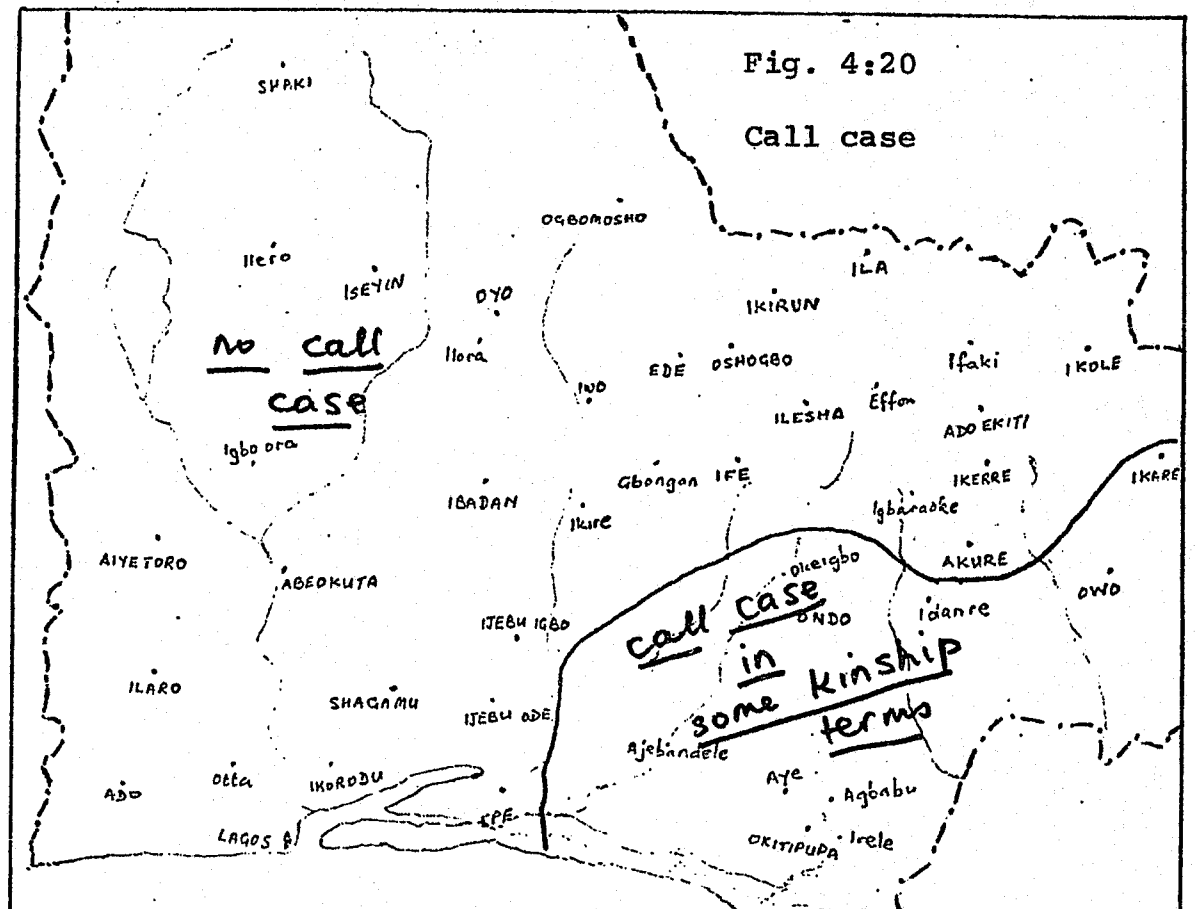


Fig. 4:20

Call case

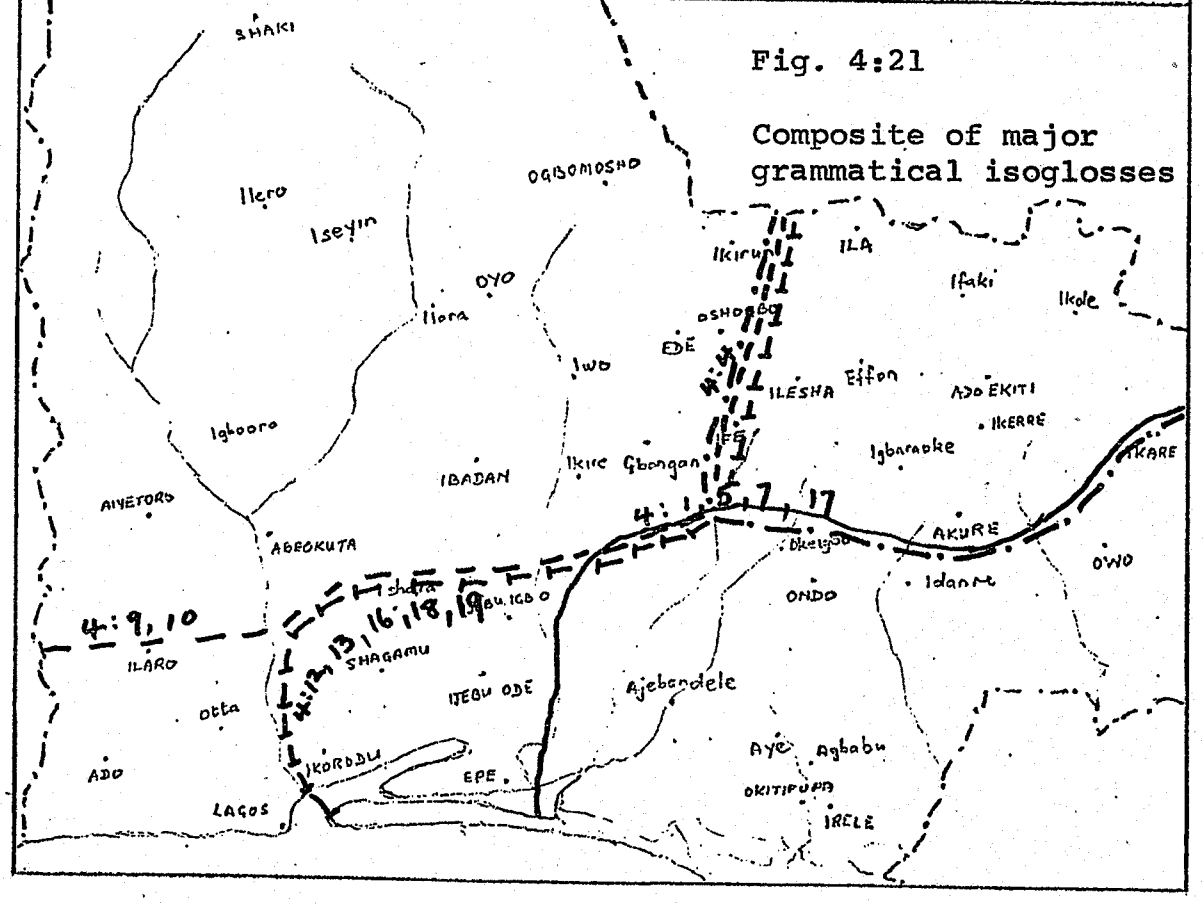


Fig. 4:21

Composite of major grammatical isoglosses

CHAPTER 5

PHONOLOGY

5.0 Introduction

The most striking differences among the dialects are in their phonological systems. These differences are of such great proportions compared with the other levels we have already discussed that it is no surprise that the naive native speakers are able to recognize and identify some of them.

The divergence of our dialects on the level of phonology has, not surprisingly, come to the attention of earlier writers. But beyond the identification of only a few phonological correspondences among some of the dialects, Yoruba dialectology remains unattempted. Koelle's Polyglotta Africana, 1852, must be viewed with the sympathy and indulgence that a pioneering work deserves. Along with some other West African languages, the Polyglotta contains a word list of about 300 items in 12 Yoruba dialects, seven of which are included within our area. Koelle must have been hampered by the informants available to him: the wordlist was compiled in Sierra Leone from informants who had been living away from home, some for about twenty years. Moreover, Koelle's unfamiliarity with the range of sounds in the different dialects and the resultant inaccuracy of transcription of some of them, notably

the voiceless labiovelar stop [kp] which he renders sometimes as [gm] and at other times variously as gw and gb makes the work less valuable than it could have been. Also the motivation for the collection of the wordlist was only secondarily linguistic; therefore the type of sampling and planning which necessarily precedes the questionnaire for a dialectological survey is absent. The result is that Koelle's Polyglotta is useful for phonological comparison only. In spite of all these shortcomings, Koelle's work stands out as unique in the field of African Linguistics and as the only work in Yoruba dialectology that can be reckoned with.

Rowland's "Yoruba Dialects in the Polyglotta Africana" (1966) attempts to identify sound correspondences among Yoruba dialects based on Koelle's Polyglotta and supplemented by his own fieldwork. We shall take up his findings, most of them very naive, in the course of this chapter.

Armstrong's "Three Yoruba Dialects" (1964) provides a wordlist of about 400 items in three dialects, only one of which is in our area. Beyond the identification of three sound correspondences and an ethnographic introduction, the work remains just a wordlist.

5.01 Reconstructed Phonology

We believe that dialectology is not only valuable when it characterizes the levels of linguistic cleavage on a

geographical basis; in attempting to explicate the naive native speaker's intuition about his dialect and its boundary, we also have a lot to gain from the characterization of the prototypes from which the present forms have developed. A challenging but exploratory goal of dialect studies then will be the intimate wedding of divergence along two axes--the temporal and the spatial.

5.02 Plan of the Chapter

We present first the vowel systems and later the consonants. For each subsystem, we give first an inventory followed by a short description of the inventory. Then follows our reconstruction based on correspondences identified and finally the course of change which yields the present-day systems.

As a rule, only one or two lexical items which explicate the shift we shall be considering will be shown in our figures. We shall, however, give more examples of the same shift within the scope of our discussion.

5.1 Vocalism

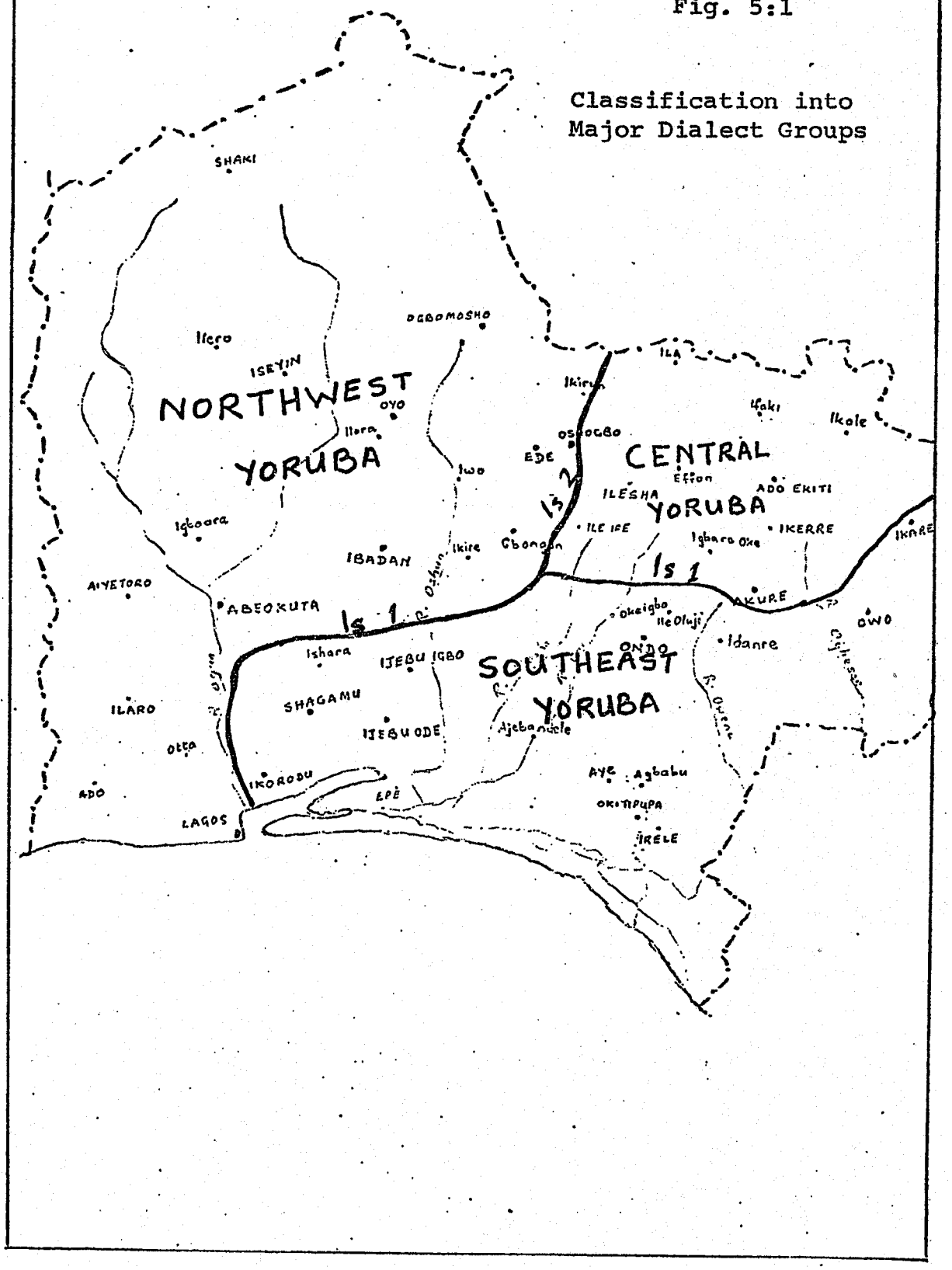
The Yoruba linguistic area under consideration is divided into three sections by isoglosses 1 and 2 (Fig 5:1).

1. To the east and south of Isogloss 1, we have a cluster of dialects comprising Ikale, Ondo, Owo, Akoko, and Ijebu. We designate this area South-East Yoruba.

2. West of Isogloss 2, we have the Oyo, Ibadan, Egba,

Fig. 5:1

Classification into
Major Dialect Groups



Egbado, and Oshun group of dialects--North-West Yoruba.

3. Between Isoglosses 1 and 2 are the Ife, Akure, Ilesha and Ekiti group of dialects. This is an area with its own unique phonology, but characterized at other levels by a series of transition phenomena. This area we call Central Yoruba.

For this broad classification, there is also historical justification (chapter 6).

Vowel Inventory

Below we present the vowel systems of the major dialect areas we are considering:

Northwest Yoruba

Oral	Nasal
i u	ĩ ũ
e o	
ɛ ɔ	(ɛ̃) ɔ̃
a	

Southeast Yoruba

Oral	Nasal
i u	ĩ ũ
e o	
ɛ ɔ	ɛ̃ ɔ̃
a	ã

Central Yoruba

Oral	Nasal
i u	ĩ ũ
ɪ ʊ	
e o	ɪ̃ ʊ̃
ɛ ɔ	(ɛ̃) ɔ̃
a	(ã)

The parenthesized items are marginal to each system.

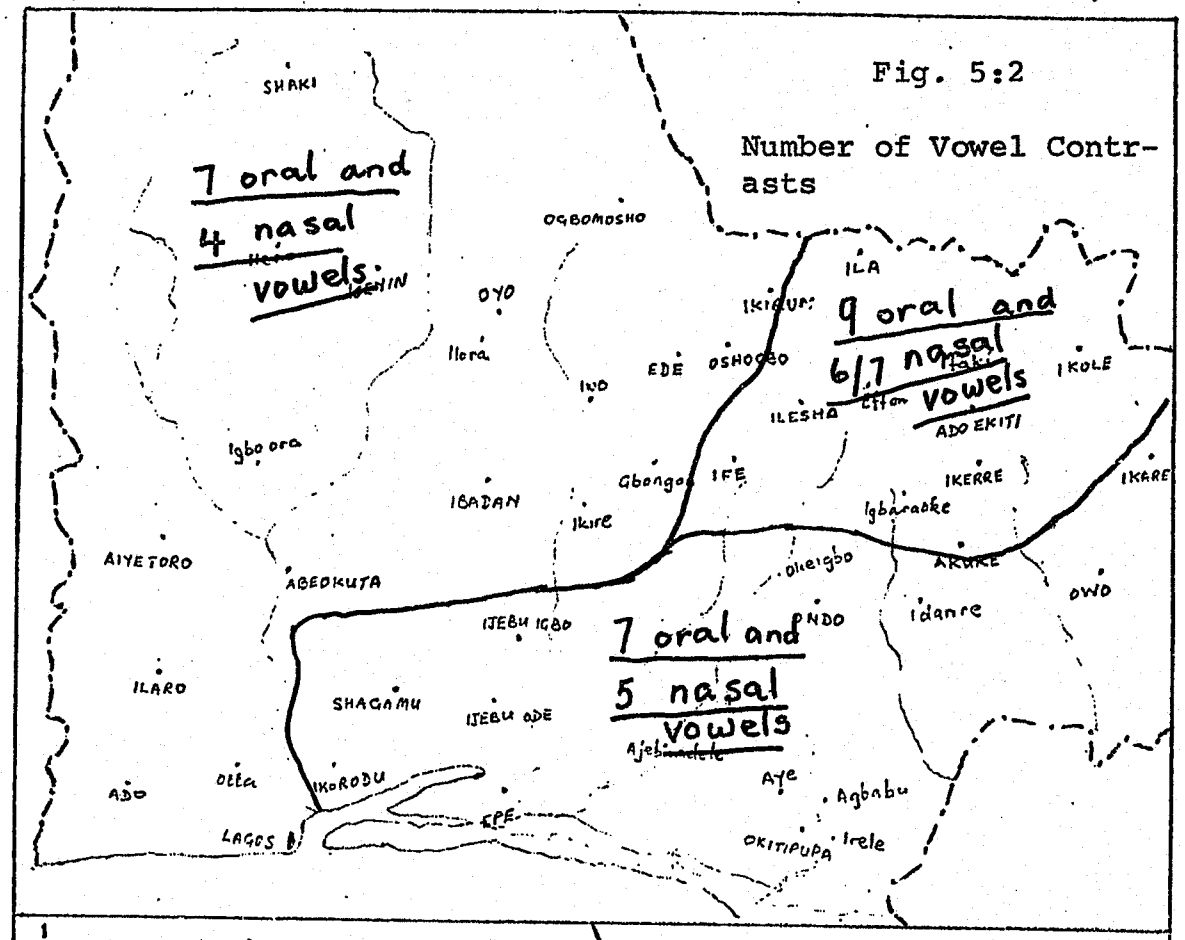


Fig. 5:2

Number of Vowel Contrasts

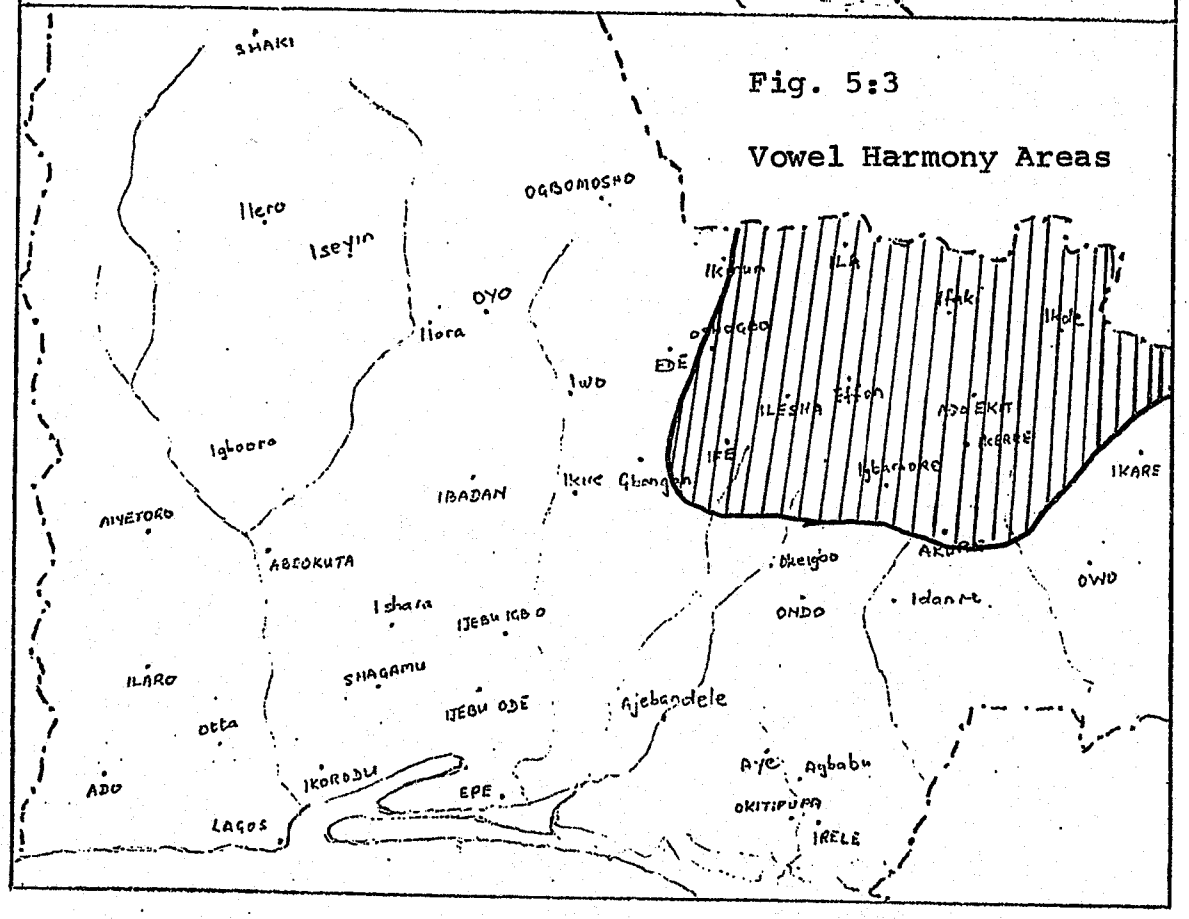


Fig. 5:3

Vowel Harmony Areas

Distribution

Before we identify the correspondences that will enable us to guess at the prototypes, we wish to point to some intriguing features in the distribution of some of these vowels in the lexicon of the different dialects.

All earlier writers on the phonology of the Standard Yoruba Language (Siertsema, Ward, Bamgbose, et.al., including the present analyst) grossly erred in believing that of the oral vowels only the u has a limitation on its distribution. These earlier writers (except Ida Ward, 1952), examined only the occurrence of vowels either in initial position or finally in the word. Ida Ward went a little further by examining the possibilities of /CV/ cooccurrence, which is the structure of the simple verbs in Yoruba. The structure of 90% of the nouns of this language is V_1CV_2. We want to stress that in many cases, the V_1 is prefixed to the verb as a nominalizer. While we find the situation too complex to admit a generalized prediction of the quality of V_1, we assert that a knowledge of the cooccurrence of vowels in such structures can help us determine what the earlier phonology of the language was like. Below we chart the cooccurrence of these vowels for NWY and SEY. The two systems have slight differences to which we shall call attention later. We note here nevertheless, that in SEY u occurs initially as against the picture the chart will give us. The chart is essentially that of NWY.

	i	e	ɛ	a	ɔ	o	u
i	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
e	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
ɛ	+	-	+	+	+	-	+
a	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
ɔ	-	-	+	+	+	-	-
o	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
u	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Vertical axis
First Vowel

Horizontal axis
Second Vowel

What we find is that of the 49 possibilities, only 29 do occur, that is, 59.3%. This is, however, not the most important finding. We should note the great limitations on the distribution of all the vowels except i, and the direction of the limitation. ọ and ɔ, ọ and ɛ, e and ɛ do not cooccur at all. While in the dialects of the Central Yoruba group this pattern is governed by a strict vowel harmony, we find no motivation for this limitation in NWY and SEY.

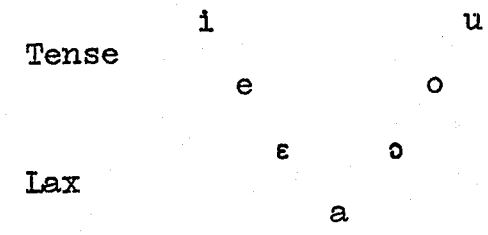
Apart from the mutual exclusion of these phones, we find still other limitations on their cooccurrence with some other phones in the dialects:

We have/aCo/ but not /oCa/; we have /iCɔ/ but only one dialectal occurrence of /ɔCi/, i.e. /ɔti/ 'foreign wine.'

We have /aCe/ but not /eCa/.

The inference we can draw from this is that the co-occurrence of lax and tense vowels was probably more limited at an earlier time than at present, i.e. we would group our vowels into two groups, tense and lax as follows, with

cooccurrence limited to members of either group. a, i, and u, in their distribution seem to negate this assumption but we will see later what happens in the CY group of dialects.



We show below the charts for the nasal vowels of NWY and SEY.

Northwest Yoruba

	ɪ̃	ɛ̃	ɔ̃	ũ
i	+	+	+	+
e	+	-	-	+
ɛ	+	-	+	+
a	+	-	+	+
ɔ	-	-	+	+
o	+	-	-	+
u	-	-	-	-

Southeast Yoruba

	ɪ̃	ɛ̃	ã	ɔ̃	ũ
i	+	+	+	+	+
e	+	-	-	-	+
ɛ	-	+	+	+	-
a	-	+	+	+	-
ɔ	-	+	+	+	-
o	+	-	-	-	+
u	-	+	+	-	-

In the NWY group of dialects, nasal vowels do not occur initially. ɛ̃ occurs in one form only--ɨyɛ̃ 'that'--which is a loanword from SEY. We note here also the non-cooccurrence of o and ɔ̃, and e and ɛ̃.

SEY with five nasal vowels portrays much the same picture as NWY. In fact, this is further reinforced when we

notice that the high tense vowels e and o do not cooccur with ɛ̃ and ɔ̃, which are low lax vowels. Contrary to the behavior of a in its occurrence with tense and lax oral vowels in NWY and SEY and with tense nasal vowels in NWY, it does not occur with ĩ or ũ tense high nasal vowels in SEY. So also does o not occur with ĩ and ũ. As to the distribution of i and ĩ, which have no cooccurrence limitations, we shall offer explanations later on.

The picture that unfolds is one of partial or limited vowel harmony which, although restricted today as a result of shifts and splits to be dealt with later, has left unmistakable traces in the lexicon of these dialects and still greatly affects the morphology. Before we summarize our findings let us see what happens in CY.

We recall that CY has these vowel systems:

Oral		Nasal	
i	u	ĩ	ũ
ɪ	ʊ		
e	o	ɛ̃	ɔ̃
ɛ	ɔ	ã	
a			

Each system has a bipartite division into tense and lax thus:

Oral		Nasal	
Group A - tense		A tense	
i	u	ĩ	ũ
e	o		

Group B - lax		B lax	
ɪ	ʊ	ɪ̃	ʊ̃
ɛ	ɔ	ɛ̃	ɔ̃
a		ã	

5.13 Correspondences

For easy reference we present below the vocalic correspondences across the three major divisions we are considering.

We identify two types of vowel position in the syllable as relevant to our discussion. The syllable in all dialects is defined by tone placement and is of the structure /(C)V/, i.e. /CV/ or /V/. This gives us:

1) The vowel as an independent syllabic, not preceded by any consonant.

2) The vowel preceded in the syllable by a consonant.

We follow the Yiddish dialectologists in assigning phonetic letter symbols to suggest the value of phonemes and subscript numbers to identify their historical origin. Two digits follow each letter symbol. The first 1-9 shows the quality of the proto-vowels as [i, ɪ, e, ɛ, a, ɔ, o, ʊ, u] respectively. The second specifies the position 1,2 indicated above. Where these positions are irrelevant we substitute 0 to cover 1 and 2.

	Central Yoruba	Northwest Yoruba	Southeast Yoruba	
i_{10}	igi	igi	igi	'wood'
$ɪ_{20}$	ɪyɔ̀	iyɔ̀	iyɔ̀	'salt'
e_{31}	eku	eku	eku	'rat'
e_{32}	dé	dé	dé	'cover'
$ɛ_{41}$	ɛ̀jɔ́	ɛjɔ́	ɛjɔ́	'fight'
$ɛ_{42}$	bɛ̀	bɛ̀	bɛ̀	'beg'
a_{50}	dá	dá	dá	'set'
$ɔ_{60}$	ɔ̀jà	ɔjà	ɔjà	'market'
o_{70}	ojú	ojú	ojú	'face'
	kó	kó	kó	'carry'
$ʊ_{81}$	ɪ̀yà	ìyà	ùyà	'suffering'
$ʊ_{82}$	adú	adú	adú	a name
u_{91}	ulé	ilé	ulí	'house'
u_{92}	bú	bú	bú	'abuse'

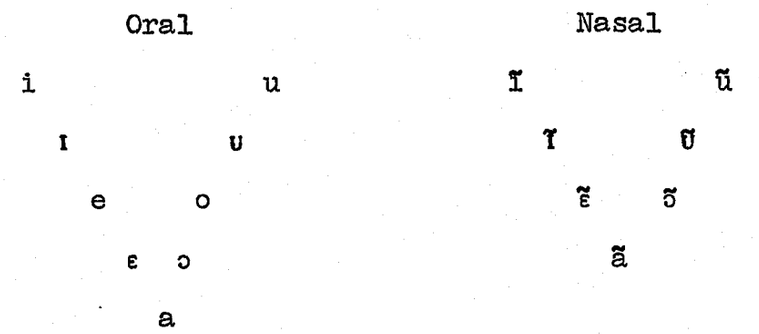
Nasal Vowel Correspondences

The subscript numbers 1 through 7 stand for PY nasal vowels [ĩ, ɪ̃, ɛ̃, ã, ɔ̃, ʊ̃, and ũ] respectively. Because of the disparity between the number of oral and nasal vowels, our subscript numbers cannot stand alone. There is no parallelism between the oral and nasal subscripts.

	Central Yoruba	Northwest Yoruba	Southeast Yoruba	
$ɪ̃_{10}$	orí	orí	orĩ	'song'
$ɪ̃_{20}$	kpɪ́	kpɪ́	kpɛ́	'share'
$ɛ̃_{30}$	ɛ̀ɪ̃	ɛ̀yĩ	ɛ̀wɛ̃	'they'
	dɛ̀	dɛ̀	dɛ̃	'still'
$ã_{40}$	yá	yá	yã́	'yawn'
$ɔ̃_{50}$	ɔkɔ̀	ɔkɔ̀	ɔkã̀	'heart'
$ʊ̃_{60}$	ɔdʊ́	ɔdʊ́	ɔdɔ̃́	'year'
$ũ_{70}$	mù	mù	mù	'dive'

5.14 Reconstruction

We give below our reconstructed Proto-Yoruba vowel systems as follows:

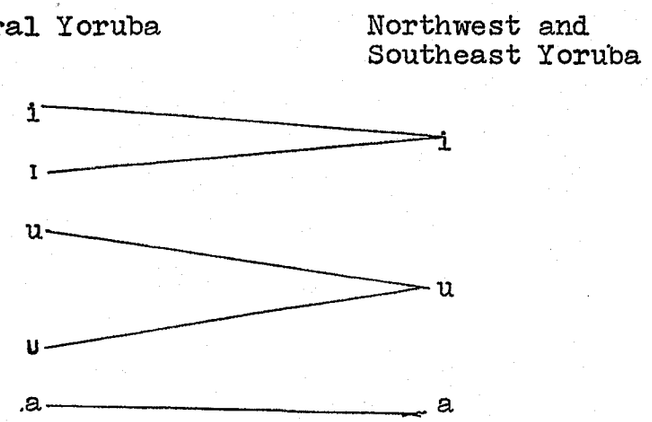


Superficially, these reconstructed systems resemble the present-day Central Yoruba vowel systems. But this is not a problem since, as we shall see later, this resemblance is accounted for by a number of historical processes.

5.14.1 Evidence for the Reconstruction

We note here that the reconstruction of a nine oral and seven nasal vowels results from a number of cross dialect correspondences. This reconstruction is also supported by external evidence.

The main argument in favour of our reconstruction is related to how we view the vowel harmony which as shown above is fully operative in CY and only partially in the other groups of dialects. In CY, cooccurrence of vowels is restricted to membership with the sets of either tense or lax vowels. In the other dialects, the non-cooccurrence of e ɛ, o ɔ, ẹ ọ, and o ɛ is seen to be a relic of vowel harmony, thus confirming that vowel harmony is not a CY innovation. In their distribution in NWY and SEY, i and u which are tense vowels cooccur with both tense and lax vowels while a which is a lax vowel also cocccurs with both tense and lax vowels. With these three vowels i, u, and a the opposition tense vs lax is non operative in SEY and NWY. The wider range of distribution shared by these three phones is explainable in terms of their historical development. The correspondences of these phones in NWY and SEY with CY are as follows:



The combined distributional range of CY i and ɪ equals that of SEY~ NWY i while CY u and ʊ equals SEY~ NWY u. Accepting the suggestion that CY's vowel cooccurrence is not an innovation, we have to posit for SEY~ NWY the mergers of tense i and lax ɪ > i and tense u and lax ʊ > u. These mergers then allow the resulting phones to have the distributional privileges of their prototypes. The result is the collapse of vowel harmony in the cooccurrence of the other phones with the new ones i and u.

Seen in this light too, the wide distributional range of a does not constitute a problem. In proto Yoruba, a occurred with ɪ and ʊ as it does to present day CY. But ɪ and ʊ having merged with i and u respectively, PY àtɪ became àti 'and', and PY àmʊ̀ became àmù 'pitcher'.

We may also note that Twi and Igbo, members of the Kwa subfamily of languages (Greenberg (1956)) operate today

with vowel harmony. The reconstructive comparative method applied to Ijaw, a related language in the Niger delta of Nigeria yields a proto-language in which vowel harmony was operative. The partial reconstructions done for many other members of the Kwa language group suggest that vowel harmony was probably a feature of Proto-Kwa. (These studies are not yet published.) The external evidence as to the other languages within the Kwa group operating with vowel harmony is relevant to our suggestion that vowel harmony in Yoruba is not an innovation. That vowel harmony is found in full scope in CY and to some extent in all the other dialects of Yoruba also suggests that it is an old feature.

The evidence for the reconstruction of a seven-member nasal vowel series is even more convincing. In our discussion of nasal vowel distribution, we recall that nasal vowels do not occur word initially in NWY. In both SEY and CY we find a few occurrences of nasal vowels word-initially. And where we find cooccurrence of nasal vowels, only the lax nasal vowels do cooccur. We find these forms:

Central Yoruba		Southeast Yoruba	
ɛ̀ɔ̃	'they'	ɛ̀wɔ̃)	'they'
ɔ̀ɔ̀)	'you (pl)'	ɛ̀wɛ̃)	
ɛ̀ɔ̀)			

The paucity of these forms with nasal vowel in word initial position and the cooccurrence of nasal vowels indicate that the distribution of nasals vowels can be more profitably studied in their cooccurrence with oral vowels.

In CY, cooccurrence between nasal and oral vowels is again determined by vowel harmony: lax vowels, oral and nasal, cooccur while tense vowels cooccur. In SEY restriction to membership of either tense or lax vowels is negated only by the cooccurrence of i and u in word initial position with lax nasal vowels as second vowels. In NWY, limitation on the cooccurrence of tense oral vowels with lax nasal vowels and lax oral vowels with tense nasal vowels is not at all great. When we rank our dialect groups according to limitations on the distribution of oral and nasal vowels, we find that CY has an almost complete system of the restriction of vowels in their cooccurrence to sets, i.e. only tense vowels or lax vowels cooccur. This system is almost absent in NWY. In between the two extremes comes SEY. These different rankings are explainable in terms of the shifts in the nasal vowel systems. We reproduce below the correspondences of nasal vowels among the three dialects.

Southeast Yoruba	Central Yoruba	Northwest Yoruba
ɪ̃	ɪ̃	ɪ̃
ɛ	ɪ̃	
ʊ̃	ʊ̃	ʊ̃
ɔ̃	ʊ̃	
ã	ɔ̃	ɔ̃
ɛ̃	(ɛ̃)	ɛ
ã	(ã)	a

We find that the shifts in SEY do not affect the vowel harmony system. $\underline{\tilde{I}} > \underline{\tilde{\varepsilon}}$, $\underline{\tilde{U}} > \underline{\tilde{o}}$ are still shifts within the lax vowel system. In NWY however $\underline{\tilde{I}} > \underline{\tilde{I}}$ and $\underline{\tilde{U}} > \underline{\tilde{u}}$ are shifts of lax vowels to tense vowels. The result is that here also, vowel harmony is disrupted.

We summarize below the evidence for our reconstruction.

(a) Vowel harmony which restricts cooccurremce of vowels to membership of either tense or lax vowels is seen as a relic. And although this harmony operates fully only in CY, relics of it are found in all the other dialects.

(b) The limited cooccurrence of tense and lax vowels in SEY and NWY are explainable by shifts which have resulted in the partial collapse of vowel harmony.

(c) The partial collapse of vowel harmony in NWY and SEY may be due, in part, to external influences. Both NWY and SEY areas came under the influence of other languages, NWY through Fulani conquest which led to mixture of peoples and SEY through the Benin empire. The evidence we have relating to the history of the area under investigation suggests CY area was relatively free from external influences and contact with a foreign language.

(d) We may note also that the structures of languages related to Yoruba within the Kwa subphylum justify our reconstruction. Some of these languages

still retain full vowel harmony while relics of vowel harmony are found in all the others.

5.14.2 Derivation of Presentday Vowel Systems

To derive the NWY oral vowels, we posit three shifts:

(a) Raising of $\underline{\imath}_{20} > \underline{i}$ and subsequent merger with $\underline{i}_{10}$

(b) Raising of $\underline{u}_{82} > \underline{u}$ and subsequent merger with $\underline{u}_{90}$

(c) Fronting of $\underline{u}_{81}$, and $\underline{u}_{91}$, thus yielding $\underline{i}_{10,20,81,91}$

Two shifts are responsible for the presentday system of SEY oral vowels:

(a) Raising of $\underline{\imath}_{20} > \underline{i}$ and subsequent merger with $\underline{i}_{10}$.

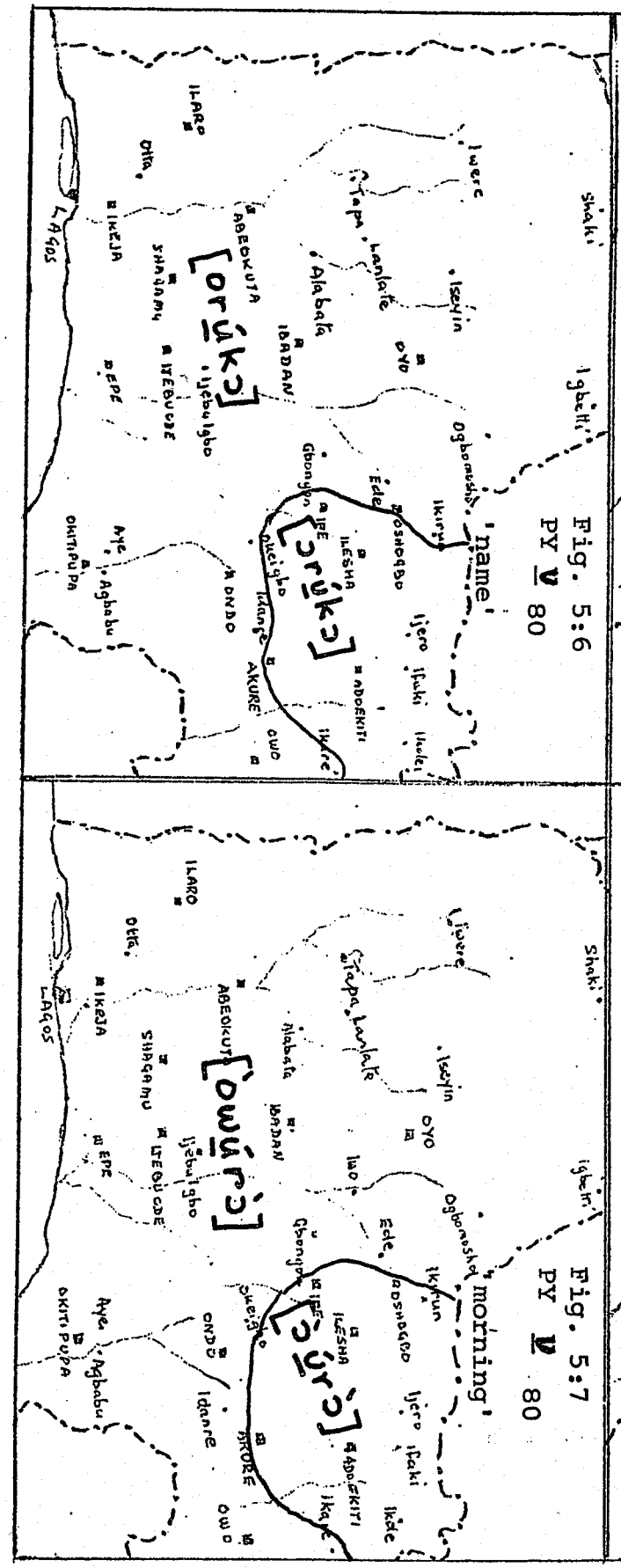
(b) Raising of $\underline{u}_{80} > \underline{\grave{u}}$ and subsequent merger with $\underline{u}_{90}$

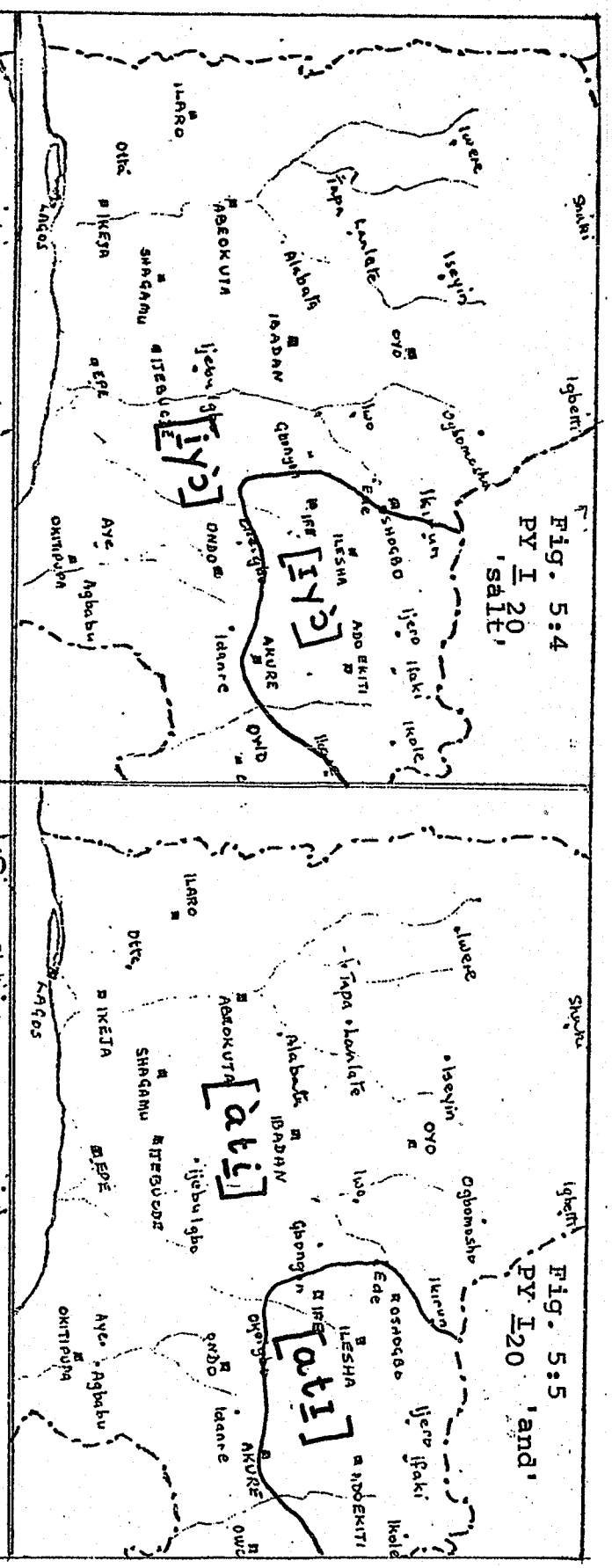
5.15 Differentiation of SEY and NWY from CY

The geography of these changes responsible for differentiating on the one hand SEY from NWY and on the other SEY and NWY from CY is shown below.

5.15.1 Raising of $\underline{\imath}_{20} > \underline{i}$--Figs. 5:4 'salt' and 5:5 'and'.

The shift of $\underline{\imath}_{20}$ to $\underline{i}$ in NWY and SEY seems to be the oldest vowel change in these dialects because of the geographical range in which it took place. The limits coincide with isoglosses 1 and 2, although we find relics of $\underline{\imath}$ in non-phonemic function in the southwest corner of SEY (around Shagamu and Ketu). The causes of this shift we cannot guess, but we suspect both internal and external forces might be





involved. It is significant to note that in the establishment and spread of two neighboring empires--to the east Benin, and to the northwest Moslem--both SEY and NWY were subjected to contact with other languages while CY remained relatively unaffected. This then might be one of the causes of this dialectal divergence. We may also note the vast effects this has on the lexicon of both NWY and SEY. We saw earlier how i cooccurs with almost all other vowels. The earlier situation must have been that i occurred with tense vowels and ɪ with lax vowels. Since these two have merged, the new phoneme assumes the cooccurrence privileges of its prototypes. No other phoneme in NWY or SEY except a comes near i in its freedom of distribution.

Examples of the shift of $ɪ_{20}$ > i are:

CY	NWY	SEY	
wɪ́	wí	gwí	'say'
ɪmʊ́	imʊ́	imʊ̃́	'nose'
ɪyɛ̃	iyɛ	iyɛ̃	'feather'
ɪkpʏ́	ikpɪ́	ikpɛ̃́	'eye discharge'
adɪ̀ɛ	adìɛ	ajìɛ	'hen'

5.15.2 Raising of $ʊ_{82}$ > $ʊ_{90}$--Figs. 5:6 'name' and 5:7 'morning'

This shift takes roughly the course of the one already discussed above. We offer these examples:

CY	NWY	SEY	
ɛrú	ɛrú	ɛrú	'slave'
ɛrù	ɛrù	ɛrù	'load'

Since a later innovation affecting $\underline{u}_{81}$ and $\underline{u}_{91}$, is one of the very significant differentials among the three dialect groups, we consider it here also. $\underline{u}_{80}$ and $\underline{u}_{90}$ must have merged probably at the same time or a little later than the merger of $\underline{i}_{20}$ with $\underline{i}_{10}$ in NWY and SEY.

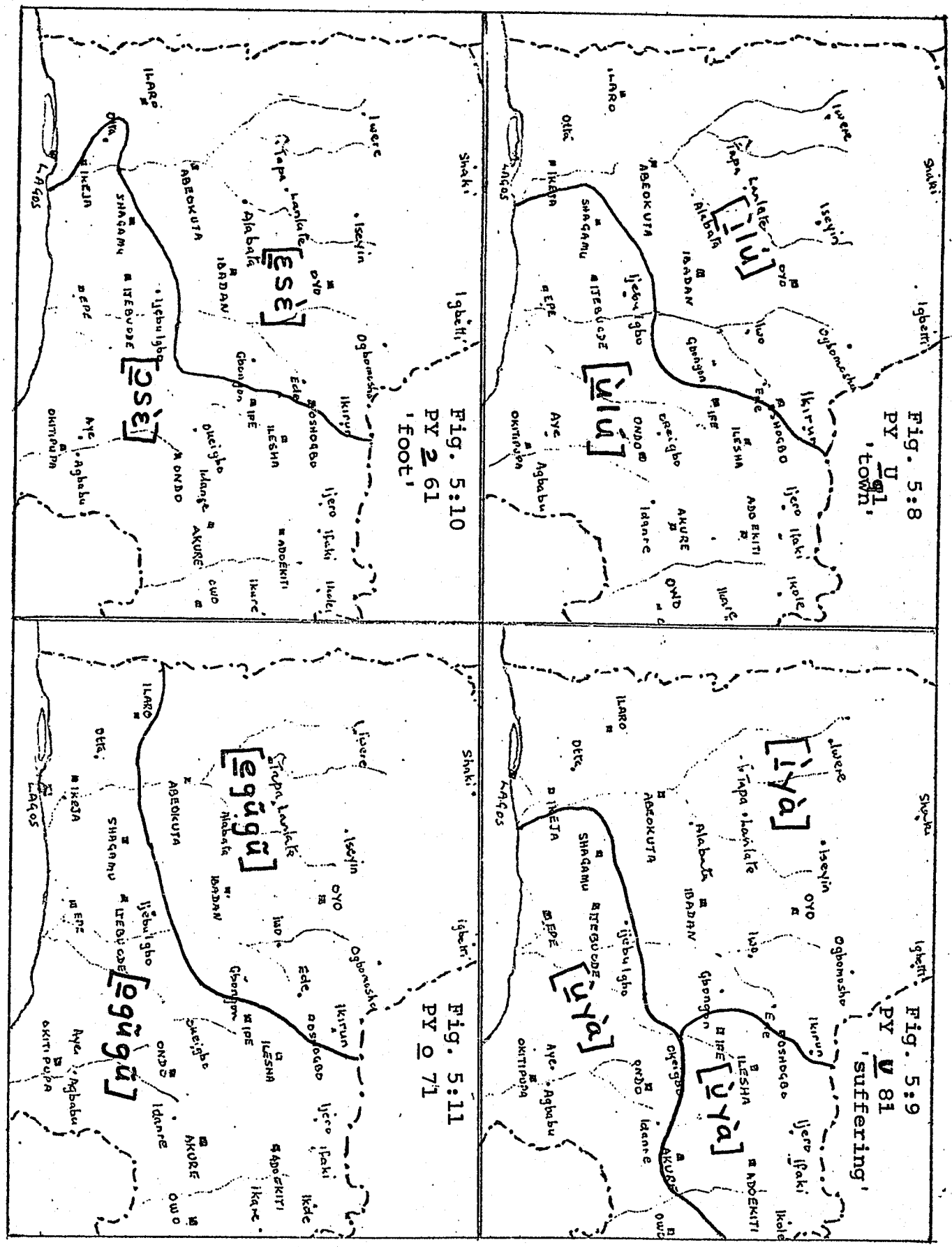
5.15.3 Fronting of u_{91} in NWY--Fig. 5:8 'town' and 5:9 'suffering'

Following close on shift noted above, is the fronting of the resulting u in initial position to i in NWY. Some examples of this are:

NWY	CY	SEY	
ìlú	ùlú	ùlú	'town'
ilé	ulé	ulí	'house'
ìyà	ùyà	ùyà	'suffering'
ìjà	ùjà	ùjà	'fight'
ibi	ubi	ubi	'placenta'

5.15.4 Fronting of other initial back vowels in NWY--Fig. 5:10 'leg' and 5:11 'bone.'

Rowlands (1965:105) remarks that "there are in SY [std Yoruba] several nouns with alternate forms of the vowel prefix . . . several examples crop up in Koelle, the alternation being usually between front and back vowels of the same



rank." A phonologically defined morphological process in this language is the affixing of a /V/ to nominalize a verb of the structure /CV(CV)/. All structures of the form /CV/ are either verbs or pre-verbs in this language (the shorter pronouns of CV structure have an underlying form of /VCV/ structure). The present structure of the language does not permit one to isolate all the initial /V/'s in the noun structure /VCV/ as nominalizers of verbs, but all extant verbs, intransitive and those with deletable objects, are nominalizable by prefixing a /V/. Thus /ǰà/ 'to fight'-

/ù - ǰa/ 'a fight'

/gbɔ́/ 'to be wise' -

/ɔ - gbɔ́/ 'wisdom'

Our contention here is that the /V/ prefix was solely and is still largely determined by vowel harmony. We want to point out here that the mergers of i and u had very serious consequences for the operation of vowel harmony in NWY and SEY. The fronting of u 81,91 had the further complication of eliminating the relatively neat pattern whereby in V_1CV_2, V_1 was probably also determined by the frontness or backness of V_2. This fronting also induced the fronting of initial back vowels in a few words. We find correspondences such as the following:

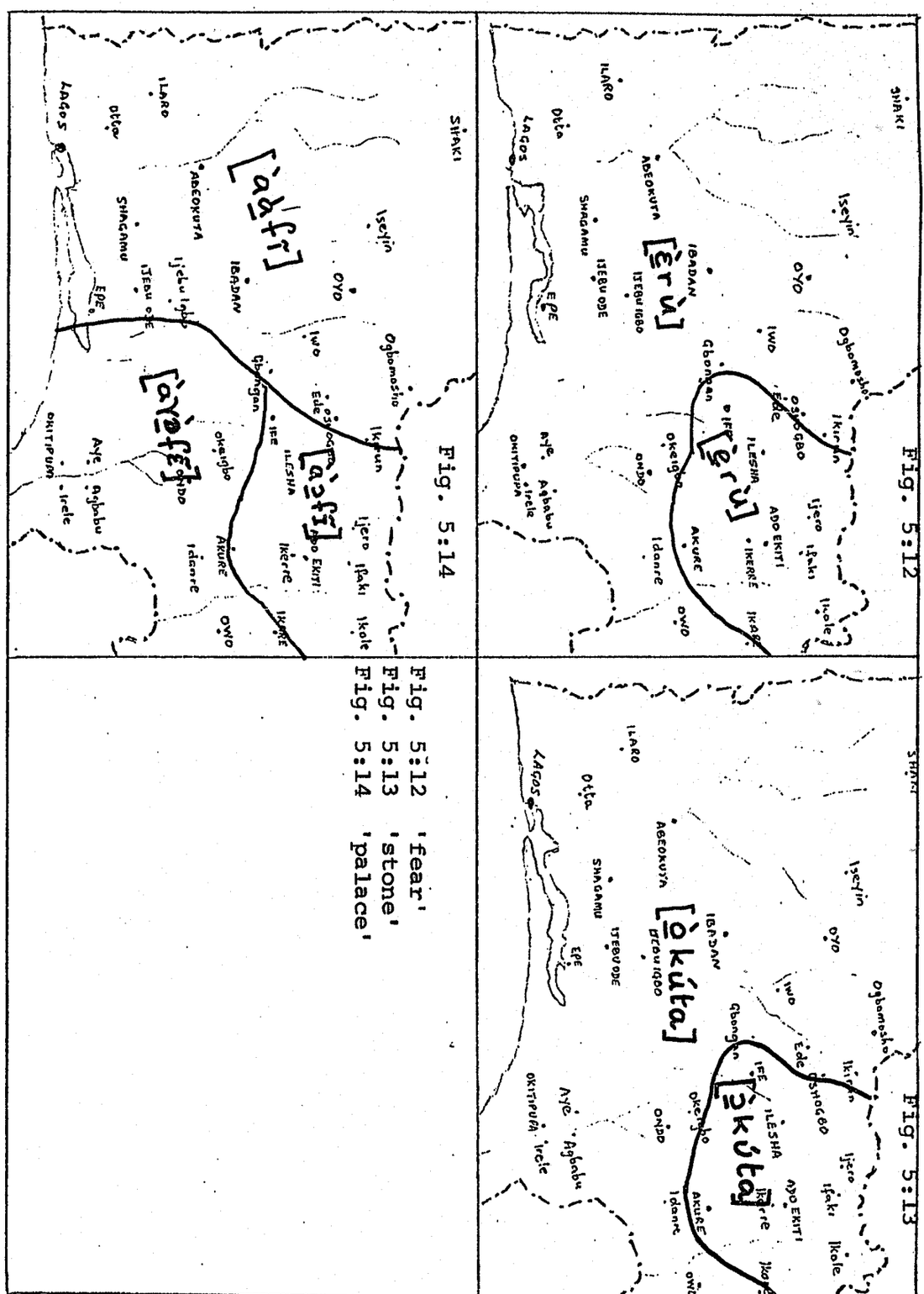


Fig. 5:12 'fear'
Fig. 5:13 'stone'
Fig. 5:14 'palace'

Fig. 5:12

Fig. 5:13

Fig. 5:14

	CY	SEY	NWY	
ɔ > ɛ	ɔsɛ̀	ɔsɛ̀	ɛsɛ̀	'foot'
	ɔkà	---	ɛkà/ɔkà	'corn'
	ɔnĭ	ɔnɛ̃	ɛnĭ	'person'
o > e	ogũgũ	ogũgũ	egũgũ	'bone'
	orí	oríɣo	eri/orí	'head'
	ɔ̀ní	ɔ̀ní	è̀ní/ɔ̀ní	'today'
	ɔ̀nìyɔ̃/ɔ̀nìyɔ̀	---	è̀nìyɔ̃	'human being'

A few other correspondences, very limited in their regularity, occur between the mid tense and lax vowels of the same series, i.e. between e and ɛ and between o and ɔ. We noticed earlier that e and o, do not enter the same phonological subsystems with ɛ and ɔ; while e and o and the other tense vowels cooccur, ɛ and ɔ go with the lax vowels. Vowel harmony is suspected to have been operative along two axes before Proto East Yoruba was formed. Proto East Yoruba probably inherited fully this division of vowels into tense and lax and partially the frontness-backness tongue position axis. It is then not surprising that with the near total collapse of vowel harmony in the SEY and NWY and its large scale retention in CY, we find occasional correspondences between these phones. Thus we find forms like:

SEY and NWY	CY	Gloss
ɛrù	è̀rù	'fear' -- Fig. 5:12
ewúrɛ́	ɛ̀úrɛ́	'goat'
ɔ̀kúta	ɔ̀kúta	'stone' -- Fig. 5:13

These forms are different only in that they obey the phonological selection rules in each dialect.

5.15.5 Other Correspondences

To conclude our discussion of the oral vowels we note below a few other correspondences, this time conditioned by consonant elimination in a particular type of structure.

Word structures of four or five syllables do occur in Yoruba, but these are very few. For three-syllable words of the structure $V_1C_1V_2C_2V_3$ in CY and SEY, we find in NWY VVCV, i.e. the consonant onset of the second syllable is dropped. The vowel of the second syllable is then assimilated to the phonetic value of the first vowel.

SEY and CY	NWY	gloss
oɣíɣó	oówó	'boil'
àɣɔ̀fɛ̃ ààfĩ	ààfĩ	'palace' -- Fig. 5:14
àrírɛ̀	àárɛ̀	'lassitude'
èrìwɔ̀	èèwɔ̀	'taboo'

The second vowels of the NWY forms therefore have different reflexes o ~ i, a ~ ɔ, i ~ a, e ~ i, in CY and SEY.

Fig. 5:15 Composite of Figs. 5:4 - 5:8

Fig. 5:16 Composite of Figs. 5:9 - 5:12

These two figures give us a cumulative picture of the oral vowel isoglosses of the dialects we are studying.

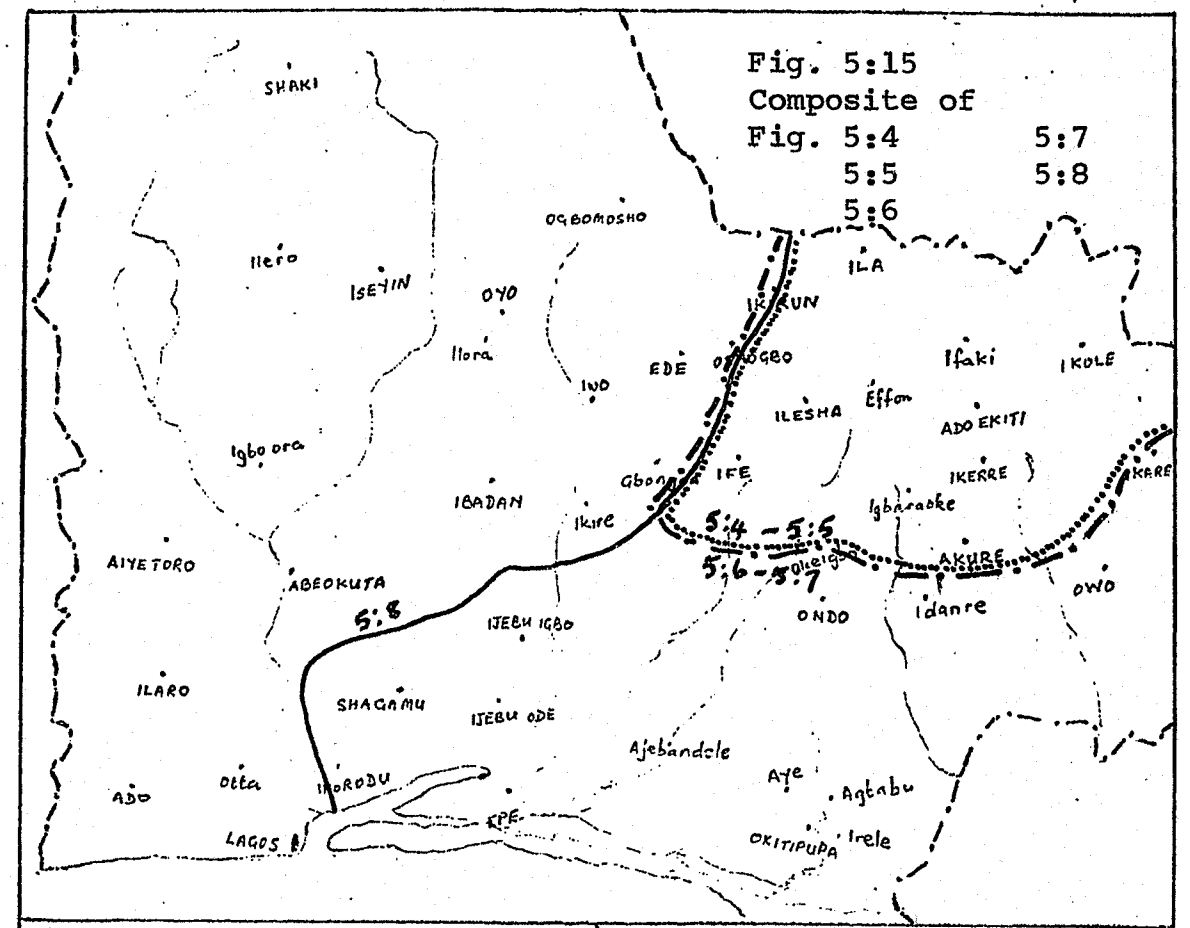


Fig. 5:15
Composite of
Fig. 5:4 5:7
5:5 5:8
5:6

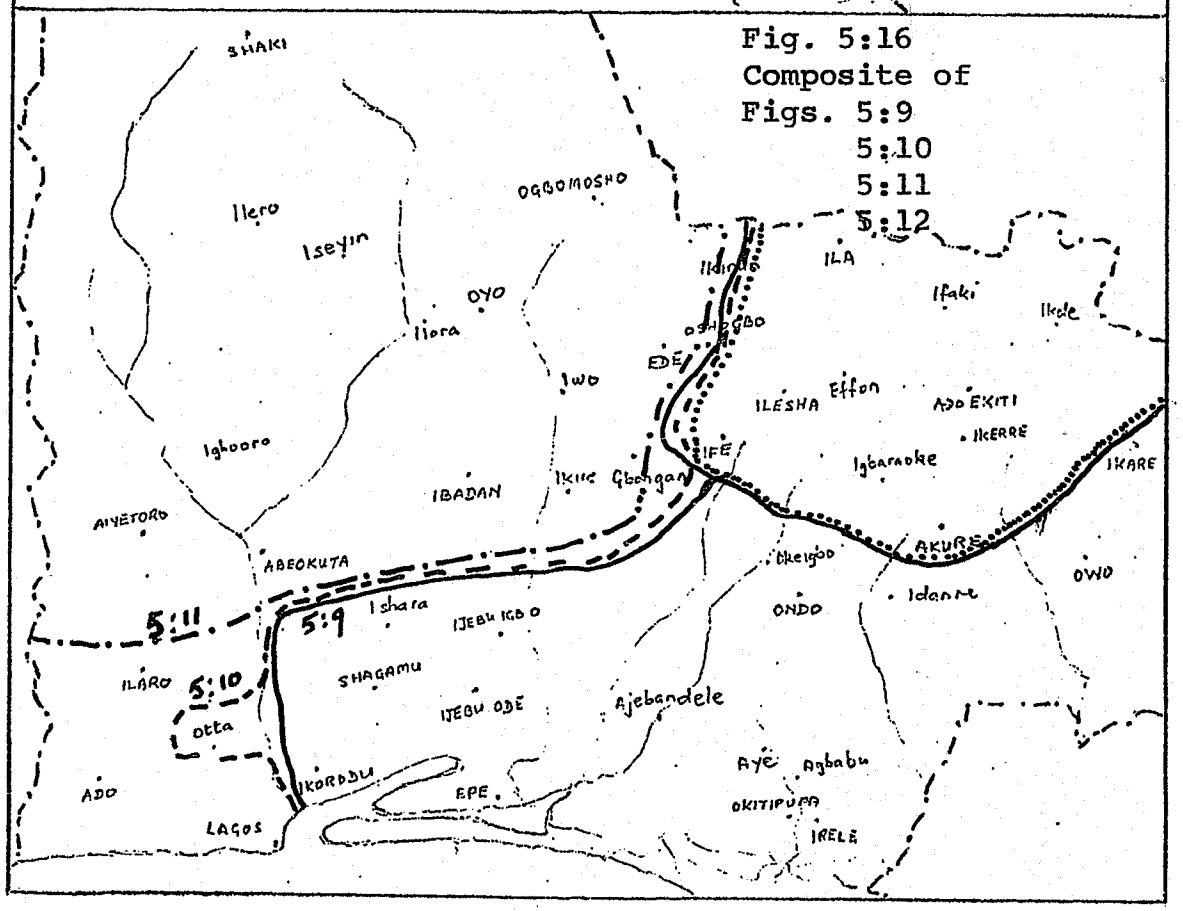


Fig. 5:16
Composite of
Figs. 5:9
5:10
5:11
5:12

5.2 The Nasal Vowels

We also reconstruct a system of nasal protovowels as follows:

ɪ̃ ʊ̃

ɪ̃ ʊ̃

ɛ̃ ɔ̃

ã

Vowel harmony was a feature operative no less in the nasal vowels than in the oral vowel series. This is still the situation in CY. The division of cooccurrence is however, between the two high tense nasal vowels ɪ̃ and ʊ̃ on the one hand, and all the lax vowels on the other hand. Thus we have:

Tense	ɪ̃	ʊ̃
Lax	ɪ̃	ʊ̃
	ɛ̃	ɔ̃
	ã	

We are suspicious of this division, but our data lead us to believe that there could not have been any other system. The slanting of the distribution to favor the B group with five members as against the A group with only two is at least what PEY inherited from PY, but we see that, at a period that must have been very early indeed, readjustments were made in all the dialects we are considering, not only to reduce the number of contrasts in the nasal vowels but also to minimize the number of oppositions of the lax vowel

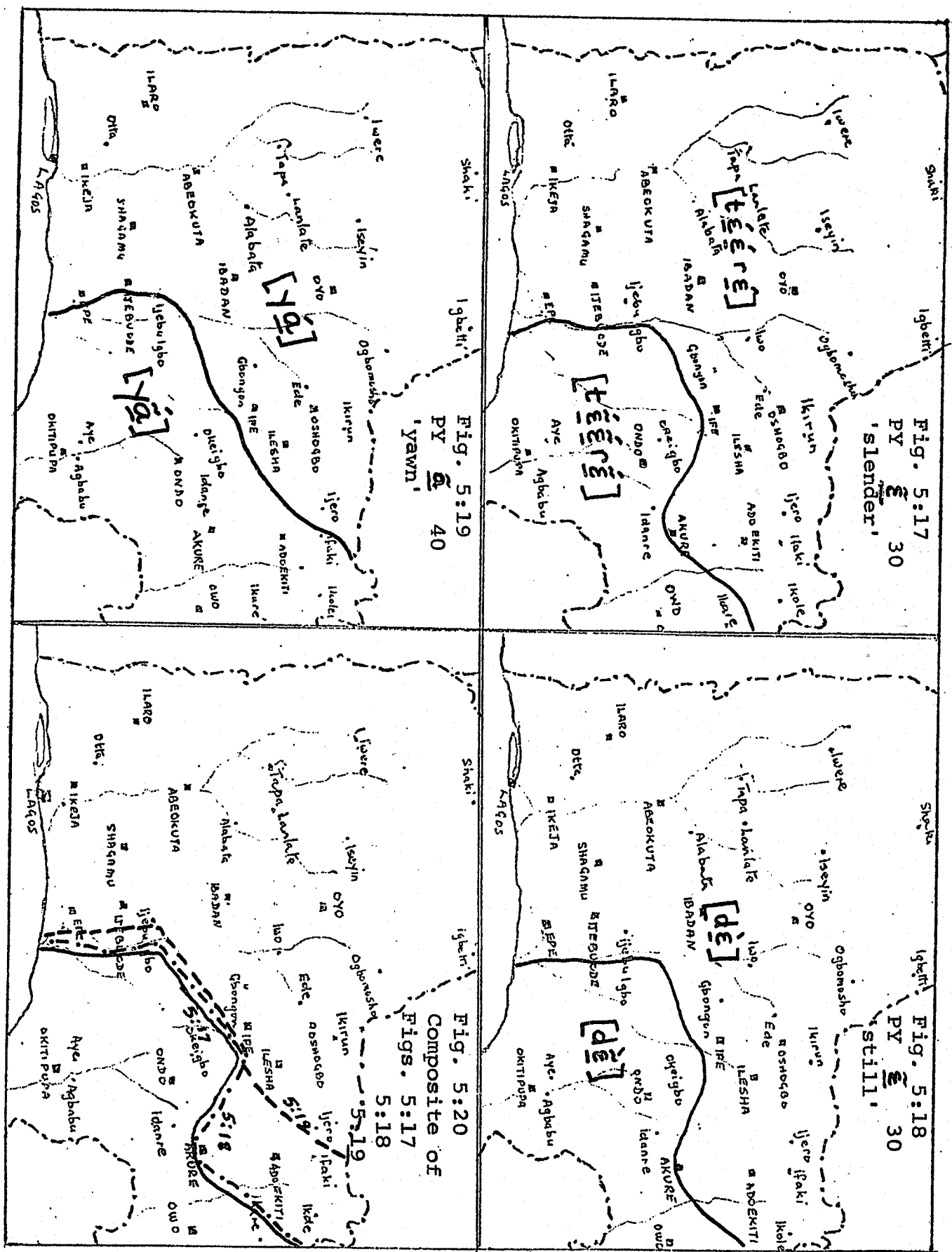
group. It has been shown that acoustically, the lower nasal vowels are more distinguishable than the higher ones (Hockett, 1955). Yet the direction of shifts and mergers in the nasal vowel systems of all the dialects we are considering is towards the reduction of the number of the lower nasal vowels. This becomes plausible if we accept the thesis that structural pressures here aim at arriving at parallel subsystems for both the tense and lax group of vowels. Two ways are open: (a) either an increase in the number of oppositions within the sybsystem tense; or (b) a reduction in the contrasts in sybsystem of lax vowels. The latter is chosen. Were (a) the case, then the number of terms in the nasal vowel series would become as large if not larger, than those of the oral vowel series. Typologically, this would be unique, as we know of no language in which the number of nasal vowel contrasts exceeds that of oral vowels (Greenberg, 1963).

5.21 Early Oralization of Some Nasal Vowels

There is a certain amount of evidence that some nasal vowels became oral very early in PEY. The more widespread changes involve ɛ̃ and ã resulting in their elimination from both NWY and CY.

5.21.1 Oralization of PYɛ̃ in NWY and CY -- Fig. 5:17 'slender'

Between SEY on the one hand and CY-NWY on the other, we have the correspondence ɛ̃ ~ ɛ in the following words:



SEY	NWY and CY	
tɛ̃́rɛ̃́	tɛ̀rɛ́	'slender'
gbɛ̃́	gbɛ́	'carve'
ɔgbɛ̃́	ɔgbɛ̀	'injury'
gwɛ̃rɛ̃	wɛrɛ	'tiny'
dɛ̀̃	dɛ̀	'still' --5:18

The retention of this ɛ̃ in SEY should not be confused with the SEY ɛ̃ resulting from a late shift of PEY of PYĨ> /ɛ̃/. (See below section 5.22.)

5.21.2 Oralization of PYã in NWY and CY--Fig. 5:19 'yawn'.

Examples of this change are difficult to come by because the change seems to have affected SEY too. However, we find two words to explicate PYã in SEY. These are:

SEY	CY and NWY	
yã	yá	'yawn'
ãwã	à(w)ã	'they'

We suspect that apart from the retention of ã in these two words in SEY, the change must have been much more widespread. We arrive at this conclusion because of the morphophonemic development of ã in SEY from a in non-nasal environments, a development found in states where it would be least expected. Thus we have:

	SEY		CY and NWY		
	bí àdé >	bãdé'	bí adé	bádé	'give birth to Ade'
but	bɪ̀ɔla >	bɔlá	bí ɔlá	bɔ́lá	'give birth to Ola'
	šu arã	šãrã	šu arã	šarã	'to excrete worms'

Examples of this morphophonemic development of ã abound in SEY, and we give it the historical explanation sketched above.

Cross-dialect correspondences of nasal and oral vowels of the same series and order are widespread and probably were induced by the two major ones discussed above. Rowlands had already remarked that "variation in nasalization occurs to some extent in SY [Standard Yoruba] e.g. wu>wun [wũ] 'to please,' oyinbo [oyĨbo] oyibo 'white man', and the absence of nasalization in some common words, e.g. fufu, 'white' is a characteristic of Egba [NWY] speakers." (1965:104). Fig. 5:20 gives a composite of Figs 5:17 - 5:19.

5.22 Later Differentiation Among the Dialects

The result of the two early shifts documented above - the oralization of PYã and ɛ̃ --(5.21.1 and 5.21.2) was a two-way differentiation of PY into the SEY type which still retained a seven nasal vowel system, and other types which now had five nasal vowels.

Proto SEY		Proto NWY/CY	
Ĩ 10	ũ 70	Ĩ 10	ũ 70
Ĩ 20	ʊ̃ 60	Ĩ 20	ɔ̃ 60
ɔ̃ 30	ɔ̃ 50	ɔ̃ 50	
ã 40			

From the above, we derive the present-day nasal vowel systems of the different dialects as follows:

Central Yoruba

The system is much the same as for Proto NWY/CY except

(a) (regional) lowering and centralization of $\underline{\varepsilon} > \underline{\ddot{a}}$

(b) recent development of $\underline{\varepsilon}$ from loanwords of SEY origin

Northwest Yoruba

(a) raising of $\underline{\imath}_{20}$ to $\underline{\imath}$ and subsequent merger with $\underline{\imath}_{10}$

(b) raising of $\underline{u}_{60}$ to $\underline{\ddot{u}}$

These two shifts as we noted early partially led to the disappearance of the distinction between tense and lax nasal vowels.

Southeast Yoruba

(a) lowering of $\underline{\imath}_{20} > \underline{\varepsilon}$, eventuating in a merger with $\underline{\varepsilon}_{30}$

(b) lowering of $\underline{\ddot{u}}_{60} > \underline{\ddot{o}}$,

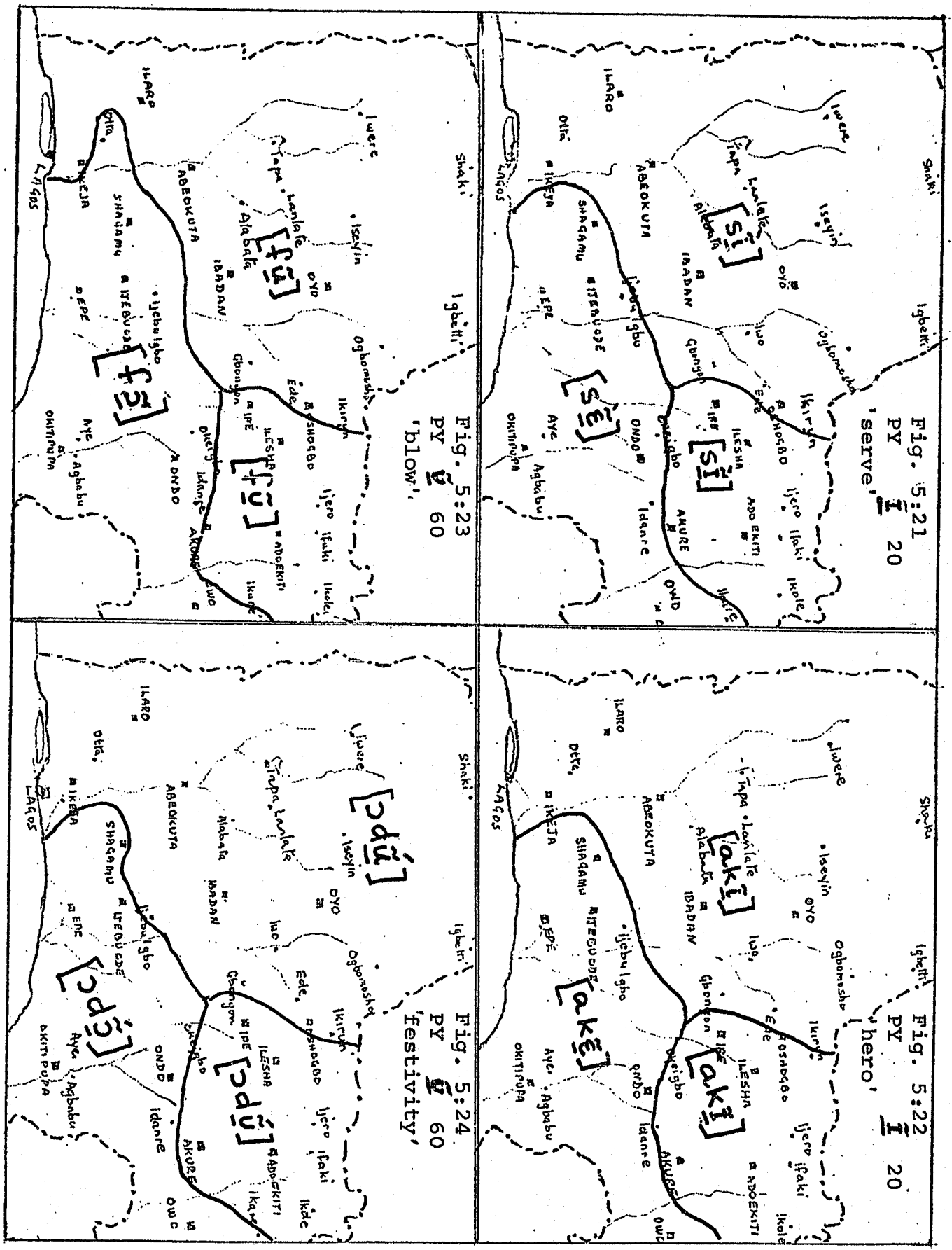
(c) lowering of $\underline{\ddot{o}}_{50} > \underline{\ddot{a}}$, resulting in a merger with $\underline{\ddot{a}}_{40}$

We deal first with the differentiation of NWY from CY.

a) Raising of $\underline{\imath}_{20} > \underline{\imath}$ in NWY--Figs 5:21 'serve' and 5:22 'hero'

This shift is similar to the ones already documented for the high lax oral vowels

	CY		NWY	
Vowel Examples	ĩ	>	ɪ	
	kpĩ́		kpɪ́	'share'
	sĩ̀		sɪ̀	'worship'
	ɔ̀kĩ́		ɔ̀kɪ́	'a bird'
	akĩ		akɪ	'hero'
	ɛ̀gbĩ		ɛ̀gbɪ	'dirt'



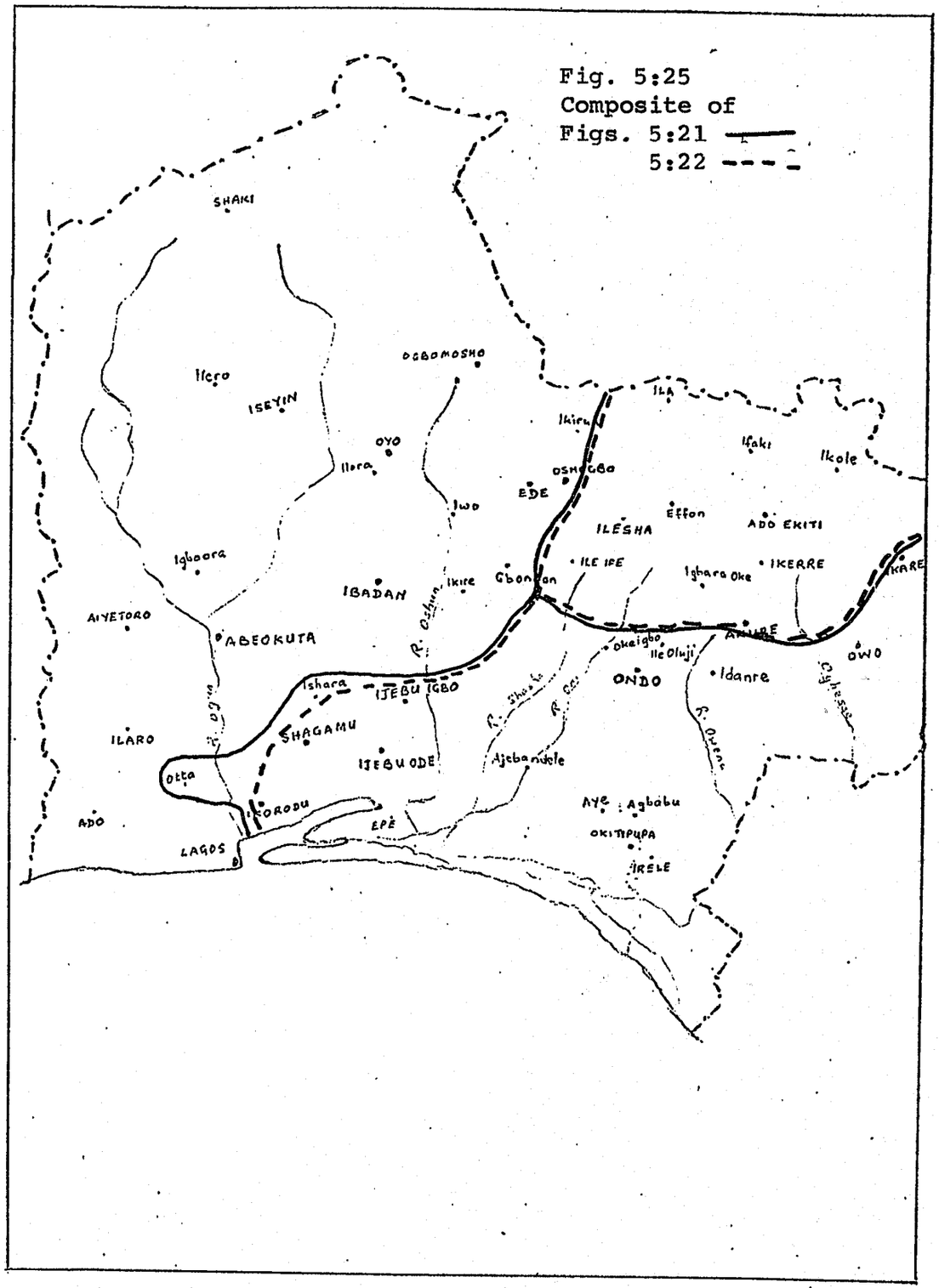
b) Raising of ʊ̃60 > ũ in NWY--Figs. 5:23 'blow' and 5:24 'festival.'

This shift probably took place at about the same period as that of ĩ > ɪ̃. Between CY and NWY we have the correspondences shown in these words:

	CY	SEY	
	ʊ̃	ũ	
Vowel Examples	ɔ̀bʊ̀	ɔ̀bù	'dirty person'
	ɔ́dʊ́	ɔ́dú	'festival'
	fʊ́	fú	'wring'
	ɔ̀tʊ̃́la	ɔ̀túla	'day after tomorrow'
	sʊ̃kʊ́	sũkũ	'weep'

We see the two shifts discussed above as resulting in the reduction in the number of the lax nasal vowels. The mergers of tense and lax vowels have the further effect of giving the resulting phonemes the distributional privileges of the two prototypes which have coalesced. And this is why in the phonology of NWY today both ɪ̃ and ũ cooccur in successive syllables of the same word with both tense and lax vowels, a situation which is very rare in CY.

Fig. 5:25 gives a composite of the nasal vowel isoglosses presented so far. It is noteworthy that the direction of these isoglosses matches that of the oral vowels already given.



5.23 Further Differentiation of SEY from both CY and NWY.

We have quite a different picture in SEY where the two nasal vowels ɪ̃ and ʊ̃ that were raised in NWY were lowered instead. While in NWY $ɪ̃_{20}$ and $ʊ̃_{60}$ merged with $ɪ̃_{10}$ and $ʊ̃_{70}$ respectively, only $ɪ̃_{20}$ merged with $ɛ̃_{30}$ in SEY; however $ɔ̃ < ʊ̃_{60}$ did not merge with $ɔ̃_{50}$ which was also subjected to lowering.

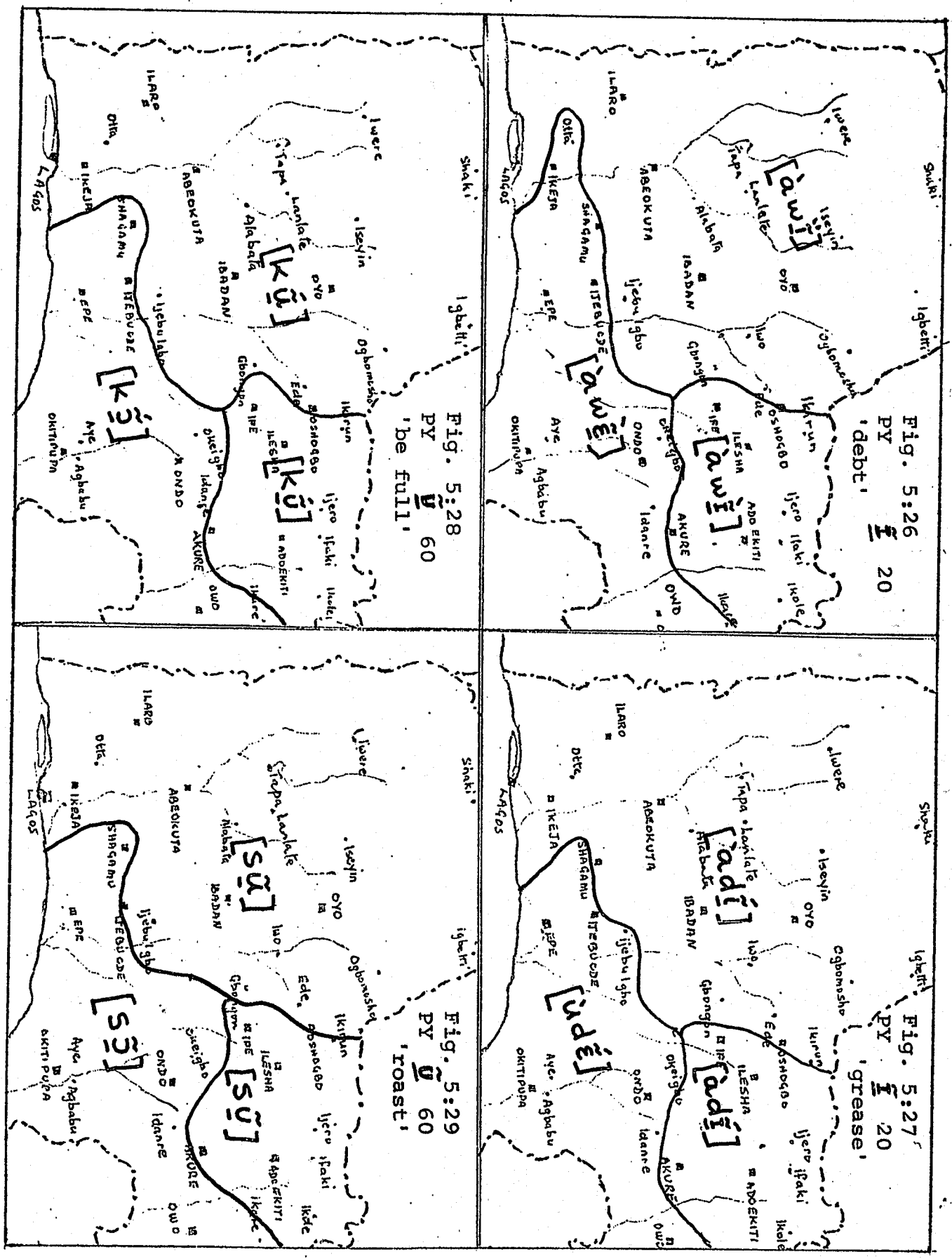
5.23.1 Lowering of ɪ̃20 in SEY--Figs. 5:26 'credit' and 5:27 'grease'.

The SEY words below compared with both CY and NWY lists provided show the correspondences

	SEY		CY		NWY	
PEY	ɪ > ɛ̃		ɪ̃	>	ɪ́	
Examples	ùɛ̃		ùrɪ̀		́ɪrɪ́	'walk'
	àwɛ̀		àwɪ̀		àwɪ́	'credit'
	akɛ̃		akɪ̀		akɪ́	'hero'
	ùdɛ́		àdɪ́		àdɪ́	'grease'
	sɛ̀		sɪ̀		sɪ́	'worship'

5.23.2 Lowering of ʊ̃60 in SEY--Figs. 5:28 'full' and 5:29 'roast'.

PEY ʊ̃60 retained in CY and raised to ʊ́ in NWY was lowered to ɔ̃ in SEY. We have these corresponding forms in the dialect groups.



PEY		SEY	CY	NWY	
ũ	>	õ	u	u	
Examples		ɛ̀dṍ	ɛ̀dù̀	ɛ̀dṹ	'sympathy'
		kṍ	kṹ	kṹ	'full'
		ɛ̀rõ̀	àrṹ	àrṹ	'five'
		ɔ̀kõ̀	ɔkù̀	ɔ̀kṹ	'millipede'
		sõ	sṹ	sũ	'roast'

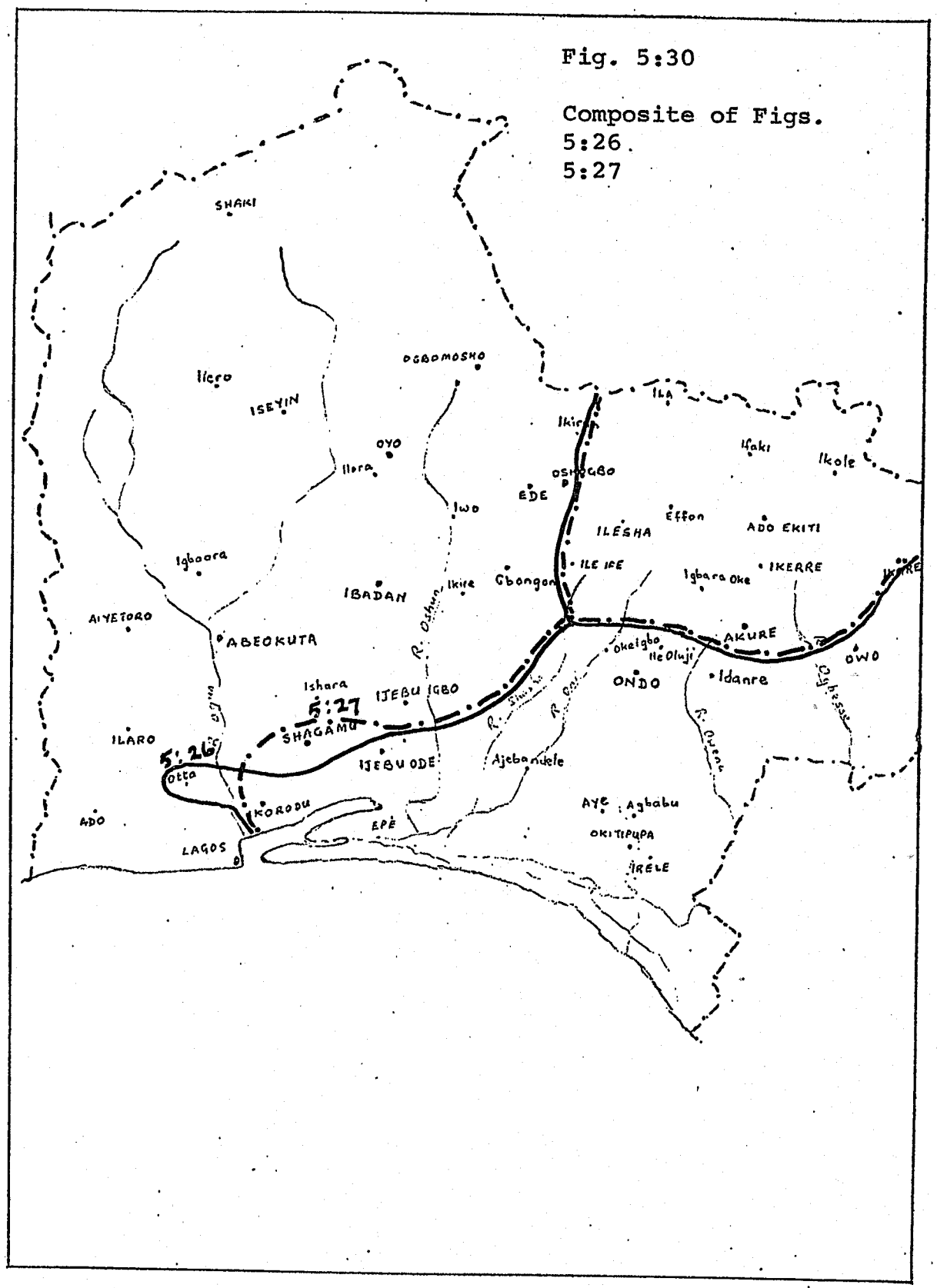
Fig. 5:30 shows a composite of Figs. 5:26 to 5:29.

5.23.3 Lowering of PEY/ṍ/50>/ã/ in SEY. Figs. 5:31 'meat' and 5:32 'ripe.'

We recall that PEY /ṍ/50 remains in CY as well as in NWY. We have these correspondences:

PEY	CY and NWY		SEY	GLOSS
õ	õ	>	ã	
Examples	kpṍ		kpã	'draw water'
	rṍ		rã	'send'
	gbõ̀		gbã	'be wise'
	asṍ		asã	'vanity'
	kõ̀		kã	'heart'
	gõ̀õ̀		gãã	'indeed'

The sequence of the shifts in the nasal vowel series in SEY is intriguing. But the facts are that $\underline{\tilde{o}} < \underline{\tilde{u}}_{60}$ did not merge with $\underline{\tilde{o}}_{50}$ which must have become $\underline{\tilde{a}}$; many occurrences of $\underline{\tilde{a}}_{40}$ having become oralized. The sequence of the shifts



would most probably be either

(i) ɔ̃ > ã

then (ii) ũ > ɔ̃

or both shifts happened together along with ɪ̃ > ɛ̃

Barring external pressures of which we do not know, this is the only explanation we are able to offer for these shifts.

The shifts in the nasal vowels discussed above were all matters which intrigued Rowlands (op.cit.). Having established some of the cross-dialect correspondences, he comes to the conclusion that:

> It is possible that in some areas the an/on (/i.e.[ã/ɔ̃]) phoneme is splitting up in such a way that on ([i.e.[ɔ̃]) is coalescing with un [i.e. u] after that itself has split into two parts, un [i.e. ũ] and u, thus losing part of its domain to the oral u phoneme. This rearrangement would maintain a system of three nasalized vowels which seems to be very common in the Yoruba dialects, though SY /i.e. Standard Yoruba/ is anomalous in this respect in that, besides an/on, in, un [i.e., ã/ɔ̃, ɪ̃, ũ], it has some words which contain en [i.e.ɛ̃].

We disagree with almost every one of Rowlands' conclusions. They follow, of necessity, we feel from his incorrect assumption that all the dialects have a nasal vowel series of either three members: ɪ̃ ũ

ɔ̃

or of four members: ɪ̃ ũ

ɛ̃ ɔ̃

Present-day Standard Yoruba has a four-member nasal vowel system: ɪ̃ ũ

ɛ̃ ɔ̃

CY has six or seven nasal vowels depending on the particular area:

ɪ̃ ũ

ɪ̃ ʊ̃

ɛ̃ ɔ̃

(ã)

while SEY has a five-member system: ɪ̃ ũ

ɛ̃ ɔ̃

ã

It is noteworthy that Rowlands makes no mention of the differentiation of CY from Standard Yoruba.

Moreover, in no Yoruba dialect is ɔ̃ coalescing with ũ. The shifts as we have already noted are ʊ̃ and ũ merging in NWY while ʊ̃ becomes ɔ̃ in SEY.

Finally, as to the possibility that ũ is splitting into u and ũ we cannot adduce anything in support of its being widespread. We mentioned earlier that the process of denasalization of PY ã and ɛ̃ probably affected, but to a minor degree, other nasal vowels. The correspondences ũ and u belong to this category.

5.24 Recent Innovations in NWY and CY.

a) Lowering of ɔ̃

We recall that as a result of the shifts and mergers already presented, CY developed a five-member nasal vowel system:

ɪ̃ ũ

ɪ̃ ʊ̃

ɔ̃

and NWY the three-member system

ĩ ũ

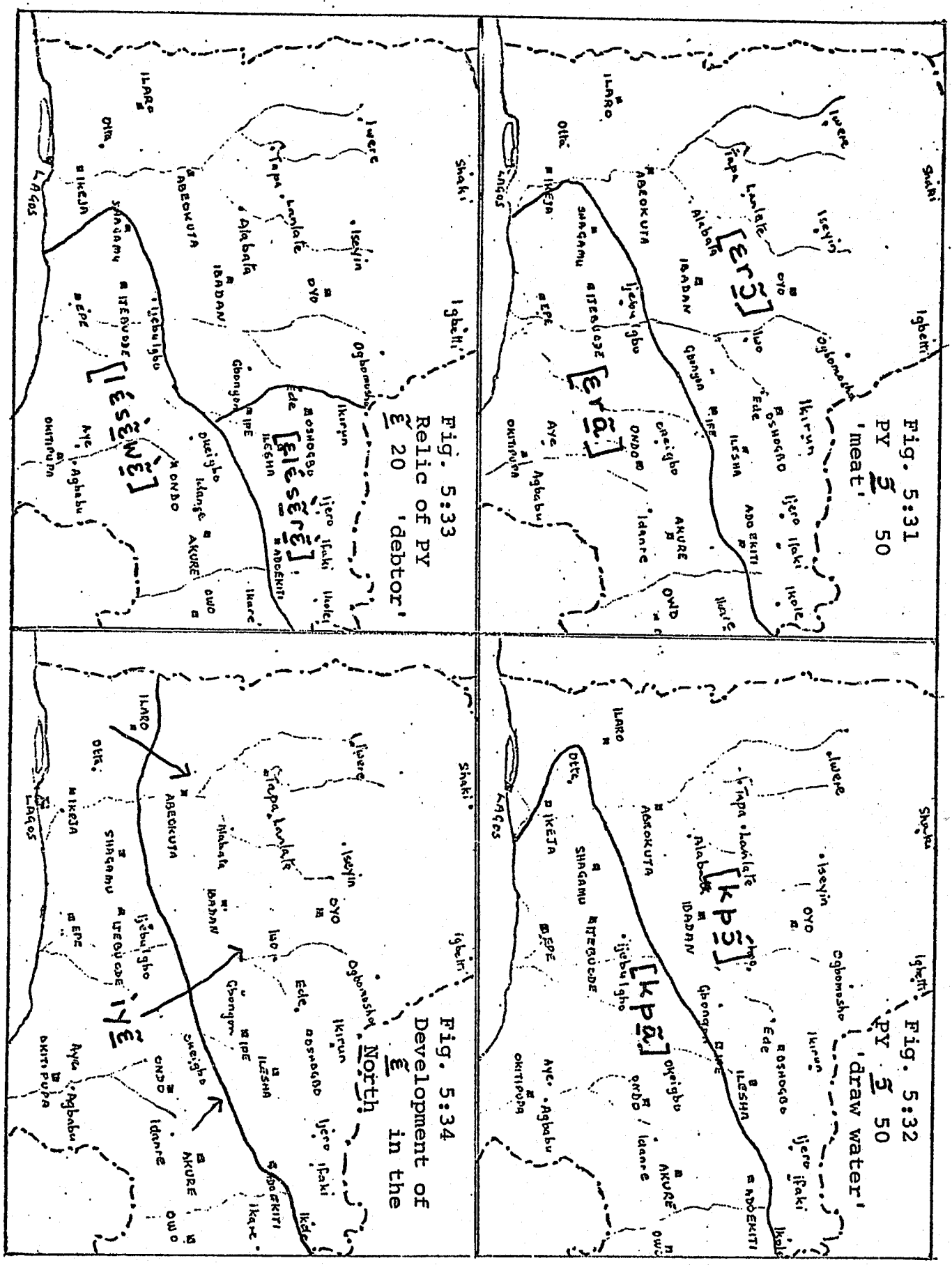
ɔ̃

In both dialect groups, however, ɔ̃ was either being lowered and centralized to ã or was retained.

As we can reconstruct it, we find the shifting back and forth of PY ɔ̃50 in both CY and SEY very intriguing, because the motivation for this most probably lies in structural pressures towards the establishment of a symmetrical pattern. In either group of dialects the flux in the series tended to a lowering of ɔ̃ > ã to evolve a symmetrical triangular nasal vowel series parallel to the oral vowel series. We believe very strongly in this explanation of phonological spacing for the development of /ã/ in the two dialect groups. (See below for another development in the establishment of a new patterning which is due to structural pressures.)

(b) Development of /ɛ̃/--Figs. 5:33 'debtor' and 5:34 'that.'

An innovation in NWY involves only one loanword along with which a phoneme is also borrowed and integrated into the phonological pattern. The opposition between the demonstrative pronouns 'this' and 'that' is expressed by èyí and èyi nɛ̄ respectively in NWY and CY. In the SEY, however, it is iyí and iyɛ́. In some NWY and CY dialects èyini and iyɛ̃ are still used side by side, but with iyɛ̃ gaining ground



over ẹ̀yìnì. With this new word in NWY came ɛ̃, and the word is the only exponent of this phoneme today. One would expect that a phoneme with such a low dictionary frequency would have been lost in any language. But the structure of the phonological system which allows a two-term opposition in the back series will also allow for a similar opposition in the front nasal vowel series. The new picture we have with the borrowed phoneme integrated into NWY is:

ĩ ũ

ɛ̃ ɔ̃

We suggest that it is the structural parallelism and patterning that sustains the retention of ɛ̃ in NWY.

Almost the same situation prevails in CY dialects, except that we find three other forms with ɛ̃. These are:

ɛ̀lɛ́sɛ̃rɛ̀ɛ̃ (compare SEY lɛ́sɛ̀wɛ̀ɛ̃) 'debtor, flirt'

iʃɛ̃kpɛ̃ (same as SEY) 'hearth stakes'

ɪmurɛ̃ (SEY ɔ̀mʊ́rɛ̀ɛ̃) 'another'

The phonetic occurrence and stability of ɛ̃ is guaranteed as long as these phones occur after nasal consonants, as in /mɛǰɔ/ [mɛ̃ǰɔ] but what we are discussing here are the functional values.

We have shown that the development of ã in NWY and CY is motivated by structural parallelism between the nasal and oral vowel series. The borrowing of ɛ̃ from SEY Yoruba is sustained by only one loanword in NWY and yet ɛ̃ is integrated

into NWY and CY, thus yielding the same number of oppositions in both the front and the back nasal vowel series. But the situation is more complicated than this. Informant sessions with elders in both CY and NWY areas reveal that most of the aged men and women above 70 years old have neither ɛ̃ nor ɔ̃ phonemes: ɛ̃ is absent because the loanword iyɛ̃ is absent from their vocabulary, while ɔ̃ has shifted to ã. The picture we thus have is that in each dialect group there is a competition of two phonemic systems: that of elders in which ɛ̃ is absent and where ɔ̃ has been lowered and centralized to ã and that of educated youths in which ɛ̃ is present along with ɔ̃.

	CY	NWY
Elders	ĩ ũ ɪ ʊ ã	ĩ ũ ã
Youths	ĩ ũ ɪ ʊ ɛ̃ ɔ̃	ĩ ũ ɛ̃ ɔ̃

5.25 Other Features

To conclude this section, we want to discuss two related features in phoneme distribution in the Yoruba dialect area. These are (a) the oralization of initial nasal vowels, especially in NWY; and (b) the development of the syllabic nasal.

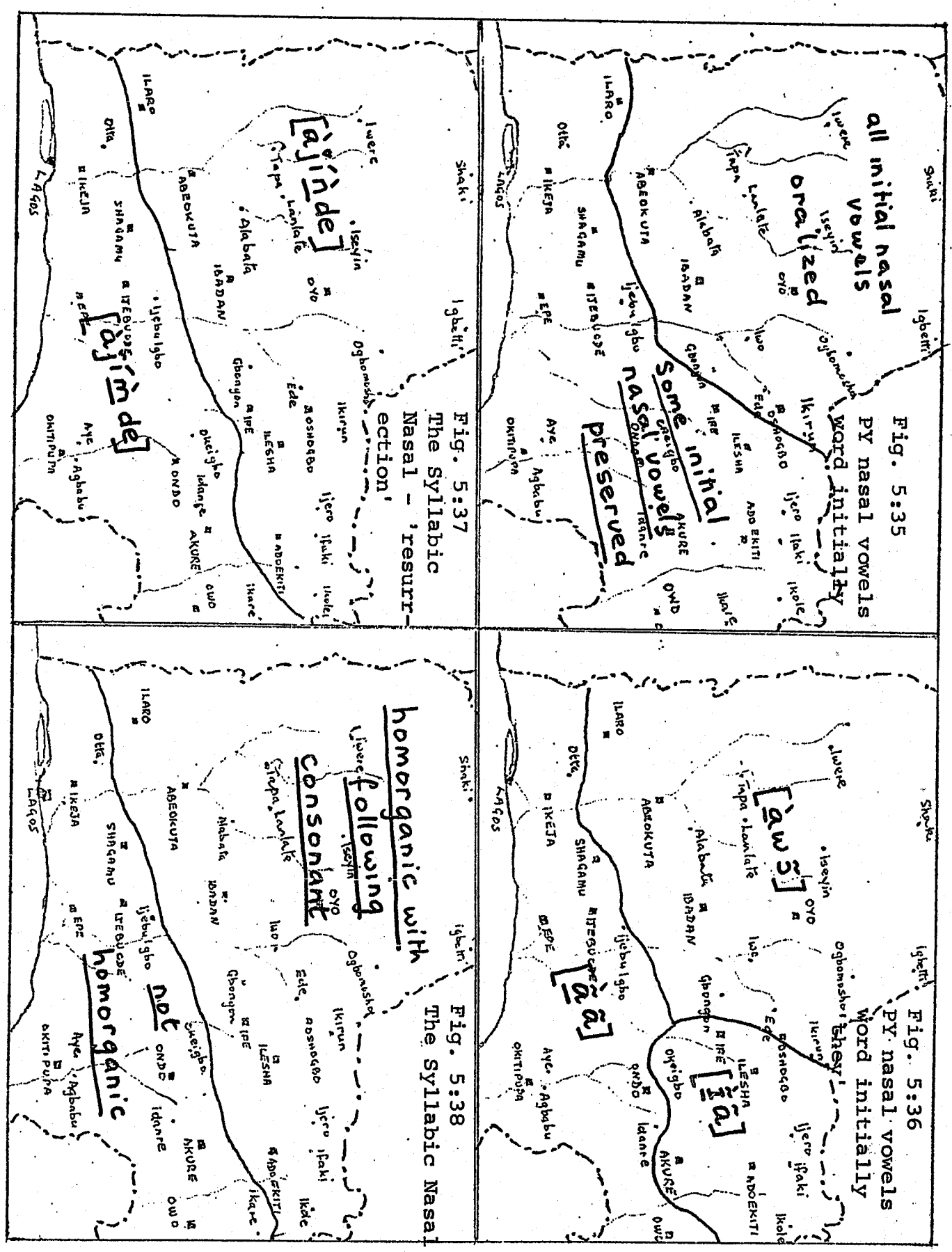
As we have already pointed out, initial nasal vowels in NWY became oral. We find these correspondences among the different dialects.

CY	SEY	NWY	Gloss
ɔ̀5/ɔ̀ã	ãã	àwɔ̃	'they'
ɛ̀ɪ	ɛɛ	eyɪ	'you (pl.)'
ʊ̃ʊ̃	ʊ̃ʊ̃	ohʊ̃	'thing'
ì ɪ́	ɪ̀ɣɪ́	ìhɪ́	'here'

Fig. 5:35 shows areas in which some word initial nasal vowels are preserved. Fig. 5:36 'they'. What interests us here is the preservation of initial nasal vowels in some dialects as against their elimination in NWY. Since only a few forms are affected, we assume that they are relics. Oralization of the initial nasal vowels probably involved a complex process since in the four forms cited, only the last form is consistent in its other vowels as between CY and NWY. On the basis of the few forms we have, we are unable to speculate on the process involved.

We have identified elsewhere (Adetugbo, 1965) the syllabic nasal archephoneme /N/ in NWY. We only summarize here the points relevant to the establishment of this archephoneme and later on we shall trace its development.

In any structure of the form /VCV/, nasal vowels do not appear as the first /V/ in NWY (see above), whereas there is no restriction on oral vowels in any position in the



language. To show that the distribution of the syllabic nasal in NWY bears multiple complementation to that of the nasal vowels we identify four syllabic positions in the structure of the word in NWY and note the distribution of oral vowels, nasal vowels, and the syllabic nasal.

	Word initial	Word final	Post V	Post $\tilde{V}$
Oral Vowel (V)	+	+	+	+
Nasal Vowel ($\tilde{v}$)	-	+	-	+
Syllabic /N/	+	-	+	-

We may note that the combined distribution of /$\tilde{v}$/ and /N/ parallels the distribution of /V/. This is part of our motivation for setting up /N/ along with the vowels.

Every group of dialects has the syllabic nasal but differs from the others in the phonetic quality, the distribution, and the function of this nasal. In NWY this /N/ has three major allophones m, n, ŋ homorganic with the following consonant or realized as [ŋ] in the environment -#, where # is a morpheme boundary realized phonetically as a pause in articulation or silence. Also in NWY /N/ functions as the continuous aspect marker when prefixed to verbs.

In CY, the distribution of /N/ is similar to its distribution in NWY, but its functions in CY are different. It is not prefixed to verbs and does not specify any grammatical relationship.

In SEY, /N/ has only one allophone, [m], and this

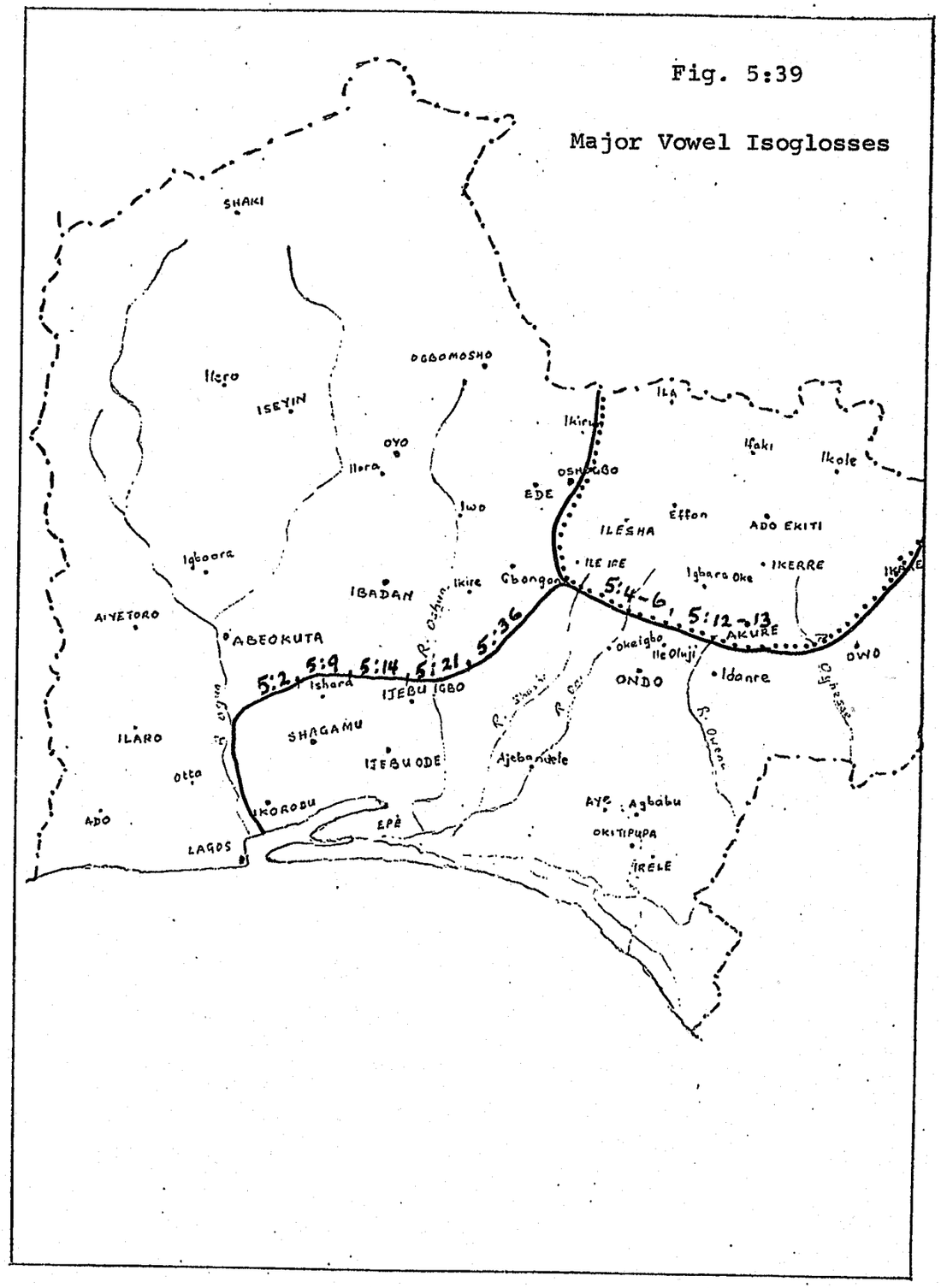


Fig. 5:39

Major Vowel Isoglosses

phone has a close identity with the consonant /m/ from which it is derived. What happens is that after /m/, the high vowels /i, u/ are deleted and /m/ becomes syllabic. Thus we have:

àmṹga	>	a᷆́ga	'scissors'
ìdɛ̀mùdɛ́	>	idɛ̀᷆́dɛ́	'pawpaw'
lámù̀gbá	>	lá᷆̀gbá	'lizard'
mìbálɔ	>	᷆̀bálɔ	'I would have gone'

Figs. 5:37 and 5:38 show the geographical differences in syllabic nasal vowels.

The deletion of vowels after nasal consonants is probably the origin of /N/ in all dialects. To the west of SEY, we find some dialects which express the continuous aspect of the verb with a preverb of the form mi. Thus in Ijebu and Otta we have:

/ó lɔ/ "he goes or went" (simple non-future tense)

but /ó mí lɔ/"he is going or was going" (non-future, continuous)

We suspect that NWY had this structure. The vowel after m was later dropped and m progressively became assimilated to the following consonant.

Fig. 5:39 portrays the major vowel isoglosses.

5.3. Consonantism

5.30 Introduction

Differentiation among Yoruba dialects is not as great within their consonantal systems as within the vowels. Nevertheless we find many differences in the consonantal systems which merit discussion. Even within the areas grouped together as belonging to one major dialect, we find differences, though these can be considered chronologically recent. We present below the consonant systems of each of the major groups of dialects. Those items which stand in parentheses are geographically of restricted occurrence and will be dealt with in the regional shifts within each major dialect area.

5.31 Inventory of Consonants

South-East Yoruba

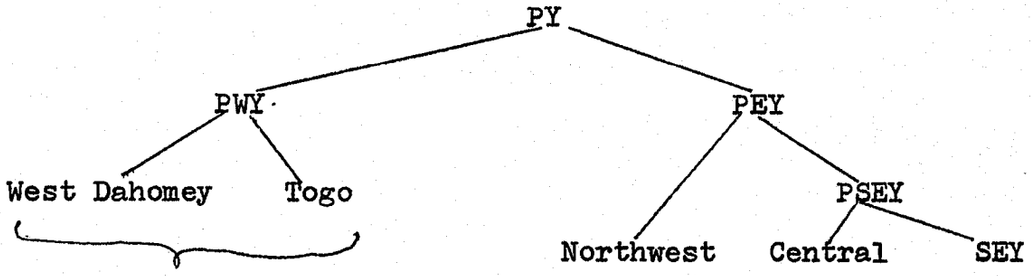
m	n		(ŋ)		
	t		k	kw	kp
b	d	ǰ	g	gw	gb
f	(s)	(š)	(h)	ɣ	
w	y	(r)			

North-West and Central Yoruba

m			t	k	kp
b			d	ǰ g	gb
f			s	(š) (h)	
	l	ɾ	y	ɣ w	

Even though the NW and Central Yoruba groups have an almost identical system of consonants, we shall show that they are not derived from the same prototype. We offer, below, a schematic family tree for the development of Yoruba. We also

insist that the development of the dialect groups, especially the Central group, is explainable not in terms of the family tree alone, but partially in terms of the wave theory; a composite of mechanisms is involved.



Not presented

5.32 Distribution

A few distributional correlations will be presented here. All the continuants /w, l, y, r/ in NWY and CY; these and /ɣ/ in SEY have nasal allophones [w̃, n, ñ, r̃,] and [ŋ] respectively and they are distributed as follows:

Phoneme	/ w l y r ɣ /
Allophone before oral vowels	[w l y r ɣ]
Allophone before nasal vowels	[w̃ n ñ r̃ ŋ]

We showed earlier (chapter 4, p.) that although [l] and [n] complement each other phonetically in SEY they express different grammatical categories and may strictly not be regarded as belonging to the same phoneme.

5.33 Correspondences

The following are some of the consonant correspondences among the dialects:

	SEY	CY	NWY	Gloss
Correspondence	kw	kw	k	
Examples:	kwé	kẃe	ké	'what'
	ɔkwù5̀	Dkw 5̃	ɔkũrũ̀	'invalid'
Correspondence	gw	w	w	
Examples:	gwí	wí	wí	'
	gwɔ̀	wɔ̀	wɔ̀	'dig'
Correspondence	ɣ	ø	w	
Examples:	oɣó	eó	owó	'money'
	ɔɣɔ̀	ɔɔ̀	ɔwɔ̀	'brown'
Correspondence	/ɣ/	ø	h	
Example:	ɛ̀ɣí	èí	ìhí	'have'
Correspondence	š	s	s	
Examples:	aš́ɔ	asɔ	asɔ	'cloth'
	šišɛ́	sísɛ́	sísɛ́	

It goes without saying that SEY m = CY/NWY m etc.

5.34 Reconstruction

No serious attempt is made here to reconstruct Proto Yoruba consonants. Indeed, it would be unwise to do so. Although the area under study accounts for more than 90 percent of the total number of the Yoruba people, we have

not studied the fringe dialect areas of Dahomey, Togo, Northern Nigeria and a few areas to the east of our boundary. The structure of the speech forms of these peoples, we believe, is crucial to any historical reconstructive work in yoruba. If we can, therefore, go back as far as the intermediate 'prototype' which dominates the divergence in the area we are studying, i.e. Proto East Yoruba, we shall minimize the limitations which the lack of PY places on our analysis.

5.34.1 Consonants of Proto East Yoruba

As a result of the comparison of SEY with NWY we arrive at the following reconstructed forms for PEY:

m	n				
	t		k	kw	p
b	d	ǰ	g	gw	gb
f	š				
	l y	r		ɣ	

5.35 Derivation of NWY Consonants

To derive the NWY consonant system, we posit these four shifts:

(a) kw lost frictional release and merged with k

(b) gw lost stop onset and became w

(c) š > s

(d) ɣ became w through h

For present-day CY dialects, three shifts are responsible:

(a) and (b) as above, and

(c) ɣ > ø

Three shifts--one general and the others regional--are responsible for present-day SEY consonant system. These are:

(a) split of š into s and š

(b) regional loss of ɣ (as for CY)

(c) regional loss of r

5.35.1 Changes Differentiating NWY from SEY

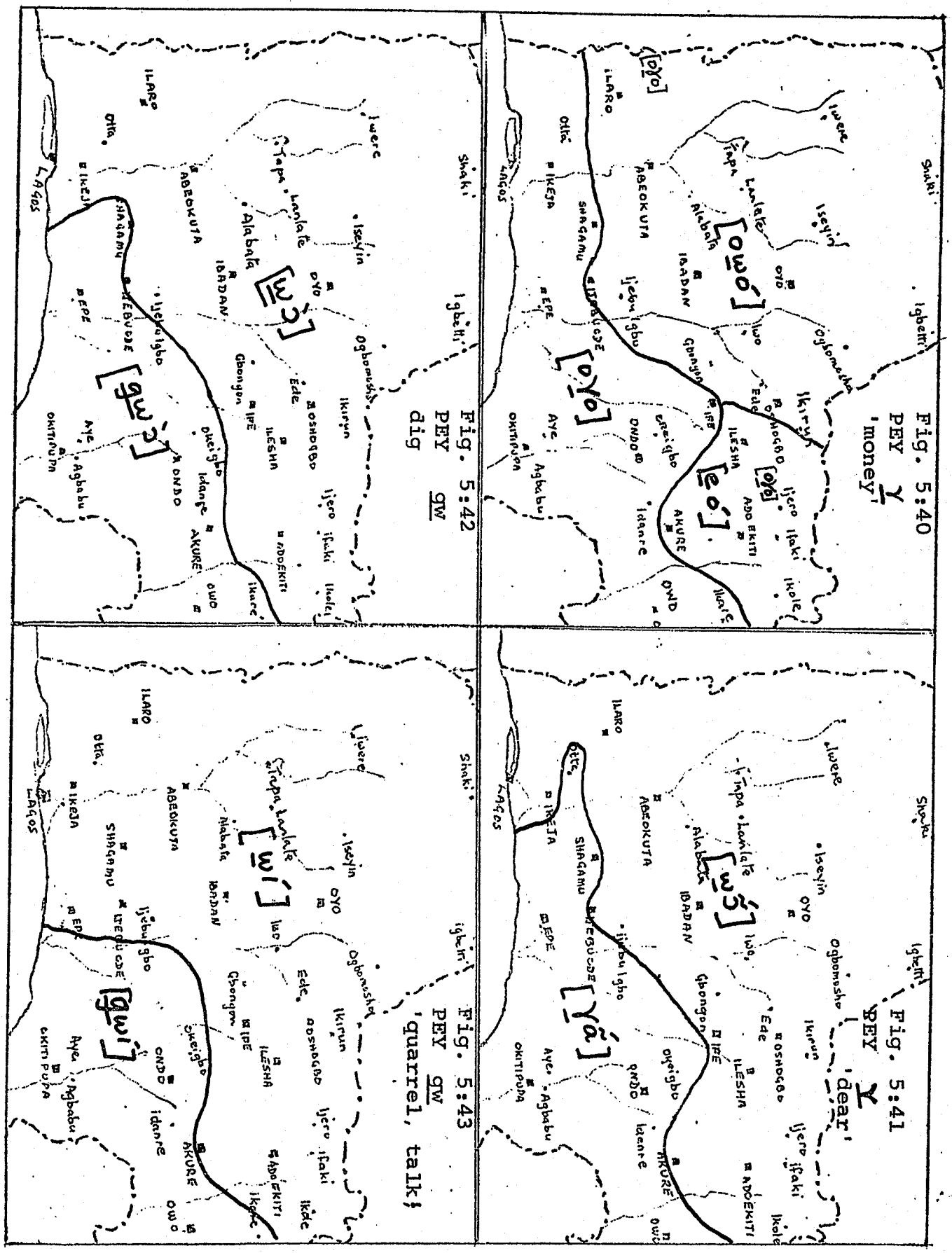
We shall try to reconstruct the shifts responsible for the cleavage between NWY and SEY. Our handicap here is immense since we have no philological literature to base our assumptions upon or to evaluate our conclusions with. Koelle's work, referred to earlier, furnishes us with little help because of the limitation of its scope and the unreliability of its phonetic details. The strength of our argument therefore lies solely on the phonological structure of the language itself. We may be able to make references to the relative chronology of the differentiation, but reference to the absolute time of the shifts will be impossible.

The major differences between the NW and SEY rest in the former's simplification of the velar consonant series, i.e.,

PEY		NWY
kw	>	k
gw	>	w
ɣ	>	w

5.35.11 NW Semivocalization of ɣ--Figs. 5:40 'money' and 5:41 'broom'

We believe that this shift is one of the oldest characteristic differentiating factors between SEY and NWY. To the SE ɣ is retained. This is also the case to the West of Ijebu and around Otta and Ketu. It is significant that the area in which this prototype ɣ is retained is not continuous. Nor can we explain the Western dialect islands where this sound exists as having borrowed it from the SEY where it predominates. We may be able to offer, later on, evidence to show that it was this shift ɣ > w in the North-East area which predates all other consonant shifts. As to the cause of the shift itself, one guess may be as good as the other. But we feel that structural pressures on ɣ might be partially responsible. It will be noted that in our PEY phonology, ɣ is the only voiced fricative. One would have predicted that it first of all shifted to h and later shifted to w, but one is not sure. The complex and multiple reflexes of PEY h in other dialects make this plausible. Another explanation of the shift would be the desire to simplify the velar series, which was functionally crowded.



Examples of words reflecting the shift are:

SEY	NWY	
ɣɔ̀	wɔ̀	'look at'
à ɣa	à wa	'we'
ɛ̀ ɣɛ̃̀	ɛ̀ wɔ̃	'chain'
a ɣɔ̃̀	a wū	'a type of tree'

5.35.12 PEY gw become w in NWY--Figs. 3:42 'dig' and 3:43 'quarrel.'

This shift simply involves the loss of the stop onset of the sound in NWY. We regard gw as a unit phoneme and not as a cluster because in PEY there probably was no independent phoneme w. Today SEY contrasts gw and w as in following:

gwɔ̀	'dig'	wɔ̀	'wear'
gwó	'demolish'	wó	'foam'

Also the contrast between gw and g must have been greater in PEY than it is today in SEY, where gw is attested in fewer than fifty words. Some examples of the correspondence between SEY gw and NWY w are:

SEY	NWY	
gwí	wí	talk
gwɔ̀	wɔ̀	dig
gwó	wó	demolish
mɛ̃́gwa	mɛ́wa	ten
àgwójɛ	àwójɛ	walnut
gwɛ̃́ɛ̃	wɛrɛ	small

It is probable that the shift of gw > w in NWY followed after ɣ had shifted to w.

5.35.3 PEY kw become NWY k--Figs. 5:44 'sieve' and 5:45 'invalid'.

Another feature which is probably as old as, if not older than, the shift gw to w is in the correspondence of SEY kw with NWY k. The occurrence of kw is now limited to only a few forms in SEY, where the sound itself is merging with k due to the influence of the standardized language. The intriguing fact about the shift is the merger, in NWY, of kw with k while its voiced counterpart gw went with w. This may suggest that this shift predated the other two already discussed; for had ɣ > w taken place earlier, then kw would have merged with w as gw did.

5.35.4 PEY š > s in NWY.

We have reconstructed for PEY only one sibilant š even though today the contrast between s and š is made in many places in Yoruba land. The standardized dialect, the language of literary works, makes a distinction between s and š notwithstanding the fact that among Oyo speakers, from whom Standard Yoruba is said to be culled, it is difficult to say that where the contrast is heard, the distinction is functional. We believe that where the distinction s/š is made, the prototype of the two phones is š.

Characteristic of NWY, except the Abeokuta area, and

the western sector of CY is the confusion of s and š. This is displayed in Fig. 5:46. Armstrong (1965) mentions this confusion but does not document it. Nevertheless, by comparing Oyo with Ife Ana he suggests that s/š were originally not differentiated.

The choice of either s or š by NWY speakers is intriguing and therefore worth dwelling on here. We group our informants into two categories: (a) old people and market women, and (b) educated speakers. The prototype of the first group is an illiterate adult about 60 years old. In Oyo, Ibadan, Ogbomosho, Ife, Ilesha, if the adult is not bidialectical, i.e. cannot approximate his speech to Standard Yoruba, his choice of either s or š all too often reflects the exact reversal of Standard Yoruba norms. Thus for

Standard Yoruba	aṣọ	he has	aso	'dress'
	èṣù		èsù	'devil'
	oṣù		osù	'moon'
	àṣẹ		àsẹ	'order'
	ṣe		se	'do'
while for Standard Yoruba	so	he has	ṣo	'hang'
	sù		ṣù	'sheep'
	sọ		ṣọ	'hang'
	èso		eṣo	'fruit'

But this mirror-image reflection of Std. Yoruba in NWY speech is anything but regular. A further test in which informants were given minimal pairs with the contrast s/š reveals that even the choice of one phone as against the other is not consistently maintained and that in 80% of the cases informants of this group prefer s.

The second group of speakers interviewed consist of the educated, i.e. school children, teachers, college and university students and high-ranking civil service employees. These people are already exposed to Std. Yoruba and English--languages in which the contrast between the two phones is functional. There is a high degree of consciousness among these people in the choice of either s or š, the deciding factor being conformity with Std. Yoruba norms. Nevertheless, from their constant hesitation, especially when presented with minimal pairs between s and š, one discovers that these informants are very unsure as to which phone to choose. It turns out that in relaxed speech with the microphone concealed, s turns up between 70 to 90% where it is expected, i.e. where it occurs in Std. Yoruba, and also in between 60 and 75% where š would normally be used.

It is probably not true to claim that anybody in NWY area lacks total contact with the standardized language, since the word stock and the syntax of this koine are largely if not solely derived from the Oyo dialect which is in this area. In fact, every scholar of Yoruba has hitherto claimed that standardized Yoruba is nothing more than the

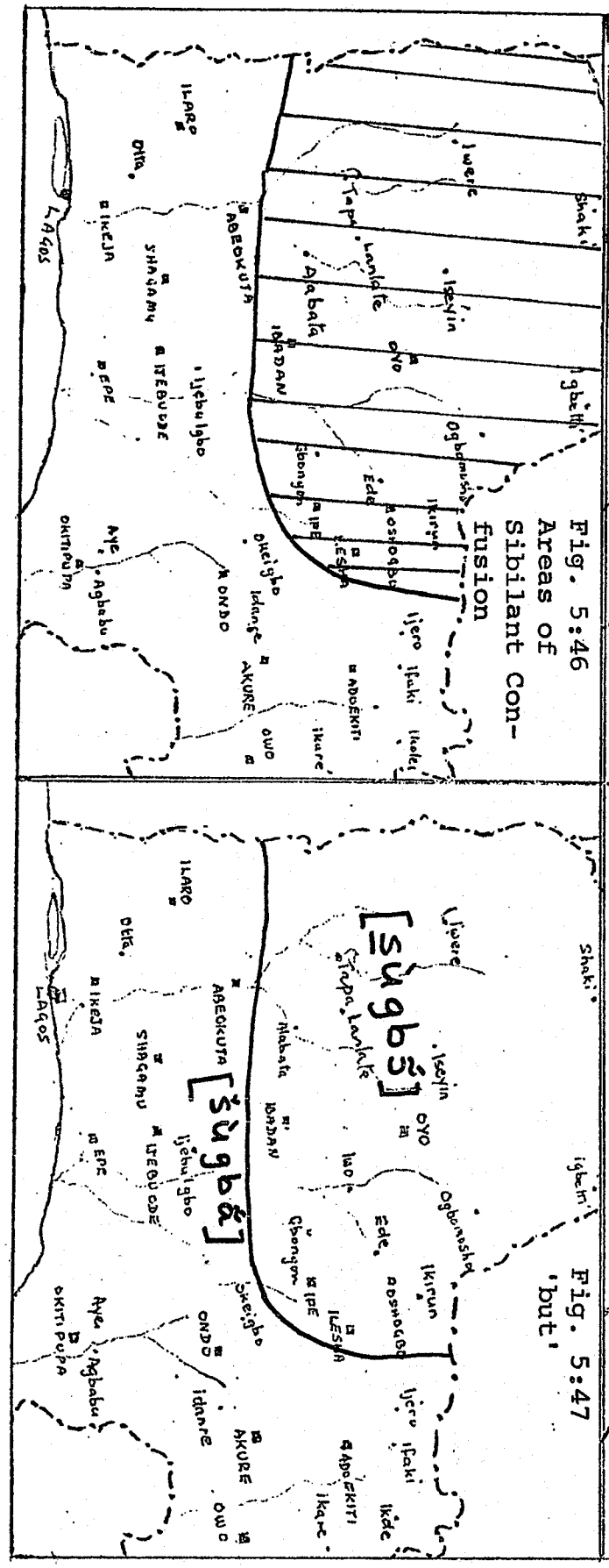


Fig. 5:44
PEY kw
'sieve'

Fig. 5:45
PEY kw
'invalid'

Fig. 5:46
Areas of
Sibilant Con-
fusion

Fig. 5:47
'but'

Oyo dialect. In anticipation of a counter-claim (chapter 6, p.) we say that the koine, while largely deriving its lexicon and syntax from Oyo and adjacent dialects, has a phonology approximate to Egba phonology, i.e. the Abeokuta dialect where the confusion between the sibilants is not operative. We will also claim that no Yoruba speaker has this koine as his native dialect.

PEY s̈ shifted to s which, as we have shown, is the preferred phoneme over s̈ in NWY. s then is probably the original or native sound in NWY. Contact with Std. Yoruba phonology brings with it the recognition of the distinction between s̈ and s. The confusion arises when the NWY speakers want to make a functional use of this distinction, based on Std. Yoruba norms. This means splitting up lexical items with the occurrence of s into two, i.e. keeping s where Std. Yoruba and NWY dialects both have it and substituting s̈ for the other words in NWY with s, where Std. Yoruba has s̈. This would have been easier were s and s̈ in Std. Yoruba complementary allophones, so that the set of conditioning features guiding the choice of one as against the other might be learned. But they are not conditioned allophones; hence the division of the lexical items with the occurrence of the sibilants constitutes a list-learning problem for NWY speakers.

5.35.15 Split of PEY s̈ into s̈ and s in SEY--Figs. 5:47 'but' and 5:48 'sleep.'

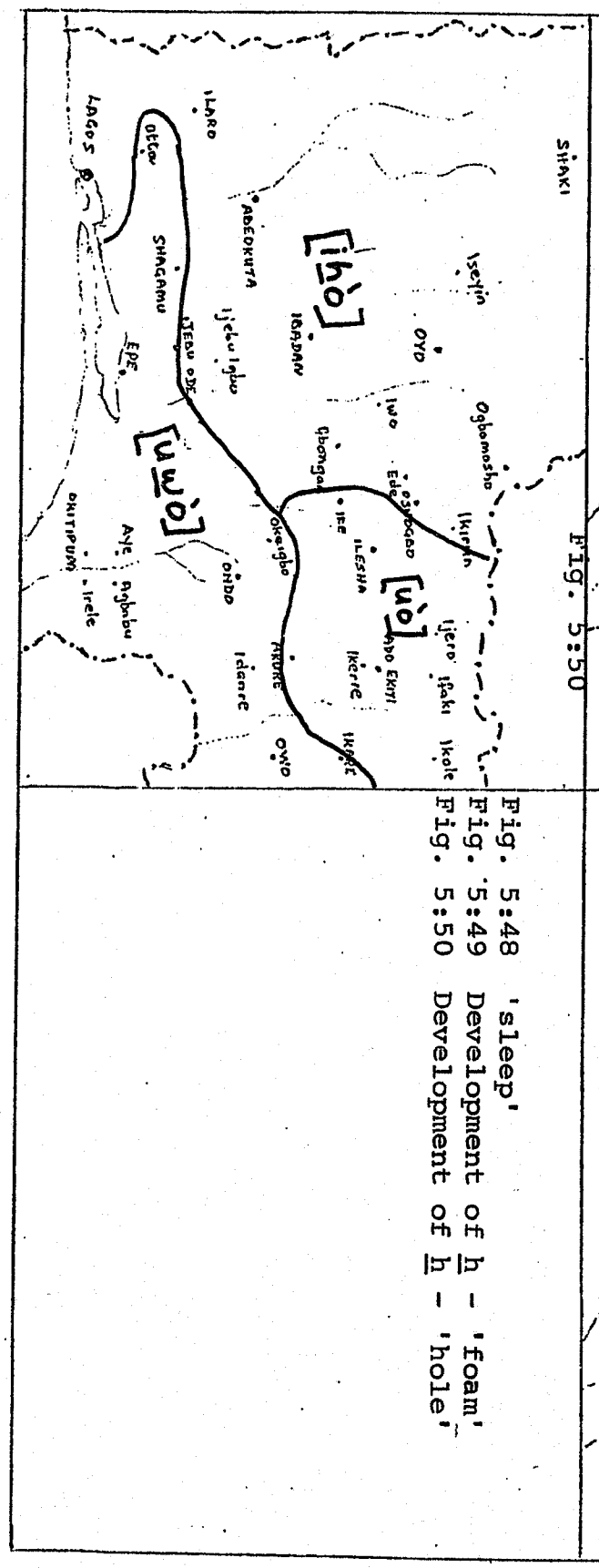


Fig. 5:48 'sleep'
Fig. 5:49 Development of h - 'foam'
Fig. 5:50 Development of h - 'hole'

We showed above the areas where these sibilants are confused and this confusion, together with a later change in these sibilants in the southeasternmost sector of SEY, afford us the evidence for reconstructing a single sibilant for PEY. š split into š and s in all areas of SEY. Regional shifts here later affected these phonemes in certain areas of SEY. (See below, p. .)

5.35.16 Correspondence Between NWY h and SEY w, y, etc.--

Figs. 5:49 'foam' and 5:50 'hole'.

There are a few correspondences between NWY h and w in SEY. A complex problem in Yoruba historical phonology is the status of h in NWY along with its correspondence with a host of other consonants in both SEY and CY. Except from a relatively late shift of /s>h/ in the Okitipupa area of SEY, both SEY and CY lack h. We find in SEY many consonants corresponding with NWY h:

SEY	NWY	
ɣ	h	
èɣí	ìhí	'here'
ɔɣɔ́	ɔhɔ́	'there'-Fig. 5:51)
ìɣaɣe	ìhà	'rib'
/y/	NWY h~y	
ɛyɪ́	ɛhɪ̃/ɛyɪ́	'back'-(Fig. 5:52)
ɛ yɪ́	ehí/eyí	'tooth'
ɛɣɛ	ɛyɪ	'egg'

We also have an occurrence of the correspondence of NWY h with SEY and CY f in:

NWY	SEY/CY	
hù	fù	'sprout' (Fig. 5:53)

In other cases NWY h becomes ø in SEY as in

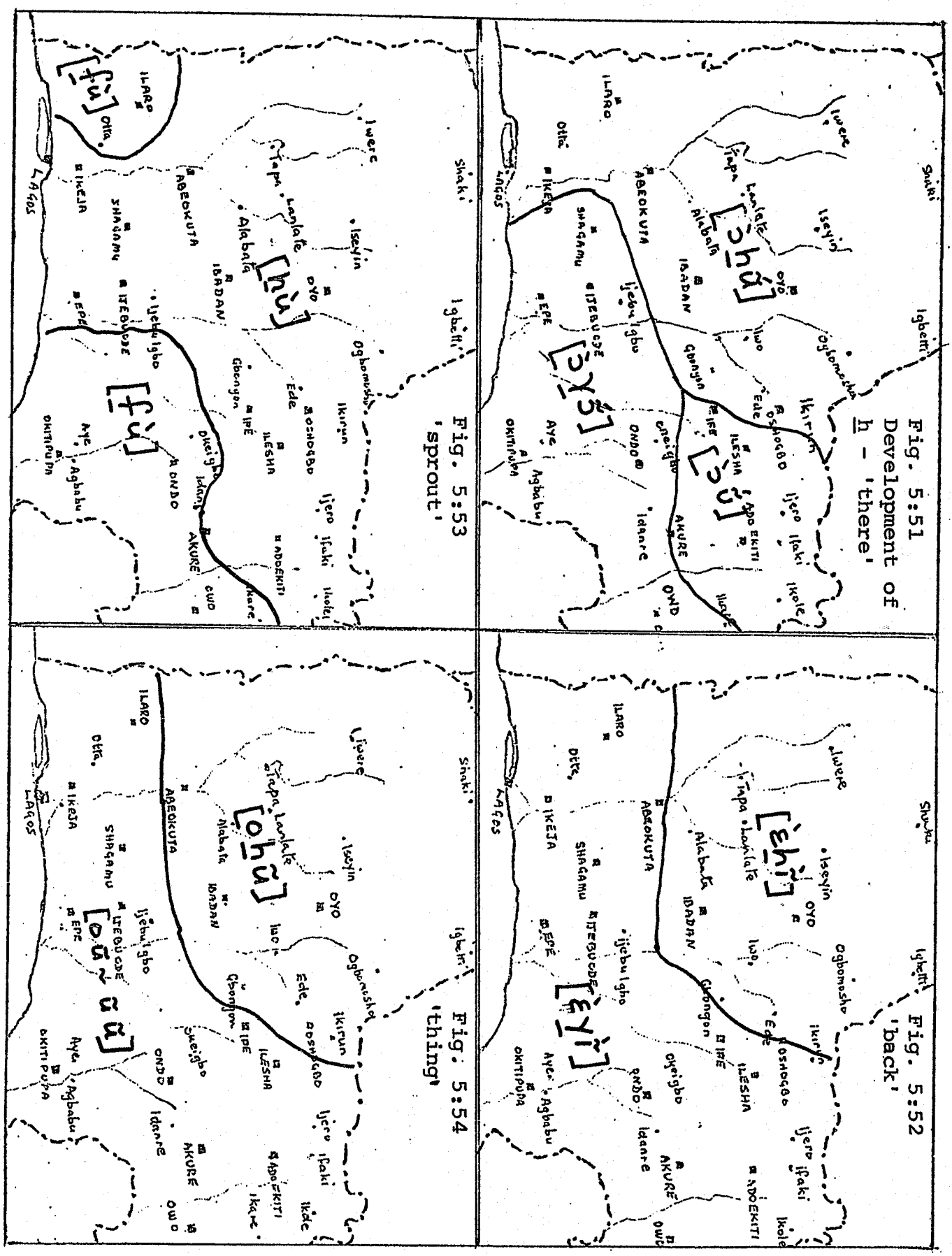
NWY	SEY	
ohũ̀	oũ̀	'thing' (Fig. 5:54)
ha!	a!	(exclamation)
ạhɔ̃́	aã́~iwã́	'tongue'

To summarize, NWY h unpredictably corresponds with SEY y, w, y, f, and ø. We hasten to remark that in a large number of cases h is being dropped in NWY itself. An informal sampling shows that except for h's which correspond with SEY y, NWY h tends to be replaced by its SEY correspondent. Where the correspondence is between NWY h and SEY y, NWY h is shifting to ø.

This irregular complex system of h reflexes in SEY and the shifts of h toward its SEY correspondences is evidence of the state of flux in NWY. h is now seen as a sort of catchall, an intermediate phoneme through which change in the fricatives is effected: PEY y becomes w by first shifting to h, i.e.:

uγò	>	ihò	>	iwò	'hole'
εγɪ́	>	ɛhɪ́	>	εyɪ́	'tooth'
oγũ̀	>	ohũ̀	>	ò ũ̀	'voice'

The conditioning factors determining the result of the changed prototype are lost to us.



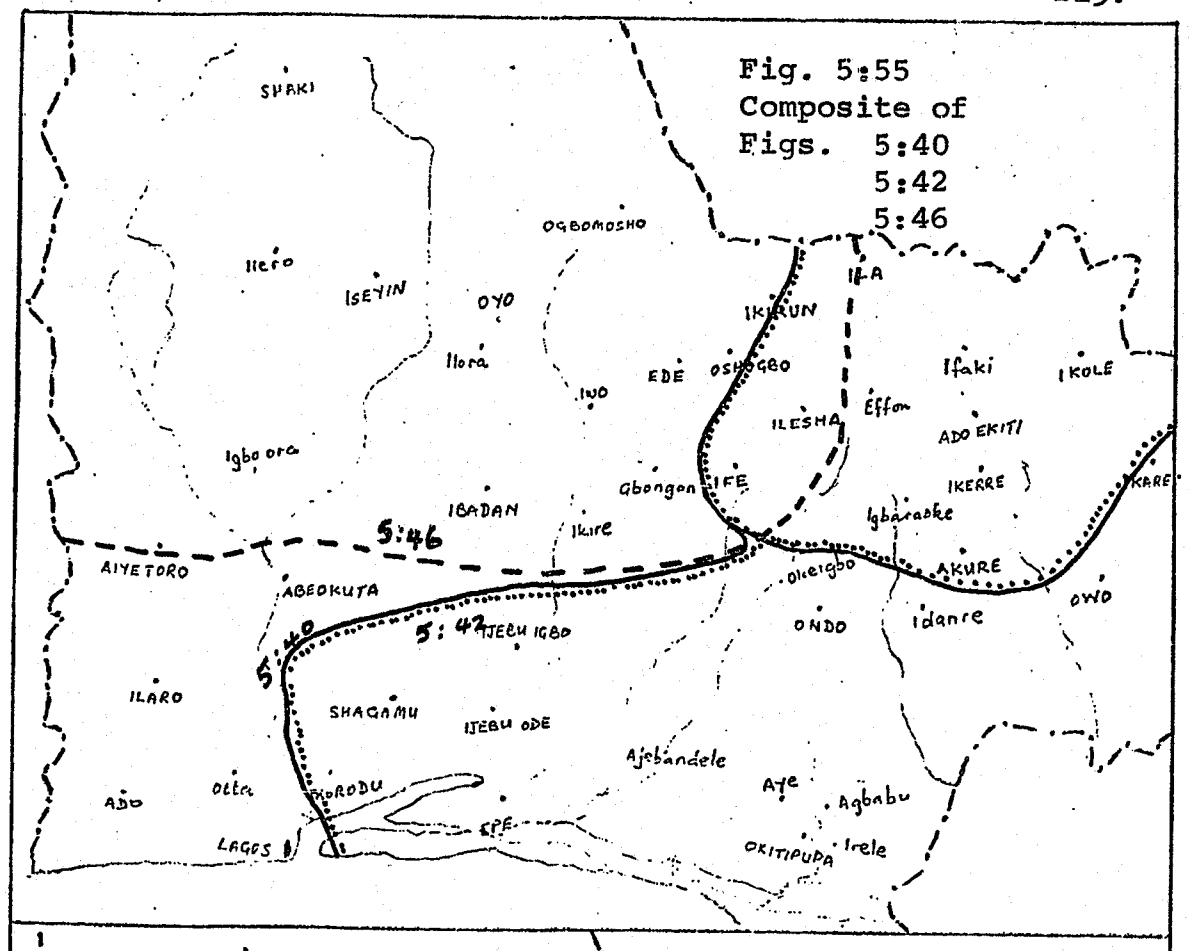


Fig. 5:55
Composite of
Figs. 5:40
5:42
5:46

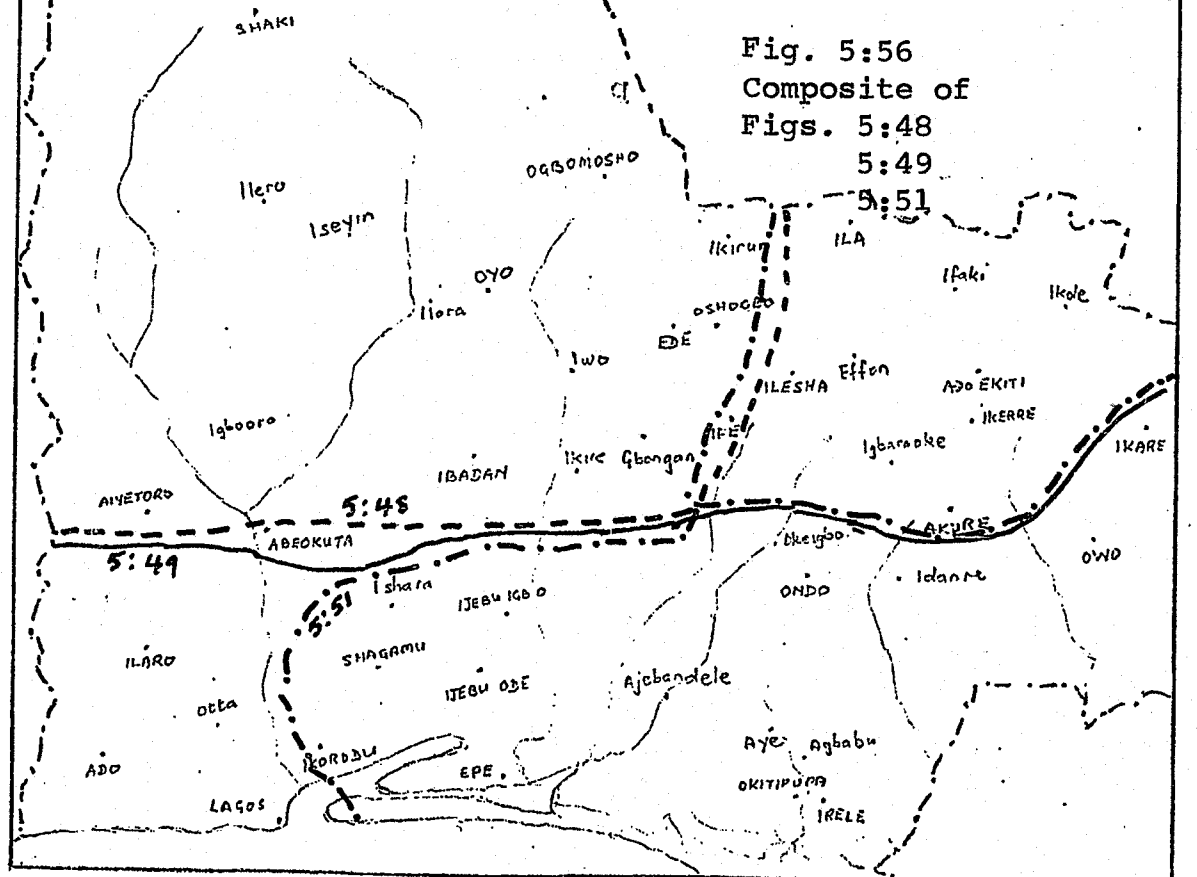


Fig. 5:56
Composite of
Figs. 5:48
5:49
5:51

Thus far we have treated consonant shifts responsible primarily for the differentiation of NWY from SEY. The composite phonological isoglosses are given in Figs. 5:55 and 5:56.

5.35.2 Emergence of Central Yoruba

Hemmed in to the east by SEY and to the west by NWY is the area we have designated Central Yoruba. This area is unique in certain phonological features which it possesses and which are absent from the other dialect groups. This, as we saw earlier, is in the vocalic system which shows considerable features of antiquity. In the consonant system, however, it is at least as innovating as the southeast group of dialects. It shares its consonant system with SEY, but is also affected by innovations from the NWY group, so that it is today more similar to the NWY group than the SEY group. We shall compare it below with the other groups.

We recall the four shifts primarily responsible for present-day CY dialects:

a) PEY *gw* > *w*; and

b) PEY *kw* > *k* still in progress

These two shifts are shared with NWY:

c) PEY *y* > *ø*; and

d) PEY *h* > *ø*, the latter alone shared with SEY

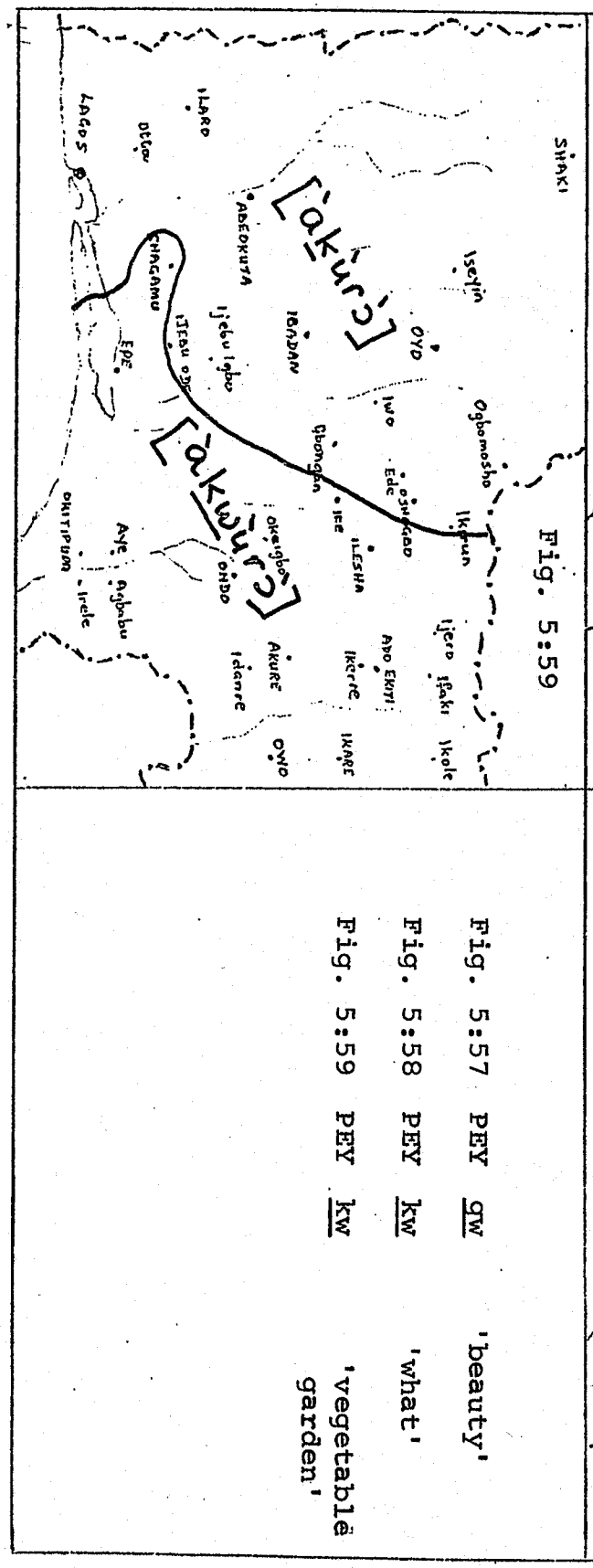


Fig. 5:57 PEY gw 'beauty'

Fig. 5:58 PEY kw 'what'

Fig. 5:59 PEY kw 'vegetable garden'

5.35.21 PEY gw > w in CY.

This shift is similar to that of NWY discussed above (5.35.12). Among the three groups of dialects we have these correspondences:

SEY	NWY	CY	
gwí	wí	wí	'complain'
gwà	wà	wà	'dig up'
ɔgwá	ɔwá	ɔwá	'palace, seat of a king'
ɛgwà	ɛwà	ɛwà	'beauty'-(Fig. 5:57

While NWY has more than one source of w, i.e. PEY gw and y both yield w in NWY, this is the only source of w in CY.

5.35.22 Sporadic Retention of PEY kw vs General Shift to k--

Figs. 5:58 'what' and 5:59 'vegetable garden'

Most of our informants found it difficult to recall that their phonology has kw except when directly prompted for examples by the contrast /kwe/ 'what' and /ke/ 'cry'. Even then, kwe, kwo, kwa question introducers, 'what' are special forms because they are believed to be assimilated forms from /ku/ + /w/ which are the forms heard in slow speech:

/ kú wɛ́ ra jɛ/ in rapid speech is /kwɛ́ ra jɛ/ 'what will you eat?'

/kú wo fɔ̀/ becomes in rapid speech /kwɔ fɔ/ 'what did you say?'

The kw forms correspond with SEY kw forms. Fortunately, the establishment of kw does not rest on these forms alone in CY. We also have ɔ̀kwʊ̀ 'millipede' (SEY ɔ̀kwɔ̀) and àkwùrɔ̀ 'vegetable farm'--Fig 5:59. . Otherwise kw has become k. We recall also that kw occurs only in very few forms in SEY.

5.35.23 PEY ɣ become ø in CY--Figs. 5:60 'tortoise' and 5:61 'taboo,' 'curse.'

We recall that PEY ɣ is retained in SEY, and shifted to w in NWY. In CY, however, it is dropped. We have these examples:

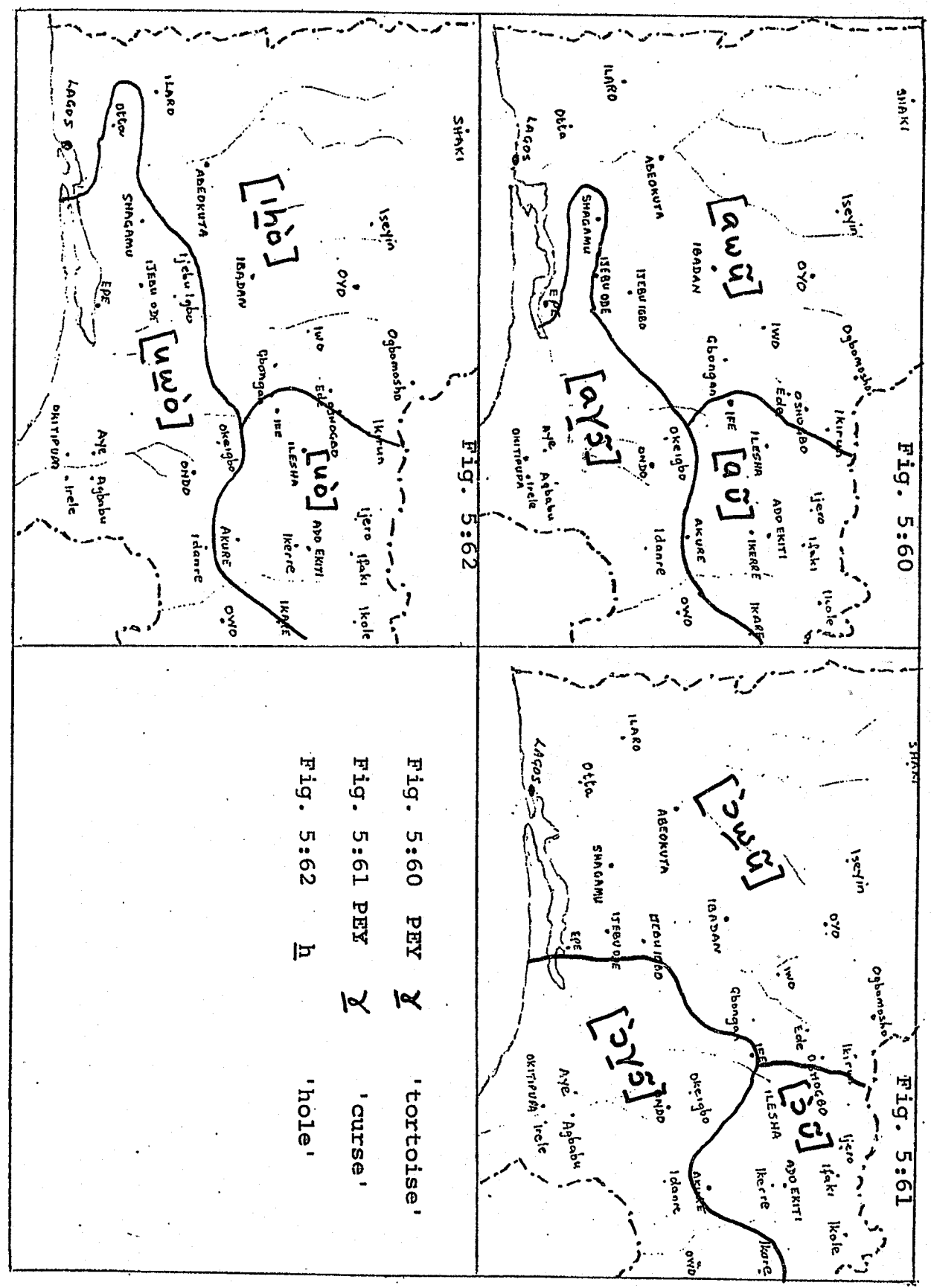
SEY	NWY	CY	
oɣó	owó	eó	money
ɔɣɔ̀	ɔwɔ̀	ɔ̀	respect
aɣò	awò	aò	spectacles
èɣe	---	èe	cheeks
ɛɣã̀	ɛwã	ɛã̀	chain

This is one of the most distinguishing features of CY.

5.35.24 NWY h Corresponds with ø in CY.--Fig. 5:62 'hole'

We mention this correspondence here for the sake of completeness, as the last in the series of features distinguishing CY from both SEY and NWY. Where the correspondence is between NWY h and SEY w, CY has ø. For example:

NWY	SEY	CY	
hó	wó	ó	foam
ihɔ̀	uwɔ̀	uɔ̀	hole



This is part of the evidence for describing NWY h as the intermediate stage in γ > w, since, as shown above, PEY γ also becomes ø just as the NWY-SEY h ~ w correspondence yields ø in CY.

5.35.3 Subregional Shifts Within SE Yoruba

SEY is made up of about five distinct 'subregional' groupings each characterized by at least one peculiar phonological feature. These features are consonantal.

a) s > h--Fig. 5:63 'run.' Around the Okitipupa and Irele areas which comprise the dialect group known as Ikale, this shift is one of the significant features of the phonology which differentiates it from the other groups within the major dialect area known here as SEY. All we can say about this shift is that it seems to be recent. It is a clearcut shift without exceptions. Thus we have:

NWY and SEY	Ikale	
sáré	háré	'run'
sù̀	hù̀	'sleep'
asṍ(ã́)	ahã́	'vanity'

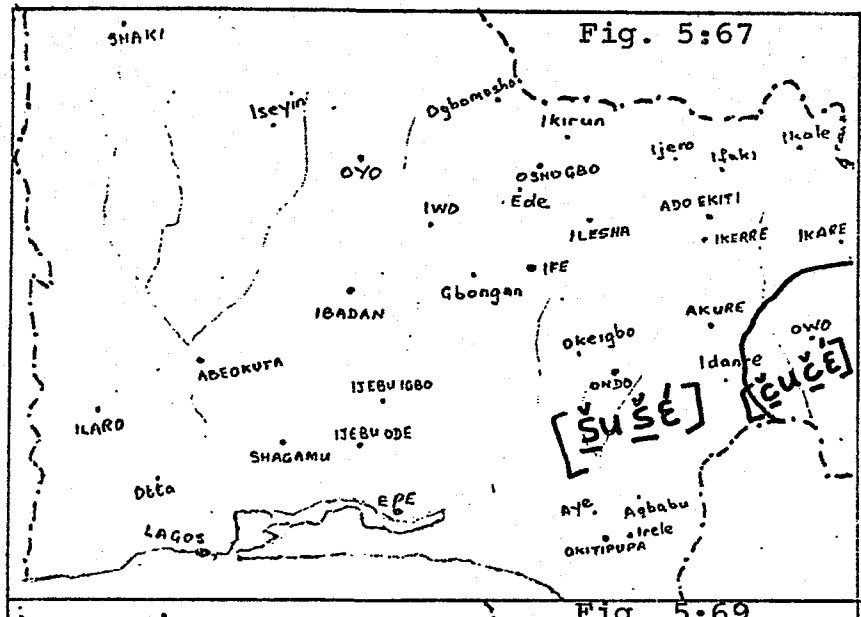
b) Another shift peculiar to this area is š > s.--Fig. 5:64 'cloth.' Viewed together with (a) above, we have 1. š > s 2. s > h and arrive at a push chain shift. It is noteworthy, however, that in SEY, the differentiation between [š] and [s] is not effected by any appreciable difference in the localization of articulation but by the mode

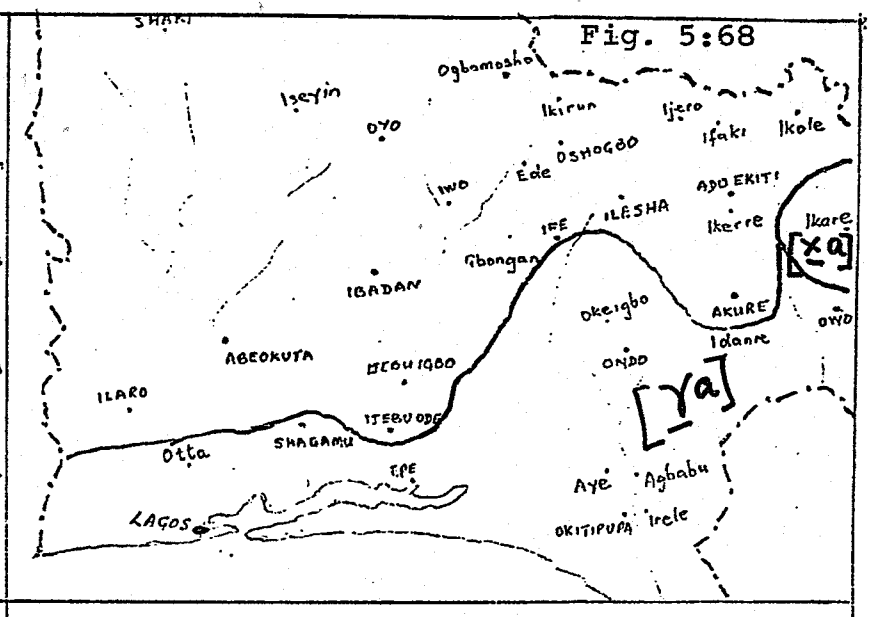
of articulation. The place of articulation for both sounds is almost the same. The difference in the acoustic realization of the two sounds is made by retroflexion in s and its absence in š. We believe that this chain shift was motivated by š becoming retroflexed, rather than merging with s, s shifted to h. The initial motivation for š > s might have been brought about by contact with the NW Yoruba, consequent on the opening up of Okitipupa late in the 19th Century. (We saw earlier that there is a confusion between š and s in NWY.) Examples:

Other South East areas	Okitipupa	
ašɔ	asɔ	cloth
àšɛ	àsɛ	authority
ùšó	ùsó	nail
àšà	àsà	custom

SEY r > ø in Ondo.--Fig. 5:65 'thunder.'

The consonantal factor distinguishing Ondo from the other dialects of the SEY group is the loss of r. In Ondo, Ile, Ohiji and Idanre areas, this feature is uniform and is recognized by speakers of other varieties of Yoruba. In fact, it is so marked that the average Ondo man, when he switches codes and speaks Std. Yoruba, devises a formula by which he inserts an r in any form to disallow sequences of vowels within the word. This works most of the time, but leads to hypercorrections where sequences of vowels within





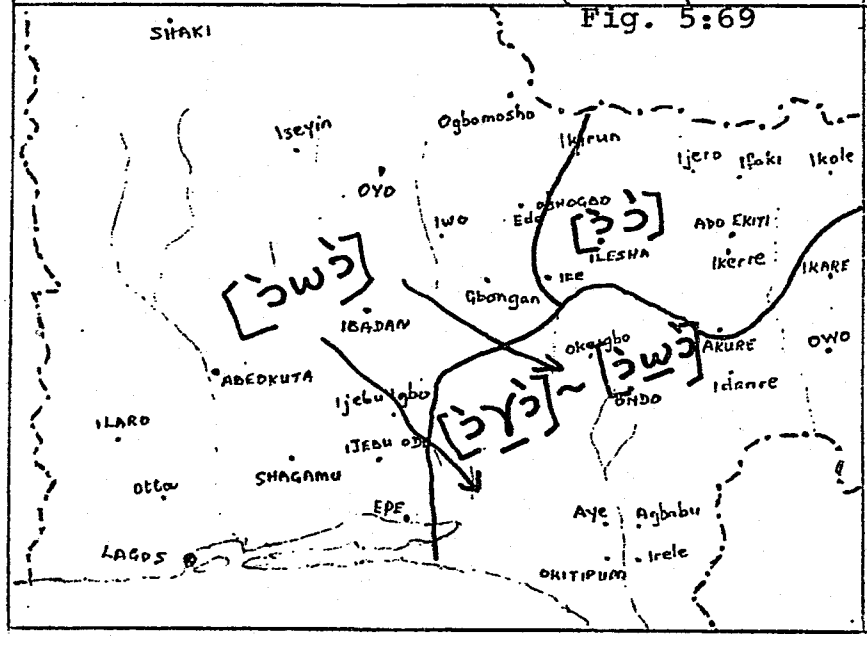
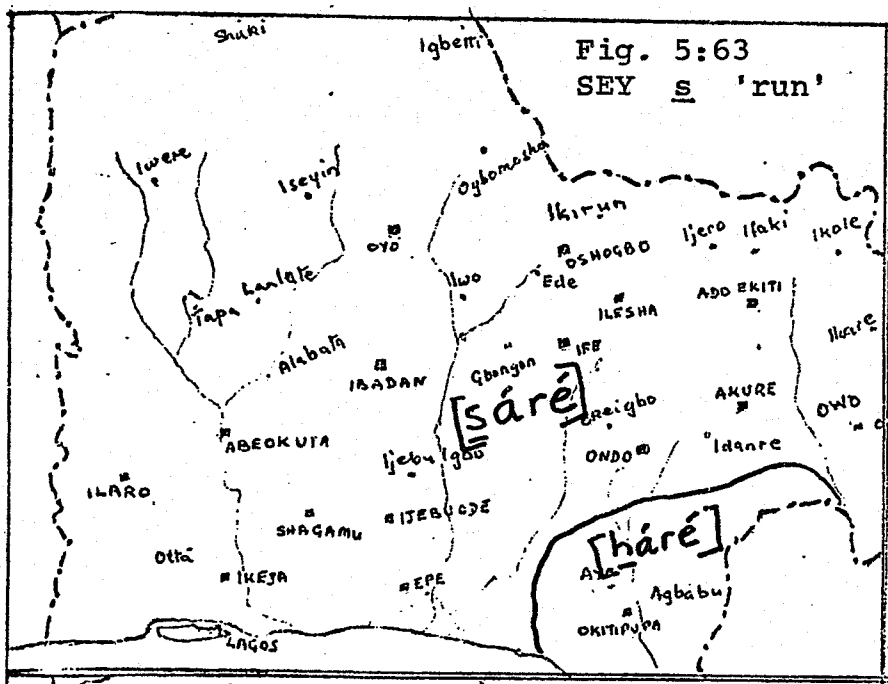
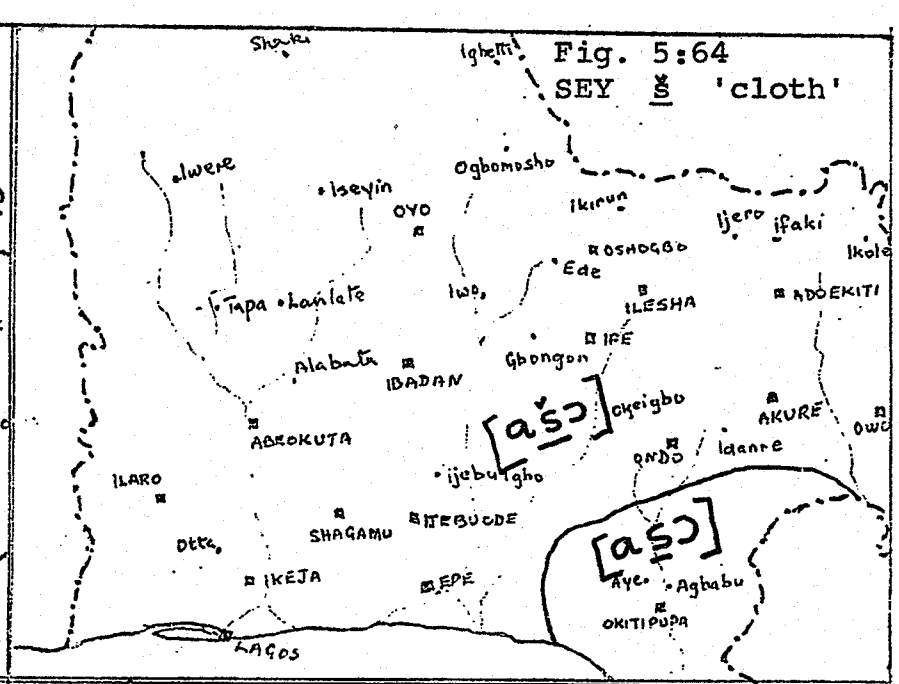


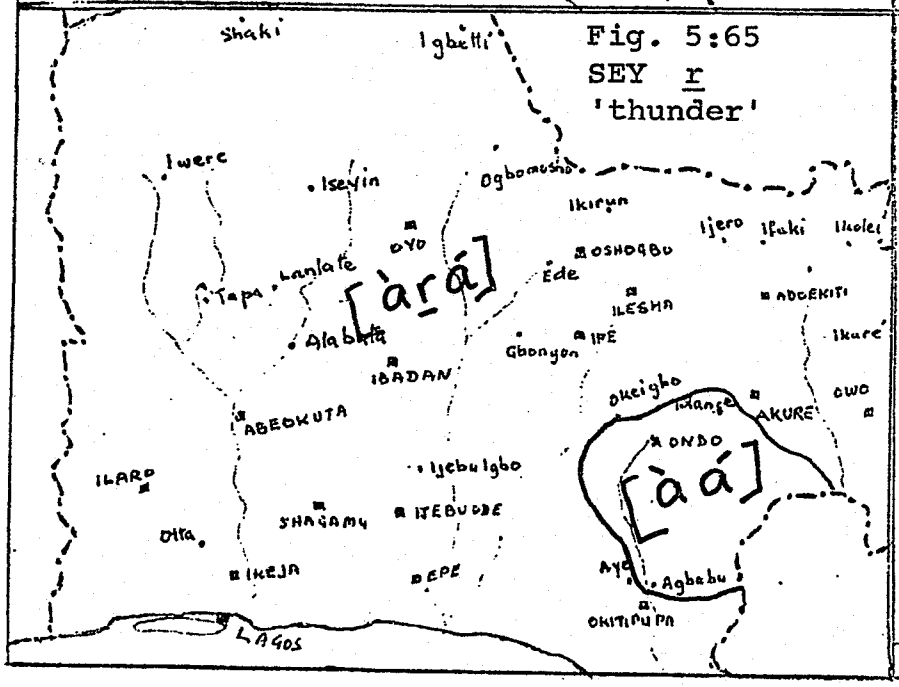
Fig. 5:67 SEY š 'work'

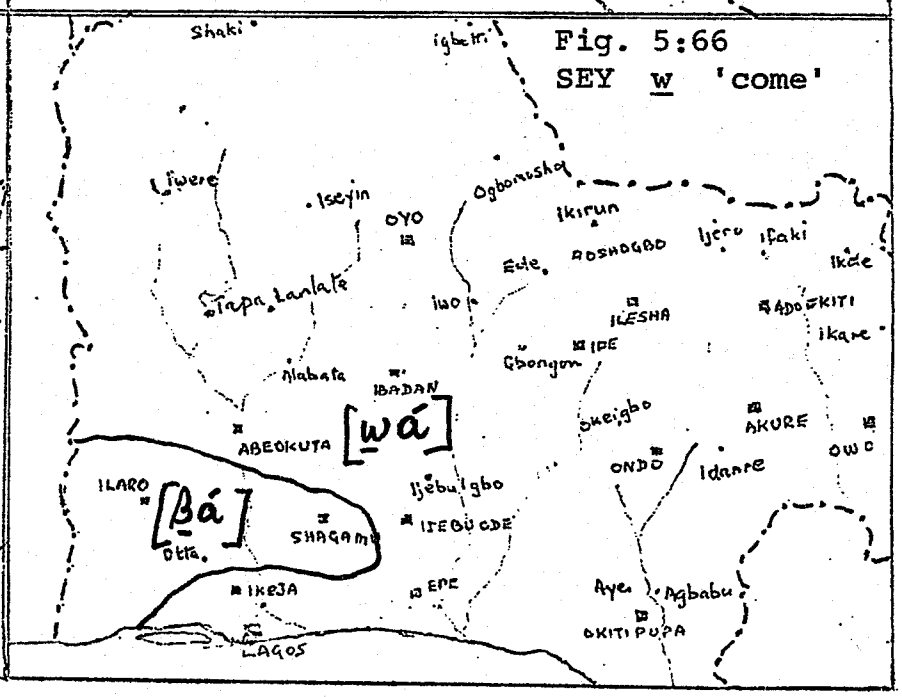
Fig. 5:68 SEY ɣ 'scrape'

Fig. 5:69 Development of w in SEY 'respect'









the word are permitted in the koine.

SEY and NWY	Ondo	
orí	oí	'head'
ὲrῖ	ὲῖ	'laughter'
èrɔ̀	èɔ̀	'mob'
rà	à	'buy'

This feature, though characteristic of Ondo and probably having its origin there, has diffused southwards towards Okitipupa.

Two recent innovations characterize the westernmost section of SEY. They are the bilabialization of f > ɸ and w > β. These shifts must be viewed as very recent since w > β must be consequent only on the acquisition of w in SEY.

SE and NWY	Remo	
wá	βá	'come'--Fig. 5:66
ɔwɔ́	ɔβɔ́	'hand'
fɛ́	ɸɛ́	'desire'
fɔ̀	ɸɔ̀	'jump'

SEY š > č in Owo. This is also a regional shift within the SE Yoruba grouping. Example:

SEY	Owo	
šušɛ́	čucɛ́	'work'-Fig. 5:67
àšá	àčá	'hawk'

Finally, to complete the regional shifts within SEY we present one affecting the NE corner of the linguistic area. This is

the shift of SEY γ > x i.e. loss of voicing. It is suspected to be of no great antiquity.

SEY	Ikare	
γã́	xã́	'dear'
γɔ̀	xɔ̀	'look at'
γa	xa	'scrape' (Fig. 5:68)

5.35.4 A Major Innovation from the West - Further Emergence of SEY

A major innovation from NWY results in the acquisition of w by SEY. It will be remembered that one of the characteristic features in the emergence of NWY is that PEY gw changes to w in NWY while it is retained in SEY. It follows therefore that SEY had no independent phoneme w. All the dialects of the SEY group today have w. The only explanation one can offer is that w was borrowed or diffused from the NWY area. A comparison of the reflexes of SEY gw > w in Central Yoruba and NWY w > ɸ in Central Yoruba will show that w is not original to SEY. NWY acquired w from many sources and therefore has a number of correspondences in SEY:

	PEY		NWY		SEY
a)	gw	>	w	=	gʷ
b)	γ	>	w	=	γ

It is probably the w derived from PEY gw that is being diffused to SEY. The effects on the phonology are great. First, in a large number of lexical items, γ and w are in free variation along the southernmost part of SEY area: we

have such pairs as ɣɓ/wɓ 'look at' ɐ̀ɣa/ɐ̀wa 'we' and oɣo/owɔ́ 'money'. All over the area, we also have forms keeping only the w phone as ɓwɑ́(r)ɓ 'morning,' wɑ́ 'look for', ɔwɔ́ 'hand'. The greatest effect of the innovation, however, is in the lexicon of SEY, where a host of doublets have arisen; some are still undifferentiated semantically but in a few cases, fine lexical differentiations have arisen.

ɔwɓ : 'broom' (made of oilpalm fronds)

ɔɣɓ : 'broom' (from coconut palm fronds)

ɓwɓ : 'trade'

ɓɣɓ : 'market place'

(ɛyɔ)ɣɔ́ : 'money' (traditional cowrie shells)

owɔ́ : 'money' (recent European oriented currency

ʉ̀wɐ̀ : 'character, demeanor, judgment'

ʉ̀ɣɐ̀ : 'king's judgment seat'

ɓwɔ̃́ : 'measles'

ɓɣɔ̃́ : 'yonder' (originally a nameless place where sick people were quarantined)

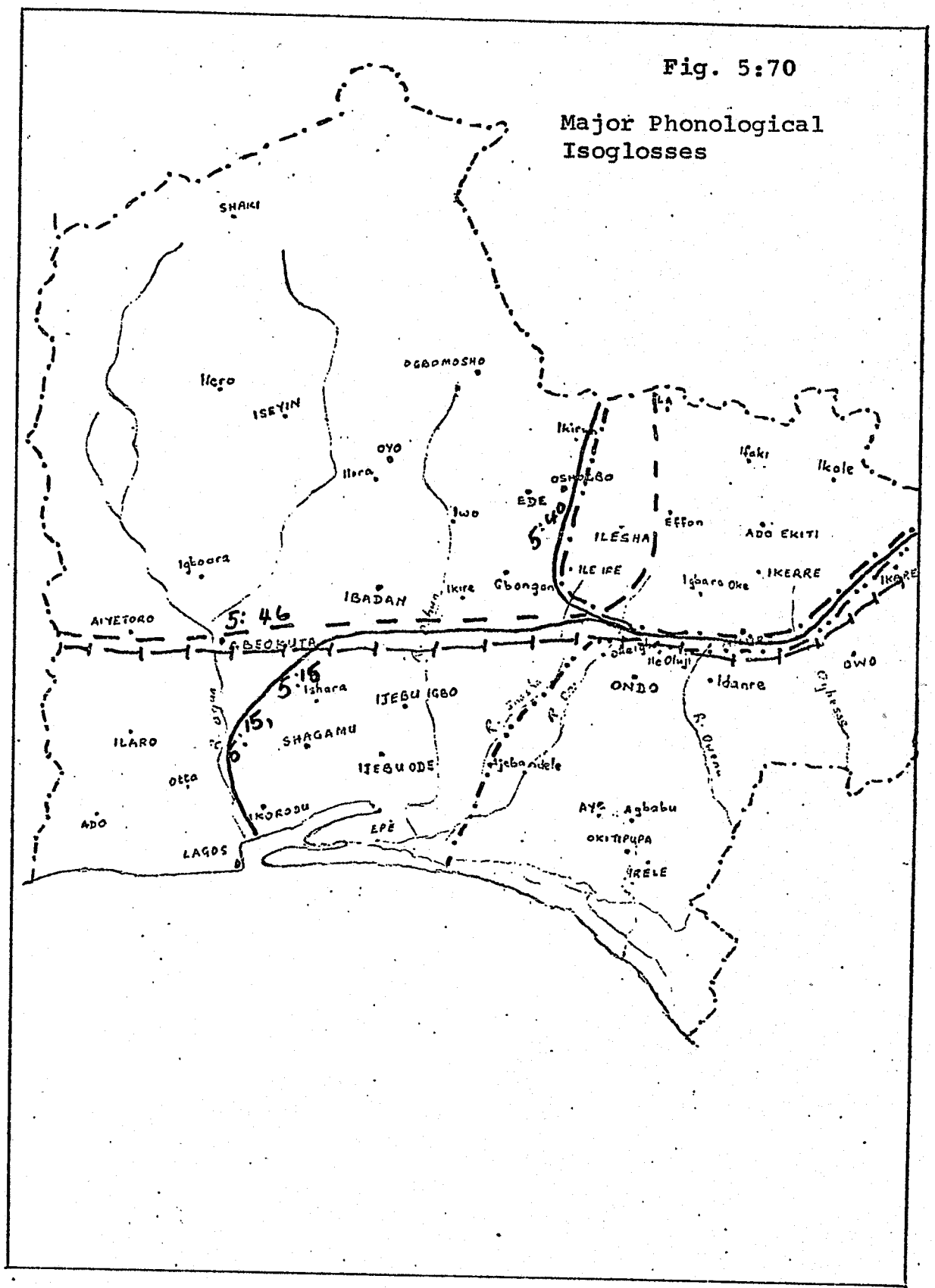
Where there are competing doublets with the rival forms w and ɣ, it is easy to predict that w, the more recent form, is likely to remain while the ɣ form will eventually be lost--that is, if the doublets will not eventually be differentiated semantically.

Fig. 5:70--Composite of Major Phonological Isoglosses.

This figure brings together the different major bundling of isoglosses found in chapter 5. A comparison of this Figure with Fig. 1:1--Subtribal Grouping-- will show that there is some measure of homogeneity in the phonological systems of each subethnic group while at least one phonological change separates a subethnic group from another.

Fig. 5:70

Major Phonological Isoglosses



CHAPTER 6

GENERAL SYNTHESIS

6.0 Introduction.

We have shown in the preceding chapters that there exist certain geographic discontinuities in the forms of the Yoruba language and culture in Western Nigeria. Chapter 2 documents discontinuities on the level of non-verbal culture. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 show where the cleavages lie on the basis of the lexicon, grammar and phonology respectively. Fig. 6:1 brings together the major isoglosses found in chapters 1 through 5.

The degree of coincidence between the major isoglosses at each level of our description invites comment. Is this coincidence an artifact of our description or does it result from our choice of the data to be presented? What, if any, historical justification can we adduce for this coincidence? And if we assume that the trend of these linguistic cleavages reflects breaks in the channels of communication within the area under investigation, can we support this claim with any external evidence?

This chapter will be concerned with synthesizing the picture of cleavages already discovered with the history of the settlements in our area, in order to answer some of the

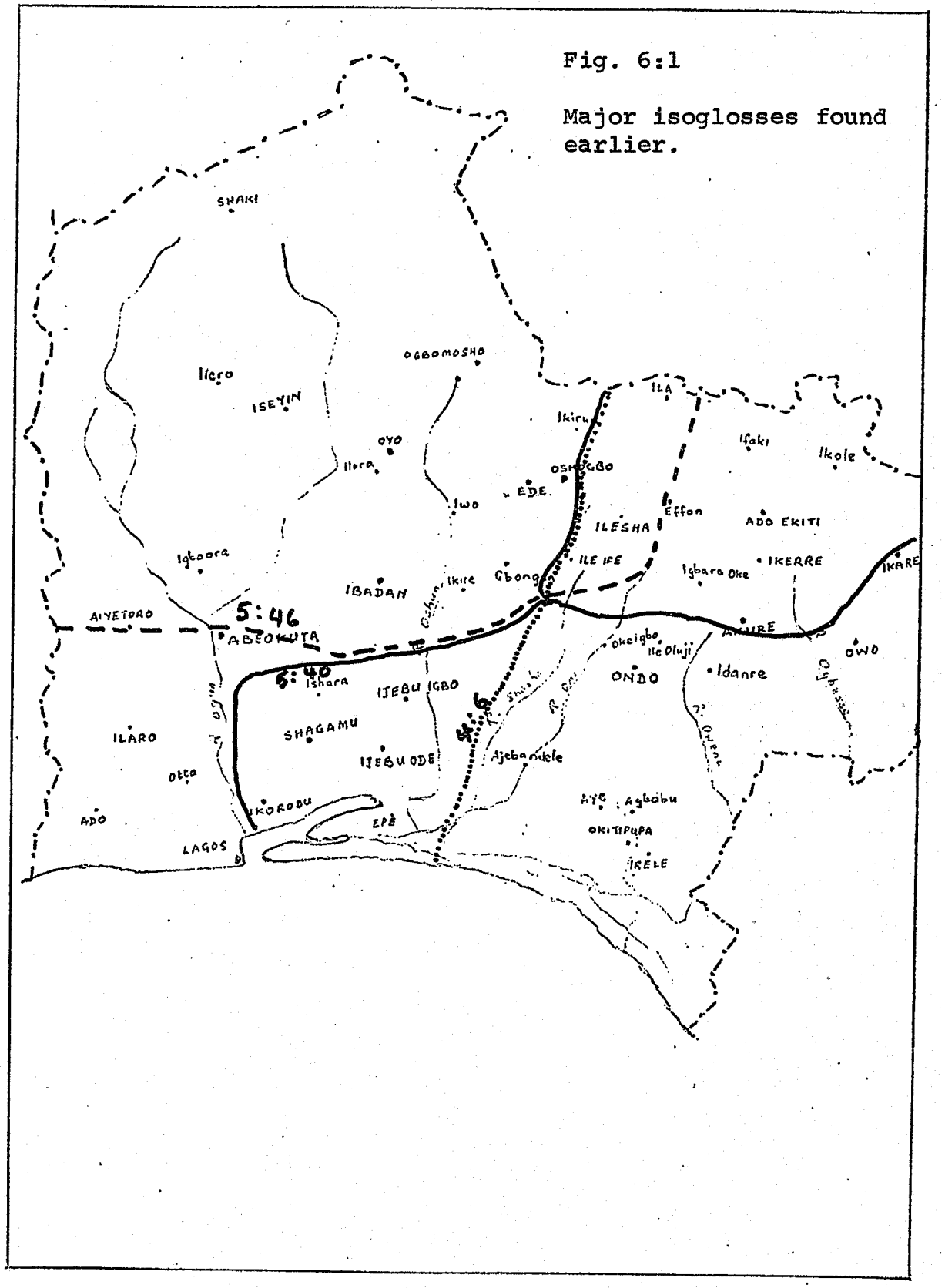


Fig. 6:1

Major isoglosses found earlier.

questions posed above. We make the claim here, however, that the bundling of our isoglosses in such a way that the major cleavages coincide at all levels of our description is neither due to chance nor to limitations inherent in the choice of the data presented. The sequence of our chapters reflects the order of the use of selectivity in the data presented. While we restricted our data in chapter 2 to only those basic features of the ethnology of the people whose differentiation can be easily shown, we are not so restricted in the subsequent chapters. In fact, we hold back no data at all in chapter 5. Moreover, if there were to be a ranking of ethnological features in the order of importance, we feel that those presented in Chapter 2 would come high in the ranking. And the fact that within these we find some divergence which runs parallel to the linguistic cleavage should eliminate some of the doubts one may entertain as to what limitations our choice of data may place on the validity of the analysis arrived at.

Section 6.1 explores the history of the Yorubas to see if the historical justification we claimed corroborates the setting up of our major dialect boundaries really exists. In section 6.2, we conclude our study by bringing together the linguistic implications of this research.

6.1 Yoruba Settlements in Western Nigeria

We offer below a sketch history of the settlements in our area.

6.11 Yoruba Origins

Nc comprehensive study exists about the history of the settlements in this area. Most of the work done on the history of the Yorubas either deals with the origin of the race or with the 19th century. We offer below what we can make of these works and take no responsibility for their accuracy.

We have three works on Yoruba origins--Johnson (1921), Lucas (1949), and Biobaku (1957). These writers claim that the Yorubas migrated to Western Nigeria from the Middle East. The three sources contradict one another, and, of the three, only Biobaku is free from internal contradictions.

Johnson places the origin of the Yorubas near Mecca. He however makes an exception for the Ekitis--a term which for him covers not only the Ekitis and Akures in the CY area but also the peoples of Ondo, Okitipupa and Owo in the SEY area; these he regards as aborigines. Johnson's classification of the areas into aborigines and immigrants is shown in Fig. 6:2. Figure 6:3 superimposes Fig. 6:2 on 6:1.

After mentioning this origin and the way the Yorubas were led by Oduduwa to settle in Ife, Johnson has recourse to traditional myths which he mistakes for historical facts about the diffusion of the Yorubas to different settlements. For instance, Ilesha is recorded by Johnson as having been peopled by men transformed from yamstakes and then reserved for sacrifice to the gods.

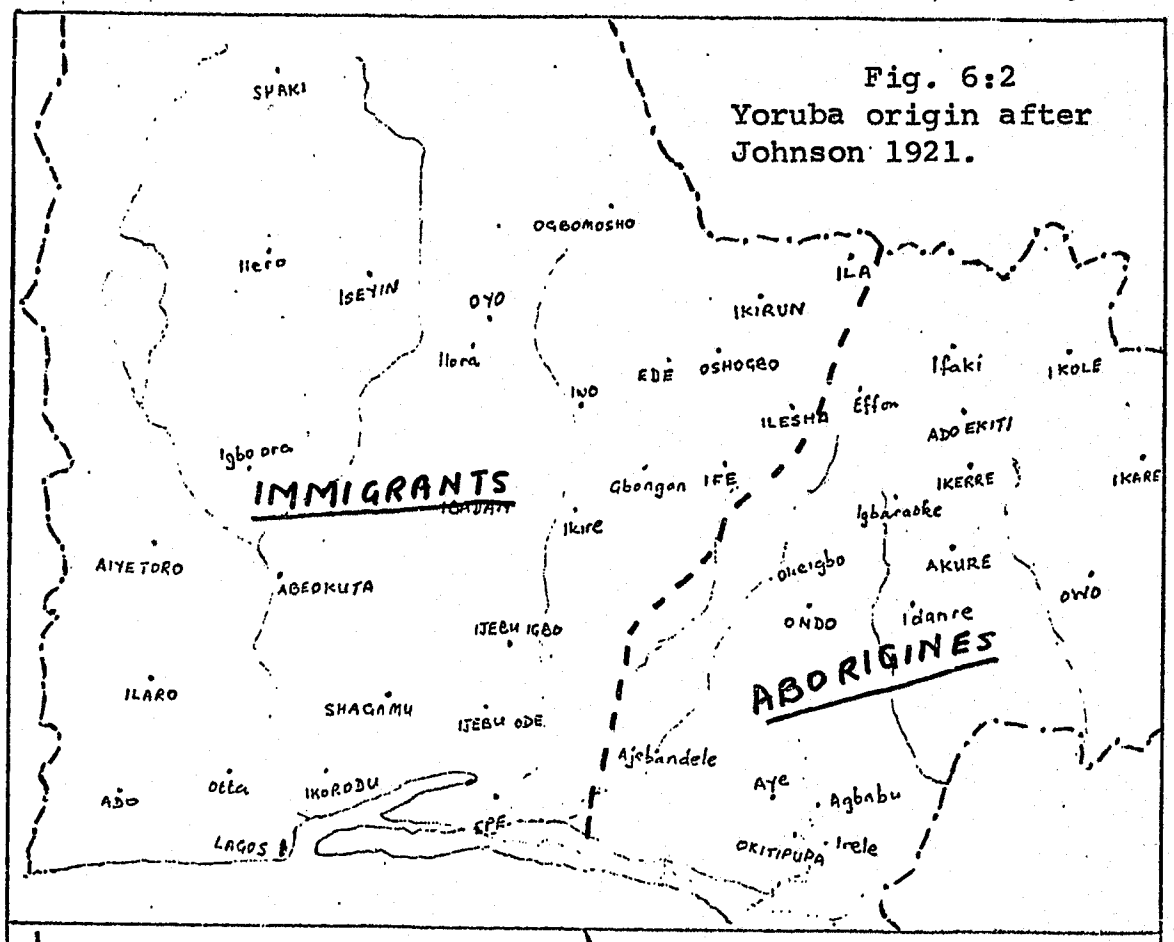


Fig. 6:2
Yoruba origin after Johnson 1921.

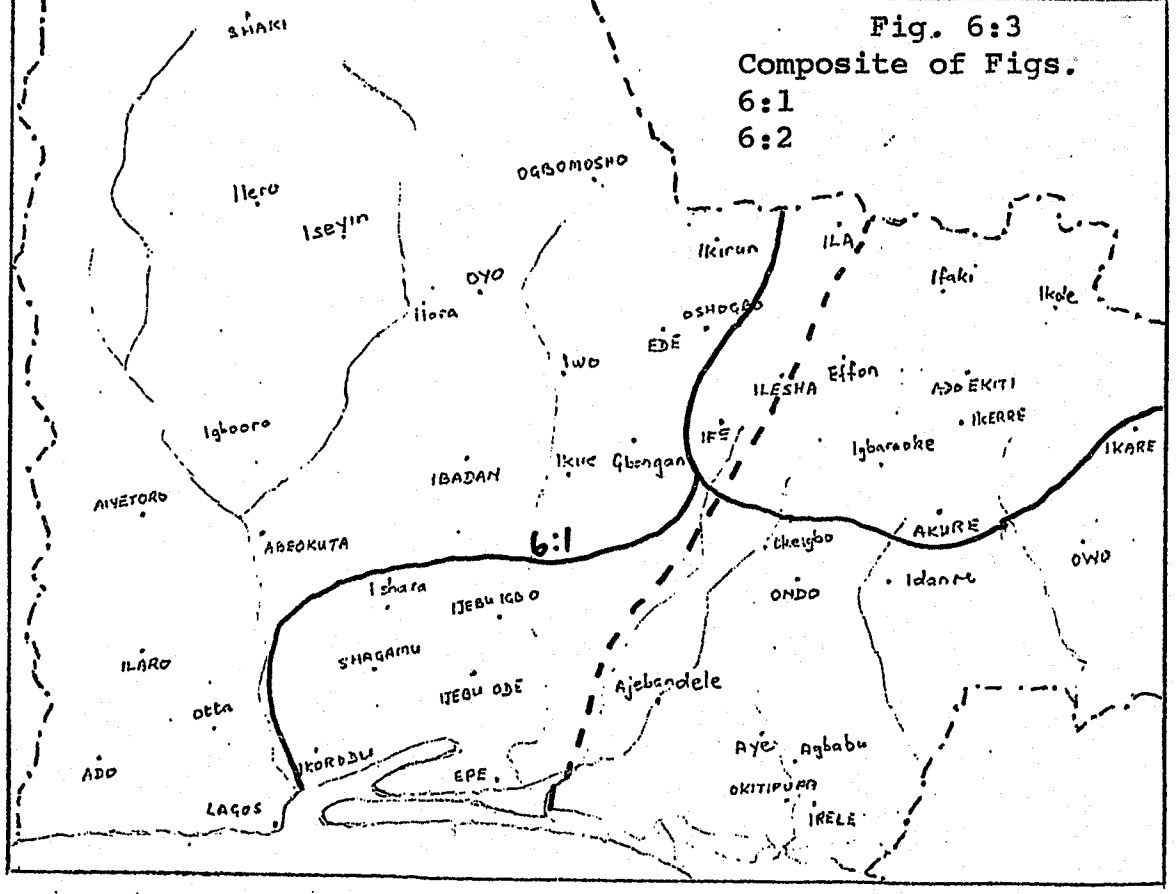


Fig. 6:3
Composite of Figs.
6:1
6:2

Lucas's claim about Yoruba origin is bolder and more cocksure than Johnson's, but obviously weaker. According to Lucas, "the Yorubas migrated gradually from Northern Egypt to Southern Egypt and then to the Sudan until they reached their present home"(p. 37). He further claims that the Yorubas are Egyptians in race, culture and language. His evidence lies solely in ritual and religious similarities, especially as to polytheism, priesthood, and idolatry, between Egypt and Western Nigeria. In defence of this claim, he makes use of supposed linguistic correspondences between Ancient Egyptian and Yoruba.

In a review article, "Did the Yorubas come from Egypt," Wescott (1957) shows Lucas to be deeply mistaken in his evidence. Wescott remarks that "the cultural affinities which he, Lucas, sees as indicating a special Egyptian-West African nexus actually proved no more than that the Yoruba may have derived as much of their culture from Egypt as may many other peoples on their level of development" (p. 57).

Lucas's use of linguistic evidence also comes under criticism by Wescott: "Dr Lucas's understanding of sound correspondences is as sketchy as his knowledge of phonetics. When he seeks to derive ordinary nouns....in Yoruba from Egyptian proper names, Dr Lucas strains all credulity. He relates Yoruba ofu "waste" to the Egyptian Pharaoh Khufu by observing that Khufu's pyramid building was wasteful (p. 26).

He further suggests that Yoruba aguton "sheep" comes from Greek Aiguptos, "Egyptian", because sheep were so commonly depicted on Egyptian temple walls" (p. 38).

Biobaku (1957) has some sound logic in his work, but it nevertheless suffers from the same handicap which beset the others--lack of primary records of the origin of the Yorubas. More cautious than the others, he deduces that the Yorubas "were immigrants from the Middle East and it is probable that the All Black Kingdom of Meroe in Upper Egypt or the Sudan played an important role in transmitting Egyptian influences to them. They came under Jewish and Arab influences in their original homes and their subsequent migration was connected with Arab movements" (p. 17).

Biobaku further claims that the Yorubas came into Western Nigeria in waves, the first wave having arrived in the 7th century A.D. The Ekitis and the Idokos formed the greater part of this first wave. The second major wave of immigration consisted of people who later settled in Ife, and eventually under their leader Oduduwa, now deified, they conquered or founded other settlements.

Even though we may not accept Biobaku's claim as to the origin of the Yorubas, we find it significant that he recognizes an ethnological break between SEY and NWY which allows him to posit two different times of immigration. The cleavage he ascribes to this time difference parallels our cleavage of SEY-CY vs. NWY.

But the claim of Yoruba origin outside their present country raises a number of questions our sources are silent about. What language did the Yorubas speak before they came to Western Nigeria? And what was the language of the aborigines? Moreover, the relationship between the members of the Kwa family of languages demands that if the Yorubas came from Egypt, then all the other tribes within the Kwa family of languages probably are immigrants also. The Middle East origin of the Yorubas remains nothing but a hypothesis.

6.12 State Building in Western Nigeria

All we know about the Yorubas prior to the 19th century concerns individual settlements extending their areas of influence. Many such settlements built empires, the bulk of which were short-lived. We start with the role of Ife, a town which Yoruba traditions claim to be their home of origin.

There are two widely held traditions of Yoruba origin. According to one, Oduduwa was sent by God to create the world and he started from Ife. The other tradition is the more widely held, that Oduduwa came from Mecca to settle in Ife.

All we know about ancient Ife (Flint, 1966) is that it developed in the 12th and 13th centuries into a unique center of civilization. The archaelogical sites today reveal well laid out palaces and potsherd pavements. Its sculpture in bronze and terra cotta is famous today for its

delicately naturalistic style.

But Ife was poorly placed to develop into a political empire, nor did it develop into a center of commercial importance. Its location in the heart of the rain forest impeded military and commercial mobility. Nevertheless, Ife remained for the Yorubas a cultural center. We would have expected that the linguistic influence of such a locality would result in concentric isoglosses with Ife in the center. We have not found such formations.

In the 16th century there existed two empires in Western Nigeria. These are the Benin and Oyo empires. Benin is located east of Western Nigeria, but developed an empire in Western Nigeria. The empire extended northwards to the River Niger and westwards to the coastal areas around Lagos. Lagos and all areas of SEY came within the Benin empire. It is probable that Ife itself was included within this empire. Benin people also claim Ife origin and up till today, every third king of Benin is buried in Ife.

The organization of such an empire, vast as it was, was to the advantage of the local peoples. It was impossible to control the day-to-day affairs of the subjected people closely and directly from the center; therefore local rulers of Benin origin were imposed and given some autonomy (Flint, 1966).

Nevertheless there was some measure of Benin influence. One such influence is the house pattern dominant in areas of Benin occupation. In the SEY areas, indigenous houses

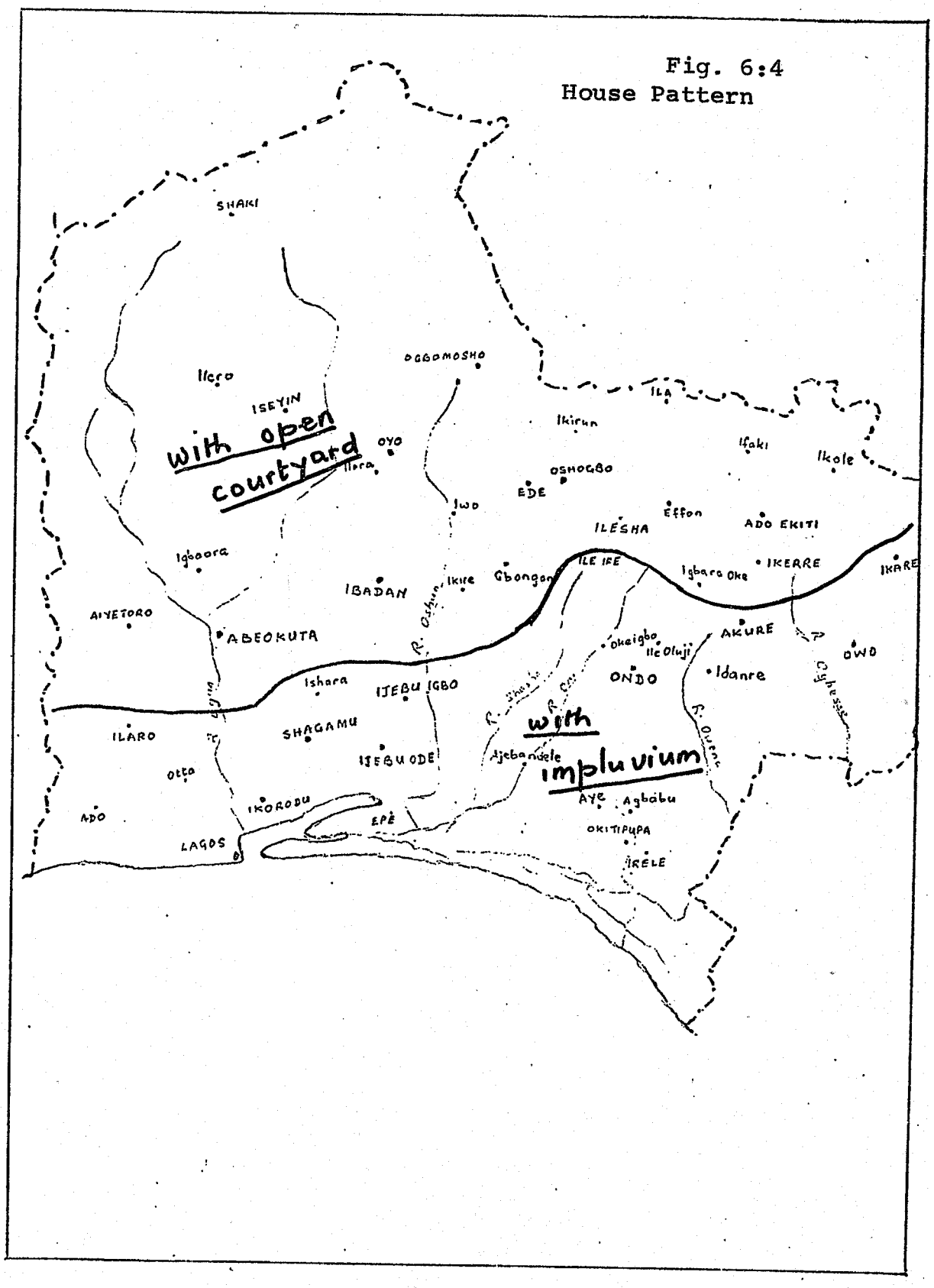


Fig. 6:4
House Pattern

are today designed with or without small courtyards and have impluvia in the center. But in the Oyo and northern Yoruba areas, indigenous houses consist of large compounds, about 100 feet square. In the center, instead of an impluvium as in SEY areas, there is usually an open space courtyard, the inner roof of which is supported by a wall. Fig. 6:4 shows the area differences.

At the time the Benin empire was flourishing, the Oyo empire was being built. Oyo was founded in the 14th century probably to protect the Yorubas from invaders from Northern Nigeria. It was situated in the savannah forest belt and so was well placed as a commercial center for the exchange of Yoruba forest products with southward bound grassland products. The sphere of influence of Oyo extended northwards and was thus a breakthrough for the forest dwellers. Oyo developed iron smithing and cloth weaving. Fig. 6:5 shows Western Nigeria in the 16th century.

With the development of the slave trade, Oyo started to look for outlets to the sea. But its expansionist tendencies contained itself to some extent to avoid a clash with the Benin rulers under whose control had come all the coastal areas of Yorubaland. So Oyo expanded southwestwards to Dahomey. In 1780, Dahomey repudiated Oyo. Also, because of the shift of trade to the coastal areas as a result of the coming of the Europeans, the Egbas moved to Abeokuta in 1830 and declared independence from Oyo. Early in the 19th century, the Fulani from northern Nigeria started raids on Oyo, culminating in the destruction of Oyo in 1837.

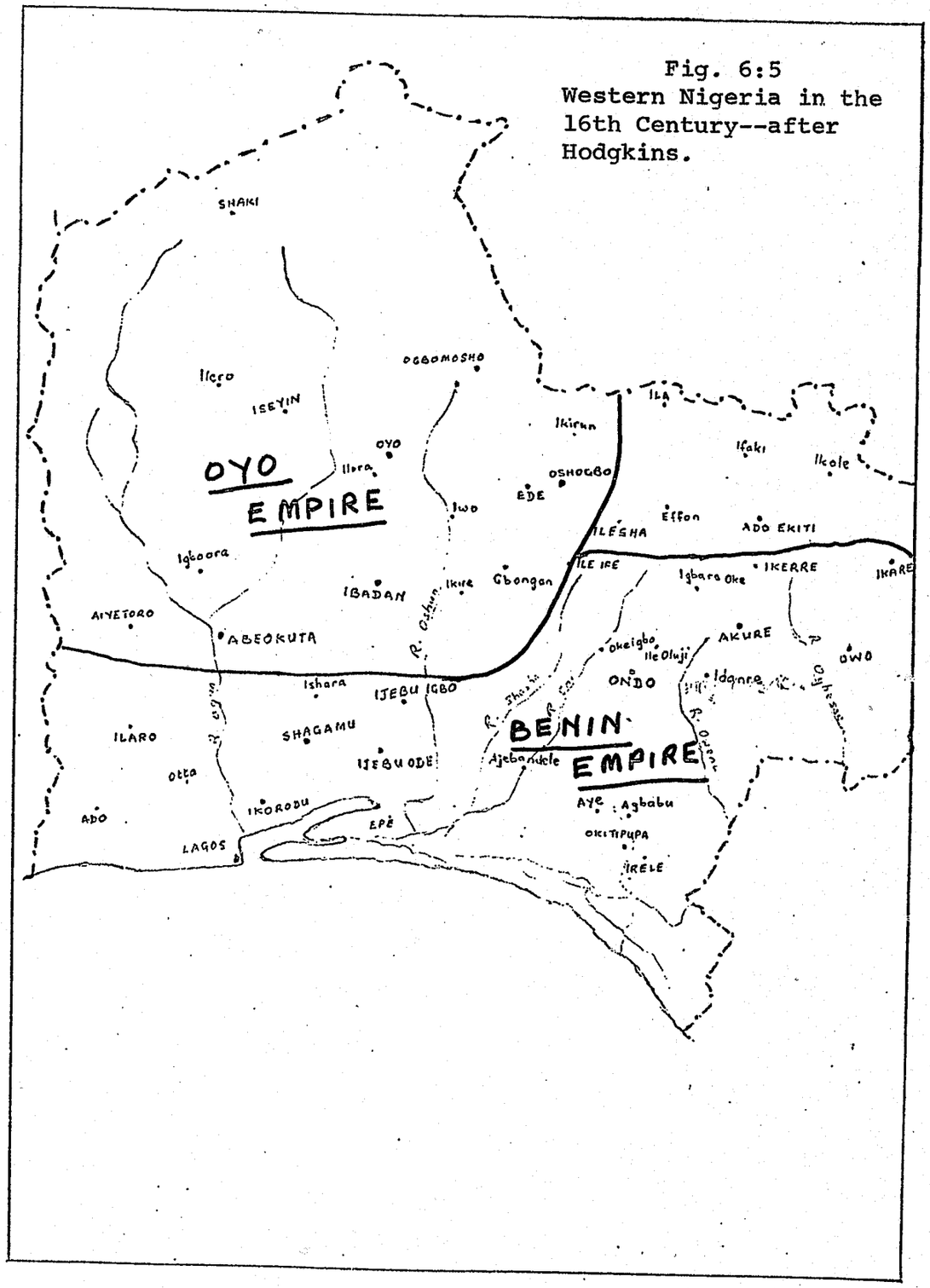


Fig. 6:5
Western Nigeria in the 16th Century--after Hodgkins.

All the population of Oyo moved southwards, some settling in Iwo, Ede and Ogbomosho while the others bounded themselves together to found the present Oyo.

The later period of the Oyo empire, especially in the 19th century, saw large movements of people within the areas of Oyo influence. This time was also the period of intratribal warfare for the capture of slaves. In 1829, a mixed party of refugees from Ife, Egba, Ijebu and Oyo settled in Ibadan. By 1830, the Egba contingent with some other refugees from wars moved and settled in Abeokuta. Abeokuta was well placed for defence and these people helped to restrain invaders from Dahomey.

From the sketch above, it will be seen that while the areas we have delimited as SEY, and probably the CY areas too, enjoyed comparative ease and security under the Benin empire, NWY was plagued with wars, resulting in mass migrations of populations. Oyo people moved south to found a new settlement, some of them joining other groups from other settlements. Ibadan was founded by a group of people coming from different settlements, as was Abeokuta.

We present in Fig. 6:6 the movements of the Egbas as given by Biobaku (1957), who has done much impressive work on Yoruba history.

It will be recalled that in our discussion of non-verbal culture (chapter 2), the NWY area was seen to possess

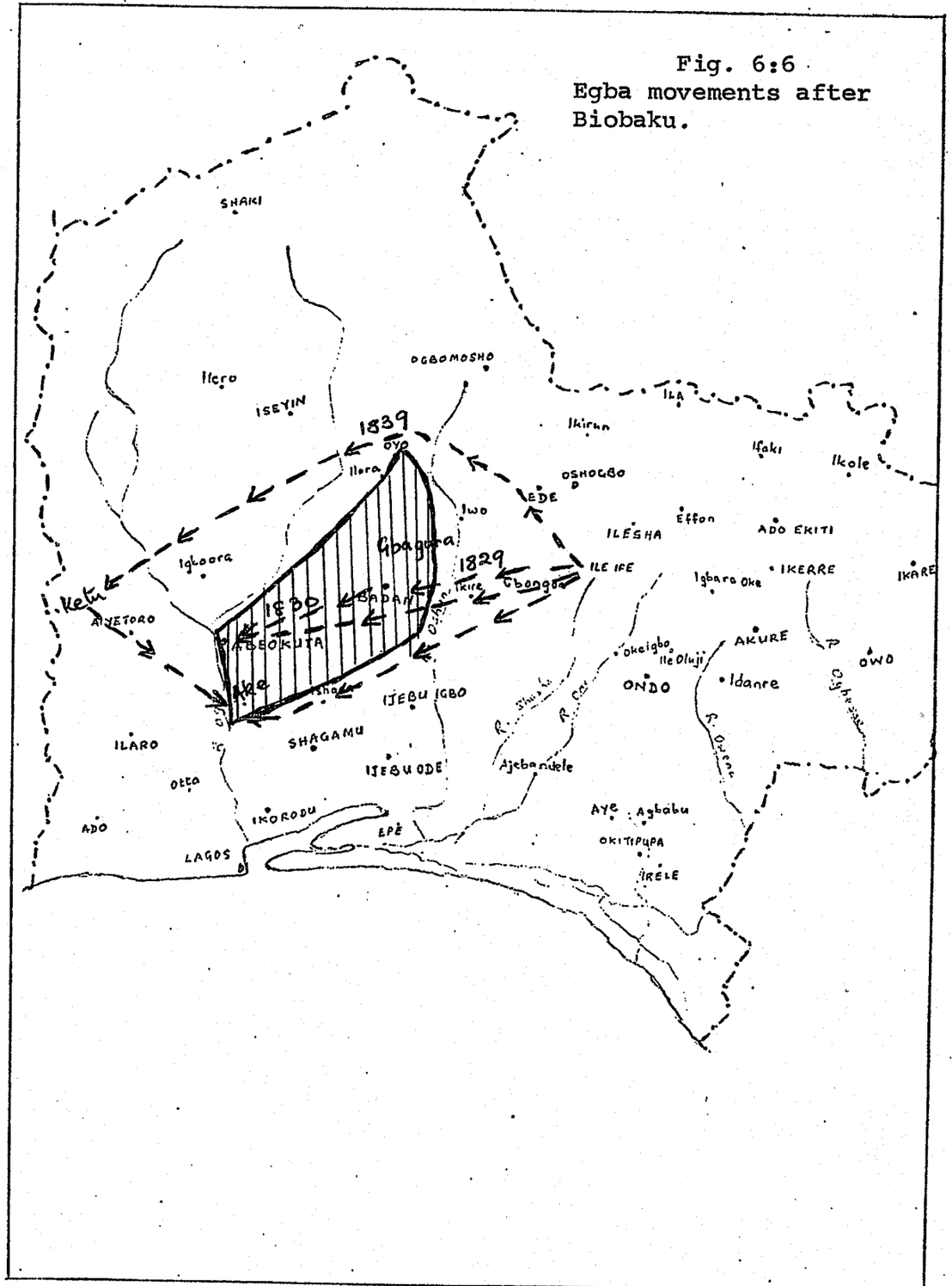


Fig. 6:6
Egba movements after Biobaku.

more than one set of tribal marks per town. This fits well with the notion that a town was founded by peoples from many different other towns.

Fig. 6:7 shows the oldest Yoruba towns, according to Mabogunje (1962). The towns shown are regarded to have been founded before the 16th century. It may be seen that most of these towns are located outside the NWY area, old Oyo having been completely destroyed in the 19th century. The absence of really old towns in NWY area may partially account for why historians think of both SEY and CY as either made up of aborigines or of immigrants of an earlier origin than the peoples of NWY.

6.13 Rise of Standard Yoruba

The standardized Yoruba dialect, variously called Modern Yoruba and Standard Yoruba, came into being through the efforts of missionaries in the 19th century. The first significant move towards the establishment of this koine may be traced to Bishop Crowther, an emancipated slave of Yoruba origin from Abeokuta. In 1844, while a priest in Sierra Leone, Crowther made this entry in his diary for January 9: "This afternoon, at half-past four o'clock I opened the Yoruba service in the mission Church at Freetown...the whole proceeding seemed to myself like a dream." His text was from Luke I, 35: "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Crowther's transcription

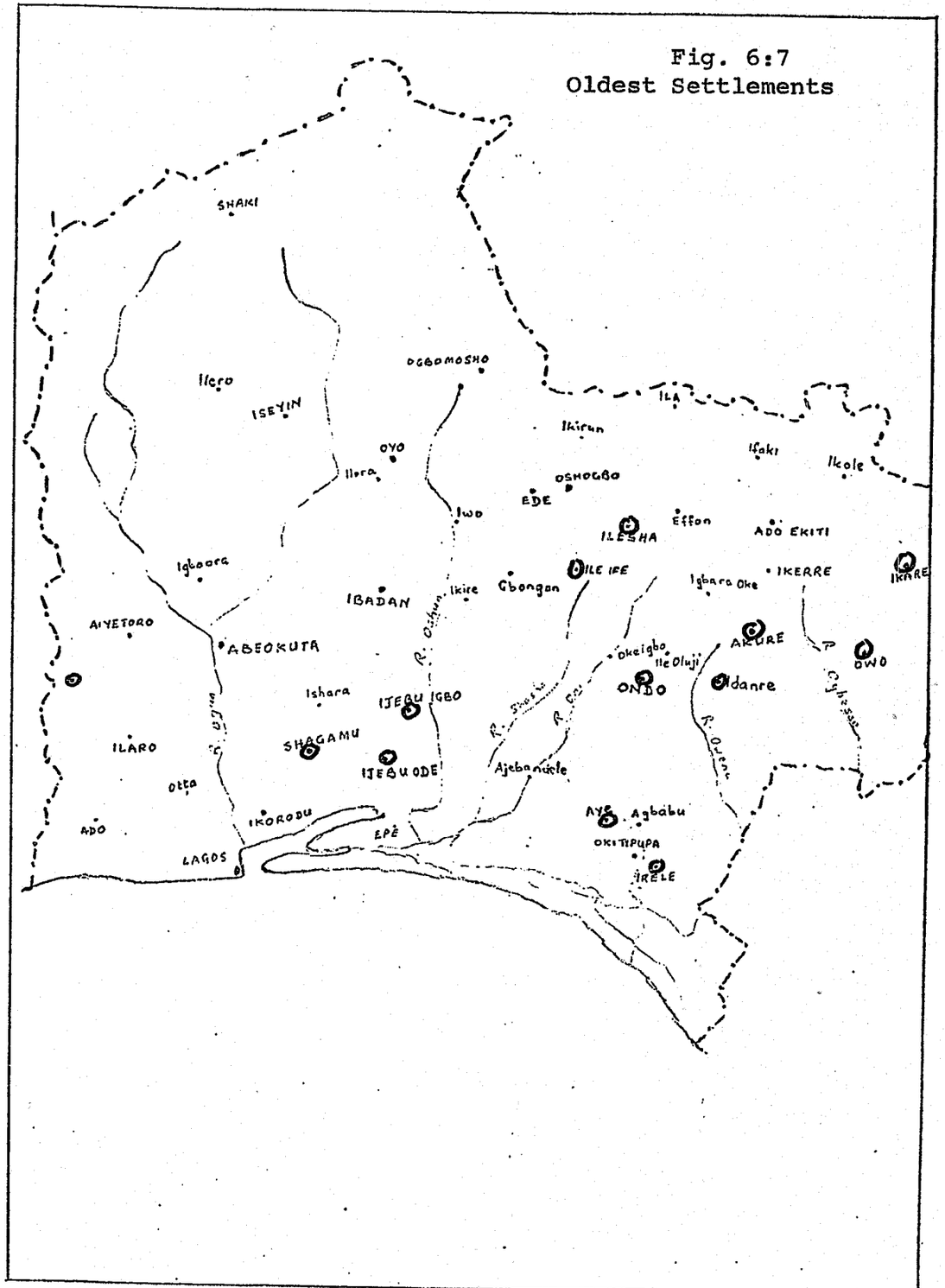


Fig. 6:7
Oldest Settlements

was: Ohung ohworh ti aobih ni inoh reh li aomakpe li Omoh Olorung (ohũ ɔ̀wɔ̀ tí a ó ɔ̀ bí ní inɔ́rɛ li a ɔ́ɔmáa kpɔ̀ lí ɔmɔ ɔlɔ́rũ).

It may be noted that Crowther's transcription of Yoruba was largely influenced by English orthography. This becomes obvious when his transcription is compared with the phonetic transcription provided in parenthesis.

Crowther's interest in Yoruba was an offshoot of the general desire by missionaries to develop African and Asian languages in such a way as to facilitate their use in the propagation of the gospel. Early in 1854, a conference of Eurpoean linguists, philologists and missionaries met in London under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society to devise a standard orthography for these languages. But this conference could not reach an agreement to reconcile the proposals of Lepsius of Berlin and Max Muller of Oxford. The final decisions therefore rested with local missionaries.

With the opening up of the Niger Mission and Crowther's transfer to Nigeria, there was cooperation among all the local missionaries; there was still some disagreement, however, as to the way in which many Yoruba sounds, notably [š,kp,gb,ɛ,ɔ] and vowel nasality, were to be represented. Moreover, another conflict arose as to which dialect was to be used. Crowther had done all his translations in the Abeokuta dialect and his 1842 Grammar of the Yoruba Language

was essentially a grammar of the Abeokuta dialect.

A conference of the local missionaries was called in Lagos early in 1875 to resolve some of the differences in the practice of local missionaries. The conference, apart from criticizing some aspects of Crowther's use of the Abeokuta dialect, also set some prescriptions concerning Yoruba grammar in line with the practices in the Oyo dialect. In that year, Yoruba's orthography was standardized, but it was based on Crowther's newly revised orthography, which still reflected the Abeokuta dialect.

The story of a standardized dialect for Yoruba is thus seen as essentially the same as the story of a standard orthography. While the orthography agreed upon by the missionaries represented to a very large degree the phonemes of the Abeokuta dialect, the morpho-syntax reflected the Oyo-Ibadan dialects. Later standardization by native scholars has been in the direction of the Oyo dialect, and this has been largely stabilized, especially in its literary usage, by graduates of St. Andrew's College, Oyo, the oldest and for a long time the only teachers' college in Western Nigeria.

It has often been claimed that Standard Yoruba can be equated with the Oyo dialect, but this is not true. Standard Yoruba, for instance, does not reflect the confusion of sibilants as is the case in both Oyo and Ibadan. The

opposition between [s] and [š] is functional in Standard Yoruba.

6:14 Influence of Standard Yoruba on other Dialects

In the discussions accompanying our data, we mentioned in various places the influence of the standardized dialect on all the other varieties of speech. This influence is seen, for instance, as responsible for the merging of Lagos and its immediate hinterland into the NWY system. The impact of the standardized dialect will naturally be first felt in the bigger cities with cosmopolitan populations. Educated Yorubas learn this koine and these people usually migrate to the big administrative centers of Lagos, Ibadan and Abeokuta, thereby influencing the speech of the uneducated peoples of these centers, who are all too readily impressed by the educated.

6.15 Historical Justification for Dialect Boundaries

The cumulative evidence from the sketch history of our area, given above, points out that there exists a sharp break in the communication network, a break running roughly parallel to our linguistic cleavage which sets off SEY-CY from NWY. Johnson, as mentioned above, regards the peoples of SEY-CY as aborigines and NWY peoples as immigrants. Biobaku says that most of these people are immigrants, but that the migration of the inhabitants of the SEY-CY areas was earlier than that of the NWY immigrants. We also recall that

between the 14th and the 19th centuries, there were two different empires, the Benin empire extending over SEY areas and the Oyo empire over NWY territory. Also, we have shown that in the 19th century, there were mass movements of people from different settlements, binding themselves together, to found other towns; and this took place in NWY, resulting in dialect mixture. Finally, the rise of a standardized dialect from NWY must have affected NWY areas more immediately than the dialects of SEY-CY, which are geographically far away.

A problem arises, however, when we seek historical justification for the setting up of CY. We mentioned earlier in our phonology that while CY has a unique vocalic system, its consonantal system is derived from SEY. At the other levels of our description, CY is a transitional area, often sharing features with SEY, and sometimes with NWY. It probably was the case that the greater part of CY area did not come under any foreign influence of the type imposed by the empires of Benin and Oyo on the other areas of Yoruba land. The king of Otun, a town northwest of Ado Ekiti, claims that his town was a buffer territory separating the kingdoms of Oyo and Benin. If this was the case, then some part of CY area was left to develop without external pressures. In any case, a historical justification for the emergence of CY must await the results of further study.

We have, with some certainty, shown that the coincidence of our isoglosses at almost all the levels of our analysis is not due to chance. We are also able, despite the paucity of the historical evidence, to confirm that in the history of our settlements, the break in the network of communication is in line with our major dialect boundary. We conclude our discussion by presenting below some implications that our study has as a work in general linguistics.

6.2 Some General Implications

6.21 Models of Language Change

We call attention to the two models of language change on which historical reconstruction is usually based--the family tree model and the wave theory model. The adequacy of either model as a basis for comparative reconstruction has often been called into question, not only by the Neogrammarians themselves but also by modern linguists. Herzog (1965: 4,5) insists that the use of dialect contact as determinant of language change tends to negate the concept of change by the family tree model, but is reluctant to discard the use of this model.

We indeed think that the family tree model of language change, in assuming a uniform protolanguage, to a certain extent contradicts the principles of dialect behavior as far as the area we are dealing with is concerned.

First of all, to assume a uniform protolanguage is a complete negation of what we know about language behavior. An individual's idiolect is never regular, and the lexical doublets shown in chapter 5 in the discussion accompanying the alternation of y and w in SEY in fact testify that however much we may go into the past, the problems of alternations still exist.

The family tree model is also shown to have failed in its application to an area with shifting dialects. We find it more plausible to believe that there has been continuous interaction among our dialects and that there is not enough justification for us to assume that at any time was there a break sharp enough to permit total loss of contact between one dialect area and another. The earlier chapters have shown some of the results of dialect contact in our area. For instance, the presence of competing phonological systems in NWY can be explained by contact.

Perhaps the motivation for the retention of the family tree is the same that can be used by those who would want it discarded: its assumption of a uniform protolanguage. The facile assumption allows us to reconstruct this protolanguage from which there developed dialects which later grew differentiated enough to become mutually unintelligible languages. We probably have not been able to devise another model capable of showing this relationship in a better way, and hence the retention of this model. And in fact, historical linguists no longer consider the family tree as a serious model of language history.

But with the awareness of the limitations of the family tree as a model of the historical development of a language, the value of our reconstructions must also be called into question. No reconstruction of an earlier stage of a language can be taken to represent that language at that stage. By its very nature, any reconstruction must be taken as a partial diagram of those aspects of a protolanguage that the present stage of the language reflects. As a matter of fact, the present stage of any language lends itself only to use in reconstructing the suspected regular aspects of its ancestry. Our reconstructions tell less than half the story of any protolanguage.

6.22 Causes of Language Change

We would very much like to rank our innovations according to their probable causes, but this is an impossible task at the present stage of our study. It is sufficient that we have been able to isolate some of the causes of change which we mentioned in the discussions accompanying the body of our data. These are:

(a) diffusion from a neighboring dialect

(b) importation through migration

(c) structural entailment

(d) contact with another language.

Even though we have often referred to single causations of change, it should be understood that that particular cause

is the one we are able to isolate with some degree of plausibility. It is inevitable that other causes may be involved. We cannot at this stage of our study isolate all of them beyond all doubt.

Of the four probable causations of linguistic change mentioned above, we have found very handy the explanation of innovations by reference to linguistic structure. While this motivation of change is in itself self-evident as the probable cause of the competing phonological systems of CY and NWY, we suggest that it was triggered off by another change: the borrowing of ẹ from SEY as a result of contact by NWY-CY with SEY.

From this single example, it is evident that the explanation of any innovation by a single causation will not tell the full story. Usually, a pluralistic motivation of change will be nearer the truth.

We will also prefer to 'explain' our isogloss bundles rather than single isoglosses. Within the body of our data, we have with much caution posited probable causations for single innovations delimited by single isoglosses. Here again, our insight is limited by the very nature of the task as well as by the infancy of Yoruba dialectology. To be able to explain our isoglosses fully, we will have to await further research.

We also want to draw attention to the fact that the emphasis in this work has not been one on dialect classification on the basis of individual features. For instance, there are many regional differences within any of the major dialect boundaries established. Even though we have documented these regional innovations, we do not regard their isoglosses as delimiting dialect boundaries. Isoglosses have to bundle sufficiently to delimit a cleavage in the network of communication before they can be regarded as delimiting dialect boundaries. The classification of dialects on the basis of individual isoglosses, while possible, seems worthless. At best, it destroys the very concept of dialect.

6.23 Structuralism and Dialectology

Since the publication in 1954 of Weinreich's article, "Is a Structural Dialectology Possible?", there has been much interest in the application of structural linguistic principles and methodology to dialect geography. Various degrees of success have been achieved in this direction; and even though the usefulness of a structural dialectology has been disputed, structural dialectology has nevertheless been shown to be possible.

The reservations as to the usefulness of a structural dialectology arise not because of any inherent weakness in the construct but because of the very nature of the object of our description. It is indeed a fact that the regularity we

assume for the speech of even a single individual is an illusion, and credibility is strained beyond limits when from this we extrapolate regularity for the speech of a community. When we recognize that even for a single speaker there are different levels of usage, we delimit the object of our description by reference to a particular level. But by describing a particular level of usage, say, the formal as against the informal, can the structuralist claim that he has described a language?

The point we are striving at here is that structural linguistics itself has problems in regarding language as a regular and closed system of discrete members. The assumption is only a pragmatic device to facilitate the study of language. Linguistics has thrived very well from the use of such abstract constructs; and perhaps the nature of language can better be understood only by the use of such abstractions.

To the extent that language itself permits us to regard it as a structure, Weinreich (1954) seeks to employ in dialectology those structural devices which have served the linguist well. The problem here is of a different nature from the structuralist's. While it is sometimes possible for the dialectologist to regard historically distant dialects as distinct systems, he cannot do this with transitional dialects where there is a continuous merging of one subsystem

into another and where there is diversity in what may be regarded as a system.

Weinrich's construct of a diasystem, where applicable, is a partial solution for this problem. By it, Weinreich does not demand that dialectology be contained in structuralism, since among the obvious reasons, the use of external material as contained in our Chapter 2 has no reasoned place in structuralism. Nor does Weinreich envisage that structural dialectology, which in essence is synchronic, replace the diachronic study of dialects.

The diasystem is valuable for a bidialectal situation. For a CY speaker who has acquired a knowledge of Standard Yoruba, for instance, a diasystem can be constructed to show his linguistic behavior in the two dialects. Following Weinreich's example, the formula below is to be read as follows: single slashes enclose sets of phonemes and single tildes designate phonemic oppositions; oppositions in the constructed diasystem are characterized by double tildes. The whole formula for the diasystem is enclosed in double slashes.

1 - Standard Yoruba

2 - CY

$$//\frac{i}{i\sim ɪ} \approx e \approx ɛ \approx a \approx ɔ \approx o \approx \frac{u}{u\sim ʊ}//$$

If we compare this formula with the development of the vowel systems of CY and NWY given in Chapter 5, we find that this diasystem formula not only exhausts the synchronic phonological inventory of the two varieties but it also shows the

phonological correspondences of the two varieties. The correspondences, too, are a development from the history of the language.

We are not implying that a structural dialectology does not have its weaknesses. Some of these have been adequately discussed by Moulton (1962) and Herzog (1965). But these weaknesses do not outweigh its merits.

6.24. Goal of Dialectology

We suggested in Chapter 1 and in our subsequent discussions that the goal of dialectology should be primarily the discovery of the classificatory matrix which helps the naive native speaker recognize his dialect and where its boundary lies; and secondarily in uncovering the mechanics of language change. We further claimed that the recognition of a dialect is not solely based on linguistic criteria and that most purely linguistic delimitations of a dialect hardly match those which are recognized by the native speaker.

The problem of the native speaker's attitude to dialect is as intriguing as it is fascinating. We encountered in the field many situations in which we could find little or no significant difference between the speech habits of two settlements a few miles apart from each other but which are regarded as having different "dialects" by the native speakers. In such situations, we directly asked the native speakers wherein lie the differences. Some of the answers

given were, as expected, vague; while others were solely ethnological.

Let us consider a specific case, the information volunteered us by an Akure informant as to the differences between his dialect and that of Alade, about six miles south of Akure. "They (the Alades) are rude, have heavy tongues because they talk in their throat, lazy and eat dogs." The sophisticated linguist will hardly find any relevance of this information to dialect classification. On closer look however, we found that this naively expressed characteristic of the Alade speaker has its parallel in linguistic cleavage. The Alade speaker is considered rude because he has no plural of respect; he is regarded as talking in his throat because he makes use of the velar ɣ which is absent from Akure speech; lazy, in that he more often elides one of every two juxtaposed vowels. The relevance of the eating of dogs is the most intriguing, yet the comment has some semantic relevance because the Alade man distinguishes more "species" of dogs than the Akure man. While to the Akure speaker every dog is ajá, besides ajá, the Alade man has ɔ̀kɔ́ 'a dog sacrificed to the god of war' lɔ́kìlì 'a house dog which takes up childrens' mess, kítà 'a dog being tended for slaughter', kílìwí 'a young dog' and some other designations.

The differences between the nature of dialects in rural agricultural communities as against metropolitan dialects must not be lost sight of. We suspect that here in the United States, for instance, speech habits are becoming less

and less geographically defined because of the influence of the mass communication media and other factors as education and the growth of large metropolises. In the place of the geographically defined language cleavages have come some social stratification of speech habits within a single community. The multifarious interests within a large metropolis make this inevitable, especially when these interests and the interaction among the many peoples are socially defined.

But to the average Yoruba farmer who lives for most of the year away from the big cities, the geographically defined dialect is the reality. His society is almost classless, at least not as socially stratified as we have in say, New York. The only motivation for the existence of a village of about, say 500 people, is usually a common interest in agriculture and usually the only significant social distinction that can be made here is between the young and educated, who have acquired a knowledge of the standardized language and the adults who are relatively unexposed to this standardized form. To this type of adult, one's manner of speech shows whether one belongs to the settlement or not. We suspect that in a situation, where the native speaker recognizes one as not belonging to the settlement when no apparent difference between one's speech habit and his is found, the basis for the recognition is group identity. By whatever features and characteristics the native uses, he concludes that one does not belong to a particular group and therefore one speaks a dialect different from his.

On the other hand, the native speaker may have other factors on which group identity may be based, besides the bond of common settlement and common interests. Perhaps the dialectologist will benefit more from a recognition of these criteria which will probably later show themselves in linguistic cleavage.

While our questionnaire was not geared in the main to solve this problem (in fact, the possibility of such a goal came to us only after many months in the field), we feel that the data already presented can be partially utilized to buttress this claim. Our major dialect boundaries are established on the basis of both linguistic and external criteria.

But we are still a long way off from recognizing with accuracy what the native speaker's criteria are. This first attempt in Yoruba dialectology can hardly be expected to achieve this goal. Such a goal can come only after a reasonable documentation of cleavage at all levels of the language and after much progress in the sociocultural description of the people. What our present study can achieve is the humble goal of opening up the way for further research along these lines.

APPENDIX 1

INDEX OF PRINCIPAL INFORMANTS

Location	Informant	Age	Occupation
Abeokuta	Mr. Ogunbowale, S.O..	35	University Lecturer
Ado	Mr. Olatoye, B.A.	48	Farmer
Ado Ekiti	Mr. Osho, O.	52	Trader
Agbabu	Mr. Akinyosoye, D.	46	Produce Examiner
Aiyetoro	Mr. Ogunti, S.	55	Politician
Ajebandele	Mr. Bakare, D.	58	Farmer
Akure	Mr. Aladegbaiye, O.	28	Teacher
Aye	Mr. Monebi, S.	35	Agric. Officer
Ede	Mr. Olojede, B.	?	Weaver
Effon	Mr. Abodunde, O.	33	Medical Secretary
Eruwa	Mr. Ajani	39	Farmer
Epe	Mr. Awopeju, E.	52	Fisherman
Gbongan	Mr. Aderemi, O.	41	Teacher
Ibadan	Mr. Lalude, A.	70	Retired Civil Servant
Idanre	Mr. Akinrinlola, O.	40	Printer
Ifaki	Mr. Dada, G. O.	43	Teacher
Ife	Mr. Akinlagun, S.	29	Student
Igbara Oke	Dr. Ajayi, W. O.	39	University Lecturer
Igbetti	Mr. Adebisi, A.	49	Farmer
Ijebu Ode	Mr. Ogunba, O.	31	University Lecturer
Ijebu Igbo	Mrs. Durojaiye, M.	48	Trader
Ijero	Mr. Obasa, O.	37	Teacher
Ikare	Mr. Adeyemo, A.	47	Farmer
Ikeja	Mr. Gbadamosi, S.	52	Farmer
Ikerre	Mr. Affun, S. I.	56	Farmer
Ikirun	Mr. Seidu, B.	66	Trader
Ikole	Mr. Babayemi, O.	33	Teacher
Ikorodu	Mr. Anjorin, O.	29	Student
Ilaro	Mr. Obadara, A.	63	Farmer
Ilesa	Mr. Ojo, S.	34	Student
Ile Oluji	Mr. Akinbo, O.	48	Farmer
Irele	Mr. Lebi, A.	31	Student
Iseyin	Mr. Akinola, O.	53	Weaver
Iwere	Mr. Adedeji, J.	47	Farmer
Iwo	Mr. Alabi, D.	58	Farmer
Lagos	Mr. Ojora, B.	25	Student
Lanlate	Mr. Agboola, A.	58	Farmer
Ogbomosho	Mr. Ayantayo, A.	39	Clerk
Okeigbo	Mr. Owolabi, D.	36	Teacher

Location	Informant	Age	Occupation
Okemesi	Miss Oluwadiya, E.	?	Teacher
Okitipupa	Mr. Akinbuwa, A.	40	Trader
Ondo	Mrs. Adetugbo, E.	65	Trader
Ore	Madam Akinmulero, O.	77	-------
Oshogbo	Mr. Aderinola, S.	58	Farmer
Otta	Mr. Ojogbole, P.	64	Hunter
Owo	Miss Ogundipe, M.	?	Teacher
Oyo	Mr. Okunola, D.	37	Farmer
Shagamu	Mr. Bashorun, O.	53	Trader
Shaki	Mr. Abiodun, A.	34	Clerk
Tapa	Mr. Oladimeji, A.	68	Farmer
Ujare	Mr. Boboye, O.	54	Teacher

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