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mony, sometimes even anarchy, among men. In days gone by, communities, towns, in fact whole tribes had gone to war in which thousands had died just because of a parcel of land. Even now, disputes over land constantly pitch communities against one another and in the process, a lot of damage is done to lives and property.

From between Akwa Ibom communities and their counterparts in Abia, Cross River and Ebonyi communities, Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra State, Ife and Modakeke in Osun State, Benue and Taraba communities to, most recently, Offa and Erinle communities in Kwara State, disputes over land have, over the years become the staple of community relations in Nigeria.

Consider the most recent one. On Tuesday, June 20, barely two weeks ago, two communities in Kwara State, Offa in Offa Local Council and Erinle in Oyin Local Council, fell upon each other in a contest that had no umpire! The hostility, the consequence of an age-long disagreement between two descendants of the Yoruba progenitor, Oduduwa, raged for four consecutive days with catastrophic consequences.

The official death toll, when the booms and sbams of warfar went silent, according to the Kwara State Police Public Relations Officer, Deputy opritendent Gideon Markus, stood at three but official sources said more than 10 people died, warming ownership rights over what they no longer have to enjoy!

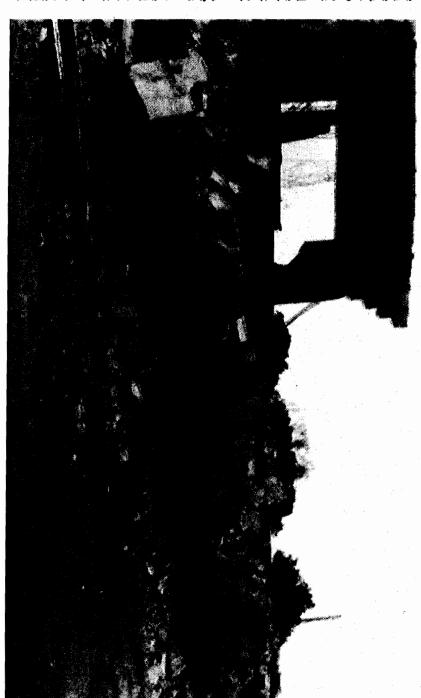
Ironically, the most reliable authority on Yoruba history Rev. Samuel Johnson in his work *The History of the Yorubas groups Offa and Erin-Ile as people of common destinies, state and hope.*

Johnson says on page 201 of the book: "A sanguinary ball was fought in which the Fulanis were victorious. They routed the Yorubas and followed up their victory, which resulted in the desertion and destruction of many towns in the Ilobo providence. The Only important town left in that part were Offa, Igbona, Ilona, Erin and a few others."

Giving the history of how the age long acrimony between the people of Offa and the Erin-Ile started, a teacher of Law at the University of Ilorin, Mr. Rasheed Ijaojola said it began in the First Republic when the people of Erin-Ile allegedly registered series of moves by the Cffa people to be classified

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common and seem to define the gravity of the mutual antagonism, even hatred, that appears to characterise human/community relations in Nigeria. From Ilorin, ABIODUN FAGBEMI reports The report was chilling: three persons beheaded in a communal clash between two communities in Kwara State following a dispute over a piece of land. These days, such reports are rather very



well nigh impossible for Offa to be merged with the defunct Western Region, because it is Erin-Ile and not Offa that is the demarcating settlement nities is such that unless the Erin-Ile residents concented to such a proposition, it would have been between Osun and Kwara States. The geographical placement of the two commu-

Offa people could not be in the Southwest when the town before Offa is in the defunct Northern ljaodola noted: "The argument, then was that

ties could not be divorced from the Dr. Funsho Joseph O. Ijaodola, the cause of the internecine crises between the Offa and the Erin-Ile communi-Adaramola's Awards of 1992. According to an Ilorin-based legal practitioner

that Adaramola's demarcating point has been exceeded by a kilometer stretch of land: porarily sited. By interpretation therefore, it means Adaramola boundary today is about one kilometer from where the Federal Polytechnic Offa is tem-Descendants Union (ODU) secretariat Offa. The Lagos State University (LASU), had allegedly put the boundary between Offa-Erinle at NEPA Transformer (now PHCN) almost opposite Offa Adaramola, now a professor of Jurisprudence,

as belated."During his administration, the first civilian governor of Kwara State, Alhaji Adamu Attah while trying to foster unity between the two communities had remained silent on any Supreme Court decision, but instead had embarked on the construction of a modern market called "Ajegunle Market", for the benefits of both communities.

According to Ijaodola, the teacher of law, "the concerned people deserted the market and today it Jiaodola, contested at the Supreme Court in 1973 but with the apex court describing the application The Adaramola award was, according to

for peace continued. But according to a secretary at Oloffa's palace, who asked not tobe quoted. "not bear the unprovoked attack on our people."
But his counterpart at Erin told *The Guardian* of Olanipe cun II) and the Kabiyesi of Erin-Ile (Oba especia ly attacking our men in the farm, but you that the Erin-Ile community was not provoking us is being used as a motor park in Offa."The search Abdulgariyu Olusookun) are friends, so we used to know; is commonly known that our Kabiyesi
(Oloffa of Offa, Oba Mustapha Olawoore

an alleged attemptt by Offa people to dominate their men in the farms. But like I had told you, if ther adjacent settlements by encroaching on their hat naturally our peop. would resist such ey had trespassed on our farm land, you know nds and diverting the location of all federal presce to Offa alone. "It is not true that we fought

The communities convinued their cat and mouse

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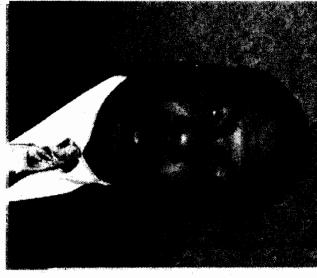
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One of the destroyed buildings in Offa



Governor Saraki of Kwara State

game until 1997, when the administrator of the state Col. Peter Ogar (Rtd.) had to declare the about four-kilometer radius disputed landed area a buffer

at structure already erected by an Offa man plebiscite, it was alleged that there was an industri-Major Bisi Oladipo. The structure coded "Biko Industry' was allegedly meant for the sale of vehi-But before this declaration after the conduct of a

arrangement by his Oyin Council counterpart alleged sudden non-recognition of the buffer zone Tajudeen Aro Folaranmi linked Mrs. Hellen Popoola. Narrating the event that led to the recent may-hem, the chairman of the already dissolved Offa Local Council (in the aftermath the crisis), the crisis to

ple. The state government set up a committee and came in, we started having problem with Erin peo-According to Folaranmi, "as soon as Popoola

> them removing the industrial struc-ture set up by Major Oladipo a late Offa man, on the buffer zone. buying and selling on the buffer zone. The next thing was for us to see at that time the Erin people were

urged them to try and recover a taxi cab parked within it, so that it would not be destroyed," he said. have been recording cases of assault on our people in the farm. We did not retaliate and anyone who cares to check should confirm this in the police records. When I noticed the tried to calm down our people but destruction of Oladipo's property, I "Besides, for the past months, we

sawmill were torched while a motor park at Idi Ogun was vandalized in the area Besides, 10 other people were wounded. The feed mill and the doned off by the police, killed one Deji Razaq who operated a car wash moved further into the area ed the state government, they assured us that a detachment of hose people attacking us from Erin disputed area. But we were told that policemen would be ordered to the Folaranmi added: "When I contact-. 100

here until the panel starts its sitting. committee has been set up to look into the crisis, I think I better stop to the best of my ability. Now that a civic duties and that I had displayed saying. As a council boss, I know my do not understand what Folaranmi is But Popoola countered, saying:"I

ers of both communities continue to Armoured Brigade, Sobi, there, leadto the troubled spot, after the blame the police for their alleged deployment of some men of the 22 Although peace has since returned

complicity in the crisis.

They alleged that the police could development.
One of the complainants said: "They of lives and property, but instead they appeared indifferent to the have prevented further destruction

> effectively. ring factions to prosecute the crisis before the 2007 general elections.
>
> Although the police boss put the ery fighters were brought from neighfive Bésides, it was alleged that mercindeath toll at a mere two, sources said boring settlements to enable the warthe toll could not be less than,

Unconfirmed reports said spouses of both Erin-Ile and Offa had to horriedly file divorce suits, as the unluckier ones

watched the wanton destruction unhindered. It appeared that they were only drafted there to guide a filling stament official. owned by a highly placed state governtion closer to the scene said to just stayed glued to an area and

chat with police spokesman, Deputy Supritendent Gideon Marcus described he allegation as unfortunate and frivo-Reacting to the development in a at with The Guardian, the state's

accusing us. I have heard of their accusations. This is just one of the bad lucks men, we are not always happy when there to ensure peace. As uniformed there is crisis. hat they even attacked us. We were hat we face in the police. Do you know Marcus said: "All of these people are

simply call it a frivolous accusation," he "But probably these people misun-derstood us. We pray to God that they would understand us. This is a federal Over 90 per cent of our men sent to the This is quite unfortunate and I will area are not even from Kwara State. police, yet people are complaining

that the state police command is at power as more mobile police men have been deployed to Abuja for training present experiencing shortage of man-Sources however told The Guardian

among them were either maimed or got their property burnt.

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