

Socio-Economic Impacts of Settlers in Ado-Ekiti

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Abstract: *Migration and trade are two important factors that led to the commercial growth and development of Ado-Ekiti during pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial period. These twin processes were facilitated by efforts of other ethnic groups, most notably the Ebira among others, and other Yoruba groups. Sadly there is a paucity of detailed historical studies on the settlement pattern of settlers in Ado-Ekiti. It is in a bid to fill this gap that this paper analyses the settlement pattern of settlers in Ado-Ekiti. The paper also highlights the socio-economic and political activities of settlers, especially their contributions to the development of Ado-Ekiti. Data for this study were collected via oral interviews and written sources. The study highlights the contributions of settlers in Ado-Ekiti to the overall development of the host community*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ado-Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti state is one of the state in southwest Nigeria. the state was carved out from Ondo state in 1996, since then, the state has witness a tremendous changes in her economic advancement. The state has witness the infix of people from different places. Settlement patterns in intergroup relations are assuming an important area of study in Nigeria historiography. Studies on the history of Ado-Ekiti are enormous. Example of such works include the fascinating studies of Oguntuyi (1952), Olomola(1984) Jadesola Babatola (2008), Oke Michael Akande(2007) etc. Most of these studies cover extensive political, economic and socio-cultural relations of Ado-Ekiti people and their neighbors. However, not much work has been done on the settlement pattern of modern Ado-Ekiti in which various settlers who left their original homes had found reasons to settle in Ado-Ekiti. The theme of this paper therefore centres on the settlement pattern of people from far and near in Ado-Ekiti. It also examines the forms of socio-political and economic intercourse between Ado-Ekiti people and all other Yoruba settlers as well as non-Yoruba speaking groups that have settled in the town up to the recent past.

2. ADO-EKITI AND THE STRANGERS: HOSTILITY AND HOSPITABILITY

Ado-Ekiti the capital of present day Ekiti State has come to be a major homeland of a large percentage of Ekiti people in the past one hundred years⁴. The exact date of the establishment of Ado-Ekiti has not been ascertained by scholars, however, available information shows that Ado-Ekiti became what it is today as a result of the influx of various groups who migrated, settled and regarded Ado-Ekiti as their new home country⁵. The town attracted many wandering refugees from other Yoruba towns and cities and made Ado-Ekiti their home⁶. In other words, the political organization of the town encouraged migrants to settle within the town. It is important to note that the settlers were attracted to the town because of the city's customs and traditions that did not forbid strangers from mixing with indigenes for socio-political and economic interaction. Beside, Ado-Ekiti had an open-door policy of accepting new comers especially those who dared hard work, looking for economic opportunities⁷. These categories of people, apart from Yoruba settlers in the town include, the Ebira, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani just to mention a few.

As earlier mentioned, the town offered more opportunities for laudable achievements. As a result, industrious artisans, farmers, traders as well as ambitious able-bodied men and women looking for security and better economic opportunities in farming and trading activities migrated to Ado and settled down⁸. Many of these migrants especially the non-Yoruba groups who settled in Ado worked as labourer, domestic servants, traders, farmers as well as apprentices.

About six hundred years ago, Ado-Ekiti became a conglomeration of people from many parts of Yorubaland at large. The settlers in the town could be classified into three major groups i.e. Ado

people, settler's population and refugees. These include the descendants of the following groups of voluntary internal immigrants from Ulegemo, Ulero, Aso, Ogbunrunmundun, Inikun, Ujamoro, Utalaoro. Ewi conquered and incorporated them into Ado-Ekiti, mainly Ilesun. These had become indigenous Ado by the 14th century¹¹. The element of non-Ado communities who migrated, settled in Ado-Ekiti within the district, these include settlers from Imesi Lasigidi, Ode, Egbe Oba near Akure, Oge land in 1924 a part of Oke agbe Akoko, element from Ila Orangun in the 16th century. War refugees/captives from Ikole in the 19th century, Omuo, Oyo speaking communities in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Elements of Ijebu, Urobo, Hausa-Fulani, Igala, Igbo etc settlers from the early 20th century following the establishment of British colonial administration in the country, with Ado-Ekiti as a district headquarters¹².

It is noteworthy to note that, there has never been any major friction between the settlers and their Ado host. Available information show that the settlers acculturated themselves with the pattern of behaviour and lifestyle of an average Ado people. It should be noted that, Ado people are peace loving and accommodating in as much their traditions are not tampered with¹³. It is also important to note that majority of the settlers came in search of greener pastures, settlement and protection¹⁴. As a result, the town witnessed the influx of people from Benin, Owo and Ose areas while one of the special qualities of the people of Ado is their love for strangers. Strangers in all Ado communities feel quite at home. They have fully integrated into society and contributed to the socio-economic development of Ado-Ekiti and its immediate communities.

The trend which began in the 15th century continued in the early 20th century with the British colonial administration opening up the country, Nigeria establishment of colonial administrative headquarters for Ekiti in Ado-Ekiti

One Akinboye Fayinminu an Ondo man who became a reputable cocoa merchant and ranked high among the traders in the town.¹⁵ He later became balogun of Emmanuel church, Ado-Ekiti and remained till the end of 1970. Among other non-Yoruba groups in Ado are the Urhobo and Igbo who migrated from the Niger Delta and the eastern parts, the Hausa - Fulani from the north, Ebira from the middle belt and a few Igala and Idomas popularly referred to as "*agatu*" who engaged in farming and hired farm labour. The Urhobo concentrated primarily on palm wine tapping, palm oil production and some cassava production¹⁶.

It is important to note that, among these groups, Urhobo exhibits a lot of self confidence and perception of equality with their host which make them to be regarded as arrogant, as a result, it was difficult for them to settle down conveniently unless they have business of their own to generate income without relying much on the support of their landlord¹⁷. On the contrary, the situation was different in the case of Ebira until the recent years. The early Ebira migrants who came to Ado-Ekiti were peasant's farmers desirous of cultivating large portion of land for the production of agricultural products such as: yam, okro, vegetable pepper beans and cassava. Some of them however took to hunting as a complementary profession¹⁸. As a result of this, they migrated in large number since the traditional land tenure system in Ado-Ekiti allowed strangers to be granted land for cultivation of crops and settling down in various hamlets and villages. Also, the system of *isakole* was not strange to Ebira people, land were given to them to cultivate and in return, payment for the use of land was usually made in kind and cash on annual basis¹⁹.

Moreover, the cordiality between Ado and Ebira eventually assisted them to be acclimatized and embraced the Ado family system and culture. The few successful Ebira were able to engage in other businesses without conflicting with the town's people²⁰. In the process, they gained the confidence of their host to the extent that some of the Ebira sons and daughters benefited from the educational enterprise and integrated themselves into the community by either inter-marriage with the indigene or by attraction²¹.

However, the Ebira began to be prominent in Ado as a result of their obedience to the law of the land and the role they played in the 1979 general elections. It is also worthy to note that the Ebira also played a prominent role in 1982 during the President Shehu Shagari's state visit to Ado then in old Ondo State. They contributed the bulk of population of non-indigene that publicly celebrated the visit. By the beginning of the fourth republic, the Ebira had become a very formidable political element in Ado politics to the extent of producing a councilor at the local government level during the 2003-2006 administration of Governor Ayo Fayose²².

Similarly, the Igbo people are another important non-Yoruba group in Ado. They were limited in number when compared to Ebira, and came as palm wine tappers between the 1950s and 1960s. This is because, the attraction of Igbo people were largely concentrated in urban cities of Onitsha, Lagos, Ibadan²³ etc. The potential for an average Igbo man to do business in Ado was limited during the colonial era and up to the early 1970s because the available business opportunities have been maximized and coordinated by the activities of the multinationals company and their agents such as UAC,UTC, Lever Brothers just to mention a few. Also, the available limited business opportunities were given to few notable agents and financially capable entrepreneurs including: chief Adamolekun, chief Ajibade the Egbedi Mr. J.B Falade, Madam Oguntuyi Joel and Brothers, J.A Anisulowo and other notable merchants in the town²⁴.

Available evidence point to the fact that, after the civil war, majority of the Igbo people that were empowered during the period of reconstruction, reconciliation, rehabilitation and expansion of Nigerian economy realized the need to spread their business potentials to other parts of Nigeria²⁵. The earlier encounter of Igbo people in Ado was the influx of Igbo-made products popularly referred to as *okirika* in the late 70s and early 80s. The Igbo people systematically increased their trading activities in Ado-Ekiti by renting shops in major city centre along Okesha and old garage where they expanded their trading activities. Information reveals that there has never been any major conflict between Igbo and their Ado host, they are known to be law abiding people to the extent that a prominent merchant D.L Okoli was made an honorary chief of the town as a notable merchant²⁶. Today, Igbo business in Ado-Ekiti constitutes a major percentage of the trading in local economy. Among the Christian communion, the Igbo has already established themselves by having an Igbo Roman Catholic church St Tansi Catholic church at Oke Ila and the Anglican communion of Ekiti Diocese allotted to them the Emmanuel church for members of Igbo Anglican adherents.

Migrants from the northern parts of Nigeria i.e. Hausa, Fulani, Nupe etc popularly known as *monla, gambari or aboki* are also to be reckoned with in the town²⁷. The Hausa settlement in Ado is situated at Atikankan and Odo Igbeyin area of the town where they established their trading depots. The Sabo area and part of Ijoka Quarters of the oba's market have become the Quarters' of the Hausa people since the past 40 - 50 years²⁸. Information reveals that there has never been any major disagreement or physical confrontation between the Hausa and their hosts apart from the Fulani who are well known as the cattle rearer²⁹. They have been reputed to be isolated from the town because of the nature of their job. They wander through the bush to secure food and water for their animals. They often behave as if they own the land and at time engage themselves in physical confrontation with their host whenever their herds encroach on indigene's farms. As a result, the Fulani are less integrated into Ado-Ekiti community³⁰.

It is obvious that both Fulani and Urhobo are the two major ethnic groups that were less integrated into Ado-Ekiti community, while the Ebira, Igbo and Hausa are fully integrated and are accommodated into the family system simply because of their obedience to the law of the land and similarity of religion. Hausa for example, Islamic religion has bridged the gap between Hausa and Ado muslim³¹, their willingness to contribute to the local economy and their non-challant attitude to life has made them less of a threat to the Ado community except for the few cases of disturbance in the past between Hausa and the local people on the issue that involve the use of land and spillover of religion crisis in the north and little disagreement over the issue of security and access to landed property and personal right in the community³². From the above discussion, one can submit that Ado-Ekiti indigenes have been friendly with the settlers in the town.

3. YORUBA ELEMENTS IN ADO-EKITI

The history of internal migrations among the Yoruba in general was characterized with constant political dispute, occasionally, succession of kingship or chieftainship³³. These often necessitated the mass movement of people from their original home states and their eventual settlement in other states and kingdom.³⁴

The fall of old Oyo Empire and the outbreak of Yoruba civil wars necessitated the mass movement of people mostly of the Oyo-Yoruba stock from the old Oyo Empire to their various locations³⁵. Although, emigration of people into Ado-Ekiti began more than 200 years before the collapse of old Oyo Empire, therefore, very few people came to Ado from Oyo.

Ado-Ekiti, like other Yoruba towns in Nigeria has been a homeland of Yoruba people, simply because of the nature and the political structure of the town which allowed and accommodates strangers to

interact and move freely in the town. It is important to note that, Ado-Ekiti witnessed the influx of Yoruba migrants who later settled permanently in the town³⁷. The history of Ado-Ekiti is replete with reference to some immigrant/settler families in the town.

4. ODOBA'S FAMILY

Historically, the odoba family in Ado-Ekiti migrated from old Oge in Akoko division about three hundred years ago³⁸. They initially settled in Adugboku a farmland of Ado-Ekiti before they were finally invited by the Ewi to settle in their present quarters in Ado³⁹. Available evidence reveals that Odoba together with his family members left Oge, their original home as a result of a chieftaincy dispute⁴⁰. After the demise of Owage, whose name is not retained. According to the tradition and custom of the Oge, Odoba, the crown prince of the Oge, was to proceed to the throne as the next Owage. He had performed all the necessary traditional rites relevant to the new Owage's installation before he was technically rejected by the king's makers. He was rejected on the account of his haughtiness. The Odoba together with his family members including his own sons left Oge in annoyance and migrated to Ado-Ekiti⁴¹.

It is important to note that, Odoba together with his family members were warmly welcomed to Ado-Ekiti and the Ewi. As a mark of acceptance in the town, Ewi offered the Asha chieftaincy title to Odoba, which he rejected and pleaded with Ewi to allow him retain his Owage crown title. He however pleaded to the Ewi to consider his son for the Asha chieftaincy title offered to him. His requests were granted; he was allowed to retain his Oge crown title and classified as an Ijegbe/Elumo group of chiefs, a king maker and inner council of chiefs. Long after they have settled in Ado-Ekiti at Ereguru, it has never been on record that, there was any crisis or conflict between the Odoba family and their host (Ado-Ekiti)⁴².

The level of development witnessed in Ado-Ekiti will not be complete without reference to the Odoba family in Ado. Available information reveals that the first set of missionaries who came to Ado in 1895 started their missionary activities at Odoba's compound. History also has it that, the old site of maternity Home, Ile Abiye, Emmanuel church started at Odoba's compound⁴³. The headquarters of British colonial administration of Ekiti built on Odoba land in 1913.

5. ODOGUN'S FAMILY

Odogun family was one of the Yoruba speaking groups that migrated and settled in Ado-Ekiti⁴⁴. Available information showed that the Odogun under the leadership of OKAKA, a warrior and prince of Isewa a section of Idoani in Ose Local Government area migrated to Ado-Ekiti. Information reveals further that OKAKA together with his family members left their homeland as a result of chieftaincy dispute. It was reported that, he contested the vacant chieftains' stool of his father, the head of Isewa and was not elected; as a result, he left Isewa together with his family and migrated to Ado-Ekiti. On his sojourn, he had a stopover at Imesi Lasigidi before he finally moved to Ado-Ekiti⁴⁵.

It is interesting to note that on his arrival in Ado-Ekiti, he brought with him two of his family traditional deities as a symbol of identity, i.e a war masquerade *Ajalamo* and *Orisa-Isewa*, the owner of Aligator known as (Isewa goddess of water). History also recorded that Okaka arrived at Ado-Ekiti during the reign of the forth Ewi Oloju Aro he was cordially received together with his entourage by the Ewi. Shortly after his arrival, there was a conflict between Ado-Ekiti and Igbara odo, Okaka been a warrior refused to go to war for his kingdom and also declined to accept traditional title given to him by the Ewi⁴⁶.

Okaka been a warrior was able to capture some of the invaders who normally come to invade Ado-Ekiti on the regular bases on their way to escape⁴⁷. On this account, he was invited and summoned before the Ewi and stated that "in spite of the fact that Okaka refused to go to war, and capture four enemies without any external forces" as a result of this, Ewi therefore conferred "ODOGUN"chieftaincy title on him. Because of this, Okaka was made the "head of Oke-Ewi domain, a king maker, a senior member of inner council of chiefs" *olori marun* he represents during an interregnum.⁴⁸

Today in Ado-Ekiti, Odogun chieftaincy is one of the most prominent and influential titles in the town. Information shows that today, the Odogun chieftaincy title is taken on rotational bases by two ruling linages i.e. Ona-Owuro lineage and Asegbe Oloba lineage

6. EJIGBO'S FAMILY

The Ejigbo migrated to Ado-Ekiti from old Imesi Lasigidi homeland under the leadership of Oso Omololu where he settled down permanently. As a matter of fact, scanty information is available on their migration pattern to Ado, but available information shows that the Ejigbo family left their original home after a chieftaincy dispute among the ruling houses and sought Ewi's protection⁵⁰.

Today in Ado-Ekiti, among the prominent chiefs in the town, Ejigbo is classified as the closest chief to Ewi. Ewi classified him among the Olori Marun chiefs and made him the head of Ijigbo quarter in Oke Ewi domain and also as the palace minister. As the palace minister, chief Ejigbo visits Ewi three times daily to see to his wellbeing and update him on the on-going activities around his kingdom. While going to the palace, he takes the lead of Agba-Ado to the palace. He has direct access to the inner chambers of the palace to notify the Ewi of Agba Ado's presence and return to deliver the Ewi's message to them. Chief Ejigbo on many occasion, liaises between the Ewi and his subjects, in the town Ejigbo may takes immediate steps to settle disputes without the matter been taken to Ewi's court⁵¹. Ejigbo chieftaincy title is taken on rotation by two ruling lineages namely Oso Omololu and Ibaraba du Ijumu.

7. SASERE'S FAMILY

The migration process of Sasere family to Ado-Ekiti was controversial. Available information shows that the Sasere under the leadership of Egbedimojo migrated from Owu in Abeokuta. He left his original home country because, he failed to achieve his political ambition and became frustrated⁵². History also recorded that Egbedimojo left with his people and initially settled in Omuo Ekiti After a while, he contested for the vacant throne of Olomuo and lost. Therefore he was frustrated and left Omuo Ekiti to settle initially at Ugbo Aso, a farmland of Ado⁵³.

Later, Egbedimojo together with his people left Ugbo-Aso to settle at Oudo (where Ile abiye maternity hospital now stands) in Ado Ekiti. Egbedimojo with his people were later invited by the Ewi to settle in the capital city of Ado. They were warmly welcome by the people, as a matter of fact, Egbedimojo was appointed and installed the Sasere of Ado-Ekiti by his royal highness⁵⁴. He was among the Ewi cabinet chief, Head of Igbeyhin Quarters and also classified among Olori marun group of chiefs. Sasere chieftaincy title in Ado-Ekiti has only one ruling house/lineage Okilorigbokun⁵⁵.

8. ARO'S FAMILY

Aro Osindile was one of the immigrant groups that migrated to Ado-Ekiti about the 18th century from Usho. It was recorded that Aro and his family were victims of inter-tribal war which necessitated their migration from Usho. It is equally important to note that on their sojourn, they settled in Igrigiri forest before they finally moved into the city of Ado to settle permanently⁵⁶.

More importantly, on their arrival at Ado, Aro Osindile was appointed and installed as a prominent chief of the town; classified into IARE MERIN group of chiefs and made a member of inner council of chiefs. Aro and his Ilaro people, often referred to as "OYE" were among the first people in the defunct Ado kingdom to acquire Egigun cult. Aro participates in many festivals in Ado such as ceremonial bonfire and Aheregbe festival .Today in Ado-Ekiti Aro chieftaincy title is taken on rotational basis by two linages i.e Falomo and Kamo Fajimiye linages⁵⁷.

9. ALARIERIN FAMILY

The history of Alarierin family in Ado-Ekiti dated from a succession dispute to the throne of Ila-Orangun⁵⁸. Atikumogun, a prince of Ila-Orangun who bided to ascend the throne of his father's lost the contest and decided to emigrate out of his community. He migrated with his people to Ado-Ekiti sojourning for a short period of time at Ayegunle before he finally moved into the city for permanent settlement. Atikumodun arrived Ado-Ekiti, during the reign of Ewi Idagunmodo who reigned between 1696 and 1719 A.D

On this account, Ewi Idagunmodo accepted and welcomed Atikumogun and his family members into the town. He made prince Atikunodun the Alarierin and head of Ogbon Meta, *Emijamio* Domain, leader of Olori Ogbon Meta, a member of Inner council of Chiefs of the Ewi. Today, the appointment of Alarierin like other chiefs in Ado is first made by the family and presented to Ewi. Appointment of Alarierin is within a single family of Ajifeninu⁶⁰.

On the appointment of Alarierin, the chosen candidate is presented to Balemo of Ila, who would appoint chiefs to present the chosen candidate to the Ewi⁶¹. Most time, the Ifa Oracle is consulted for the selection. Available information reveals that, in the past, the chosen Alarierin was installed in the shrine of orisa the shrine of Egungun led by Aye and watched by Ila elders. But in the recent time, due to political changes and advancement, an Alarierin elect is taken to the palace for necessary ritual and installation ceremony by the Ewi in accordance with the tradition and custom of the town. The Alarierin celebrates Odede festival and Orisala, a fertility goddess on annually basis⁶².

10. ODUNRO FAMILY

Odunro migrated from Isia in Nupeland land and settled with his people in Ulesun kingdom under the leadership of Oduro Opoloki. He settled at a place called Oke-Efon many centuries ago. Available information shows that, Odunro left his original home country as a result of his failure to achieve a political elevation in his kingdom. Later, Ewi conquered Ulesun kingdom including Oke-Efon and all vassal towns and villages under the Elesun⁶³. He supplanted, occupied and integrated all the people under Ado and retained Odunro as the Head of Oke-Efon ward and made him a second member of Olori Ogbon Meta of Oke-Ila and a member of Inner council of Chiefs. The name of their ancestor was known as Agbadudumoru

Today in Ado, Odunro chieftaincy title is taken on rotational bases by two lineage, i.e Agbadudu Moru and Ikanmodu lineages. In the past, the installation of new Odunro usually takes place at the shrine of Orisala Deity but due to the political advancement, the Odunro is taken to Ewi for necessary initiation and installation ceremony. Odunro celebrates Ereju(Ebora) and Aerege festival in the town⁶⁴.

11. OLORA FAMILY

Oral interview with chief Joel Eyinafe Babatola, the Olora of Ora Quarters in Ado shows that, Olora, a Chief priestly title together with his Ora people could trace their ancestral origin to Ife, that Ora people migrated from Ife, sojourning briefly in Ilesa, at Adugboku is near Ajebandele, Ado old near Igbara Odo and Ekute⁶⁵. Later, they moved in to Ado, settled at Oke-ibon. Although, some of the Ora migrants refused to move and decided to stay behind in Ilesha, some went and founded Ora settlement in Ido under the Olojido⁶⁶.

Available information reveals that, Olora and his people have already settled at Oke-ibon long before Ewi came to found Oke-Ewi, but with the arrival of Ewi, Olora and his people were forced out of Oke-ibon to a place outside the town. They were forced to move because Ewi's consorts were often frightened by Olora's Ereju bull rearer some of which often roared like thunder while others cried mysteriously⁶⁷. Olora was made the Head of Ora family and third member of Olori Ogbon Meta or a Executive member of Oke-Ila Domain and a member of Ewi cabinet of Chiefs. Olora chieftaincy is taken on rotational basis by two lineages, i.e Babatola and Arogundade lineages. Installation of Olora, like the Alarierin and Odunro, almost takes the same process. The Olora elect is taken to Ewi's palace for necessary installation ceremonies⁶⁸.

Generally speaking, the influx of Yoruba elements and other groups have contributed in no small measure to the economic advancement of Ado_Ekiti. For instance, in the area of agriculture, Ebira are known to be the major producer of Yam while the Igbos engaged in all manners of business activities. The presence of these settlers had influence the economic structure of the town. Also, the Yoruba elements in the towns contributed in no small measure to the politics of the town. Today Ado-Ekiti is regarded as the economic hub of the state because of the benefit the town accorded to all the settlers.

12. CONCLUSION

Finally, this chapter had examine the historiography of settlers and socio-economic transformation of Ado-Ekiti, by examining the impact of settlers from far and near in the town. It has been shown from the foregoing that, the role of various settlers in the town cannot be overemphasized. Ado-Ekiti became what it is today as a result of the activities of various groups who migrated, settled and sees Ado-Ekiti as their new home. The town attracted industrious personalities as well as ambitious able men and women who are direly looking for better economic opportunities in farming and trading activities.

Ado-Ekiti also witnessed the influx of other Yoruba elements. Settlement of Yoruba elements into Ado-Ekiti was characterized by the constant and continuous migration of people, due to the constant

raids, political instability, economic crisis as well as Yoruba civil war. The various Yoruba elements who migrants into the town were able to fit in into Ado-Ekiti as a result of their loyalty and support received from the traditional ruler of the town.

It is interesting to note that, the Yoruba groups have systematically established themselves in Ado-Ekiti. Apart from the aforementioned Yoruba families in the town, there are other numerous Yoruba families in which this may not be able to address. This was as a result of paucity or unavailable information about them.

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- [44] Oral interview with Chief Odogun on 11th February 2013 age 60+.
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- [46] M.J Young Agbelusi Opcit p34.
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- [57] Ibid
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- [59] See Young Agbelusi p47
- [60] See A.O Oguntuyi Pp111-112.
- [61] Ibid
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