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## From Fraternal Brotherhood to Murderous Cult: The Origins and Mutations of Southern Nigeria's Confraternities from 1953 Onwards

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The Nigerian confraternity movement in the 1950s seemed to sprout from ideas of brotherhood and chivalry, much like any U.S. fraternity might have. But twenty years later Nigerian confraternities were beheading fellow students, murdering administrators, running prostitution rings, and wreaking havoc across Southern Nigeria. What caused the transformation from the original Pyrates confraternity to the ruthless, violent organizations of the 1980s and 90s? Which factors are most responsible for the transformation? This paper will attempt to answer these questions through both historical analysis and theoretical critique of contemporary arguments concerning the corruption of confraternities. An in depth historical analysis will be conducted on the origin point of Nigeria's first fraternities, as well as the progression and gradual corruption of values that undermined the confraternities later on. Next, this paper will give an overview of prominent academic theories concerning the subject while weighing the strengths and weaknesses of each. Finally I will offer up my own explanation for the corruption of confraternities, and tie it back in with the most successful elements of other modern theories to craft a comprehensive answer to the above questions.

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## Introduction

The Nigerian fraternity scene started much like a fraternity scene would on an American college campus. Seven close friends joined together in the name of fraternal brotherhood and moral values to form an organization bigger than themselves. They aimed to better their campus community by eliminating ethnic, religious, and socio-economic barriers. They wanted to produce African leaders who were proud of their heritage and the Nigerian way of life. In many ways they were successful, but twenty years later their organization began to break up and form splinter groups. And ten years after that those organizational offspring had begun to murder, kidnap, rape, and steal in the name of brotherhood. What was once a well-intentioned social fraternity had become a criminal cult. What went so wrong over the span of a few decades? The cause behind the corruption of Nigeria's "confraternities", as they are called, has baffled psychologists, sociologists, and other academics for years now.

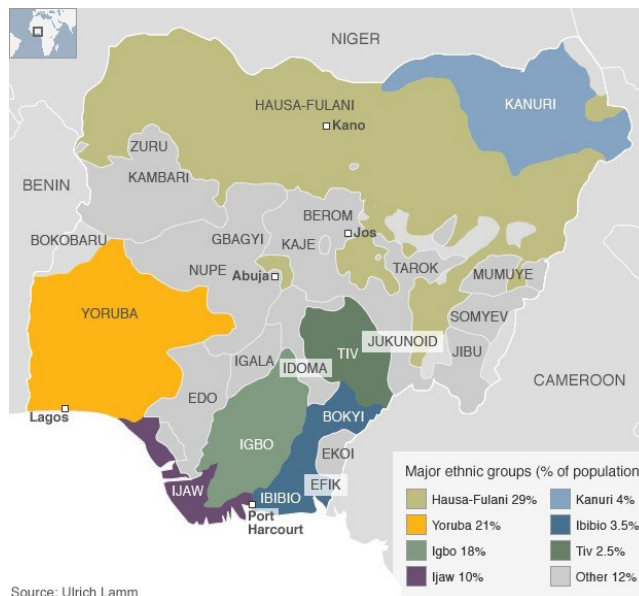
This essay will attempt to chip away at the Nigerian confraternity sociological mystery by answering some key questions relating to the topic: To what extent were Nigerian confraternities originally geared towards violence? What caused the transformation from the original Pyrates confraternity to the ruthless, violent organizations of the 1980s and '90s? Which factors are most responsible for the transformation? This paper will attempt to answer these questions through both historical analysis and theoretical critique of contemporary arguments concerning the corruption of confraternities. An in-depth historical analysis will be conducted on the origin point of Nigeria's first fraternities, as well as the progression and gradual corruption of values that undermined the confraternities later on. Next, this paper will give an overview of prominent academic theories concerning the subject while weighing the strengths and weaknesses of each. Finally I will offer my own explanation for the corruption of confraternities, and tie it back in with the most successful elements of other modern theories to craft a comprehensive answer to the above questions. However, it is necessary to clearly define the relevant terms in this area of study.

## Definitions

For the purpose of this essay we will be examining what are known as "confraternities" in Nigeria. The term confraternity is largely interchangeable with the word fraternity, but over the past seventy years, Nigeria has come to breed its own very unique brand of confraternities, and as such, the term is now synonymous with Nigerian fraternities in many places. The original term confraternity simply means a brotherhood, especially one with charitable or religious purpose. Why the founders of the first Nigerian fraternity selected this term rather than just "fraternity" is unclear, but for Nigeria and much of West Africa, the modern connotation of the confraternity has come to mean a ruthless criminal organization tied in some way to a university. These modern-day incarnations of confraternities have also been called "cults", "killer cults", or "campus cults" by popular media. This essay will utilize Rotimi's amalgamated definition of a secret cult as a "group of people whose activities are carried out in exclusive locations and unusual times without being exposed to the uninitiated" (Rotimi, 80). Throughout this essay the terms confraternity and campus cult will be interchangeable when referring to any sort of Nigerian university fraternal organization.

The scope of this research will be limited to confraternities and secret cults based in Southern Nigerian universities. The reasons for this limitation are twofold. First, the Northern Nigerian political, economic, and religious spheres are strictly governed by Muslim religious sects. This differs from Southern Nigeria, where tribal, ethnic, and religious ties all battle for supremacy. Northern Nigerian tribal and ethnic divides fall along much more clearly delineated religious lines, and what little tension exists between the two prominent sects of Shi'a and Sunni

Muslims manifests itself in words and ideological conversion rather than physical violence and territorial battles (Fabiyyi, 141). Second, this difference in cultural composition has precluded the need for any sort of ethnically neutral fraternal organization on many Northern Nigerian college campuses, and as a result, there are very few instances of confraternity activity in the North. For these reasons we will be focusing our examination on confraternity activity in Southern Nigeria. Specifically, confraternity activity has been most prevalent in the Yoruba, Edo, Igbo, and Ijaw ethnic regions within the south. The map below gives an unofficial visual representation of the ethnic concentration and makeup of Nigeria. This is not to say that confraternities are tied to these ethnic groups, instead they are quite the opposite, products of cultural dissonance between multiple ethnic and religious groups. This concept and the reasons for confraternity activity in Southern Nigeria are addressed below.



## Origins of the confraternity in Nigeria

Conveniently, the origins of the confraternity system in Nigeria can be traced back directly to the formation of one fraternal brotherhood at the University College, Ibadan, in the 1950s. Nowadays the college is no longer a satellite campus of the University of London, and it functions as a standalone institution known as the University of Ibadan. Thus it will be referred to as the University of Ibadan for the remainder of the paper. The University of Ibadan was the first University in Nigeria, and as such served as a major intellectual hub for 1950s and 1960s Nigeria. Great authors like Chinua Achebe and Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka were among the first to graduate from the university (Nwakanma, 79-80).

Wole Soyinka founded the Pyrates confraternity (a.k.a. the National Association of Seadogs) in 1953 while attending the University of Ibadan with six of his closest friends. Together they were known as the G7, or “Magnificent Seven” as some now call them (Rotimi, 81). The G7 set out to create a fraternal brotherhood based upon the pyratanical creed from Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*. The creed stated that the group would be “against all convention” as defined by society (Fabiyyi, 146-147). Wole Soyinka was elected “captain” of the society and adopted the name “Captain Blood” (Rotimi, 81). The confraternity closely followed the pirate literature, abandoning

their three-piece suits for traditional pirate garb, taking up the skull and crossbones as their logo, and using names from Daniel Dafoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (Soyinka, par. 8; Rotimi, 81; Aderoju, par. 16). But these seemingly silly pyratanical tendencies had a deeper meaning. The group was formed with ideological goals and convictions. Abandoning their suits was a way displaying their anti-colonial sentiment (Soyinka, par. 8). Adopting new pirate names allowed the members to transcend the ethnic and religious affiliations that came with their given names (Lawrence, par. 14). The group was formed with these certain values in mind: anti-colonial, anti-socio-economic class, de-tribalised, non-religious, and non-political (Soyinka, par. 4). In this way the G7 hoped to bring together a diverse student body on campus, and present opposition to the intolerant upper-class elites that dominated campus life for the first few years at the University of Ibadan (Rotimi, 81). The goals of the Pyrates confraternity were also stated quite clearly. They wanted "to fight non-violently but intellectually and effectively, against the imposition of foreign conventions, to revive the age of chivalry" (Rotimi, 81). This came quite easily since the original classes of Pyrates were comprised of the "cleanest, brightest, and most politically conscious students on campus" (Rotimi, 81). And the Pyrates also wanted "to find a lasting solution to the problems of tribalism and elitism" (Rotimi, 81).

With these goals and moral values, the Pyrates were quite successful. The group was politically active on campus, and by the 1970s had become a political hub at the University of Ibadan (Ellis, 223). According to Pastor Muiywa Awe, one of the G7 who went on to become a prominent religious figure, the Pyrates remained the only Nigerian fraternal organization for almost twenty years (Aderoju, par. 7). Over that time span the Pyrates produced many notable figures in the Nigerian community, with former G7 going on to become the first African Nobel Laureate, a successful radio host, executive director for the Nigerian Tobacco Company, and a successful poet ("Nigerian veteran broadcaster, Opara dies", par. 1-4; "Vanguard Columnist, Aig-Imoukhuede is Dead", par. 4-6). It was not until 1972 that another confraternity formed in Nigeria, according to Awe (Aderoju, par. 7). But by 1984 Wole Soyinka was forced to shut down all campus operations by the Pyrates confraternity due to the increasing violent actions on campus. From the Pyrates confraternity spawned a whole plethora of other confraternity organizations over the coming decades, all relating back to the principles of the Pyrates in some form.

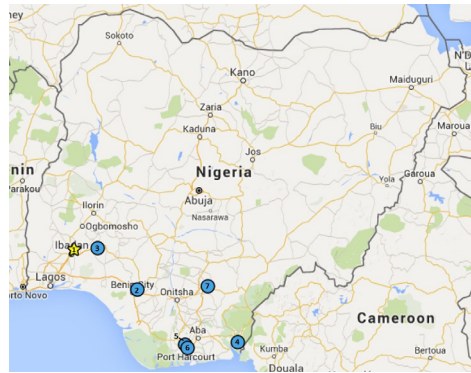
## Splintering of the Pyrates and the Formation of New Confraternities

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact dates of formation for many of the confraternities. Conflicting accounts attribute contradictory dates to the same confraternities, and some sources offer up differing accounts of the origins of each confraternity. What is clear is that the Pyrates confraternity began to splinter into different confraternities somewhere around the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The main causes cited for the initial splintering of the confraternities were the Pyrates high academic standards and strict chivalric code (Rotimi, 82). By 1972, a schism had occurred within the confraternity. Some Pyrates members were expelled and they promptly started a rival organization, the Buccaneers Confraternity. Pastor Awe stated that in 1965 some of his friends began to hold informal meetings at the University of Ibadan in a group that would later form the Eiye confraternity (Aderoju, par. 7). Some of the earliest accounts place the beginning of the Eiye confraternity in 1968, with some sources saying they branched off from the Buccaneers (Rotimi, 82). Regardless of the exact dates, all three of the original confraternities (Pirates, Buccaneers, and Eiye) started at the University of Ibadan (Aderoju, par. 8). From this point the confraternities began spreading outwards to other universities and states across Southern Nigeria.

The Neo-Black Movement of Africa, or the Black Axe confraternity as it was also known, was founded at the University of Benin sometime after the formation of the Buccaneers

(Wellington, para. 5). This confraternity was highly ideological and based upon pan-Africanism and Black rights ideals borrowed from the anti-apartheid movement (Research Directorate, 1). Sources differ on whether this group was formed before or after the Eiye confraternity. As early as 1979, confraternities began forming with clear criminal intent. The Family Confraternity (a.k.a. Campus Mafia) was created at the University of Ile-Ife in 1979 (Ogidefa, 2). By 1983, the Klansmen Konfraternity was formed at the University of Calabar and in 1984 the Supreme Vikings confraternity was founded by a former Buccaneer at the University of Port Harcourt (Wellington, para. 6). In the 1990s confraternities began growing exponentially, and groups like the Mgba brothers, the Red Devils, Black Berets, and Trojan Horse began popping up at various universities across the south (Wellington, para. 8; Ogidefa, 2). Even some professors began forming confraternities, as was the case with the Victor Charlie Boys at the Rivers State University of Science and Technology (Wellington, para. 8). The map below shows the geographical locations of some of these original confraternities, with each of them numbered in rough chronological order.



Legend	
★	Pirates, Buccaneers, and Eiye--University of Ibadan
②	Black Axe confraternity--University of Benin
③	The Family confraternity--University of Ile-Ife
④	Klansmen Konfraternity--University of Calabar
⑤	Supreme Vikings confraternity--University of Port Harcourt
⑥	Victor Charlie Boys--Rivers State University of Science and Technology
⑦	Black Berets--Enugu State University of Science and Technology

## From confraternities to Campus cults: the criminal mutations

Immediately following the splintering of the Pyrates in the 1960s and 1970s, standards for the confraternities began to decline. Many of the splinter groups formed out of opposition to the high academic and chivalric standards that the Pyrates maintained and viewed members of the original confraternity as outdated elitists (Rotimi, 82). This only further set the stage for a transition to rebellious criminal activity. It is worth noting, however, that throughout 1960s and 1970s, some confraternities were still acting as beneficial additions to student social life on campus. The University of Lagos utilized the Panama Confraternity to receive distinguished visitors and usher them around campus (Rotimi, 85). The Black Axe Confraternity commemorated the anti-apartheid students killed in Sharpeville, South Africa, through an annual memorial service (Rotimi, 85). But in the 1980s almost all of the confraternities begin ramping up criminal activity and cult-like secrecy. Initiation rituals became much more intensive, requiring pledges to endure thorough beatings, drink concoctions of human blood comprised of blood from every member mixed together, or even rape popular female students (Soyinka, 2:54; Rotimi, 84). According to

Rotimi, the confraternities' criminal activity started with harassing or "dealing" with outsiders who stole members' girlfriends (Rotimi, 85). They would also pay off professors or coerce them into giving members good grades in class (Rotimi, 85). By 1984 the original Pyrates confraternity was forced to shut down all operations on Nigerian campuses for fear of being associated with the growing instances of confraternity crime (Fabiyyi, 153).

The Nigerian confraternity culture was not limited to males. By 1990, female confraternities began to form throughout the country (Aderoju, par. 13). Female confraternities called for specific traits among their recruits. It ranged from things as tame as wearing jeans and provocative outfits to things like possessing a gun or axe. Female recruits were often required to smoke copious amounts of cigarettes, drink excessive amounts of alcohol, and preferably have lesbian tendencies. Initiation could include having six rounds of rough intercourse in a row or fighting with other girls or even strong boys. Very soon after their creation, these female cults began operating as prostitution rings, and advertising with photos of themselves in hotels (Rotimi, 83-85).

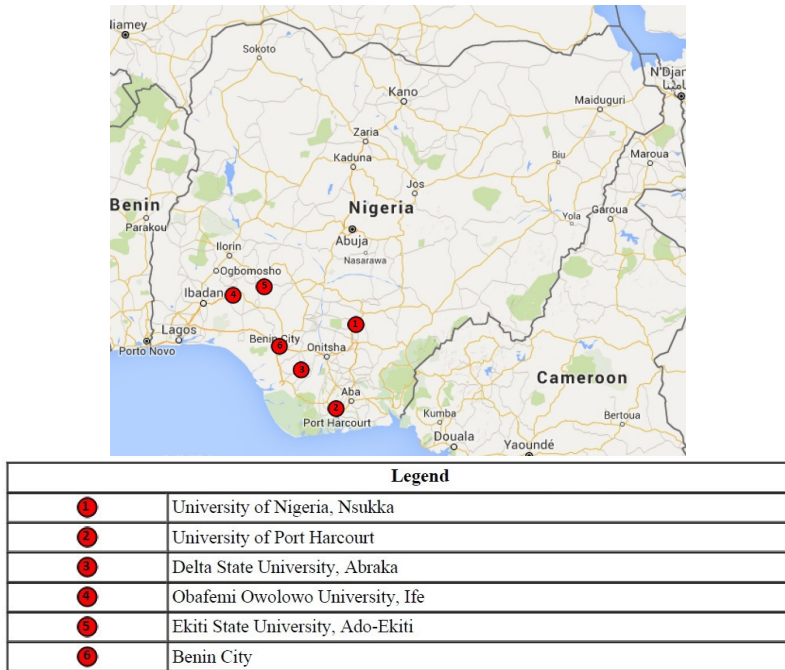
When attempting to discuss confraternity and campus cult crime in Nigeria one must consider the statistical limitations. Accounting for all instances of campus cult related crimes in Nigeria is extremely difficult. Almost all instances of confraternity crime are left unsolved and unprosecuted, and to make matters worse the Nigerian police do not attribute crimes to campus cults in their records (Rotimi, 85). This leaves no proper documentation or data reporting on the number of crimes committed by campus cults over the past decades. So data collection is limited to scattered newspaper reports, magazines, and rare personal accounts from former cult members. Past cult members are very unlikely to discuss any cult operations due to the threat of violence from current cult members to preserve the cult's secrecy (Rotimi, 85). With this in mind, outlined below are some prominent instances of violent crimes by campus cults. These cases represent only a small fraction of the total criminal activity that has been conducted by the hundreds of campus cults in Nigeria over recent decades.

These instances illustrate the variety of violent crimes cultists commit and the geographical concentration of the crimes within southern Nigeria. A map is shown below with each of the instances reported here represented by a marker on the map. One of the earliest accounts of cult related violence occurred at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1985 with a cult leader heavily beating a non-member for stealing his girlfriend (Rotimi, 85). In 1991, a student at the University of Port Harcourt was beheaded during a feud between cult members (Rotimi, 85). Around 1993 at Delta State University a war between the Black Axe confraternity and the Buccaneers led to the death of a Principal Assistant Registrar and his wife (Rotimi, 86). Cult members stormed a male hostel full of sleeping students and murdered 5 of them in cold blood at the Obafemi Awolowo University on July 10th, 1999 (Rotimi, 86; Fabiyyi, 137-138). On June 14th, 2002, cult members entered a crowded exam hall and shot and killed 15 people at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (Fabiyyi, 137). Also in 2002 cultists were credited with burning down and destroying multiple buildings on the Delta State University campus in Abraka, such as the Vice Chancellor's lodge and the Department of Linguistics building (Rotimi, 86). At Ekiti State University, cultists shot and killed eight students (Rotimi, 86). In 2003 cultists in Benin City set fire to a house after failing to find the people they were hunting down (Rotimi, 86).

## Causality Theories for the Corruption of Confraternities

This section will outline the prominent theories written about in recent years by African studies scholars and sociologists. Each theory will be given a brief overview and then critiqued to determine its merits and legitimacy in explaining the corruption of Southern Nigerian confraternities. Finally, I will offer up my own causal theory for the corruption of the Nigerian confraternities.





### Elite Progeny

The elite progeny theory is an argument that focuses on the unexplainably low conviction rates among cultist criminals since the beginning of confraternities. For all of the brutal crimes committed by the cults in recent decades, there have been few to no convictions directly tied to the cults' crimes. While the membership of these confraternities is highly secret, this extremely low conviction rate allows one to conclude that cults are comprised primarily of upper class elites. These elites hold strong ties to the ruling regimes through blood ties to prominent state figures. This allows them to commit serious crimes with little to no legal ramifications (Fabiyi, 138). This legal freedom has led some to blame the upper class elites for the corruption of confraternities. The theory states that wealthy students have continued to commit increasingly serious crimes over the years, while their powerful family members turn a blind eye or even encourage the cults in some cases (Fabiyi, 138).

It is well known that confraternities often target first-year students from rich families during the recruitment process, and many campus cults are disproportionately comprised of children from elite families (Ellis, 228). Proponents of this theory often tie in the idea that over the years many former cult members have become functioning members of society, working in respectable government, banking, or military positions. The almost non-existent conviction rates and constant secrecy means that former cult members are very hard to identify. This vast network of former cult members grants the campus cults even more power throughout society (Ellis, 221).

While these characteristics of confraternities certainly have some effect on the continued violent tendencies of campus cults, there are also other factors at play that have allowed the criminals to go unscathed. For many years, Nigerian society and government ignored the campus cults, and it was not until 1989 that the government actually made an official attempt to squash campus cults. Even that initiative was limited to the university level, and it was not until the 1990s that campus cult activities were criminalized (Rotimi, 91).

As criminalization of campus cult activity has taken effect, many campus cults have only gone further underground, a move that would seem unnecessary if their elite connections made



them truly unafraid of the law. Furthermore, this theory does little to explain the origins of the confraternities' violent actions. It assumes that violent action was already occurring, and then it was condoned by the familial connections in government. For these reasons it seems unlikely that elite progeny is the basis of confraternities' corruption. We must look elsewhere to find what causal factor prompted confraternities to take up violent criminal actions.

### Militarization of the state and Institutionalization of Violence

Another prominent argument that attempts to explain the corruption of confraternities focuses on the militarization of Nigeria and the statewide institutionalization of violence. Rotimi argues that Nigerian campuses served as cultural microcosms that reflected the broader Nigerian cultural landscape of the time. As the Nigerian state became increasingly violent due to autocratic military rule and state-sponsored violence, so too did the confraternities on Nigeria's campuses.

Nigeria's history of violent military rule began with military coups in 1966 and 1967, resulting in the politically charged murders of many prominent politicians, including the head of state. (Rotimi, 87). This was followed by a bloody and well recognized civil war from 1967 to 1970 that resulted in not only the death of government officials but also many regular citizens. Rotimi says this civil war also familiarized the population with the use of sophisticated weaponry (Rotimi, 87). The head of state was murdered yet again in the coup of 1976, and two failed coups in 1976 and 1990 resulted in the public execution of coup plotters by a military court (Rotimi, 87-88). State sponsored political violence became prominent under the rule of military regimes from 1983-1998. Particularly gruesome was the Abacha regime from 1993-1998, and an investigative panel set up in the early 2000s revealed the calculated murders of numerous journalists, politicians, and other perceived enemies of the state during Abacha's reign (Rotimi, 88). Throughout all of the military regimes and even in Nigeria's nascent democratic government, political assassinations of prominent politicians and state figures were commonplace and highly public. Legislators, governors, party leaders, and even attorney generals were murdered on the streets of busy cities or just outside their homes (Rotimi, 88-89).

Pastor Awe also cites the autocratic military rule from 1966 to 1999 (except for the brief period of civilian rule under President Shagari from 1979-1983) as one of the primary causes for the corruption of the confraternities. Awe believes that military officials acting as presidents, governors, senators, and legislators established armed robbery, assassinations, and ritual murders as common occurrences within the country (Aderoju, par. 10-13).

Rotimi goes one step further, also addressing the growth of ethnic and religious conflict in the late twenty-first century. Ethnic militia groups championing the rights of Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa/Fulani populations started to form in the late 1990s as a response to the general lack of confidence and trust in the Nigerian police force. These groups took to bloody and costly gun battles with Nigerian police forces, with clashes often leaving a dozen or more police officers dead (Rotimi, 89). Rotimi also cites increased violent religious conflict between Christians and Muslims as having an effect on the confraternities (Rotimi, 90), but neither ethnic nor religious conflict is likely to have a significant effect on the confraternity scene and its overall decorum. From the very beginning confraternities were devised specifically to ignore both ethnic and religious ties. As the confraternities have evolved they have maintained this tradition, instead emphasizing universal ideals like pan-Africanism or nothing at all. Furthermore, by the mid-1980s we can see concrete evidence of confraternity violence, five years before the aforementioned ethnic or religious violent conflict arose. Even if ethnic and religious violence picked up in the country from the 1990s onwards, this seems both too late and too distant to have any significant effect on the confraternities. Rotimi and Awe try to make the argument that institutionalized violence in Nigeria established toxic cultural norms throughout the country that trickled down to campus life and corrupted confraternities, but the unintended side effects of military rule, such as the co-optation

and employment of confraternities, as well as the decreased education spending, seem like more culpable factors (Rotimi, 87-90, Aderaju, par. 10-13).

A stronger argument that both Rotimi and Wellington bring up is the idea that many confraternities were led to violence by powerful figures in the college administration, military, and government. As the military regimes gained power, they became afraid of organized and politically active student unions on campus, and began co-opting and employing confraternities to “neutralize” these opposition groups (Rotimi, 93). College administrators were known to utilize these methods as well, employing confraternities to take care of difficult students or professors (Ellis, 229). There are also records of politicians employing confraternities to conduct political attacks and assassinations (Rotimi, 93-94). Through all of these wealthy and powerful patrons, the confraternities were pushed further and further towards violence, and in many cases these patrons provided the confraternities with weapons (Wellington, par. 13). While the actions taken by these school and government officials can be directly attributed to the autocratic military rule in the country, it seems unlikely that increased instances of state-sponsored violence would inherently lead to the increase in confraternity violence. While there may be more violence in the country overall, this still does not provide confraternities with a sufficient or rational motive to start committing violent acts. Violent criminal acts are most often committed either with clear motive and intent, or with judgment clouded by emotion. Rarely are they the product of a warped need for social conformity, which is essentially Rotimi’s and Awe’s argument.

Perhaps as military regimes relied increasingly on violence rather than intellectual debate to solve political issues, confraternities on campus did so as well (Rotimi, 94), but this ideological link is much more difficult to prove than the monetary link between violent patrons and confraternities. Another monetary link can be seen in the spending habits of autocratic military regimes. As military regimes funneled more and more money into the defense sector, money was siphoned out of social welfare programs and education, significantly harming campus life. A lack of funding meant decreased spending on recreational and educational activities on campus, which left a void for many students in terms of community involvement (Rotimi, 94). Students wanted to be a part of something, and as the newly established Nigerian universities brought more diverse populations together, there was an even greater call for an organization that could unite differing ethnicities, religions, and social classes.

### Cultural dissonance and the pyratanical origins of the first confraternity

Southern Nigerian university students were products of a culturally clashing society, with constant tension between Western Christianity instilled by British rule, traditional religious movements like Yoruba mythology, and local tribal allegiances throughout the country (Fabiyi, 144-146). Students needed a vehicle for fraternal brotherhood or personal relationships that could transcend both longstanding ethnic or tribal ties as well as new religious allegiances. The key was to find an associative vehicle that could maintain elements of Southern Nigeria’s past secret brotherhoods, while also being sufficiently “western” to avoid being labeled local or unprogressive by the British elites. Southern Nigeria had a rich history of secret brotherhoods, organizations, and cults that arose when minority groups or interest groups were oppressed in some way by the power structure. Nearly all of these groups held sacred certain key elements, most notably oaths and secrecy, rituals and traditions, and societal development roles (Fabiyi, 138-143). This led to Wole Soyinka and other fraternal groups looking outwards for ethnically neutral organizational structures, as is shown by many of the confraternities’ names: Pirates (Anglo-Saxon, European), Buccaneers (Anglo-Saxon, European), Vikings (Nordic), Klu Klux Klan (North American, white supremacist), and Daughters of Jezebel (Judeo-Christian) (Fabiyi, 149 -150).

However, these new confraternities lacked that third key element that all of the past cults had prized as essential: avenues for societal development (Fabiyi, 142-143, 147). This meant that members in the group had no clear path to gain concrete societal benefits through group

membership. There was a gaping hole in these organizations where there should have been clear collective as well as individual goals for both the organizations and their members. These new fraternal brotherhoods were essentially left working together towards nothing outside of their own existence. To be fair, while this is true for later manifestations of confraternities, it is difficult to apply these labels to the Pyrates, as there is evidence of a clear political agenda and social activism during their time at Ibadan. The Pyrates organized to fight for the construction of a rail-line leading to the university that would allow a more diverse group of students to attend Ibadan. This rail-line faced opposition from the homogenous upper-class elites that comprised much of Ibadan's first graduating classes. The Pyrates worked together towards a common objective and succeeded in implementing the new rail line to the University of Ibadan (Wellington, par. 2). While the Pyrates were able to work within the parameters of their moral values and stated objectives as outlined above, later splinter groups distorted and warped their original message. Soon the Pyrates' light-hearted Treasure Island creed was being used as justification for a criminal organization.

The Pyrates' attempt to transcend ethnic and religious ties and "go against all convention" eventually led to a group with no ties to society, and thus no societal objective or opportunity for societal development roles for members. This lack of purpose directly contrasted with the established rules of the group and their motto, "Odas is Odas", which means "Orders are Orders". This meant that the group had strict group conventions that had to be followed, even if societal conventions were not (Fabiya, 148). So, as the confraternities progressed from their origin point, Nigerian universities were left with groups full of fiercely loyal young men with no clearly defined political, religious, cultural, or societal goals. The only concrete statement some of these confraternities could act on was the idea that they would "go against all convention". Soon universities began to see the manifestation of rebellious individualistic ideals in a collectivist organizational structure--essentially a well-organized and well-educated recalcitrant youth. Foundation of the group "against all convention" perhaps had admirable and good-hearted intentions when Nigeria was under the yolk of British colonial rule, but following Nigerian independence, this opposition to convention was maintained in all of the confraternities, and eventually opened the gates for opposition to Nigerian convention, Nigerian society, and most drastically Nigerian law.

Pastor Awe echoes the concerns of Fabiya with regards to the pyratanical origins of confraternities. Rather than blame the structural shortcomings of the Pyrates' group, Awe says that the Pyrates' ideological basis is to blame, and that the Pyrates were founded with elements of secrecy and debauchery from their pyratanical origins that set them on a path towards criminality. The group chose names based on armed robbers and cold-blooded killers, and chose a logo symbolizing poison and death (Aderoju, par. 15-18). These commitments early on set the stage for confraternities to further devolve into violent, secretive, cult organizations.

### Economic conditions in the 1970s and early 1980s: the oil boom and subsequent bust

Economic history receives little attention in this literature. Of course, economics play a key role in the history and development of the post-independence Nigerian population, and Nigeria's unusual discovery of massive natural resource reserves so late in their development had drastic effects on the country. Consequently, it seems strange that there has not been more in depth analysis conducted to analyze the impact these economic factors had on Nigerian campuses, and more specifically Nigerian confraternities.

In the early 1970s, Nigeria started to shift its economic focus onto producing and exporting oil. As Nigeria's oil production levels grew, the price of oil grew even faster. OPEC began to quadruple oil prices in the 1970s, and this meant a massive income boost for the state of Nigeria. Nigeria's autocratic political structure at the time lent itself to patronage, and as oil wealth flowed into the country, it was doled out to those deemed worthy by the Nigerian government. This system was only expanded when the country transitioned to democracy in 1979 (Ellis, 225-226). In the matter of a decade, Nigeria had gone from having no oil to being

completely economically and politically dependent upon it. So when oil prices plummeted in the early 1980s, Nigeria was left with no political or economic recourse, and crisis ensued.

Suddenly Nigeria became home to international economic frauds, drug problems, rampant poverty, and an emigrating class of elites (Ellis, 226). This economic and political crisis had drastic effects on university campuses and confraternities. Universities had experienced tremendous growth under the oil boom, both in number and in size. State-run and private universities popped up all across the country, and with them came vibrant new campus cultures (Ellis, 222). The drop in oil prices harmed these new universities twice over, first as the civilian government was forced to cut government spending, and next in 1983 as the new military government diverted even more precious funds towards defense spending. These budget cuts left irreparable holes in campus culture, and many students were left in vulnerable positions. Gone were the sports programs, arts initiatives, and student unions that students had grown accustomed to. Suddenly, large numbers of students were unaffiliated and unproductive. Intensive government patronage programs funneled all of the oil wealth to older generations, and left university students with excessive free time and a lack of purpose. Nigerian university students suddenly had the motive, the opportunity, and the tools to commit crime: a need for money, an excess of time, and a socially disengaged organizational structure that could help them do it. In this way the Nigerian economy, and more specifically the drop in oil prices in the early 1980s, led to a political and economic crisis that transformed confraternities into the campus cults they are today.

This effect can be seen in the timeline of confraternities as well. Beginning in 1979, confraternities turned towards violence and crime with the formation of the Campus Mafia and other more radical groups. This mirrors the growth of income inequality that peaked at the end of the decade after years of government controlled oil wealth started to exacerbate class differences. As oil prices drop and the government cuts funding to universities, we see the first recorded instances of violent criminal acts directly attributed to campus cults in the early to mid-1980s. The Nigerian economy of the 1970s and early 1980s had an undeniable effect on the political, cultural, and socio-economic landscape of the entire Nigerian population, and Nigerian confraternities were no exception.

## Conclusion

The corruption of confraternities in Southern Nigeria can be attributed to three key factors: the co-optation and patronage of confraternities by violent government and school officials, the structural shortcomings of the Pyrates confraternity as a product of cultural dissonance, and the economic conditions of the oil boom and subsequent crisis in the 1970s and early 1980s. These three factors not only transformed Nigerian university campuses into breeding grounds for violent student groups, but also worked to solidify confraternities as criminal organizations once the first violent actions had been taken. The nature of the Pyrates' establishment led to the creation of many student organizations with undefined goals, secretive criminal tendencies, and fiercely loyal members. Both the economic conditions of the 1970s and 1980s as well as the employment offers coming from government and school officials pushed previously harmless confraternities towards violence. Those same economic conditions and government officials created a situation conducive to the transformation of confraternities into campus cults, embroiled in secrecy, loyalty, and ritual, but with nothing other than crime and money as an inherent goal.

These conclusions then beg the question of what can be done to combat criminal cult behavior in Southern Nigeria. In 2001, legislation was passed to officially criminalize membership or participation in secret cult activities. Small numbers of cult members have been caught and

charged with prison time or fines, but many claim that these laws have only further driven the confraternities into the criminal underworld (Refugee Review Tribunal, 8-9). Universities have required students to take pledges against joining or participating in secret cults, and students found doing so are often expelled (Rotimi, 91-92). As a last resort some local municipalities and universities are calling on religious figures, both Muslim and Christian, to hold mass prayer sessions or exorcisms in hopes of eradicating cultism (Rotimi, 93; Soyinka, par. 1-2, 4-6). While any effort to combat criminal confraternity behavior is a step in the right direction, these efforts only scratch the surface of the problem. To get to its root, one must consider the causal foundation of the confraternities' criminal tendencies. Efforts must be directed towards three things: reforming the political landscape to rely on civil debate and fair elections rather than political violence to solve problems, restructuring the confraternities to give members and the confraternities themselves clear goals that benefit both them and the campus community, and redirecting funds towards campus life in order to build an inclusive university environment. Hopefully, through these initiatives, the violence associated with Southern Nigerian confraternities can be stopped.

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