

A HISTORY OF AROGBO IJO OF THE WESTERN DELTA, NIGERIA, 1885-1960

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved wife, Olaronke Ganiyat Iroju, Ph.D

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My profound gratitude goes to the Almighty God who divinely designed the Ibadan School of History as my destination in obtaining a Doctor of Philosophy in History. The experience and knowledge acquired in the course of the programme greatly testifies to the grace and strength of God who strengthens me in all things.

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ABSTRACT

The Arogbo Ijo, a sub group of Ijo of Niger Delta, are located in the Western Delta region of Southwestern Nigeria. Existing studies on the Ijo groups of the Niger Delta have focused mainly on the Ijo in the Central and Eastern Delta with little attention paid to the Ijo groups in the Western Delta, especially the Arogbo Ijo. This study was, therefore, designed to examine the history of the Arogbo Ijo, with a view to identifying the specific dynamics and patterns of socio-cultural and political developments occasioned by British colonisation between 1885 and 1960.

The historical approach was adopted. Primary and Secondary sources were utilised. Primary sources included intelligence reports and provincial files obtained from the National Archives, Ibadan and Sopolu Research Library, Ikenne. Oral interviews were conducted with 114 key informants aged between 52 and 98 years, who were purposively selected based on their knowledge and experience of the history of Arogbo Ijo. The key informants comprised 50 high chiefs, 22 community heads, 21 civil servants and 21 traders. Secondary sources included books, journal articles, dissertations and theses. Data were subjected to historical analysis.

The direct British colonisation of Arogbo Ijo in 1885 was based on its strategic and geographical location. The colonial authorities created artificial boundaries which distorted the existing ones in the Western Delta area. Socio-economic conflicts such as piracy, and minority and identity crises were notable historical developments encountered by the Arogbo Ijo between 1915 and 1960. Agitations for economic rights and the attempts to regain the Arogbo Ijo traditional boundary were remarkable developments up to 1960. The Arogbo Ijo experienced socio-political changes with the British imposition of a tax regime in 1925, and the gradual restructuring of the Arogbo Ijo judicial structure in 1897, 1936 and 1938. On 2 November 1939, Shell D'arcy Exploration Company embarked on oil explorations in the entire Okitipupa Division of Southern Nigeria, which included the Arogbo Ijo area. The established colonial boundaries became the template for the allocation of oil resources, and this further deepened the boundary crises between the Arogbo Ijo and their Ilaje neighbours in 1943. Thus, both parties approached the colonial courts for arbitration in 1955. However, the case remained undecided up to the end of colonial rule in 1960. This later resonated in the post-independence oil boundary crises between the Arogbo Ijo and the Ilaje.

The artificial boundary creation of the British colonial authorities between 1885 and 1960 undermined the Arogbo Ijo territorial and aboriginal identity.

Keywords: ArogboIjo, Western Delta Nigeria, Colonial boundaries in Nigeria

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups and languages, each having a number of distinguishing characteristics.¹ Significantly, members of an ethnic group speak the same language or dialect of the same language, and they shared the same history of origin claiming to have descended from the same ancestor. However, European explorers, missionaries and traders polarised these numerous ethnic groups into two categories, namely the centralised and non-centralised states.² The Yoruba, Hausa, Kanuri and Edo belong to the centralised states, while the Igbo, Itsekiri, Urhobo, and Ijo are reputable examples of non-centralised states. As well known in the mega states, the nature of governance was centralised political authority which colonial rule further strengthened. However, the non-centralised communities also referred to as segmentary societies, were not as centralised as the mega states. This, however, did not undermine the significant impact of European influence on these societies.

Typically, the Ijo of the Niger Delta area are largely considered as belonging to the non-centralised group. A common feature of both States is the tendencies of a dominant group overshadowing the histories of the sub groups or clans within its geographical proximity. This is often characterised by the pattern of relationship with each of these groups have with the European. Particularly, the history of the Arogo Ijo located within the centralised states of Benin and Yoruba.³ Hence, the reasons for a clear cut understanding of the history of Arogo Ijo during the period of study. By and large, the British colonisation of Nigeria in the last two decades of the 19th century is a major epoch in the annals of Nigerian history. Prior to this period, the people who occupied the geographical area now referred to as Nigeria had diverse socio-cultural, economic and political organisations which accounted for the differences in the history of these groups within the Nigerian state.

¹Falola, T. 2001. *Culture and Customs of Nigeria*. London: Greenwood Press. p.4

²Horton, R. 1976. Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa. *History of West Africa*, Vol. 1. Ade Ajayi, J.F. and Crowder, Michael. Eds. United Kingdom: Longman Group Limited. pp. 72-113

³High Chief Boubou Adura. Aged 75. Traditionalist. Tebubelou Quarters, Arogo, on March 21, 2016.

Therefore, the advent of European political system through colonialism was a distortion in the pre-existing indigenous political formations of the African societies. In support of this position, Falola clearly asserts that, “colonialism was an alteration of the pre-colonial political system of many societies”.⁴ Invariably, colonialism means a discontinuity of the affected societies from their traditional forms of social advancement, and thus created difficulties for a proper understanding of histories of these societies. Beginning from the last two decades of the 19th century up to 1914 and beyond, the British government perfected the formal consolidation of their political system over Nigeria and administered the state up till 1960, when Nigeria became independence.

This, however, is not to say that there was a complete apathy for the pre-colonial political structure by the British. Rather, African political system became instrumental to the reinforcement of the British political and economic motives. As rightly upheld by Alao, administrative and economic motives was the centre-piece of what compelled the expansion of British law in virtually all the communities within the Nigerian state.⁵ This also represents the views of many historians and cognate scholars as it relates to the British motives in the imposition of their political system on the Nigerian state. That is, various scholars conclude that, in the midst of the several socio-economic and political factors responsible for the British imposition of their political will on Nigeria, uppermost was the desire for the exploitation of Nigeria’s resources. In fact, the Nigerian state was a deliberate creation and by product of British imperialism, which became more politically aggressive by the turn of the twentieth Century.⁶ Hitherto, most societies within the Nigerian state, and Arogbu Ijo in particular, were ushered into the 20th century with British political and economic formations becoming part of their socio-political experience. Apparently, at this point, the Arogbu Ijo encountered new forms of historical developments.

In economic terms, the industrial revolution in Europe played a pivotal role in the British colonisation of Nigeria. As a result of the change from the use of manual labour to the

⁴Falola, T. Mahadi, A., Uhomobhi, M. and Anyanwu, U. 1991. *History of Nigeria 3: Nigeria in the 20th Century*. Ibadan: Longman Nigeria PLC. p. 189

⁵Alao, A. A., 2003. Colonial Rule and Judicial Reforms, 1900-1960. Oyeade, A. Ed. *The Foundation of Nigeria: Essay in Honour of Toyin Falola*. Trenton: African World Press. p.201-202

⁶Crowder, M. 1976. *The Story of Nigeria*. London: Faber and Faber. p.206. See also Tamuno, T.N. *The Evolution of the Nigeria State: The Southern Phase, 1898-1914*. London: Longman Press. p.1.

introduction of machines, there was a drastic increase in the production of goods and this necessitated acquisition of external markets for adequate distribution of surplus goods. There was also the need for raw materials to feed the growing British industries.⁷ According to Webster and Boahen, the replacement of the slave trade with palm oil trade brought the British steadily into the political life of the coastal kingdoms and led finally to conquest and partition.⁸ In addition to high demand for palm oil, crops such as cocoa, groundnuts and rubber were in steady demand. It was the sturdy quest for steady markets for their surplus products and to control the natural agricultural products of Nigeria that in part encouraged the imposition of British rule upon the Nigerian state.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the Niger Delta societies were still active participants in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In Dike's assertion, "by 1830, the Niger Delta region was the greatest single trading area in West Africa".⁹ This established the fact that, the region was an economic hub for the Europeans in the trade in human cargoes. In other words, Europeans were anxious to explore and exploit the coastal communities for their commercial interest. In fact, the early European trade in African slaves, and later, trade in palm oil, had profound impact on the dynamics of socio-political, economic and cultural changes in the Niger Delta.¹⁰

As a follow up to the British participation in the scramble for and partition of Africa (Berlin Conference of 1884/1885), the coastal areas that was later referred to as the Niger Delta region was annexed by the British government.¹¹ This indicated more active involvement by the British government in the administration of the territories.¹² In essence, the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885 became a turning point in the history of British relations with the communities of the Niger Delta region. That is, the British strong desire for their political administration over the coastal societies was a direct consequence of the various attempts to end slave trade and establish

⁷Falola, T. 2003. *The Power of African Culture*. New York: University of Rochester Press. p.76

⁸Webster, J.B. and Boahen, A.A. 1980. *The Revolutionary Years: West Africa since 1800*. London: Longman Press. p.55.

⁹Dike, K.O. 1956. *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. p.19

¹⁰Okpevra, U. B. 2005. Ijo- Itsekiri Relations, 1500-1800. Akinwunmi Ogundiran. Ed. *Pre-Colonial Nigeria: Essay in Honour of Toyin Falola*. Africa World Press. p.396

¹¹Tamuno, T.N. 2011. *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta, 1849-2009*. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers Ltd. p.4

¹²Tamuno, T.N. 2011. *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta, 1849-2009*, p.4

legitimate commerce, which was patterned after their industrial and commercial needs.¹³ In this regard, the Berlin Conference was a deliberate act that resulted in European imposition of their political hegemony over the coastal states, as well as creation of a new economic relationship, which in a way, reformed the trading pattern of the Niger Delta.

As observed by Ogbogbo and Muojama, “the phase of industrial capitalism, which resulted in the gradual abandonment of European slaves trading and slave, based production in the Americas, rendered the 19th century a period of adaptation for the Niger Delta people”.¹⁴ Obviously, it is easy to discern that the economic development among European nations is the underpinning factor for the change in the European economy in Africa and the Niger Delta area in particular where the Arogo Ijo are domiciled. Accordingly, the Niger Delta region was fully declared a British Protectorate in 1885;¹⁵ this represented a full British control of the area. That is, the British had secured for itself both political and economic supremacy over the people of the Niger Delta.

The British colonial government brought the region under its political control, and they began to recognise local rulers as British political agents in respective communities in the region.¹⁶ In communities with absence of locally appointed rulers, or uncompromising traditional political leaders, the British tended to create them.¹⁷ For instance, the appointment of Ralph Moor as the Commissioner and Consul-General of the Niger Coast Protectorate in January 1896, led to the initiation of the policy of using native political agents, which indeed was initially established by Sir Claude Macdonald in 1893.¹⁸ Moor, in constituting a Native Council for the Brass city-state, ignored the King of Brass and selected chiefs whom he believed were friendly to the colonial government.¹⁹ Hence, African resistance to British political subjugation was not a collective will of affected societies as often presented in certain respect. Rather, the British were embraced by some Africans as noted above.

¹³Inyang, A.A. and Basse, M.E. 2014. Imperial Treaties and The Origins of British Colonial rule in Southern Nigeria, 1860-1890. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No.20.p.1946

¹⁴Ogbogbo, C.B.N and Muojama, O. 2007. The Global Economy and the Niger Delta Crises. *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 17.p.179

¹⁵Ikime, O. 1977. *The fall of Nigeria*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. p. 37

¹⁶ Jones, G.I. 1963. *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*. London: Oxford University Press .p.6

¹⁷Jones, G.I. 1963. *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*, p.6

¹⁸Anene, J.C. 1966. *Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906*. London: Cambridge University Press p.110

¹⁹Anene, J.C. 1966. *Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906*, p.182

Fundamentally, the British economic motives changed the pattern of the political life of the coastal kingdoms. By 1886, the British government granted the National African Company, a Royal Charter on the River Niger.²⁰ The company had full power to impose and receive duties from anybody who traded in the River.²¹ Thus, the company became the British government in the Niger.²² The presence of the British firms in the region actually laid the foundation for the sustenance of British economic and political plans in the coastal area in the colonial Nigeria. These motives of the British as it concerns the Niger Delta were vigorously pursued by the signing of treaties by African coastal chiefs and kings. As expressed by Tamuno, “from the 1880s, the British government concluded treaties of protection, friendship and commerce with the coastal chiefs and peoples”.²³

However, notable crises ensued between the Europeans and African chiefs over the meaning of, and obligations under a protectorate in this part of West Africa.²⁴ These treaties compelled the chiefs and the people of the Oil Rivers and later Niger Coast (in 1893, the Oil Rivers Protectorate became known as the Niger Coast Protectorate), to fall under British imperialism. Notably, some of the chiefs agreed to the protection of Christian missionaries and European traders in their societies, and to promote free legitimate commerce in their communities.²⁵ Hence, the European imposition of colonial rule met some forms of resistance from these coastal societies, which encouraged British colonial rule over their people, and thus, sought to enhance British economic interest during this period. Therefore, the British succeeded in the gradual imposition of colonial rule across the Niger Delta and beyond. Indeed, Nigeria became British territory in the period between 1885 and 1960.²⁶ Hence, the Europeans made policies that affected the lives and property of the people of Nigeria. It is important to state that the Niger Delta region is largely dominated by clusters of Ijo settlements.²⁷ In fact, they are the dominant ethnic group in the Niger Delta area.²⁸ It is also important to note that, the British

²⁰Asiegbu, J.U.J. 1984. *Nigeria and Its British invaders, 1851-1920*. New York: Nok Publishers International .p.102

²¹Asiegbu, J.U.J. 1984. *Nigeria and Its British invaders, 1851-1920*.p.102

²²Webster, J.B, Boahen, A.A. and Tidy, M. 1980. *The Growth of African Civilisation, The Revolutionary Years West Africa since 1800*. London: Longman Group Limited. p.149

²³Tamuno, T.N.2011. *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta, 1849-2009*, p.17

²⁴Tamuno, T.N.2011. *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta, 1849-2009*, p.17

²⁵Tamuno, T.N.2011. *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta, 1849-2009*, p.17

²⁶Ikime, O. 1977. *The fall of Nigeria*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd .3

²⁷Jones, G.I. 1963. *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*, p.7

²⁸Ukporukpo, C.O. and Akpogemeh. 2009. Population. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Alagoa, E.J., Tamuno, T.N., and Clark, J.P. Eds. Port-Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications. p. 30.

political subjugation of the Ijo in the Niger Delta region was not homogenous in its character. Rather, some of these Ijo clans largely fell to British domination on individual clan bases. In essence, the colonial experience of the various Ijo groups occupying the Niger Delta region differs, and as such, these various Ijo clans shared no common colonial historical developments. By so doing, it is erroneous to see the colonial experience of the Ijo of the Niger Delta from a singular perspective. It is consequent on this that the current study analysed specific historical narratives on the Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta during the colonial epoch.

The Arogbo Ijo clan, independently established contacts with the British in the twilight of the 19th century.²⁹ That is, the Arogbo Ijo is one of the groups that were impacted by the British presence along the coastline of present day Nigeria.³⁰ The Arogbo Ijo were reputed for an aggressive involvement in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade up to the late 19th century.³¹ Their overwhelming involvement in the supply of slaves for the European markets suggests the reason for the emergence of slave emporium at 'Ekpetorun' which was located towards the coastal southern region of the kingdom referred to as Ukparamo.³²

Notably, preliminary field work identified that, because of the large scale commercial activities that took place in this emporium in the 19th century, the claim of ownership of this large coastal market and its surrounding territories have often been disputed by the Ijo and Ilaje. Nevertheless, the emporium attracted economic activities that involved Europeans, Ilaje, and Itsekiri and Urhobo traders from far and near on the coastline of the Niger Delta.³³ The Ekpetorun continued as a centre of trade during the era of legitimate commerce.³⁴ Also, the opening of the eastern trade routes into the Yoruba hinterland in the 19th century further gave prominence to the

²⁹ Interview held with Mr. Olowo Powei, Aged 87, Traditionalist, New Ajapa, Arogbo, 30th September, 2016.

³⁰ Interview held with Ebenezer, K. Egene, Aged 69, retired civil servant, Opuerede Quarters, Opuba, 6th March, 2016. See also Akintoye, S.A. 1969. The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, C.1870-1895. *The Journal of African History*, Vol.10.No. 4.p. 586.

³¹ N.A.I. An Intelligence Report of Arogbo District of Okitipupa Division by C.I. Gavin- Assistant District Officer, 1936. See also Akintoye, S.A. 1969. The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, C.1870-1895. *The Journal of African History*, p. 586.

³² Interview held with Chief J.M. Maggi, Aged 70, retired civil servant, Biagbini, 11th March, 2016. Also interview held with Mr Bekekimi Idhiarhi, Aged 54, Politician, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 14th March, 2016.

³³ Interview held with Ebenezer, K. Egene, Aged 69, retiree civil servant, Opuerede Quarters, Opuba, 6th march, 2016.

³⁴ Interview held with Mrs Lanre Iwabi, Aged 63, Trader, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 20th September, 2016. Also interview held with Chief London Guntei, Aged 59, Retired Head Teacher, Tebubeleou Quarters, Arogbo, 20th March, 2016.

Arogbo Ijo.³⁵ With the Arogbo located on this route, it became expedient on the part of the British for a complete annexation of the Arogbo Ijo clan. This was with a view to suppressing the piratical disturbances, and allows for free movements of commerce on this eastern route.³⁶ It is important to state that the Arogbo Ijo had been part of the European commerce since the Trans Atlantic slave trade. This, however, had a far reaching effect on the British activities even in the 20th century.

By way of the British annexation of the coastal communities in the western delta, the British Flag (the Arogbo Ijo referred to it as Freedom pole, 'Opo') was hoisted in Arogbo town on November, 3rd, 1885.³⁷ This is indeed in recognition of Arogbo Ijo society as one of the areas to be colonised by the British, and thus, the colonisation process was assumed to have been independently carried out by the British on the Arogbo Ijo area. Nevertheless, the neighbouring Yoruba speaking Ilaje group claimed that they facilitated the erection of the British flag on Arogbo Ijo area. The Ilaje group claimed that the erection of the British Flag was as a result of a directive from the then *Amapetu* of Mahin, Ogunsemoyin, who delegated one of his chiefs, *Idogbe* of Aboto to take the freedom flag to Arogbo which was then carved as part of the Mahin Native Court jurisdiction.³⁸ It is however difficult to substantiate this claim by the Ilaje neighbouring group because the erection of the flag and the creation of the Mahin Native Court were two separate periods in the history of both people. Therefore, the claim by the Ilaje is unsubstantiated for a factual historical understanding of the erection of the Union Jack in the Arogbo Ijo area. Meanwhile, the erection of the British Union Jack represented two important historical developments in the annals of Arogbo Ijo history. First, it was an official end to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade for the Arogbo Ijo and its environs. This portrayed Arogbo Ijo as a slave emporium whose activities largely hindered the legitimate trade. Henceforth, slaves from far and near such as the Ikale and Itsekiri slaves sailed to Arogbo in an attempt to embrace the

³⁵ Interview held with Hon. Justice C.E.T. Ajama, Aged 66, retired civil servant, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo 8th March, 2016.

³⁶ Interview held with Hon. Justice C.E.T. Ajama, Aged 66, retired civil servant, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 8th March, 2016.

³⁷ N.A.I O.D.F. NOS. 400 /1912.401/1921. Also interview held with High Chief R.A. Ere Bekewei, Aged 76, Adoloseimo community, Arogbo, 11th February, 2017.

³⁸ N.A.I.OKD. File 4/4 Ilaje-Arogbo Land dispute Matters Affecting, 1954

freedom pole in order to regain their freedom.³⁹ Secondly, it indicated that Arogbo Ijo was independently colonised by the British.

In addition, it represented the establishment of Arogbo Ijo as a trading colony by European traders.⁴⁰ It is important to note that, the hoisting of the British flag was done amidst the presence of British Navy in order to forestall any perceived resistance by the Arogbo Ijo.⁴¹ By and large, the year 1885 marked a direct imposition of colonial rule over the Arogbo Ijo; and the people became a separate political entity under the British political arrangement.⁴² They were also partitioned alongside neighbouring groups, which seems to have been responsible for the obscurity in the political developments undertaken by the Arogbo Ijo. Accordingly, the introduction of the British political system altered the views and practices associated with historical production of many African politics.⁴³ It is against this background that this research sets out primarily to undertake a historical study on the Arogbo Ijo as it regards their socio-cultural, economic and political history with a view to understanding these developments as it played out during the period under study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The imposition of British sovereignty, no doubt, was the approach in annexing the resources of Nigerian communities, particularly the Niger Delta region which usually served as the European economic hub within the Nigerian state. Several scholarly works reflecting British political development and economic exploitation in the Niger Delta region are indeed exhaustive. Most of these works concentrated on the Eastern and Central Delta, and thus tend to serve as generalisations for the western delta axis. As a result of this, not much is specifically known about the pattern of the British political system and its significant impact on the Arogbo Ijo

³⁹Interview held with Chief N.E. Ege, Aged 72, retired sailor, Upe community, Ukparamo, Arogbo, 7th April, 2016. Also interview held with Mr. Perelatei Ebiowei, Aged 72, Traditionalist, Awodikuro community, Arogbo, February 2nd, 2017

⁴⁰ Akintoye, S.A. 1969. The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, C.1870-1895. *The Journal of African History*, p. 586.

⁴¹Interview held with Chief N.E. Ege, Aged 72, retired sailor, Upe community, Ukparamo, Arogbo, 7th April, 2016. Also interview held with High Chief Josaiah Akofagha, Aged 69, Awodikuro community, Arogbo, February 2nd, 2017

⁴²Interview held with Mr. Goodluck Foloki, Aged 58, Teacher, Egbesubiri Quarters, 28th September, 2016. Also interview held with Mr. Ijowei Ominisan, Aged 69, Traditionalist, Otuokubu, Ukparamo, Arogbo, February 8th February, 2017.

⁴³ Nolte Insa. 2014. Colonial Politics and Pre-colonial History: Everyday Knowledge, Genre and Truth in a Yoruba Town. *History in Africa*, Vol. 40, No.1

located on the western delta region. Hence, the need for a historical analysis of the Arogbo Ijo during the period under study. This vacuum, however, makes this study relevant for historical research, as there is paucity of historiography specifically on British colonial impact on the Arogbo Ijo area.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The overriding objective of this study is an examination of a history of the Arogbo Ijo of the western delta, regarding significance of cultural, socio-economic and political dynamics that have played in the period 1885 to 1960.

Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. understand the pre-colonial background of the Arogbo Ijo
2. examine colonial advent, economic and socio-cultural transformation and its impact on the Arogbo Ijo.
3. identify and discuss challenges that confronted the Arogbo Ijo during the period of this study; and
4. analyse the dynamics of socio-political developments in Arogbo Ijo between 1885 and 1960.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study expands between 1885 and 1960, which was the period of British political authority on the Arogbo Ijo. The year 1885 is of particular importance because British colonial rule was directly imposed on the Arogbo Ijo with the erection of the British Union Jack on 3rd November, 1885. Again, it was from this period that the impact of external economic and political force, specifically, the European economic motives became pivotal in influencing the way and manner of socio-cultural and political history of the Arogbo Ijo. In addition, 1885 was remarkable for the opening of legitimate trade and diplomatic contacts between the Arogbo Ijo and the European merchants. The year 1960, which is the terminal period for this work, is of particular importance because it represents a turning point in Nigeria's history because it was the year foreign rule ended in Nigeria. Hence, Arogbo Ijo, like other Nigerian groups, ceased to experience British political domination. Thus, the work specifically set out to discuss on the people of Arogbo Ijo from the perspective of their socio-political history as it affects other parts of their life such as the socio-economic conditions experienced by the people during the period of this study. Hence, this

study covers the socio-political and economic developments of the Aroibo Ijo of the western delta between 1885 and 1960.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Certainly, researches focusing on the economic and socio-political history of the Ijo of the Niger Delta, consequent upon the advent of Europeans are abundantly available. However, these literatures largely focus on the Ijo central and eastern delta area. The histories of the aforementioned Ijo are considered as being representative of the histories of Ijo in the western delta. Nevertheless, the little available literature on the Ijo in the western delta dwell more on issues such as migration as well as settlement patterns. In other words, existing studies failed to bring to the fore the specific impact of European political system on the Ijo of the Western Delta. This is one of the aspects that this study discussed by employing analytical historiography to unravel certain features of the European imposition of a new political order and its attendant effects on the Aroibo Ijo in the Western Delta. This research tends to pioneer historical scholarship from the prism of the effect of European political and economic system on the Aroibo Ijo. Significantly, this study tends to enhance an understanding of the socio-political structure and general societal changes of the area beginning with 1885, when British rule was established, to the terminal period of the study, 1960. Thus, by focusing on the Aroibo Ijo that happens to be one of the least researched groups in the western delta, this study supplements and complements the already existing Ijo literatures from the perspective of a study that seeks to identify the socio-political dynamics encountered by the Aroibo Ijo during the period of study. This study is equally significant as a veritable literature for further studies on the Aroibo Ijo.

1.6 Methodology

Basically, this study made use of historical approach of narratives and analysis. The study used both primary and secondary sources. The historical value of oral traditions has long been established and widely accepted.⁴⁴ However, this study did not depend solely on the usual conventional oral interview with official and local historians who have been trained to interpret traditions in conformity with changing political situation. Hence, historical data were collected through oral interviews of purposively selected resource persons including traditional title holders,

⁴⁴Erim O. Erim. 2004. *African Historiography: Trends, Praxis and Democracy in Nigeria*. Calabar: Klinsprint. pp.12-14

aged people with or without titles and custodians of local history through field trips to the area under study. Specifically, the field work for this study was done in two stages. The first was an in-depth historical survey of the study area comprising relevant tours to communities such as Asere Bubou, Bolowoghu, Arogbo, Biagbini, Adoloseimo 1 to 4, Apata, Ajapa, Ogidigba 1 and 2, Osari, Igangboh, Koropolo, Upe, Okomu etc.

The second stage comprised field tours to some of the Yoruba and Benin communities adjoining the Arogbo Ijo region. This is with a view to cross-checking some of the information and to clarify so many controversial issues. An attempt was also made to maintain the objectivity, restraints and perspective that are characteristic of the works of professional historians. According to R.B. Davison, no one can sensibly write the history of any group without understanding the language of that group.⁴⁵ It has also been said that, “we may not possibly have a thorough access into another person’s way of life unless we can speak his or her indigenous language”.⁴⁶ Thus, the researcher was not handicapped by an inadequate understanding of the Ijo language and traditions or non-familiarity with the terrain and location of the study area. In essence, it is imperative to note that the value of oral tradition is to be able to collect several oral accounts that are to be subjected to critical examination. In addition, the work tapped several historical information from the custodians; with a view to supporting a wholesale of the Arogbo Ijo political history beginning from 1885, which is largely missing in Niger Delta historiographies.

Many written sources were consulted. Among these are the 19th and 20th centuries accounts of European and African missionaries, traders and British colonial officials as found in Western Ijo Intelligence Report, Western Ijo Assessment Reports, Okitipupa Divisional Papers and Warri Provincial Papers. Specifically, relevant archival materials were obtained from National Archives, Ibadan and Ondo State Archives with a view to supporting the crux of this study. Most of these reports are ethnographic accounts that sometimes contain biases and prejudices; however, they provide historical value relevant to this study because of their emphasis on commerce.⁴⁷ Thus, the commercial focus of these accounts made it possible in reconstructing aspects of the Arogbo Ijo socio-political history in the period under survey.

⁴⁵Davison, R.B.1988. Inter-Disciplinary Approach to the Study of History.*Expanding the Frontiers of African History: The Interdisciplinary Methodology*. Abasiattai, M.B. Ed. Calabar: Calabar University Press. p. 8

⁴⁶ Babalola, E.A.2000. The Linguistic Factor in Ethnicity and Underdevelopment.*Journal of Cultural Studies*, VOL.2, No. 1:1999: 97

⁴⁷Falola, T. 1984. *The Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial African State: Ibadan, 1830-1900*. Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press Ltd.

This study deployed research projects, books and journal articles collected from both public and private libraries. These existing sources and literatures identified the present state of knowledge and gaps that were filled by this study. Above all, data obtained from the afore-mentioned sources were subjected to rigorous analysis and critical appraisal using historical methodology.

1.7 Literature review

The Niger Delta is, no doubt, presently gaining wide scholarly attention. However, adequate attention has not been offered the Arogo Ijo as regards their socio-cultural, economic and political history as affected by European presence in the region. Available works essentially focus on their history of origin and migrations. Like any other Nigerian society, a significant historical event such as the imposition of European political system and its attendant effects on the Arogo Ijo have been neglected in the body of historical scholarship. Despite this vacuum, it suffices to say that these works are important for review for this study. Notably, archival materials abound on many parts of coastal Ijo settlements in the western delta region which tend to provide useful historical information that are relevant for the reconstruction of a history of the Arogo Ijo of the western delta between 1885 and 1960. The accounts are seemingly useful in cross-checking information obtained from oral sources and private papers or diaries of indigenes of Arogo Ijo and its environs.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that early European explorers, missionaries, colonial officers and scholars that came to the Niger Delta made some attempts to provide a common history of origin of the Ijo.⁴⁸ Evidence of Ijo history and cultures are common in the accounts of most European visitors and explorers. It is, however, Pacheco Pereira's *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* (1508), which was the first European document that contemporary scholars christened as Niger Delta studies.⁴⁹ Specifically, Pereira's description of the Arogo Ijo is notable in the area of economic activity. As noted by him in the 16th century, Arogo Ijo was one of the groups remarkable for canoe carving to support long distance trade and the selling of large war canoes.⁵⁰ In fact, canoe manufacturing and sales boomed the economy of Arogo Ijo because they were reknowned for a massive supply of canoes, supported by the condition of their physical environment. This underscores the fact that,

⁴⁸ Banigo Youpele. 2006. Ijo Ultimate Autochthony: Still an Unanswered Question? *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, VOL. 16:30

⁴⁹ Pacheco Pereira D. 1508. *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*. Translated (into English) and edited by G.H.T. Kimble. Printed for the Hakluyt Society in 1937. Cited in Alagoa, E.J. 1988. *The Early History of the Niger Delta*. Hamburg: Helmut Boske Verlag. p.13

⁵⁰ Alagoa, E.J, Kowei, E.A, Owei, B.J. and Dunu, J.B. 2009. The Western Delta Limit. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Alagoa, E.J., Tamuno, T.N. and Clark, J.P. Eds. Port-Harcourt: Onyema Research Publication. p. 408

since the pre-colonial era, there exists economic nexus between the Arogbo Ijo and other groups such as the Ilaje, Benin and other Ijo clans particularly in the Niger Delta area. By so doing, this shows that economic inter-dependency was a significant aspect of the people's life style. Since Pereira's discovery was focused on the pre-colonial settings of the Niger delta, and Arogbo inclusive, it is difficult to situate the work in light of studies on British colonial presence in the Niger Delta. However, the work is an important background to a study on the Arogbo Ijo.

Specifically, the Arogbo Ijo historical trend in terms of their socio-political development in the period under study is obviously a vacuum to be filled in the historiography of these people. Again, the writing on West Africa by European visitors and explorers was largely motivated by the participation of such society in the European economic ventures. That is, the European records were often guided by their economic motives in West Africa. The Arogbo Ijo were often considered to have been in the middle of European trade routes traversing the Western Delta.⁵¹ That is, the European incursion to the geographical entity referred to as the coastline, no doubt, identified the Arogbo Ijo as one of the inhabitants of the area that became known as the Western Delta. This further complements Pereira's earlier description of the Niger Delta. That is, the Niger Delta stretches from Apoiland in the Western Delta to Andoniland in the Eastern Delta as the "Jos" or "Ijo".⁵² This, however, gave a historical insight to the habitation of the Arogbo Ijo sub groups in this geographical location prior to the 15th century. Hence, it also depicts their participation in the pre-colonial European activities in the West African sub region. Perreira's discovery of this area, no doubt, ushered in other European traders specifically to this region and the Gulf of Guinea at large. Available European historical records on the Arogbo Ijo considered them as part of the European overseas trade. However, a history of how the Arogbo Ijo evolves in their socio-political life since the heyday of the British political impact on the study area is still in obscurity. Nevertheless, European accounts provided pivotal information, which serve as a background to a study on Arogbo Ijo in light of their socio-political history. The accounts are also useful in cross-checking information obtained from oral sources and archival materials.

⁵¹ Alagoa, E.J., Kwei, E.A., Owei B.J. and Dunu, J.B. 2009. The Western Delta Limit. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. p.407. Also interview held with Chief Posi Ajama, Aged 70, Community head, Fiyebasintei, Arogbo, February 10th, 2017.

⁵² John Enemugwem, H.E. and Darlington Okere, K. 2008. The Role of N.C. Ejituwu in the Development of Niger Delta Historiography. *History in Africa*, Vol. 35:3

Apart from the aforementioned European accounts, other relevant works by African writers such as Alagoa, Ikime, Egharevba, Dike, Anene, Tamuno, Ajayi and Crowder, Falola and Mathew are relevant for review on this subject matter. Although these works tend to discuss certain aspects of the history of the Ijo in the Niger Delta, they do not offer explanations to the elusive history of socio-cultural, economic and political developments in the Arogbo Ijo during the period of study.

Notably, the works of Alagoa are cardinal for review in an attempt to provide a wholesale historiography on the Arogbo Ijo regarding their socio-political history within the period of this study. In his work, *A History of the Niger Delta: A Historical Interpretation of the Ijo Oral Traditions*, emphasis was strictly on the origin and settlement pattern of the Arogbo Ijo.⁵³ The work is a general study on the Ijo of the Niger Delta. That is, the scope of the work is not limited to Arogbo Ijo. Nevertheless, the work is informative, particularly on the origins and migrations as well as aspects of indigenous socio-political practices by the Arogbo Ijo. However, the scope of the work is rather too scanty for an in-depth analysis of the issue relating to the dynamics of history as experienced by the Arogbo Ijo between 1885 and 1960. Besides, the author made no wide narration of the European presence in the Arogbo Ijo area. However, the inadequacies in this work are excusable because Alagoa did not set out primarily to carry out a study on politics in Arogbo Ijo, but to underscore the relevance of oral traditions in the writing of African history. In spite of this limitation, the work is relevant to this study.

Again, Alagoa discussed the Arogbo Ijo in his work, *The Uses of Hindsight as for Sight: A Reflection on Niger Delta and Nigerian History*. In the same vein, the scope of this work is on the issues of origin and migrations of the diverse Ijo groups across the Niger Delta. Alagoa described the Central Delta as the place of primary settlements of the respective Ijo sub-groups that made up the area identified as Niger Delta.⁵⁴ The work is valuable particularly for its vivid description of language and history as a means of identifying the respective Ijo sub-groups within the Niger Delta. The emphasis is that, despite the linguistic influence of non-Ijo speaking neighbours on the Ijo dialects, it is difficult for the Ijo sub groups to completely lose its language and history. Alagoa

⁵³ Alagoa, E.J. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: A Historical Interpretation of the Ijo Oral Traditions*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

⁵⁴ Alagoa, E.J. 2004. *The Uses of Hindsight as for Sights: Reflection on the Niger Delta and Nigerian History*. Port-Harcourt: Onyema Publishers. p.55

described the Apoi of the Western Ijo fringe as one of such cases in the Western Delta. Substantial relevant information on the history of the Ijo could be retrieved from this account. However, a major event such as European colonialism vis-a-viz the British political control over the generality of the Ijo in the Western Delta and Arogbo Ijo in particular is largely omitted in this work. Hence, it can hardly be considered as a satisfactory literature on a study on Arogbo Ijo history during the period under study. In spite of this vacuum, the work is impressive to the understanding of the Arogbo Ijo history.

Furthermore, in the work of Alagoa, "Niger Delta States and their Neighbours up to 1800" in Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (ed.) *History of West Africa, Vol. 1*, the concentration was mainly on the Eastern Niger Delta. Alagoa specifically applied the concept Niger Delta only to the eastern delta kingdoms of Bonny, Elem, Kalabari, Okrika and Nembe.⁵⁵ He extensively emphasised that the classification was not only a geographical description, but also because of the ethnic identity and the similarity of political, economic and social institutions of these states. On the other hand, Alagoa specifically asserts that "to the west of the delta states are the bulk of culturally identical Ijo sub-groups of the Niger Delta".⁵⁶ He acknowledges the fact that there are some forms of disparities between the Eastern Ijo sub-groups and the Western Ijo Sub-groups. For instance, Alagoa tends to argue that the revolutionary changes brought about by the Atlantic trade in human cargo were much experienced in the Eastern states of the Niger Delta. This view is opined by Alagoa's attempt to develop an understanding of the 'House system' as a new socio-economic and political development limited to these Eastern states. The implication of Alagoa's submission is that the slave trade and colonialism flourished largely in the Eastern Niger delta than the Western Delta, where the Arogbo Ijo is located. This, however, shows that the scope of this work is narrowed to the impact of Europeans' influence on the Eastern Niger Delta specifically. This creates an impression of a poor understanding of the European influence on the western delta, and the Arogbo Ijo in particular. Despite this lacuna, the work is relevant to this study as it serves as a background to European colonial enterprise in the Niger Delta. It is in light of this that a study on the history of European presence in Arogbo and its attendant effects become imperative.

⁵⁵ Alagoa, E.J.1976. Niger Delta States and their Neighbours up to 1800.*History of West Africa*, Vol. J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder. Eds. United Kingdom: Longman Group Limited.p. 331

⁵⁶ Alagoa, E.J.2004. *The Uses of Hindsight as for Sights: Reflection on the Niger Delta and Nigerian History*. Port-Harcourt: Onyema Publishers. p 331

Like its counterparts in the Eastern Niger Delta states, this study tends to provide historical accounts of the economic changes encountered in the Arogbo Ijo of the western delta as a result of the influx of the European traders up to the middle of the twentieth century. However, it is important to clearly state that the Arogbo Ijo of the western delta did not develop into important City-States in the days of the slave trade or those of the palm oil trade in the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ In fact, Derefaka aptly asserts that, the Western Delta produced only one major city-state, the Itsekiri state.⁵⁸ This assertion could be interpreted to mean that there seems to be a lesser degree of European economic activities in the Ijo geographical location within the Western Delta, and Arogbo Ijo in particular. However, scholars have come to terms that these Ijo zones in the western delta were pre-occupied by European trading activities even at inception. As noted by Alagoa, early European traders came in contact with some of these Ijo clans through the Mahin, Benin, Escravos and Forcados rivers as well as from the west, through the Lagos lagoon.⁵⁹ It therefore becomes clear that Empires such as Benin and Itsekiri in the Western Delta were not sole participants in the European trade. This depicts the reasons for the inadequacies of European historiography on the Ijo in the region.

By and large, it is imperative to stress the fact that the geographical position of the aforementioned non-Ijo Empires of Benin and Itsekiri engendered their full scale participation in the European trade. On the other hand, most of the Ijo societies were considered to lay in thick swampy mangrove forest directly away from the Benin and Forcados Rivers which forms the hub of economic route for the European traders.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, these historical works are very informative in the writing of Arogbo Ijo history as regards the period of this study.

Another notable work on the Niger Delta is Obaro Ikime's article on the western delta, 'The western delta and the Hinterland in the Nineteenth Century' in *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. This historical work overtly omitted the diverse Ijo sub-groups in this region. He pointed out by

⁵⁷Ikime, O. 1967. The Western Ijo 1900-1950: A Preliminary Survey. *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, VOL. 4, NO. 1: 66

⁵⁸Derefaka, Abi. A. 2010. Slavery and Slave Trade in Niger Delta and its Hinterland. *Slavery and Slave Trade in Nigeria, From Earliest Times to The Nineteenth Century*. J.F. Ade Ajayi and Okon Uya. Ed. Ibadan: Safari Books Ltd. p. 138.

⁵⁹Alagoa, E.J., Kowei, E.A., Kowei, Owei, B.J, and Dunu, J.B. 2009. The Western Delta Limit. *The Izon of the Niger Delta*. Alagoa, E.J., Tamuno, T.N., and Clark, J.P. Ed. Port-Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications : p. 401.

⁶⁰Ryder, A.F.C. 1965. Dutch Trade on the Nigerian Coast during the Seventeenth Century. *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, VOL.III, NO.2:123

saying “of the Ijo of the Western Delta, there is very little information, known to the present writer.”⁶¹ In fact, Ikime’s assertion clearly represents a complete neglect of the history of about twenty-three Ijo sub-groups existing in the western delta. In clear terms, this showcased the view of earlier scholars to have equated cultural respectability to a high level of centralisation and showed little interest in the construction of the history of the seemingly stateless groups. The emphasis here is that European historical accounts of pre-colonial African societies were largely influenced by the scale of European economic presence within regions considered as dominant trade centers. This underscores the scanty production of European historiography on the Arogbo Ijo within the Western Delta. Nevertheless, this is not to out rightly draw conclusion that the European colonial interest had no direct significant impact on Arogbo Ijo. Hence, the scantily available historiographies are relevant for a wider knowledge production.

As earlier identified, the primary reason for the European presence in West Africa was trade, from the time of Portuguese arrival in the late 15th century until the decade preceding the end to colonial rule in the 20th century. Consequently, trade provides the context for the historical narrative of Pereira’s discovery of the ‘jos’, that is, the Ijo of the Niger Delta. In essence, the Western Delta area was certainly affected by the European trade. As emphasised by Ryder, “during the first half of the 17th century, the centre of trade was changed from Benin City to a number of villages, chiefly Ughoton, the port town of Benin, and Aboh, a new Ijo settlement on the Benin River. At this time, Benin had control over parts of the river, and Aboh was governed in the authority of the king of Benin by chiefs from the capital”.⁶² This, however, signifies that European trade extended to parts of the Western Delta town of Aboh, but was considered as part of trade movements within the Benin Empire because of Benin’s political and economic authority over this community. Hence, this is a pointer to the fact that Benin’s political vastness overshadowed the neighbouring Ijo communities, and thus there is need to critically undertake a historical survey on the Arogbo Ijo in order to clearly understand the patterns of their active participation in European economy in the colonial period.

Again, there is over concentration of historical writings on such large empires. However, the European traders fail to recognise that African Empires cannot be strictly viewed from the

⁶¹Ikime, O. 1980. The Western Delta and the Hinterland in the Nineteenth. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ikime, O. Ed. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nig. Plc. p.275.

⁶² Ryder, A.F.C. 1971. Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897. Reviewed by H.M. Feinberg. *African Historical Studies*, VOL. 4, No. 2: 406

perspective of common histories of origin, culture and language. Rather, the extent of the political geography of these large empires cut across such aforementioned people and their unique social features. In an important study which is germane to the above problem, A.E. Afigbo argued that, “the rise of Benin into a formidable empire had tended to blind scholars to a deeper understanding of other processes of economic, cultural, and political relationships which held together the different polities in the South-central Nigeria before the military emergence of Benin”.⁶³ Furthermore, he is of the view that there is a need to re-examine the nature of the relationships between peoples in Southern Nigeria in order to better understand the dynamics of group relations.⁶⁴ Accordingly, Afigbo opined that, “the rise and expansion of Benin had often been treated as the most single factor in terms of which much of the history of the other peoples inhabiting the zone, could be explained. It is this historical writing tradition or phenomenon that is described as the ‘Benin Mirage’.⁶⁵ Also, Aniakor described the prevailing theme in Benin studies as one that deals with political and artistic suzerainty of the Benin Kingdom and its strong dominance over cultures and the peoples of west of Niger River, except perhaps for the Yoruba.⁶⁶ It is apparent that some Ijo sub-groups such as Olodiana and Furupagha, and Arogbo Ijo scantily experienced Benin’s cultural and artistic influences. Emphatically, this does not relate them as people of Benin origin nor were they part of Benin’s colonial experience. To corroborate this view, Alagoa pointed out that Benin political authority did not penetrate the delta region because they did not use canoe transportation.⁶⁷ He emphasised that Benin’s military and political supremacy only overshadowed some of the delta communities, and some of the rulers went to Benin to receive their insignia of political authority and confirmation of their appointment.⁶⁸ Apparently, the work did not specifically identify the Arogbo Ijo as one of these communities under Benin’s political influence. Neither did it clearly point out the exert form which British colonialism undertake on Benin as well as these diverse Ijo groups in the delta region. From the foregoing, it is understood why there is paucity of historical materials on the

⁶³ Afigbo, A.E.1981. The ‘Benin Mirage’ and the history of South-central Nigeria. *Nigeria Magazine*: 17

⁶⁴Afigbo, A.E. 1981. The ‘Benin Mirage’ and the history of South-central Nigeria. *Nigeria Magazine*: 17

⁶⁵ Afigbo, A.E. 1981. The ‘Benin Mirage’ and the history of South-central Nigeria. *Nigeria Magazine*: 17

⁶⁶ Aniakor, C.C. 1997. “Do all Cultural Roads lead to Benin?” The missing factor in Benin and Related Art Studies, A Conceptual View. <http://www.jstor.org>

⁶⁷ Oguagha, P.I. 1992. The Igbo and their Neighbours: Some Patterns of Relationship in Pre-colonial Southern Nigeria. *Perspectives in History: Essay in Honour of Professor Obaro Ikime*. Ekoko, A.E. and Agbi, S.O. Ed. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books PLC.p.49

⁶⁸Oguagha, P.I. 1992. The Igbo and their Neighbours: Some Patterns of Relationship in Pre-colonial Southern Nigeria. *Perspectives in History: Essay in Honour of Professor Obaro Ikime*. p.49.

Arogbo Ijo in the period of this study. In essence, these literatures have been able to clearly bring to the fore the necessity of reviewing historiographies beyond the scope of the study.

In addition, literatures emphasising geographical description of the region that became known as the Niger Delta area are also very important in understanding the historical developments undertaken by the Arogbo Ijo during this epoch. For instance, Afigbo in his work “Britain and the Hyda in the Bight of Benin: Towards A History of the Abolition of the Internal Slave Trade in the Oil Rivers and its Hinterland, C.1885-1943” described the Bight of Biafra, especially the portion of it later christened the ‘Oil Rivers’ was a major anchorage of the British imperialism at the eclipse of the trans-Atlantic slave trade after about 1860.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Afigbo emphasised that, the Oil Rivers, along with the Bight of Benin, has over the rest of Nigeria the advantage of written historical records going back to some three and half centuries.⁷⁰ Incidentally, these plethoras of historiographies focusing on the Oil Rivers and the Bight of Benin are yet to bring to the fore an adequate historical knowledge specifically on the Arogbo Ijo who also forms part of the geographical area that is referred to as the Bight of Benin. Nevertheless, the work provides an insight into the British demands for support and cooperation of the coastal chiefs to run the local administration, and to push into the interior in the interest of trade. Hence, the Arogbo Ijo area could be viewed from this general perspective of the British approach to annexing these diverse coastal communities in the Niger Delta region.

A historical narrative describing the economic nexus between Lagos and Benin along the coastal routes, vividly describes the Arogbo Ijo area as a significant route in the colonial trading enterprise. Specifically, the Europeans noticed that there was a deep, wide water way from Benin River to Arogbo (about thirty miles north-west), there is no reason why these steamers should not go to Arogbo and discharge their cargo into Lighters.⁷¹ Furthermore, Arogbo is been described to be about one hundred and twenty miles east of Lagos; steam launches drawing six feet can now go from Lagos to Arogbo without any difficulty.⁷² From the foregoing, it is extant clear that a historical

⁶⁹Afigbo, A.E. 2003. Britain and the Hyda in the Bight of Benin: Towards A History of the Abolition of the Internal Slave Trade in the Oil Rivers and its Hinterland, C.1885-1943. *African Economic History*. p.1

⁷⁰Afigbo, A.E. 2003. Britain and the Hyda in the Bight of Benin: Towards A History of the Abolition of the Internal Slave Trade in the Oil Rivers and its Hinterland, C.1885-1943. *African Economic History*. p.1

⁷¹Wood, H.T, Roberts, W, Carmichael, T, Knox, C and Ewart, J.H. 1903. Lagos, Its Hinterland, Its Products and Its People. *Journal of the Society for Arts*. p. 651. www.jstor.org. Accessed 17 November, 2015

⁷²Wood, H.T, Roberts, W, Carmichael, T, Knox, C and Ewart, J.H 1903. Lagos, Its Hinterland, Its Products and Its People. p.651

work such as “Lagos: Its Hinterland, Its Products, and Its People” in the historical narrative of Lagos and Benin trade relations in the nineteenth century brought to the fore the participation of some of the societies that falls along this coastal trade routes. Specifically, the work substantiates Arogbo Ijo as a very important terminus in the line of the movement of colonial economic goods along the Lagos-Benin water ways. In short, the Arogbo Ijo water way routes was considered more navigable and cost effective in terms of construction for easy access compare to any form of alternative route on the water way. As emphasised by the study, “It would not be a very great undertaking to dredge a deep and wide channel from Lagos to Leckie, sixty miles; the bottom is sand and mud. From there to Aboto, about forty miles, there is a good, deep channels; the rest of the route could be cleared of snags and grass at a small cost. If this were done, there would be no difficulty in Lighters towed by Steam launches going between Arogbo and Lagos”.⁷³ Apparently, it could be viewed that the geographical location of Arogbo Ijo was in actual sense supportive to its emerging as the recognizable routes on the Lagos- Benin economic water ways. Again, in terms of economic cost as it relates to the opening of the routes for navigation, the Arogbo Ijo economic trade route was indeed a veritable economic plan by the colonial government. Nevertheless, it is imperative to know that the Arogbo Ijo history was not the main focus of this work. However, the work is profoundly useful in understanding the social dynamics encountered by the Arogbo Ijo society during the time frame of this study.

Remarkably, Wilcox article on “Commercial Transactions and Cultural Interactions from the Delta to Dual and Beyond” specifically identified cultural correspondence among the Duala (and Cameroun neighbours), Ijo, and Ijebu Yoruba water spirit ceremonies.⁷⁴ Accordingly, Henry Drewal emphasised that the Ijebu and other coastal Yoruba related groups such as Ilaje, Ikale and Itsekiri acquired their water spirit masquerades from the Ijo.⁷⁵ However, the aptness of this claim is not the concern of this study. Nevertheless, the Ijo group mentioned in this intercultural exchange seems to be specifically inclusive of the Arogbo Ijo group. This view is premised upon the fact that the Arogbo Ijo is the only Ijo group that shared direct geographical proximity with the Yoruba related Ilaje and Ikale groups. Beyond this, the work depicts a cultural interface that is primordial to

⁷³Wood, H.T, Roberts, W, Carmichael,T, Knox, C and Ewart, J.H. 1903. Lagos, Its Hinterland, Its Products and Its People. p.651-652

⁷⁴Wilcox, R.G. 2002.Commercial Transactions and Cultural Interactions from the Delta to Duala and Beyond.*African Arts, Vol.35.No.1, Special Issue*.p.49

⁷⁵Wilcox, R.G. 2002. Commercial Transactions and Cultural Interactions from the Delta to Duala and Beyond.p.49

the groups that are largely found in the Western Delta area. Apparently, the work tends to provides useful insight into a study on the Arogbo Ijo.

Accordingly, Edo's work on "A History of the Niger Delta People up to 1800" represents one of the general scholarly works on the Niger Delta. He specifically categorised the Ijo as one of the segmentary societies in the Niger Delta.⁷⁶ Edo viewed the Ijo clans in the Central and Western delta as lacking central authority. However, he distinguished the Mein, Apoi and Arogbo from these clans.⁷⁷ That is, he acknowledged the presence of a central authority by these aforementioned Ijo clans. Notably, the terminal period of Edo's work obviously precede the period of this study. The focus is on pre-colonial study of the Niger Delta region. The work is not on colonial historiography of the focus area. In spite of this, the work is very relevant by providing skeletal historical information on the pre-colonial political settings of the Arogbo Ijo in particular. Apparently, it provides an insight into the patterns of Arogbo Ijo historical development under colonial rule.

Egharevba's work, *A Short History of Benin*, clearly shows that the generality of the Ijo that occupied the western delta were not subjected to the Benin Empire; rather they had direct contact with them.⁷⁸ In fact, Egharevba asserts that, "Oba Olua (C. 1473) gave orders to Ijo men to carry his son Iginua (Ginuwa) and his retinue to establish the Itsekiri kingdom of Warri".⁷⁹ The clear historical knowledge derived from Egharevba's comment on the Ijo is that they were clearly different from the Benin people. The Ijo were affirmed to have existed as neighbours to the Benin kingdom prior to the migration of Iginuwa (the progenitor of the Itsekiri) from Benin. This depicts the fact that, the Ijo interaction with the coastal territories of the area that later became described as the western delta had existed way back in the fifteenth century. However, the specific Ijo group that had direct contact with the Benin kingdom is yet to be identified. Nevertheless, the information derived at this point is the Ijo dominance along the coastal area close to the Benin Kingdom. This was also re-affirmed by Moore, when he claimed that, at the time of Iginuwa's migration certain Ijo and Urhobo were already settled in the neighbourhood.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Egharevba is of the view that

⁷⁶Edo, V.O. 2002. The Benin Kingdom: History and Culture up to 1800.*History and Culture of Nigeria up to A.D. 2000*.Akinjide Osuntokun, David Aworawo and Florence Masajuwa. Ed. Lagos: Frankad Publishers. p.36

⁷⁷Edo, V.O. 2002. The Benin Kingdom: History and Culture up to 1800.*History and Culture of Nigeria up to A.D. 2000*.p.41

⁷⁸Egharevba, J.1960 *A Short History of Benin*.Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.p.22

⁷⁹Egharevba, J. 1960. *A Short History of Benin*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.p.23

⁸⁰Udo, R.K 1980. Environments and Peoples of Nigeria: A Geographical Introduction to the History of Nigeria. Ikime, O. Ed. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Education PLC.p.9

such as the Apoi of Okitipupa Division claims that in one of their earlier settlements at Okomu or Akpaka, they served as paddlers to the messenger of the Benin Monarch.⁸¹ This further strengthened the position that the Ijo widely occupied the coastal territorial space of the Western Delta since the pre-colonial period. As rightly indicated by Egharevba's work, there existed some forms of contact between the Benin Kingdom and some of the Ijo groups in the western delta in the historical past. The extent of this relationship was actually not detailed in his work. It is easy to conclude that the Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta is one of the Ijo sub-groups who were coastal neighbours of the Benin kingdom. However, since it is not a study on the Arogbo Ijo and the Ijo in the Western Delta in general, little could be discerned on the internal history of the Arogbo Ijo which is completely different from the Benin in terms of language, history and colonial experience. This, however, does not undermine the fact that the work provides an insight to the history of the Ijo, as well as the Arogbo Ijo in particular.

Furthermore, S.A. Akintoye in his work, "The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, C. 1870-1895" provides a historical account of the passage of Europeans to parts of Yorubaland through the creation of a new route. He emphasised that, by 1870, J.H. Glover, the then Administrator of British Colony of Lagos took steps in opening a route to the interior through the Mahin, Ikale, and Ondo territories.⁸² This created a flow of European economic activities among these specific communities and Lagos. In fact, the work began by seemingly alienating the Ijo as participants in the European trade along the eastern route. In a close description of the region close to where the Arogbo Ijo are located, Akintoye described thus, "the Mahin territory, a network of lagoons and creeks, stretched along the coast from roughly the banks of the Ofara River in the west to the Oluwa River in the east."⁸³ In specific terms, the work describes the occupants of the east of the Oluwa River coastal territory to be the Ijo.⁸⁴ It is easy to discern that the author's geographical description of the coastal region aforementioned clearly referred to the Arogbo Ijo who are immediate neighbours of the Mahin Ilaje group. At this point, the economic relevance of the Arogbo Ijo in the European trade could be noted in their supply of large canoes to support the European economy in the nineteenth century. Notably, Akintoye emphasised that the Mahin and Ijo were good canoe builders, and among

⁸¹ Egharevba, J.1960. *A Short History of Benin*.Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.p.23

⁸²Akintoye, S.A. 1969. The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, C.1870-1895.*The Journal of African History*, Vol. 10, No.4.p. 584

⁸³ Akintoye, S.A.1969. The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, C.1870-1895.*The Journal of African History*, Vol. 10, No.4.p. 586

⁸⁴ Akintoye, S.A.1969. The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, C.1870-1895,p. 586

them the canoe business was very important.⁸⁵ As rightly observed, the work identifies the Ijo as participants in the European economy. In short, he further stated that, on the Lagos-bound voyage, canoes were hired at Itebu and Atijere and sometimes, at Aboto, with Ijo canoemen enjoying some preference over the Mahin among the Lagos traders.⁸⁶ At this juncture, deriving historical knowledge of the Arogo Ijo been one of the key actors in the British trade during this period is clearly affirmed. However, the work is not a wholesale historiography on the Arogo Ijo. Nevertheless, the work is a veritable historiography for the study on the Arogo Ijo in historical perspective. As a matter of fact, the work having established the Arogo Ijo as participant in the European trade is ground breaking, and provided opportunity for a wider understanding of the Arogo historical developments in the colonial epoch.

Accordingly, Ikime's work, *The Fall of Nigeria*, categorically stated that the rulers of the delta states were naturally unwilling to give up the trade in slaves at the dictate of Britain. He further emphasised that, by 1840, all of these states except Brass were already fully involved in the palm oil trade.⁸⁷ By 1884, the delta states had become extremely preoccupied with securing the position of middlemen with the Europeans trading into the Niger Valley.⁸⁸ Hence, the Lower Niger and the Delta were claimed by Britain as spheres of influence on the basis of treaties.⁸⁹ From all indications, it is clear that the entire Niger Delta was subjugated to British imperialism. Hence, the work is a guide to specific historical discourse of the Arogo Ijo within the Niger Delta. Again, Ogbogbo in his work, "Nigeria-Niger Delta Relations, 1960-1995" succinctly described the Niger Delta as being occupied by autochthonous independent groups that had vigorous interactions with other groups within and outside the region.⁹⁰ Apparently, this means that a large number of the communities within the region engaged in external relations in which the driving force is usually economic factor. The European economic desire was therefore pervasive on these various communities. Ogbogbo further pointed out that, with the adoption of the policy of gradual amalgamation of various administrative units in Nigeria, the British in 1900 wielded together different groups to form what

⁸⁵ Akintoye, S.A.1969. *The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, C.1870-1895*,p. 586

⁸⁶ Akintoye, S.A.1969. *The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, C.1870-1895*,p. 587

⁸⁷ Ikime,O.1977. *The Fall of Nigeria, The British Conquest*. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. p.15

⁸⁸Ikime, O.1977. *The Fall of Nigeria, The British Conquest*. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. p.37

⁸⁹ Asiegbu, J.U.J. 1984. *Nigeria and Its British invaders, 1851-1920*,p.102

⁹⁰Ogbogbo, C.B.N. 2006. *Nigeria-Niger Delta Relations, 1960-1995*.*Intergroup Relations in Nigeria during the 19th and 20th Centuries*.Akinwunmi, O, Okpeh Ochayi Jr., Gwamma and D. Je' Adeyibe. Eds. Markurdi: Aboki Publishers. p.552

came to be referred to as the Southern Nigeria Protectorate.⁹¹ Thus, this work is of the view that the imposition of colonial rule was all encompassing for the people of the Niger Delta. From this view, one could be able to interrogate the pattern of British political system as it played out on the Arogbó Ijò specifically.

The work of G.I. Jones, *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*, is a major scholarly work that depicts aspects of political development with the incursion of the Europeans in this region. According to Jones, by 1884, the British government policy granted the British Consul the power to maintain law and order, and for the expansion of British policy of opening up the hinterland to free trade.⁹² Jones further asserts that, the indigenous political system was cardinal to the entrenchment of colonial rule in the Eastern Delta.⁹³ Jones also comments that, European influence upon the development of these trading states was mainly economic in character.⁹⁴ A critical examination of Jones work clearly brings to fore the pattern of political and economic changes experienced in the Eastern Delta consequent upon the advent of the British in this region. Jones concluded that, the last two decades of the 19th century was the underpinning era for the political and economic changes experienced by the Ijò in the Niger Delta. The work limits its description of the Niger Delta to the Ijò communities in the Eastern Delta. However, the work is relevant in unfolding Arogbó Ijò socio-political history during the period under study.

Similarly, Obaro Ikime's work *Niger Delta Rivalry: Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European Presence, 1884-1936*, in specific discussed the Itsekiri and Urhobo groups of the Niger Delta and the changing patterns of economic relations as influenced by the European emergence in the region. However, it provides general information on European economic activities since their emergence in the Niger Delta. That is, the work identified the symbiotic economic relations among the various groups in the western delta. Historical evidence of such economic relations could be observed in the patterns of slave trading among the Ijò, Itsekiri, Isoko, Benin and Urhobo.⁹⁵ In

⁹¹Ogbogbo, C.B.N. 2006. Nigeria-Niger Delta Relations, 1960-1995. *Intergroup Relations in Nigeria During the 19th and 20th Centuries*.p.554

⁹²Jones, G.I. 1963. *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*. London: Oxford University Press. p. 83

⁹³ Jones, G.I. 1963. *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*,p.72

⁹⁴Jones, G.I. 1963. *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*,p.72

⁹⁵Ikime, O. 1969. *Niger Delta Rivalry: Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European Presence, 1884-1936*. London: Longmans Green and Co. Ltd. p.52-53.

addition, in 1689, the Olu of Itsekiri stated in a letter to the Capuchin Prefect of Sao Tome that Ijo pirates made it impossible for him to go to Benin to trade.⁹⁶ Furthermore, all through the 19th century, the Itsekiri were in constant dread of the Ijo who were fond of seizing and selling the Itsekiri men into slavery.⁹⁷ This, however, signifies the extent of socio-economic rivalry between the Ijo and Itsekiri in the 19th century. Nevertheless, the focus of the work is on Itsekiri and Urhobo relations. Therefore, adequate information on the Ijo is not expressed by the author. Nevertheless, the work complements a study on the Arogo Ijo within the period under study.

Finally, in a work by Adediran Biodun “Research on Pre-colonial Western Yorubaland: A Note on Source Materials”. It is important to note that this work did not in any way refer to the Ijo group, as well as the Arogo Ijo in particular. However, it serves as a general background to understanding the colonial approach to boundary creations. Specifically, the work is relevant to the understanding of the European creation of colonial boundaries among African States. He opines that in line with the Anglo-French boundary of 1889, the bulk of the people were placed under the British in Nigeria, and as such, the colonial boundaries of African States often cut across peoples with common culture such as the Yoruba speaking peoples of West Africa.⁹⁸ The emphasis is that, the Anglo-French boundary creation of 1889 regarded cultural similarities in the drawing of the Yoruba colonial boundaries. Nevertheless, the Yoruba groups that fell under the colonial control of the French emerged as minorities in terms of their identities. This clearly shows that the colonial boundaries created were to strictly support the colonial economic and political motives. Apparently, the article clearly expressed a view that once a people are reduced to a minority due to the colonial boundary undertakings, the paucity of source materials on such groups seems a major challenge.⁹⁹ However, the study did not mention the Arogo Ijo in any form. Nevertheless, the emphasis on colonial boundary as a factor for the reduction of a people to minority identity, as well as its consequence of the scarcity of source materials on such people affected by the colonial boundary exercise. At this point, the Arogo Ijo could be better understood within the context of the colonial boundary creation challenges it encountered during the period of this study. That is, it is in line with this that the lack of adequate source materials on the Arogo Ijo could be clearly identified. In a

⁹⁶Ikime, O. 1969. *Niger Delta Rivalry: Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European Presence, 1884-1936*, p. 54

⁹⁷Ikime, O. 1969. *Niger Delta Rivalry: Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European Presence, 1884-1936*, p.67.

⁹⁸Adediran, A. 1985. Research on Pre-colonial Western Yorubaland: A Note on Source Materials. *Anthropos* 80. p.545

⁹⁹Adediran, A. 1985. Research on Pre-colonial Western Yorubaland: A Note on Source Materials. *Anthropos* 80. p.545

more clear term, Adediran provided information on the problems arising from colonial boundary creation, as well as the reason for the emergence of a group as minority group and its attendant historiographical effect on such people. Thus, it is within this purview that the lack of adequate historiographies on the Arogbos who were also reduced to the minority status consequence upon the colonial boundary and its significant effects on the shortage of written history about them could clearly be understood in this study.

To a very large extent, this review of literature brings out clearly the existing gaps in the earlier works that this present study attempts to bridge. As observed, vital aspects of the history of the Arogbos have either been totally neglected or merely glossed over. That is, this review depicts that no serious historical scholarship has been made to examine the theme of this present work. Available literatures largely limit the scope of Arogbos history to issues of origins and migrations, as well as their pre-colonial political settings. The impression derived from such literatures in terms of the dynamic nature of the Arogbos society in the colonial epoch are not adequate for a proper historical knowledge. In short, the Arogbos history as examined under the period of this study is virtually shielded away from developments and events that characterised the histories of the Arogbos. Therefore, a historical undertaking on the Arogbos of the western delta requires a more in-depth discussion and analysis than provided hitherto in existing studies.

CHAPTER TWO

AROGBO IJO BEFORE 1885

2.1 The Land and the People

The Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta area broadly defined in its geographical, dialectal and cultural scope lies between latitude 6° 15' and 6° 21' North and longitude 4° 58' and 4° 55' East.¹ The Arogbo Ijo area is bounded in the east by the Egbema Ijo, in the north-west by the Ikale, in the north-east by the Apoi and in the west by the Ilaje.² In spite of the age long geographical proximity of the Arogbo Ijo with the Ikale and Ilaje whose histories of origin have strong historical link with the Yoruba, the Arogbo Ijo did not at any point in their oral tradition referred to themselves as a sub-group of the Yoruba.³ In fact, Samuel Johnson, the author of the famous historical documentary on the Yoruba did not mention the Arogbo Ijo as one of the Yoruba descents. Rather, a close description of the geographical region which the Arogbo Ijo could be found by Samuel Johnson was his reference to the Ilaje Mahin as a piratical tribe of the eastern waters of Lagos.⁴ This showcased that Johnson's comprehensive study on the Yoruba did not in any way affirm the Arogbo Ijo who are the closest Ijo clan to the Yoruba kingdoms to have derived its origin from Yoruba. This simply means that, in spite of the close neighbourliness between the Ilaje groups and the Arogbo Ijo, Johnson's conclusion was that they were not of Yoruba origin and thus did not document them as part of Yoruba history. The people occupy a coastal environment similar to all other Ijo groups in the Niger Delta region. Their present location was an important trade route that supported the European economic ventures within and outside the Niger Delta region. Accordingly, European accounts recorded that there was economic nexus between the Arogbo Ijo and the Ijebu traders to the west, as well as Itsekiri traders on the Benin River to the east.⁵ In terms of geographical coverage, the region expands within the coastal terrain of Ondo and Edo states of the present day

¹Alagoa, E.J, Kowei, E.A, Owei, B.J and Dunu, J.B. 2009.The Western Delta Limit.*The Izon of the Niger Delta*, p. 406

²Alagoa, E.J, Kowei, E.A, Owei, B.J and Dunu, J.B. 2009.The Western Delta Limit.*The Izon of the Niger Delta*, p.407

³Interview held with J.M. Maggi, Aged 70, retired civil servant, Biagbini, 11th March, 2016. Also Mr. Woseebi Molumo, Aged 68, retired Teacher. Igangboh, Arogbo,22th September,2016.

⁴Johnson, S. 2001. *The History of the Yorubas, From the Earliest to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*. Lagos: CSS Limited.p.465.

⁵Alagoa, E.J. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Traditions*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.p.35

Nigeria.⁶ The area is strictly a geographical description of a region occupied by clusters of Ijo speaking settlements in forms of towns, villages and hamlets. This, however, is not to conclude that the region is purely occupied by the Ijo-speaking people alone. It is therefore erroneous to conclude that the habitants of any society are strictly the indigenous people. Hence, it is on this note that one need to identify that there are non-Ijo speaking groups such as the Urhobo, Isoko, Itsekiri, Edo, Ijebu and Yoruba, within the region. But it is important to state that these aforementioned non-Ijo groups are strangers in the Aroibo Ijo territorial location.⁷ Typically, the Aroibo Ijo settled among the Yoruba speaking groups of Ilaje and Ikale,⁸ however, they were not at any point in time under the political shadow of any Yoruba kingdom.⁹ Therefore, the overwhelming presence of these non-Ijo speaking groups could better be understood in migration and economic relativity. From observations, the cluster communities that made up the Aroibo Ijo society or kingdom operate a monarchical system of government with Aroibo as the centre of political power. The region is along a coastline that extends for more than two hundred and eighty kilometres from the River Oluwa in the west, to River Siloko in the east. The area is composed of islands and coastal settlements which are interlocked to each other through a system of creeks and lagoons. Notably, these islands and creeks consist of irregular piece of arable portion of lands which support little farming and thus, accounts for the region's practice of subsistence agriculture, as well as exchange of agricultural produce with commodities produced outside their domain.

In this region, the mangrove forest barriers and beaches of the Atlantic Ocean stretch gradually and irregularly downwards, and thus, connect the Aroibo Ijo to the Delta Rivers. The two main rivers aforementioned flow directly from their different geographical locations into the Atlantic Ocean. The inter-play of these geographical factors and similar ecological experiences as well as linguistic similarities with other Ijo groups within the Western Delta strongly differentiates the Aroibo Ijo from their neighbouring Ijo groups within and outside the Western Delta. Oral traditions

⁶Alagoa, E.J. 2004.*The Use of Hindsight as Foresight; A Reflection on Niger Delta and Nigerian History*. Port-Harcourt: Onyema Research Publication.p.54

⁷ Interview held with High Chief Filatei Ofoyeju, Aged 73, Agadagba-Obon, Aroibo, 22nd November, 2016

⁸Olomola, I.1998. The Yoruba and their Neighbours.'Deji Ogunremi and 'Biodun Adediran. Eds. *Culture and society in Yorubaland*. Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication.p.69

⁹ In a general description, an Ijo *Ibe* comprises a group of villages and persons who speak a common dialect of Ijo. They also believe in a common ancestor for the sub-group. Generally, a religious base of common identity is provided by the worship of a single national god. All members of the *Ibe* observed the prescribed taboos, and all member villages attended the annual or occasional festivals under the supervision of a High Priest. There was generally no central political authority, each village being politically autonomous. See E.J. Alagoa. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Traditions*.p.15

and field observations suggest that most of the communities in the Arogbo Ijo area were islands, creeks and waterlogged areas before the 19th century and unto this contemporary period. However, most of these communities have similar geographical and ecological changes. In spite of the changes, marshy land and swamps are common features in the region.

Apart from the religious and natural explanation for these changes in the geographical environment, deliberate human action gives a lucid indication as to the emergence of dry land and hitherto coastal areas. In the 20th century, for instance, Arogbo Ijo witnessed series of dredging and sand filling activities for the creation of habitable land, and protection from flooding which frequently occurs as a result of the over flow of the Atlantic Ocean. This was the situation on towns such as Apata, Bolowogho and Ajapa respectively.¹⁰ As a matter of fact, the need to claim and re-claim land from the sea and lagoons, as well as to make swampy lagoon areas passable for boats and launches led to the dredging of water ways and sand filling of swampy areas. Since the middle of the 20th century, the activities of multi-national oil companies in terms of oil exploration had consistently caused environmental problems in the region. This continuous human influence has a tremendous impact on the environment of this study area. Based on these observations and local traditions, one may conclude that some of the coastal communities within the Arogbo Ijo region of the Western Delta were affected substantially by the climatic and ecological changes during this period under study.

The creeks and lagoons differ in sizes and volumes. The volume is often reduced during the dry season which comes up annually between November and March. One noticeable factor is that the coastline does not offer adequate natural facilities for the development of ports with an international standard. This is partly because of the extensive mangrove swamps. Rather, the area only served as a passage for vessels and launches to other parts of the Niger Delta region. The significant means of human coastal movement was largely dependent on canoes and engine boats.

Typical of all pre-colonial African societies, ecological, socio-economic and political factors were of strategic importance in the defining of a history of the Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta. These factors also effectively regulated the historical dynamics of the relations between the Arogbo Ijo sub-groups and their neighbours. In this regard, the study explores the geographical features of

¹⁰Interview held with Mr. Disegha Torukoru, Aged 70, Traditionalist, Ajapa community, Arogbo, February 3rd, 2017.

the Arogbo Ijo area and the extent to which these features conditioned Arogbo Ijo history regarding socio-economic and political practices and dynamism. Understandably, the peculiarities of the Arogbo Ijo area in form of linguistic and cultural pattern make them outstanding in comparison with their non-Ijo speaking neighbours. Hence, the prevailing environmental and cultural homogeneity of this people is largely due to the geographical effects on the area. Hence, it becomes inevitable in understanding the dynamics of the pre-colonial socio-political system and its relationship with the economy.

An in-depth analysis of the relevance of the Arogbo Ijo environmental factors in the construction of Arogbo Ijo history is particularly important for two main reasons. First, the adoption of an ecological approach as one of the theoretical models guiding the research makes an adequate understanding of the nature of the Arogbo Ijo geography and environment composition in the pre-colonial period. The second reason is to be able to situate the relevance of the discipline geography to the study of history. G.O. Ogunremi rightly observed that:

Geography is particularly to history as a discipline that nobody can understand the history of a place without first understanding its geography.¹¹

An ecological approach, as distinct from geographical determinism, underscores the need to approach the human initiatives as well as the veritable part that the geographical factors of soil types, rainfall patterns, distributions of natural resources and other ecological variables play in the course of the Arogbo Ijo history.¹² However, the study of how a geographical factor affects economic and all other social phenomena emphasizes the fact that production and in all their ramifications are not only in some sense, facts of geography, but they reflect in striking fashion the geographical differentiation of the surface of the earth.¹³ Hence, reconstructing a history of pre-literate societies must not only be familiar with the geographical legacies of the past, they also need to employ some of the analytical tools of geography for the purpose of an adequate understanding of the subject of their study. Geography, therefore, situates the socio-economic and political activities of human-

¹¹ Ogunremi, G.O.1994. Dialogue between Geography and History in Badagry: An Economic History Review. *Badagry: A Study of the History, Culture and Traditions of an Ancient City*, in G.O. Ogunremi (et.al) Eds. Ibadan: Rex Charles Publications.p.7

89. Udo, R.K. 1980. Environment and the Peoples of Nigeria. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Obaro Ikime. Ed. Ibadan: Heinemann Publishers.p.7

¹³ Wooldridge, S.W and East, W.G. 1951. *The Spirit and Purpose of Geography*. London: Hutchinson Publishers. p. 91

beings within their physical setting. Apparently, the conditions or trends of historical developments of any human society are largely a function of the geographical setting within that particular society. In other words, at the centre of human history is geography. Therefore, there is an enduring relationship between geography and history. Immanuel Kant captures the essence of the remarkable union when he wrote:

Description according to time is history and that according to space is geography. The former is a report of phenomena beside each other and geography and history fill up the entire circumference of our perception.¹⁴

On this note, Arogbo Ijo history becomes easily comprehensible when set against the background of the nature of the environment. This, however, establishes a powerful nexus between the Arogbo Ijo and its coastal environment. As earlier noted, the Arogbo Ijo geographical location is that of numerous features in form of islands and swampy mangrove forest. With rivers flowing into the lagoon, drainage constitutes a major problem. During the raining season, the low-lying region rapidly becomes waterlogged. Obviously, it was a common problem that the nature of the soil renders the construction and maintenance of the paths (even for cycling in the late 19th and 20th century) a laborious and expensive engagement.¹⁵ Most of the communities depended on river networks as means of transportation. The Arogbo Ijo region prior to the 19th century was largely confronted with the challenges of the construction of passable roads.

In terms of geo-political space, the British colonial administration partitioned the Arogbo Ijo area into different districts and provinces. For instance, while a part of this area was politically administered during the colonial period under Ondo Province, a part of the study area was partitioned under Warri Province.¹⁶ Two main factors were responsible for the British artificial division of the Arogbo Ijo society under two different colonial provinces. First, the geographical widespread of this Ijo sub-group was one factor responsible for the separation of such culturally, religiously and linguistically homogenous people. Second, like any other region, the British colonial administrators embarked on such geo-political divisions of the region absolutely for colonial political administration. Hence, the Arogbo Ijo was grouped as part of Ondo and Warri Provinces

¹⁴ Ntukidem, A.E. 1988. *The Relevance of Geography to the Study and Teaching of History. Expanding the Frontiers of African History: The Interdisciplinary Methodology*. M.B. Abasiattai Ed. Calabar: Calabar University Press. p.31

¹⁵ Interview held with Mr. Festus Pighata Egeni 73 years, Fisherman, Erubiri quarters, 16th May, 2015.

¹⁶ *NAI*. Ijaw (w) 4 W.I. 335 Vo.11, Annual Report Matters and Correspondence

respectively.¹⁷ The colonial geo-political division seems to have laid the foundation for the partitioning of the Arogbo Ijo into two different states of Ondo and Edo as observed in the contemporary Nigerian political setting.

Having established the Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta as a coastal settlement, it suffices to say that the maritime nature of this region largely determined the economic and socio-cultural endeavours of the multiplicity of human settlements that occupy the area during the period under study. The geographical location provided the Arogbo Ijo with fresh water in form of rivers, estuaries and streams, as well as sea water which are very rich in marine resources. These resources such as fish, raffia palms, aquatic animals, timber, and medicinal materials enhanced the nature of their economic activities. From the foregoing, it is clearly understood that the economic dependency on the environment was purely conditioned by the fact that human ingenuity and resourcefulness are not space-bound, but the nature of the environment conditions their manifestation and development.¹⁸ In fact, the study of history of peoples at different ages depicts that environment played a significant role in the ways of life of the inhabitants. This implies that a close interaction exists between the people and their geographical location as well as their environment in general. Hence, since environment plays a pivotal role in human life and survival, it is imperative to note that the habitants of the Arogbo Ijo region largely practiced maritime economic dependency for their sustainability during the period under study. This explains why the economic activities of the people of the Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta had been mainly fishing, canoe carving, lumbering, hunting, gin distillation, farming and trading since the pre-colonial period on to the 20th century.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the period 1885 to 1960 which specifically was the era of colonial rule in Nigeria was indeed an era of socio-economic and political transformation of the Arogbo Ijo society. To a very large extent, the pre-colonial setting of the Arogbo Ijo became readily available for the British colonial economic ventures.

¹⁷NAI. Ijaw (w) 4 W.I. 335 Vo.11, Annual Report Matters and Correspondence

¹⁸Mabogunje, A.L. 1976. *The Land and Peoples of West Africa. History of West Africa, Vol. 1.*J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder. London: Longman Group Limited.p.1

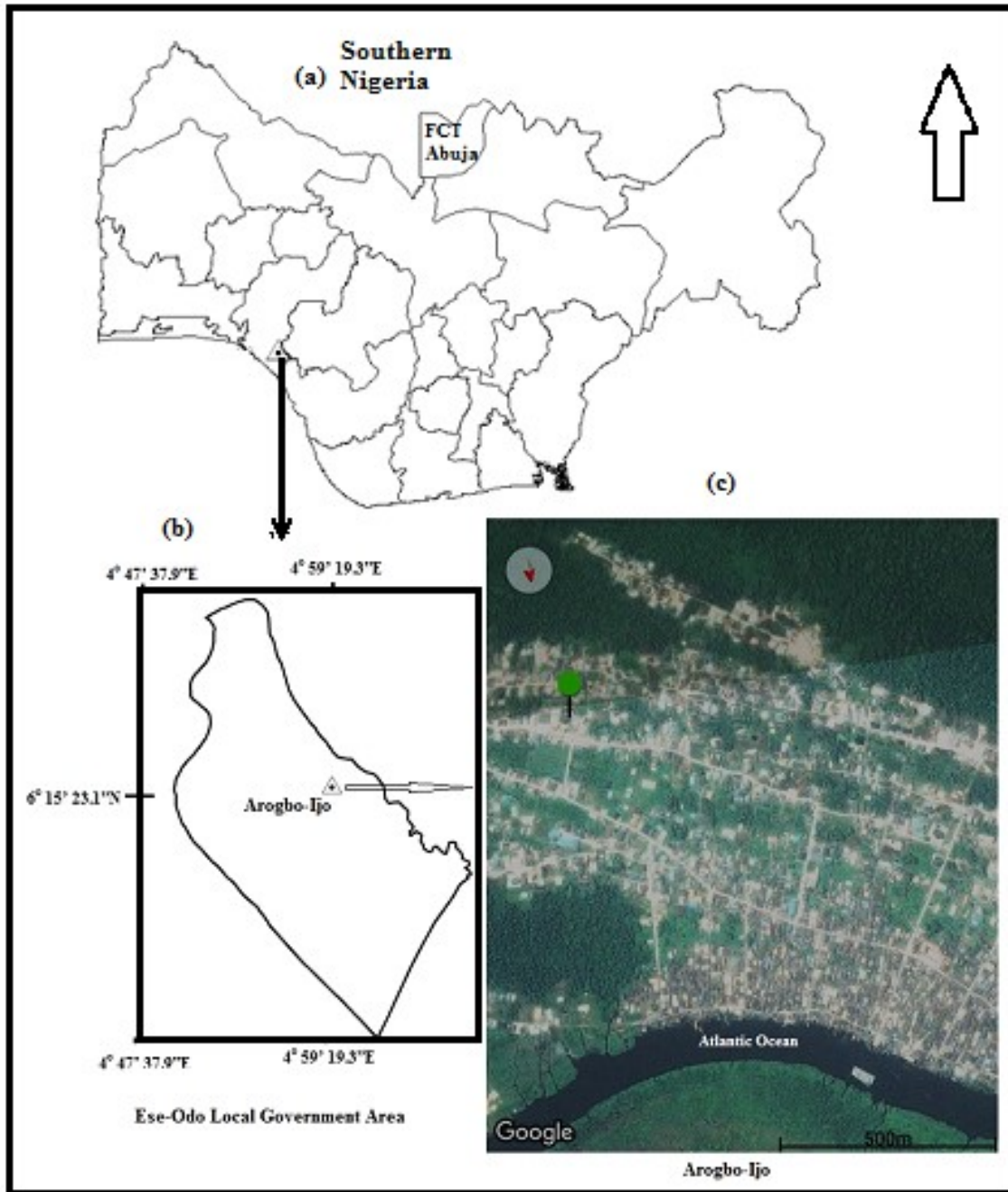


Figure 1: Arogbo-Ijo in Ese-Odo Local Government Area in Ondo State, Southern Nigeria

2.2 Migration Story and Settlement Pattern

Unequivocally, the interconnection between the origin and cultural understanding of African pre-colonial peoples, the historical dynamics of their socio-economic and political processes have been recurring themes in African historical research and intellectual production.²⁰ Taking a cursory look at the period covered by this thesis, the socio-economic and political approach to historical reconstruction becomes inevitable. Hence, there is a need for an analytical focus as well as a critical examination of the emergence of the Arogbo Ijo in its present location. Thus, it is imperative to examine the exact place of origin and patterns of migration of this historically significant group within the Western Niger Delta region. This is a view to putting an end to the variations in the history of their origin. As a matter of fact, a history of origin of the Arogbo Ijo within their present geographical location largely dominated by non-Ijo sub-groups as neighbours is seemingly relevant for a thorough examination in isolation from these respective neighbours. In clear terms, the socio-cultural and political homogeneity identified with this group makes them uniquely different from their neighbours. This allows for the consideration of the various communities referred to as Arogbo Ijo as a people with a distinct history of migration and settlement nature. The argument here is that, there tends to be variation in the histories of origin and migration pattern by this group. However, aspects of their language, cultural and religious lifestyle provided a very clear view of their uniqueness from most of their neighbouring non-Ijo speaking groups. It is rightly observed that the inhabitants of this area were already conscious of themselves as separate formidable socio-political units.²¹ This clearly indicates that, they practiced autonomous settlement patterns free from economic and political domination by their very close neighbours such as those of Edo and Yoruba extractions. Therefore, attempts to define the Arogbo Ijo as having common tradition of origin with these respective neighbours further put the historical origin of the people in obscurity. Particularly, the challenges confronting the claims of a history of origin of the Arogbo Ijo from these respective aforementioned groups is that they also shared more than one histories of origin. This, however, makes it extremely tasking to provide a historical knowledge on the actual place of origin of the Arogbo Ijo in relation to certain historical claims of their origin to have been derived from these neighbouring groups. In fact, this further deepens the extent of disparity in their histories of origin.

²⁰E.A. Ayandele. 1992. *The Ijebu of Yorubaland, 1850-1950: Politics, Economy and Society*. Ibadan: Heinemann Publishers. p. 67

²¹ E.J. Alagoa. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p.17.

Before discussing the traditions of origin vis a vis migration and settlement of the Arogbo Ijo in their present location, it is imperative to give a holistic view of the Ijo of the Niger delta. This is with the intention to properly situate Arogbo Ijo, the focused group within the general Ijo context. This becomes necessary because the Arogbo Ijo in terms of culture, language and traditions shares many similarities with other Ijo groups in the Niger delta region.²² Hence, this tends to enhance a better and in-depth understanding of their early history of migration and settlement patterns. The issue of origin of the Ijo in general has quite for sometime been very controversial among Anthropologists, European explorers and the colonialists. Generally, it seems difficult to place in proper historical perspective the exact place of origin of the Ijo.

Available historical evidence suggests that the Ijo are of considerable antiquity in the Niger Delta region. As described by P.A. Talbot, “the Ijo language is the oldest Sudanic language in the West African region”.²³ He further emphasized that the challenges facing scholars in history and language studies is the difficulty in tracing the history of the Ijo outside their present habitation in the Niger Delta. In a very lucid assertion, Talbot concluded that, “The Niger Delta, with the exception of a few tribes, occupied by the Ijo is a survival from the dim past, beyond the dawn of history, whose language and customs are distinct from those of their neighbours (the Ibo) and without trace of any tradition of a time before they were driven southward into those regions of somber mangrove”.²⁴ Obviously, the extent to which Talbot can reach in the historical narratives on the migratory origin of the Ijo is to find respite in antiquity. This implies that the Ijo are autotochthonous to their present geographical location of the Niger Delta region. Nevertheless, his view was erroneous in certain respect because there was no emphasis on the pattern of the linguistic transformation of the Ijo since the primordial period. Therefore, the exact Ijo sub-group with the proto-Ijo language was not clearly defined. Hence, it becomes difficult to affirm or trace a particular Ijo sub-group as the nucleus of the entire Ijo of the Niger Delta region. Furthermore, scholars are yet to prove beyond the historical knowledge regarding the Ijo origin being traced outside the Niger Delta region.

²²Interview held with Mrs Miyenbra Jojo, Aged 76, Traditionalist, New Ajapa, 26th January, 2017. Also interview held with Chief Ikiyouleimo Edonghan, Aged 71, Adoloseimo 1, Arogbo, 3rd February 2017.

²³ Talbot, P.A. 1926. *The People of Southern Nigeria, Vol. iii Ethnology*. London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd.p. 118.

²⁴ Talbot, P.A. 1926. *The People of Southern Nigeria, Vol. iii Ethnology*. London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd.p. 121.

To corroborate this view, Alagoa disagrees with Dike's hypothesis on the evolution of the Ijo language from the Igbo language between 1450 and 1800.²⁵ The contention here is that there is a lack of evidence for such linguistic separation. The actual location where such linguistic separation occurred within the coastal geographical spread of the Ijo could not be ascertained up till now. Similarly, the Ijo language was identified to be at least five thousand years distant from the Igbo, Yoruba and Edo, a calculation which accords with geological age of the Niger Delta region.²⁶ This depicts the fact that, the Ijo and their language are primordial to the Niger Delta. Hence, Alagoa is also strongly of the view that the Ijo are aboriginal to the Niger Delta region. On this note, it is clear that these views clearly point out the irrelevance of dependency theory of origin which confronts most groups in the sub-Sahara region of Africa to the Ijo and Arogbo Ijo in particular. However, a notable feature in relation to the history of origin of the Ijo is that it largely points out their aboriginality to the Niger Delta environment. This underscores the point that the diverse Ijo sub groups are aboriginal to the Niger Delta region in terms of their histories of origin. In spite of this, it is important to note that with the plausibility of Alagoa's scholarly work on the Ijo, the exact period of origin of the Ijo within the Niger Delta region is yet to be brought into historical limelight. Rather, much emphasis has been on the migrations and formations of sub-Ijo groups across the coastline of the Niger Delta region. Hence, the histories of origin of any Ijo sub-group falls within the purview of the general history of origin of the Ijo relating to the Niger Delta as the place of origin. This, however, provides explanation for the origin of the Arogbo Ijo to have been within the Niger Delta region.

As a matter of fact, the Central Delta (approximately present day Bayelsa state) is regarded as the dispersal points of individual Ijo group to the West (Delta, Edo and part of Ondo State).²⁷ This simply means that the Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta region are migrants from the Central Delta. On the other hand, the claim of the Central Delta as a dispersal point is a phenomenon that needs to be substantiated. In fact, a study by Robin Horton provided a contrary opinion on the Central Delta as the primary place of origin of the Ijo, and this seems a hypothetical history in its nature. He asserts that the Central Delta was a mere passage of these Ijo groups that came to occupy

²⁵Dike, K.O. 1956.*Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.p.24. See also. Alagoa, E.J. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of the Ijo Oral Tradition*.p.16

²⁶ Allen, J.R.L and Wells, J.W. 1962. Holocene Coral Banks and Subsidence in the Niger Delta.*The Journal of Geology*, Vol. 70, No.4,1962: 27

²⁷Alagoa, E.J 2004.*The Use of Hindsight as Foresight: Reflections on Niger Delta and Nigerian History*. Port-Harcourt: Onyema Research Publication. pp. 56-57.

the Western region. Horton is of the view that the Eastern Delta was the primary point of departure of the Ijo that came to occupy the Western Delta region.²⁸ Employing a combination of linguistic and archaeological sources, Horton was able to conclude that the Bolo (Adonis) region in the Eastern Delta is the probable place of origin of the entire Ijo. From all indications, the general views of scholars, and the available oral traditions are yet to identify the original homeland of the entire Ijo outside the Niger Delta region. Above all, the divergences of opinions regarding the origin of the Ijo have common features that complement each other by relating the Ijo as autochthonous to the Niger delta region. Therefore, Horton's position also buttresses the views of earlier scholars who had held on to the view that the Niger Delta region was the exact place of origin of the Ijo sub groups.

Taking a historical insight on the issues of origin of the entire Ijo, one could observe that the underpinning factor for the emergence of the Arogbo Ijo in the Western Delta is basically migration. However, it is important to note that scholars are yet to agree on the exact primary settlements of the Ijo within the Niger Delta region. In this regard, it becomes difficult to isolate the evolution of the Arogbo Ijo from the general thesis on origin of the Ijo. In clear terms, identifying the exact point of departure of the Arogbo Ijo outside the domain of the general Ijo claims of either the Central Delta or Eastern Delta respectively seems a difficult task. Particularly, for a period earlier than the 15th century and the middle of the 19th century, this historically significant Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta retreats into historical obscurity. Also, a more difficult task in identifying the exact place of origin of the Arogbo Ijo stemmed from the dynamic nature that exists in their migration patterns. That is, the group has peculiar oral traditions that explain their place of origin as well as variance in their movement pattern into their present location. Explicitly, despite the commonality in culture, language and socio-economic system by this Arogbo Ijo group, they lack a common oral tradition on the aspect of their histories of origin. Hence, important to the historical reconstruction of the Arogbo Ijo is the traditions of migrations and other historical developments within the Western Delta area. Notably, the emergence of Arogbo Ijo is interwoven in migration history. By and large, a greater number of these Western Ijo groups traced their origin to the Central Delta;²⁹ hence, the Arogbo Ijo becomes inexcusable. This, however, seems to be historically sensible, considering the nature of their migration and the reflection of the names of some of the lineage quarters in the

²⁸ Horton, R. 2006. Eastern Ijo Origin: Expansions and Migration. *The Multi-disciplinary approach to African History, Essay in Honour of Ebiegberi Joe.* N.C. Ejituwu. Ed. Port-Harcourt: University of Port-Harcourt Press. p28

²⁹ . Alagoa, E.J. and Ebiegberi A. Femowei. 2009. The Western Delta. *The Izon Of the Niger Delta.* E.J. Alagoa, Tekena N. Tamuno and John Pepper Clark. Eds. Port-Harcourt: Onyema Research Publications. p. 455

Central Delta.³⁰ On the other hand, it is also worthy to mention the aspects of oral traditions of the Arogbo Ijo relating to Benin in their oral history. Interestingly, the presence of Benin's cultural dominance became popular among other Ijo clans that were geographically close to the Benin Empire.³¹ To an extent, the cultural influence of Benin over these Ijo clans relates them to Benin in terms of their tradition of origin. These clans include the Mein, Tarakiri and Oyakiri and Olodiama.³² However, for the purpose of clarity, Alagoa is of the view that, these Ijo clans of Beni, Tarakiri, Kabowei, Kumbowei and Mein have traditions which link them with Benin though not necessarily as a place of immediate origin.³³ Apparently, the geographical proximity of Arogbo Ijo to these aforementioned Ijo clans as well as Benin Kingdom seems to have been the reason for the place of Benin as a part of the Arogbo Ijo oral history.³⁴ Notably, the overwhelming cultural and political influence of Benin on the various neighbouring Ijo clans, and Arogbo Ijo in particular should not be seen in the light of Benin being the place of origin of these respective groups.³⁵ There was noticeable influence of Benin's supremacy over immediate Arogbo Ijo neighbouring communities such as an Ijo-Apoi community known as Okomu, now in present Edo State, and Ikale communities such as Akotogbo and Ajagba in present Ondo State. This further explains the presence of Benin's influence in the Arogbo Ijo neighbourhood. However, there is no specific reason why Arogbo Ijo was not directly annexed politically by Benin in the ancient time. Rather, Benin's cultural manifestations became notable in Arogbo Ijo kingdom largely due to the aforementioned factors.³⁶ Specifically, a larger part of the immediate and distant neighbours of Arogbo Ijo kingdom to Benin encountered Benin's political domination; however, this is not to be interpreted as the history of origin of such people. In other words, it is easy to discern that the aforementioned historical event was a factor for the possibility of the Benin history of origin in the Arogbo Ijo oral traditions. These accounts of Benin origin seem to undermine the overwhelming cultural and linguistic similarities between the Arogbo Ijo and all other Ijo sub-groups within the Western Delta region. Furthermore, it is obvious

³⁰interview held with High Chief. Ebibotei Jiga, Aged 74, Biagbini, Arogbo, 31st January, 2017. Also interview held with Mr. Priye Peredonghan, Aged 60, Traditionalist, Biagbini, 31st January, 2017.

³¹ Alagoa, E.J. 1976. The Niger Delta States and their Neighbours. *History of West Africa, Vol.1*. J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder. Eds. United Kingdom: Longman Group Limited. p.335

³² Alagoa, E.J. and Ebiegberi A. Femowe. 2009. The Western Delta. *The Izon Of the Niger Delta*. Alagoa, E.J. Tamuno, T.N. and Clark, J.P. Eds. Port-Harcourt: Onyema Research Publications. p. 455

³³Ikime, O. 1980. The Peoples and Kingdoms of the Delta Province. Ikime, O. Ed. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books PLC. p.92

³⁴Interview held with Mr Festus Duweigha, Aged 68, Timber Merchant. Kirikiri Town, Lagos, 5th June, 2015.

³⁵Interview held with Mrs. Funmi Dimoh, Aged 68, Trader, Biagbini, Arogbo, 18th September, 2016.

³⁶Interview held with Chief Samson Iwabi, Aged 71, Retired Headmaster, Erubiri quarters, Arogbo, 5th May, 2015.

that the Arogbo Ijo has an outstanding traditional, socio-cultural, economic and political feature that is at variance with that of Benin Kingdom. To buttress this, Alagoa described the Arogbo Ijo as one of the few peoples in the part of the Western Delta whose traditions contain no mention of Benin influence.³⁷ This depicts the fact that Arogbo Ijo had a distinctive socio-cultural lifestyle as well as political authority which is exclusively different from that of the Benin kingdom.

Having established the independent nature of the Arogbo Ijo language and its uniqueness to the generality of the Ijo, it is erroneous to ascribe its emergence to a people of non-Ijo descent. As a matter of fact, Ijo is applied to a linguistically related group geographically spreading across the length and breadth of the Niger Delta region. Beside linguistic proximity, the Ijo are bonded together, to a large extent, by a common culture, and by traditions of origin relating them as autochthonous inhabitants of the Niger Delta region. To corroborate this fact, Alagoa asserts that “it appears that Ijo had existed as a separate Language from the Igbo, Edo and Yoruba for at least five thousand years”.³⁸ This is in line with the fact that the Arogbo Ijo and the Ijo language generally was never an offshoot of any of the languages within its immediate non-Ijo descent neighbours. This linguistic evidence suggests that theories deriving the Ijo from any of these major ethnic groups as a result of migration into the Delta in comparatively recent times cannot be accepted.³⁹ Arguably, to accept the authenticity of the Ijo language separation from the Yoruba and Edo languages seems to be a generalisation. The line of argument here is that, perhaps, there was occurrence of such a linguistic separation that tends not to be a more contemporary discourse on linguistic influence or domination from the non Ijo speakers such as the Edo and Yoruba respectively. Their complete assimilation to the peculiar Delta environment is additional support to this view. Indeed, Ijo oral traditions indicate no plausible place of origin outside the delta, but rather describe migration and expansion over the length and breadth of the Niger Delta mangrove belt.⁴⁰ However, it is important to note that the Arogbo Ijo and most of the other Ijo sub-groups in the Western Delta axis who share border with non-Ijo speakers are often challenged with crises of origin and identity. For instance, the geographical proximity of the Apoi with the Yoruba extractions of

³⁷ Alagoa, E.J.1972. *A History of the Niger Delta, An Historical Interpretations of Ijo Oral Traditions*.p.35

³⁸. Alagoa, E.J.1980. Peoples of the Cross River Valley and the Eastern Niger Delta.*Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Obaro Ikime. Ed. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books. p.68.

³⁹ Alagoa, E.J. 1980. Peoples of the Cross River Valley and the Eastern Niger Delta.*Groundwork of Nigerian History*.Obaro Ikime Ed. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.p.68

⁴⁰ Alagoa, E.J. 1980. Peoples of the Cross River Valley and the Eastern Niger Delta.*Groundwork of Nigerian History*.p.68

Ilaje and Ikale tends to relate them as a people of Yoruba origin. Similarly, the Furupagha clan has been under the shadow of Benin Empire.⁴¹ Thus, its history of origin tends to reflect aspects of Benin origin. In spite of the obvious Benin influence, the Olodiana tradition relates them to other Ijo sub-groups in the Central Delta.⁴² Notably, an aspect of relating the origin of the Arogbo Ijo to Benin was influenced by its geographical proximity to Benin Empire and its dominance on the territories close to the Arogbo Ijo area.

There is no doubt that Benin's political prominence and military supremacy in the pre-colonial period affected the history of origin and migration of neighbouring ethnic groups. This, however, is not to completely acknowledge that all of these groups derived their origin from Benin. J.F. Ade Ajayi submits in an interview that, though Benin had a kind of influence that reached Lagos in pre-colonial times, this fact does not imply that Yoruba people derived their origin from Benin.⁴³ In fact, Ade Obayemi opined that the authenticity of such claims is dubious even among the *Edoid* people of Ishan, Urhobo, Isoko, Ivbiosakan, Etsako and Akoko-Edo, which fall within the cultural territorial linguistic bloc of the Benin kingdom whose theories of origin are centered on migrations from Benin. Obayemi is strongly of the view that these people display certain fundamental peculiarities and differences which show that their establishment or foundation pre-dated the rise of Benin to political prominence and military supremacy.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Obayemi concluded that:

The farthest we can go is to say that especially during the past six or more centuries, there were Benin cultural influences like kingship emblems on other polities, but emphatically, these do not establish folk movements from Benin...⁴⁵

From this stand point, the above position applies to the groups who are culturally and linguistically *Edoid*. Hence, the Arogbo Ijo who are historically, linguistically and culturally a sub-group of the Ijo cannot be considered to have its origin from Benin. From this stand point, it is clear that controversies regarding the origin of diverse groups within the Western Delta were a common

⁴¹ Alagoa, E.J. 1980. Peoples of the Cross River Valley and the Eastern Niger Delta. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. p.79

⁴² Alagoa, E.J 1980. Peoples of the Cross River Valley and the Eastern Niger Delta. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Obaro Ikime. Ed. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books. p.415

⁴³. Ade Ajayi, J.F. "Oba of Benin Got it Wrong" *The Punch*, Monday May 10 2004.P.56.

⁴⁴Obayemi, A. 1976. The Yoruba and Edo-Speaking Peoples and their Neighbours before 1600. *History of West Africa, Vol.1* J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder. Eds. London: Longman Publishers.p.241

⁴⁵Obayemi, A. "The Yoruba and Edo-Speaking Peoples", p.241

phenomenon largely influenced by certain factors such as political supremacy, inter-cultural dialogue as well as linguistic factor. Hence, the Arogbo Ijo needs to be identified from the context of a people shrouded in problems of origin because of these reasons. In essence, it is not recorded that the Arogbo Ijo as a geographical entity was politically subjugated by Benin Empire. However, this is not to undermine the attempts by the Benin Empire to exert its political influence on a particular community within this region, such as Okomu,⁴⁶ as well as neighbouring Ikale towns such as Iyasan and Akotogbo which were once under the Benin confederacy in the pre-colonial period.⁴⁷ As rightly observed, the factors responsible for the lack of absolute Benin Empire's control of this geographically vast area was due to the nature and pattern of coastal settlement of the area. Again, it is pertinent to understand that like any other Ijo group within the Western Delta, the Arogbo Ijo was traditionally an autonomous coastal mini-state. Hence, the unavailability of a centrally controlled government of the entire Ijo kingdoms or clans in the Western Delta posed a serious difficulty to their subjugation by any external influence. It is important to note that respective Ijo clan operates a centrally structured political institution. In fact, the migration histories and the scattered settlements pattern of these Ijo groups were equally responsible for the lack of a homogenous central political system among them. Hence, the Arogbo Ijo as one of the Ijo clans within this location shared similar experiences. In clear terms, individual Ijo sub-groups uphold oral traditions, which point out that migration was generally from the Central Delta outwards to the Western Delta. Thus, in spite of the commonality in language and culture, the variation in their histories of origin and migration clearly characterise these diverse Ijo clans as easily susceptible to a collective domination of any form. By and large, there was no time in history that other various Ijo clans alongside with the Arogbo Ijo clan had a common history of migration into their present habitation in the Western Delta. In fact, it is important to point out that each of the Ijo clans has its own form of traditions of origin.⁴⁸

In this regard, it is discerned that, in spite of the dual accounts in the origin of the Arogbo Ijo, like their counterparts in the East and Central Ijo of the Niger Delta region, their aboriginality is largely restricted to the Niger Delta environment. It is also important to point out that they share in

⁴⁶Alagoa, E.J. and Ebiegberi A.Femowei. 2009. The Western Delta.*The Izon of the Niger Delta*.E.J. Alagoa, Tekena N. Tamuno and John Pepper Clark. Eds. Port-Harcourt: Onyema Research Publications.p 445

⁴⁷OGEN, O.J. 2006. The Ikale of South-eastern Nigeria Yorubaland, 1500-1900: A Study in Ethnic Identity and Traditional Economy. Ph.D Thesis, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos.

⁴⁸Oral interview with Senior Apostle Ebipatei Jemine.Aged 60. Religious leader, Bolowou, Arogbo, on September 29th,2016.

common socio-political institutions with their Ijo counter parts, and thus depict cultural similarities among the various Ijo sub groups than any other non-Ijo groups. This, however, relate them in terms of origin with the general Ijo history of origin.

Specifically, the Arogbo Ijo oral tradition upholds their migration from Gbaraun kingdom in the Central Delta in the modern day Bayelsa state, Nigeria.⁴⁹ It is important to note that, like most ancient kingdoms or states in Nigeria, the exact date for the migration of the Arogbo Ijo from Gbaraun considered as their aboriginal settlements is not historically clear, and thus, it is difficult to ascertain a particular date for their emergence in this present location. However, the historical visit of a Portuguese explorer, Perreira into the Niger Delta region could be referred to as historical landmark for the period the Arogbo Ijo occupied their present region. Perreira who wrote probably between 1505 and 1508 was personally acquainted with the coast and his book was intended to be a practical guide for navigation.⁵⁰ There is no reason to doubt his testimony that clearly identified the Arogbo in their present location as far back as the 15th century. As noted by Alagoa, the Arogbo Ijo is the only Ijo sub group in the Western Delta which direct references can be found or inferred in the early European records.⁵¹ A clear explanation offered by this historical fact is that, the acclaimed primary migration from Gbaraun kingdom pre-dates the 15th century. Oral tradition upholds that the progenitor of the Arogbo Ijo, Ogbonu, was the king of Gbaraun kingdom,⁵² and had many children among who were; Effurun (female), Eji and his younger brother Perebinyenmo.⁵³ This account relates the Arogbo Ijo migration from Gbaraun consequent upon a succession disputes that ensued at the demise of Ogbonu.⁵⁴ This established the fact that the motive for the migration from Gbaraun in the Central Delta by this group that later evolved to be Arogbo Ijo in the Western Delta was purely due to contest for political power. The presence of monarchical system as a symbol of central

⁴⁹Alagoa, E.J, Kowei, E.A, Owei, B.J and Dunu, J.B. 2009.The Western Delta Limit.*The Izon of the Niger Delta*, p.407

⁵⁰Law, R.C.C. 1973. Contemporary Written Sources. Biobaku, S.O. Ed. *Sources of Yoruba History*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.p.9

⁵¹Alagoa, E.J, Kowei, E.A, Owei, B.J and Dunu, J.B. 2009.The Western Delta Limit.*The Izon of the Niger Delta*, p.407

⁵² Interview held with High Chief Jimoh Tunfawei, The Pawei of Egbesubiri, Traditionalist, Arogbo. Aged 69, 11th March 2016. Also interview held with Chief J.M. Maggi, Aged 70, retired civil servant, Biagbini, 13th March, 2016.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Interview held with High Chief Ebieritei Kirifagha. Aged 72. Egbesu Priest, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 1st October,2017.

political authority among the people showcased the extent of political consciousness as well as development among the people since the pre-colonial period.

This oral tradition indicates that, Perebinyenmo, one of the sons of Ogbonu, and his sister Effurun led some rebellious groups away from Gbaraun. These groups were from the sub-clans of Gbaraun, namely Agwobiri, Egbesubiri and Kapabiri.⁵⁵ Also taken along by Perebinyemo were the Egbesu and Kpokotin deities, symbolic to the kingship and political institutions of the Ijo groups.⁵⁶ Along the coastline of the Niger delta, they migrated to Oporoza at the bank of the Escravos River in modern day Warri region. Alagoa affirmed that in the course of their migration from the Central Delta, their next stopping place in the Western Delta was Oproza, Gbaramatu.⁵⁷ In Alagoa's description, there is no precise date for their arrival at Oporoza as well as the duration of their presence in this creek. Nevertheless, oral tradition suggests that, it was one of the places they passed through in the cause of their settlement in their present location.⁵⁸ This underscores the fact that their ephemeral stay in Oporoza was indeed prior to the 15th century. This is in reference with Pereira's historical claim, regarding the Arogbo Ijo in their present location to be part of his 15th century discovery in the area that later became christened the Niger Delta. Fundamentally, the earlier migration of the people from Gbaraun kingdom was noted to have been induced by political reasons, and not in the usual characteristics of the Ijo migrations commonly for economic reasons.

One fundamental reason attributed to the Arogbo Ijo migration to their present location is often connected to a dispute between Perebinyenmo and Effurun, the elder sister while in Oporoza.⁵⁹ The oral tradition upheld that the quarrel over a pot of antelope porridge became inevitable because it was by tradition considered as a producer of prosperity and fertility for consumers.⁶⁰ It was stated that Perebinyenmo and some members of the groups consumed the porridge without giving part of it to Effurun, his elder sister.⁶¹ Consequently, this created a division among the groups of migrants from Gbaraun, with some supporting Perebinyenmo, and others taking sides with Effurun. The extent of this dispute is not on record. Nevertheless, it was acclaimed to be

⁵⁵Interview held with Mrs Aariyiewen Kokowei, Aged 74, Fisherwoman, Tebubelou quarters, Arogbo, 8th April, 2016.

⁵⁶Interview held with Chief N.E. Ege, Aged 72, retired sailor,, Upe community, Ukparamo, 7th April,2016.

⁵⁷ Alagoa, E.J. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of the Ijo Oral Tradition*.p.33

⁵⁸Interview held with Mr.Japhet Akiri, Aged 70,retired Teacher, Eagbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo,1ST October,2017

⁵⁹Interview held with Mr. Samuel Kondigha, Aged 70, retired teacher, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 11thMay, 2016.

⁶⁰Interview held with Benjamin Nwusun, Aged 98, Former Trader, New Jerusalem, Arogbo, and May 12, 2016.

⁶¹Interview held with Benjamin Nwusun. Aged 98, Former Trader, New Jerusalem, Arogbo, May 12, 2016.

the cause of the movement of both parties out of Oporoza.⁶² Effurun and her group migrated through the coastline and settled in modern day Effurun around Warri. It is often mentioned in the oral account that Effurun was named after her. The validity of this claim is however yet to be proven. Since this thesis did not set out to determine the origin of the people of Effurun, it is therefore needless to engage in rigorous discourse about it.

Nevertheless, Arogo Ijo oral tradition strongly adduced this dispute between Perebiyenmo and Efurun as a reason for the movement of both parties out of Oporoza.⁶³ Therefore, Perebiyenmo who was the custodian of the aforementioned deities and his group further migrated along the coastline and founded a new settlement referred to as Ekpatoru-Ita, which in turn became known as Ukparamo.⁶⁴ It is important to clearly assert that the newly discovered settlement was uninhabited and thus, had no traces of human settlement as at the time of their arrival.⁶⁵ Presently, Ukparamo which had turned to be one of the very large sub-regions of Arogo Ijo kingdom is occupied by mainly by most important Ijo towns such as Akpata, Opuba, Ajapa, Bolowoghu and Ukpe. Notably, since their departure from Gbaraun, Perebiyenmo has been the custodian of the deities Egbesu and Kpokotin described as the symbol of the Ijo political institution. Apparently, like any other African society, their progenitor is often conceived as founder and king of a particular society. For instance, commenting on the Yoruba kingdoms, Samuel Johnson noted that, in ancient patriarchal times the king of a country was regarded as the father or progenitor of his people.⁶⁶ From the foregoing, it may be surmised that this afforded Perebiyenmo the opportunity of emerging as the one who established a new dynasty as well as being regarded as the first kingly priest of the Arogo Ijo in this new settlement.

Taking into consideration the coastal ecological structure of the Arogo Ijo settlements, the people became pre-occupied with fishing and canoe carving as their dominant occupations. From Ukparamo, they paddled long distances for fishing, which in a way created difficulty for them to

⁶² Kekemeke, R.A. 1964. In the *"The Light"*, yearly magazine published by the Arogo Ijo Teacher's Union.p.2

⁶³High Chief Ekpobimini Ogonotibi, Aged 73, Community Head, Adoloseimo II, Arogo, May 14th, 2016.

⁶⁴Interview held with Mrs. Sinla Ijanboh. Aged 60. Fisherwoman, Erubiri Quarters, Arogo, 2nd September, 2017. Also interview held with Mr. Dieta Akiri, Aged 67, Traditionalist, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogo, 2nd September, 2017. See also Kekemeke, R.A. 1964. In the *"The Light"*, yearly magazine published by the Arogo Ijo Teacher's Union.p.2

⁶⁵Interview held with Mr. Eredigha Pughukumo, Aged 63, Fisherman, New Ajapa, Arogo, 2nd September, 2017. Also interview with Chief Jones Macleans, Aged 68, Community head, New Ajapa, Arogo, 2nd September, 2017.

⁶⁶Samuel Johnson. 2001. *The History of the Yoruba from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*. Lagos:: CSS Ltd. p.15

return to Ukparamo. Going by this, they founded new settlements very close to their respective fishing forest resources. Prominent among these settlements was ‘Bilebu Arhugbo’ which means the inner Arhugbo.⁶⁷ In fact, this settlement was instrumental to the discovery of the main Arogbo town, a vast uninhabited island which spread massively directly opposite the Bilebu Arogbo settlement.⁶⁸ The significance of this newly discovered island as an area of choice was the availability of huge canoe carving trees and the need to establish a more suitable place for habitation. However, oral tradition strongly upheld that the name Arogbo simply means (island for canoe carving). This implies that, as a result of the discovery of this island, the Arogbo Ijo area became renowned for canoe making and marketing which was the only means of transportation in the pre-colonial period. It is important to state that the Arogbo Island appears to be the most habitable area discovered by the migrants since their departure from Oporoza, and thus, the people migrated from Ukparamo to this newly found settlement. This, however, is not to say that Ukparamo became deserted of human habitation. Rather, it developed into a notable centre of trade. With the penetration of the European into this region, Ukparamo (Ekpatoron) became a commercial centre up to the early part of the 20th century.⁶⁹ In fact, Ekpatoron was a reputed slave market during the Trans Atlantic slave trade.⁷⁰

A remarkable aspect of Arogbo Ijo migration history was the movement of the political institution away from Ukparamo to Arogbo. The reasons for this movement as well as the exact date of this migration seem unclear in Arogbo Ijo oral traditions. Nevertheless, Barakumo, the second successor of Perebiyenmo, was reported by oral tradition to have ordered the relocation of the Egbesu deity and its associated political authority to Arogbo.⁷¹ The Arogbo Ijo oral tradition relates that the underlying factor for the dynastic movement to Arogbo was purely for geographical and administrative convenience. In other words, the reason for this movement was not in any way connected to internal or external aggressions besieging the people. In essence, King Barakumo considered Arogbo Island to be suitable for his reign as a king. From the foregoing, subsequent kings continually adopted Arogbo as the centre of their political authority. In this regard, Arogbo Island

⁶⁷ Kekemeke, R.A. 1964. In the “*The Light*”, yearly magazine published by the Arogbo Ijo Teacher’s Union.p.2

⁶⁸Interview held with Dimini Kokobioko, Aged 52, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 3rd September, 2017. See also Kekemeke, R.A. 1964. In the “*The Light*”, yearly magazine, p.3

⁶⁹Interview held with Chief J.M. Maggi, Aged 70, retired civil servant, Biagbini, 13th March, 2016. Also interview with High Chief Perebo Kowe, Aged 73, Community head, Adoloseimo II, Arogbo, 13th March 2016

⁷⁰Interview held with Chief Samson Iwabi, 71 years, retired Headmaster, Erubiri quarters, Arogbo, 15th May, 2015.

⁷¹Interview held with Chief J.M. Maggi, Aged 70, retired civil servant, Biagbini, 13th March, 2016. Also interview held with Mrs. Grace Faari, Aged 59, Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo, 3rd September, 2017.

thus emerged as the traditional headquarters of the entire people that became referred to as the Arogbo Ijo. Notably, the ancestral heads of the sub-clan quarters of Erubiri, Agwobiri and Egbesubiri also migrated with the king to settle in this newly found territory. The reason for this is that the head of these respective quarters also constituted the political institution of the Arogbo Ijo kingdom. In terms of tracing one's descent, these sub-clan quarters determine one's ancestry in Arogbo Ijo society. Therefore, since the pre-colonial period, the people's connection with Arogbo in terms of descent claim became prominent. By and large, from all over the settlements that makes up Arogbo Ijo society, the people paid traditional allegiance to the kings who throughout the period covered by this study were specifically domiciled in Arogbo town. The descent claims in Arogbo Ijo depended on the particular sub-clan an individual traces his ancestral origin to, and not minding the distance from the main Arogbo town which housed the respective Idimun (sub-clan).⁷² The point is that Arogbo Island became central to the tracing of one's family lineage within the general Arogbo Ijo society.⁷³ In other words, the island Arogbo became relevant as the traditional abode of the family lineage headquarters of respective individuals.⁷⁴ As a matter of fact, Arogbo Island which became prominent religious and political centre of the people became well established prior to the nineteenth century, and had since remained relevant to the socio-political organisation of the people.

Finally, an examination of the emergence of the Arogbo Ijo in their present location is no doubt predicated on the history of their migration from the Central Delta. It is imperative to emphasise that in the cause of the Arogbo Ijo migration from their aboriginal settlement, that is, the Central Delta, they brought along with them evidence of Ijo political institution. In essence, the symbolic Ijo political institution had no doubt allowed for a socio-political and cultural link between the Arogbo Ijo in their present settlement and their aboriginal home in the Central Delta. Again, the Ijo political institution created a distinct history for the Arogbo Ijo compared with their immediate neighbours such as Ikale and Ilaje in their present location.⁷⁵ Apparently, it is crystal clear that the migratory origin of the Arogbo Ijo as enshrined in their oral traditions traced them wholly to the Ijo descent.

⁷² Interview held with Mrs Toruofaye Duweigha, Aged 63, Trader, Tebubeleou Quarters, Arogbo, 4th September, 2017

⁷³ Mr. Ade Inami, Aged 59, Traditionalist, Adoloseimo I, Arogbo, 4th February, 2017.

⁷⁴ Interview held with Chief Balaebiju Mumbo, Aged 72, Community head, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, February 9th, 2017

⁷⁵ Interview held with Mr. Godwin Jojo, Aged 58, civil servant, New Jerusalem, Arogbo, 4th September, 2017.

2.3 Socio-Political and Cultural System

In an orthodox manner, the pattern of government in African societies was purely based on established customs and traditions. Common with the African traditional system of governance was the lack of a written constitution as in the case with the contemporary societies.⁷⁶ Oguntomisin and Edo clearly assert that political organisations in each of the pre-colonial African kingdoms were responsible for the administration of the societies.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the authors are of the opinion that, at one point in time or the other, every society evolved its own peculiar or unique political system whose structure and functions were germane to the institutionalisation of social order and harmony.⁷⁸ From this standpoint, it could be discerned that, in most African societies, the functionality of the orthodox pattern of socio-political organisation is predicated upon by the type of culture that has evolved among a particular group. However, in as much as culture is not static but dynamic, it could be well understood that the socio-political institutions constructed by a people whose culture is changing can therefore not be static; rather, it equally experiences dynamism. Accordingly, Green opines that:

Culture, does nothing only, people act and plan. How they act and how they plan, however is both Fostered and limited by the specific culture within which they live.⁷⁹

This assertion clearly demonstrates that the availability of a particular culture of a people is essentially determined by the region or environment within which they could be found. In other words, the culture of a particular people has the tendency to adopt certain aspects of the cultural behaviours of the neighbouring culture. Hence, this implies that cultural diffusion is an unending phenomenon in human history and no culture has the capacity to operate in absolute isolation from other cultures, particularly from those within its proximity. In line with socio-political structure and cultural changes, it has been earlier stated that socio-political structure is an aspect of culture. Since it has been admitted that culture is dynamic, the effect of such cultural dynamism could be unavoidably felt on the socio-political system of a particular society. This assertion is upheld by J.A. Atanda who states that, political systems are usually not static. They are dynamic

⁷⁶Oguntomisin, G.O. and Edo, V.O. 2007. *African Civilisation from the Earliest Time to 1500 A.D.* Ibadan: John Archers Publishers. p.78

⁷⁷ Oguntomisin, G.O and Edo, V.O. 2007. *African Civilisation from the Earliest Time to 1500 A.D.*p.78

⁷⁸ Oguntomisin, G.O and Edo, V.O. 2007. *African Civilisation from the Earliest Time to 1500 A.D.*p.78

⁷⁹ Green, N.A. 1972. *Sociology*. New York: Graw-Hill Book Company.p.22

featuring changes and continuities”.⁸⁰ In simple terms, the evolution of a socio-political structure is predicated upon the pattern of historical process experienced by a specific society.

In absolute terms, the Arogbo Ijo kingdom is indigenous to its own political sovereignty. The existence of this socio-political and cultural system among the Arogbo Ijo has been part of their lifestyle since the pre-colonial era.⁸¹ All the same, it is difficult to bring to bear the exact date of the emergence of the traditional socio-political and cultural patterns as it relates to the Arogbo Ijo. Nevertheless, evidence available show that, it has been an integrated part of their society since their evolution in this present location. As a matter of fact, political and succession crises had been considered as the factor for their migration into their present location. This, however, could be understood as the reason for the existence of an internal political autonomy in the pre-colonial Arogbo political settings; particularly with the view that Arogbo Ijo society before the 19th century did not record external political subjugation by neighbouring societies as part of its history. However, like most African societies, the inauguration of colonial rule in the late 19th century no doubt affected the pre-existing political sovereignty of the Arogbo Ijo as well as the traditional monarchical powers up to the end of colonial rule in Nigeria, since the process of colonial expansion itself meant the breaking of positions of power from the African traditional political leaders,⁸² it became inevitable for the Arogbo Ijo indigenous political system to be extricated from the colonial political influence.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that at the arrival of the Arogbo Ijo in their present location, the family or lineage system as a unit of the political arrangement was in practice alongside the kingship system with the title of the king as ‘Agadagba’. This shows that the socio-political identity of the Arogbo had been part of them since inception. The family or lineage was the major unit of socio-political relations as well as an instrument used in the preservation of the people’s culture.⁸³ The kingdom was a multiplicity of several small settlements, along the classical West African pattern with the citizenship, economic opportunity and the total world view being dependent on the

⁸⁰Atanda, J.A in (Monograph). G.O. Oguntomisin.2006. *Political System of Nigerian Peoples up to 1900*. Ed. Ibadan: John Archers Limited.p.3.

⁸¹Interview held with Chief Timidou Toikumoh, Aged 72, Traditionalist, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 4th September, 2017

⁸²Axel Harneit- Sievers. 1996. African Business,”Economic Nationalism”, and British Colonial Policy: Southern Nigeria, 1935-1954.*African Economic History*. p.25

⁸³ Interview held with Mr. Ujokumo Inami, Aged 64, Local historian, Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo, 2nd April , 2017. Also interview with Mr. Fiafiakimi Opirijitei, Aged 64, Community head, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 3rd April, 2017.

lineage.⁸⁴ Within each family or lineage unit is the head that was referred to as the ‘Okosuwei’ whose responsibility was to ensure the existence of peace and harmony among members of the family.⁸⁵

The king of Arogbo, like most African societies, specifically has his authority and legitimacy based on the traditional beliefs and culture rather than on electoral process.⁸⁶ Obviously, the Arogbo Ijo family system is typical of the pre-existing patterns in their aboriginal domicile in Gbaraun in the Central Delta.⁸⁷ As shown by historical evidence that, in the cause of their migration from the Central Delta, the people maintained their respective quarters which is reflective of the lineage structure. Hence, this trend continued to exist by way of representing the indigenous socio-political system of the people. In other words, each of the lineages was able to identify with their pre-existing quarters in Gbaraun as the dividing line of their genealogy.⁸⁸ Despite these divisions, there was the exercise of authority by each family head in order to create harmonious co-existence within the people of the same family as well as advance the course of peaceful inter-family relationship. In a broader sense, the maintenance of peace and harmony at the family level promoted societal peace in the entire Arogbo Ijo kingdom since the pre-colonial period. In the same vein, the assertion of Ade Ajayi that the basic unit of the Nigerian society is the family.⁸⁹ This, however, is a true reflection of the social outlook of the Arogbo Ijo society. Hence, the organisation of the people on family basis began as early as the time of their consciousness as a distinct group in their settlement in the Central Delta. Remarkably, this cultural family setting of the Arogbo Ijo was actively part of the socio-political system throughout the period of this study.

It has been ascertained that political systems are bound to undergo some forms of dynamism. It is from this point of view that the Arogbo Ijo could be better understood as a people that witnessed a growth from family level to clan level, and which resulted in the emergence of numerous settlements making up the vast Arogbo Ijo kingdom. The *modus operandi* of the political system that cuts across these diverse Arogbo Ijo settlements was such that, the governance of each of the towns

⁸⁴ Akinjogbin, I.A. 1992. *Milestones and Concepts in Yoruba History*. Ibadan: Olu Akin publisher. pp. 27-30 and 46.

⁸⁵ Alagoa, E.J. 1993. The Ijo of the Niger Delta. Bassey, W., Andah, A., Ikechukwu Okpoko and Florunsho, C.A. Eds. *Some Nigerian Peoples*. Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication. p.2

⁸⁶ Interview held with Chief Tekenatei Aribo, Aged 70, Traditionalist, Igangboh community, Arogbo, 7th April, 2017

⁸⁷ Interview held with Mr. Diete Ogidiogo, Aged 72, Fisherman, Koropolo, Arogbo, 3rd April, 2017.

⁸⁸ Interview held with Mr. Bibowei Kowei, Aged 69, Community head, Adoloseimo I, Arogbo, 3rd February, 2017. Also Ikuloh, E.A. 1964. In the “*The Light*”, yearly magazine, p.11

⁸⁹ J.F. Ade Ajayi and B.A. Ikara. 1988. *Evolution of Political Culture in Nigeria*. Ibadan: University Press Ltd. p.2

and villages was carried out by a village head or smaller chiefs often appointed by the paramount king of Arogbo Ijo, the 'Agadagba'.⁹⁰ These respective heads or chiefs wielded enormous power in the daily administration of their domains. Nevertheless, they owned much allegiance to the authority of the *Agadagba*. This was particularly informed by the supremacy of the *Egbesu* deity which is reflected in the royal supreme powers of the monarch.

On the other hand, the numerous towns and villages that are referred to as the Arogbo Ijo kingdom had linguistic and cultural homogeneity. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Arogbo Ijo as a group was their remarkable cultural homogeneity amidst their non Ijo neighbours. This is particularly surprising given the fact that Arogbo Ijo consists of multiplicity of settlements with some of them at the fringes, where they are influenced with other culture and languages. Yet, they preserved their linguistic and cultural identity. Ordinarily, this development should have paved the way for a good measure of cultural diversity which is usually related to such widely spread groups within the borders of non-linguistics and culturally related people. For instance, in Akokoland, the presence of numerous politically autonomous small states has given rise to a remarkable cultural diversity which culminated in the presence of several Edoid and Yoruba dialects.⁹¹ Apparently, the Arogbo Ijo has a high degree of homogeneity in socio-cultural institutions as well as a cultural system that is specifically unique to them in their present geographical location. Fundamentally, the nature of religious homogeneity largely expressed in the reverence of the *Egbesu* deity,⁹² was indeed the hallmark of the socio-political and cultural life of the Arogbo Ijo.

Indeed, there is a strong indication that certain ideas that transpired across them were already in existence among the people from their pioneer settlement at *Ukparamo*, which is part of the present Arogbo Ijo society. Evidently, on the aspect of their religious life which is eminent in the cultural setting of the people, the worship of the *Egbesu* and *Kpokotin* deities was a popular culture by all and sundry in Arogbo Ijo society.⁹³ They have a tradition which inextricably traced these deities to their aboriginal home in the Central Delta. Hence, the socio-political and cultural values

⁹⁰ Interview held with Mrs. N.E. Tibikimi, Aged 78, Traditionalist, Ileri-kiri, Arogbo, 28th September, 2017. Also Interview held with Tangbigbegha Esorimo, Aged 65, retired Palmwine Tapper, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, 29th September, 2017

⁹¹ Olaniyan, R.A. 1999. Forward. *Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and culture of a Frontier Zone*. Ayodeji Olukoju, Z.O. Apata and Olayemi Akinwunmi. Eds. Ibadan: Rex Charles Publications. p. viii.

⁹² Alagoa, E.J. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*. p.17

⁹³ Interview held with Mr. Apiribo Perewari, Aged 59, Teacher, Amapere, Arogbo, 5th April, 2017. Also interview held with High Chief Dimiyen Gbamila, Aged 75, Traditionalist, Ajapa community, Arogbo 1st October, 2017.

seem aboriginal to the people. Interestingly, it is observed that the Arogbo Ijo at the level of worshipping communal gods, did not adopt any of their neighbouring communal gods, but they continued to worship those deities that they brought along with them during the pioneering migration from the Central Delta.⁹⁴ It is, therefore, gainsaying that their pre-colonial socio-political process had little or no interference from their respective neighbours. However, political evolution in the 19th century clearly reflected a transformation from a purely pre-colonial system into a form of political system that unavoidably served as the bedrock of colonial government at its emergence.

In this regard, it is obvious that their pattern of migration into this geographical area largely conditioned the formation of the nature of their political system. As noted earlier, the Arogbo Ijo was a politically homogenous setting since the pre-colonial era, with a single monarch as the symbol of central authority who happens to be the custodian of the traditional socio-cultural and political values of this particular people. This clarification in a study of this nature is necessary because of the unsubstantiated claims that the Arogbo Ijo kingdom was at a point under the Benin as well as Yoruba Kingdoms. Issues bordering on political supremacy could be understood between the Arogbo Ijo and other prominent Ijo sub groups in the Western Delta. This, however, is not to affirm the existence of political conquest or subjugation of any kind by either of these groups during the period under study. Rather, it is observed that the factor used to determine supremacy is inherent in the classification of the *Egbesu* deity along gender lines.⁹⁵ That is, masculine and feminine versions, and this tends to create the impression that the groups in possession of the masculine version were a stronger political unit. However, there was no historical justification for such views. Thus, what existed among the Ijo occupying the Western Delta seemed like a “commonwealth of independent clans”, which allows for political inter-dependency influenced by the supremacy of the *Egbesu* deity.⁹⁶ This was not with the view to de-construct the indigenous autonomous independent political system of the respective Ijo groups. Even attempts by neighbouring Benin and Itsekiri kingdoms were fiercely resisted. Largely, the coastal nature protected these respective Ijo groups from being assimilated by larger kingdoms. From the foregoing, the nature of the socio-political formation and

⁹⁴ Interview held with Mr. Pereyaghi Deghibofa, Aged 71 years, Traditionalist, Erubiri quarters, Arogbo, 15th May, 2015.

⁹⁵ Interview held with High Chief Ebieritei Kirifagha, Aged 72, Egbesu Priest, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 1st October, 2017. Also interview held with High Chief Kimipatei Oweila, Aged 70, Traditionalist, Agadagba-Onon, Arogbo, 29th September, 2017

⁹⁶ Interview held with Mr. Ebikefi Ngbokuro, Aged 68, Hunter, Agadagba-Onon, Arogbo, 15th May, 2015

cultural developments by the Arogbo Ijo could better be understood within the context of the general Ijo world view.

2.4 The Kingship Institution

Among the Arogbo Ijo, there was a well defined traditional monarch commonly known as *Pere* with the traditional title of the *Agadagbaof* Arogbo Kingdom. The kingship institution depended largely on the divine powers of the *Egbesu* deity for the manifestation of religious and socio-cultural activities within the kingdom.⁹⁷ The traditional monarch is considered as a kingly priest. That is, the king also played the role of a chief priest of the *Egbesu* deity. On a general note, it is important to state that among the diverse Ijo sub-groups in the Niger Delta region, the *Egbesu deity* is revered as the arch-divinity.⁹⁸ Each of the Ijo clan or community has its own *Egbesu* since clan names qualify the name “*Egbesu*”. As rightly pointed out, there is the *Olodiana Egbesu*, *Egbema Egbesu*, *Arogbo Egbesu* and *Oporoma Egbesu*.⁹⁹ Notably, the *Egbesu* was conceived as the god of war by these clans in possession of this deity. Accordingly, the *Pere* was the symbol of the political and religious unity in the entire Arogbo Ijo kingdom. However, given the sacred and semi-divine nature of the *Pere*, the installation and coronation were accompanied by elaborate rituals and solemn rites usually influenced by the *Egbesu* deity. *Egbesu* priests known as *Okparan*, assisted the king in the spiritual activities as demanded by the *Egbesu* deity. On the other hand, a council of chiefs assisted the king in the daily administration of the kingdom. As a way of the indigenous political structure, each lineage head administered their respective lineages.¹⁰⁰ By and large, the *Pere* was to all intents and purposes the acknowledged religious, political, economic and military head of the kingdom. It is important to note that the king also doubles as the *Egbesu* priest; hence, the monarch was a kingly priest who was considered to be the custodian of the traditional values of the entire kingdom as determined by *Egbesu* deity. Remarkably, in spite of the powers and authority bestowed upon the king, this, however, did not turn him into an autocrat. Generally, the Ijo traditional constitutional provisions carefully curtailed the *Pere*'s potential excesses and possible abuse of power. It must be emphasised that the *Pere* or king and the *Okpanran*'s were acknowledged

⁹⁷ Interview held with Mr. Opuebi Kontei, Aged 63, Traditionalist, Osari, Arogbo, 22nd September, 2016.

⁹⁸ Awolalu J.O. and Dopamu P.A. 1979. *West African Traditional Religion*. Ibadan: Onibonoje Press and Books Industries (Nig.) Limited. p.98.

⁹⁹ Awolalu J.O. and Dopamu P.A. 1979. *West African Traditional Religion*. Ibadan: Onibonoje Press and Books Industries (Nig.) Limited. p.98

¹⁰⁰ High Chief Karamotei Kondigha, Aged 70, Traditionalist, Community Head, Egesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 22nd September, 2016

as the overall head of the Arogbo Ijo kingdom. Above all, at the echelon of the political structure of the people was the *Egbesu* deity who controlled the society through the king and the *Okparan*.

It is evident from the preceding analysis that, the pattern of Arogbo Ijo orthodox socio-political institution was not any way undermined by the existing differentials in their histories of origin and migration which accounted for why they are categorised as a distinct group among their non-Ijo neighbours. Rather, their cultural homogeneity relates them with much similarity with other Ijo clans. Again, the kingship institution represents social cohesion and a genuine spirit of Arogbo Ijo nationalism which could be dated back to the pre-colonial period. In this vein, the socio-political and cultural system became a readily available structure that the Europeans depended upon for their economic and political endeavours in the Arogbo Ijo society.

2.5 Traditional Economy: A Foundation to Colonial Economy

For a proper reconstruction of the history of a people, there is the need to pay attention to their political and economic structures.¹⁰¹ In furtherance to this assertion, Ake is of the view that a study of the economic structure is indeed a point of departure for studying other aspects of the society.¹⁰² To a very large extent, this tends to provide an insight into the evolution and growth of all other aspects of the society. In a strict sense, the economy of a particular society dwells more on the relationship that exists between man and his natural environment. The bedrock of the socio-economic and political formation dwell much on the theory of geographical determinism.¹⁰³ However, the ability of man to exploit his natural environment through the input of labour is a deciding factor in the economy of any society that man could be found. In support of this assertion, Frederick Engels pointed out that labour is the “primary condition for all human existence, hence, one can conclude that labour created man.”¹⁰⁴ In a relative term, the inferences can be drawn that everyman ostensibly engages in one form of labour or the other for survival. The rationale for man to seeking economic survival has made it possible for him to be identified as a productive force, and this creates an ambiance of entrepreneurship of goods or items produced. It is, however, gainsaying that the individual producer in most typical African societies has the absolute control

¹⁰¹Ake, C. 2008. *A Political Economy of Africa*. England: Longman Group Limited. p. 1

¹⁰²Ake, C. 2008. *Apolitical Economy of Africa*, p.1

¹⁰³Faluyi, E.K. 1995. *A History of Agriculture in Western Nigeria, 1900-1960*. University of Lagos: Department of History, PhD Thesis. P.18

¹⁰⁴ Chernikov, G.P. and Rydina, M.N. 1985. *Political Economy of Capitalism*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.p.7

over the goods or articles produced by him. In a nutshell, the management of the processes of production varies in African societies, while in some societies; the economic determinism of production is mainly decided by an individual, in other societies, it is indeed the obligation of the traditional political leadership to prevail upon economic situations in their domains. Nevertheless, the economic circumstances reflect societal development in its historical continuity.

A historical study of the Arogbo Ijo from the political-economic view, particularly in the era of European colonisation identifies the nature of development that has evolved in the society. Importantly, it could be observed that the dynamics of state formation process by the Arogbo Ijo has been mainly affected by the evolution of indigenous economic system which is largely influenced by their geographical settlement. During the earliest evolution of the Arogbo Ijo in the area they presently occupy, there was already the practice of economic activities, which in a way formed the bedrock of their spatial settlement pattern in the region. Studies have shown that way back in the 15th century, the Arogbo Ijo was involved in the economic occupation of canoe carving in their present location.¹⁰⁵ Hence, the people became conditioned by the traditional hospitality of the area and, thus, enhanced a dependable economic environment. This in turn led to their spread from Ukparamo (place of first settlement on arrival in their present location) to other areas such as Arogbo and other towns and villages that broadly formed the present Arogbo Ijo society.¹⁰⁶ In other words, there was noticeable intra migration along the coastline which largely reflects economic mobility of the people into coastal environment within the region they occupied. The implication of these newly recreated settlements was that it further widened an economic reliance of the people on their environment, and thus provided the people with a self sufficient economy.

The argument here is that from ecological point of view, the Arogbo Ijo as a people had occupied the present coastal location in a period that is yet to be historically dated. Hence, ecological determinism was a major factor that designed the pattern which the economy of the Arogbo Ijo operated upon. As a people whose history of migration is related to the movement along the coastline of the Niger Delta, their economy was influenced by the European capitalist market of the 19th century. In clear terms, it is indeed a difficult task to isolate the Arogbo Ijo economy from the European economic changes of the 19th century. As a result of this, the people's participation

¹⁰⁵Alagoa, E.J. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*.p.23. See also Ikuloh, E.A. 1964. In the "*The Light*", yearly magazine, p.11

¹⁰⁶Interview held with Mr. Gbesinghan Ojujoh, Aged 55, Local historian, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 5th April, 2017.

in the colonial legitimate trade engendered the satisfaction of the economic demands of the European traders. Precisely, this Ijopeople were notable for their participation in the Oil palm trade during the colonial period.¹⁰⁷ Their participation in the Oil palm trade can be classified into two parts. First, they could be regarded as minor when it relates to cultivation of Oil palm trees. This was due to their coastal settlements, with massive swampy forests that were unable to support Oil palm cultivation in commercial scale. For instance, the only available Oil palm estate was at Dabaublebu in Okiri-Ugbo which apparently was leased out to the Urhobo for harvesting.¹⁰⁸ In fact, it is correct to conclude that the commercial production of palm oil in Arogbo Ijo was economically unsatisfactory for the European demands.¹⁰⁹ At this point, it is indeed clear that the Arogbo Ijo settlement pattern largely in form of a swampy and coastal spread was the reason for the unavailability of very large natural Oil palm plantations in the area. By and large, the area could not be described as producers of Oil palm for the European economy. Nevertheless, their importance in the European economy is regarded as the second aspect of their participation in the European trade in the Niger Delta. That is, being a strait coastal settlement, Arogbo Ijo was inevitably an economic passage for European goods. For instance Sir Percy Grouard of the Royal Engineer in 1907 described the water ways as the axis of economic development.¹¹⁰ Again, Ekundare expressly stated that, Nigeria depended largely on the natural water ways for the transportation of people and goods.¹¹¹ Thus, the geographical positioning of the Arogbo Ijo enhanced them as a key player in the Oil palm mercantilism with various communities along the coast for shipment into the western world.¹¹² Specifically, the area became a passage for commerce and cash economy en route from Lagos, Warri, Bomadi, Oproza, Benin, Forcados and Sapele in exchange for raw materials needed by European industries abroad.¹¹³ Another notable aspect of the people's participation in the European capitalism was their reputation in the construction of large canoes which thus, enhanced the movement of goods in large quantity supportive to the European commerce across the coastline of

¹⁰⁷Interview held with Chief Samuel Kemiyeenkumo, Aged 64. Trader, Epu Idimu, Arogbo, 2nd March, 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Interview held with Ebenezer, K. Egene, Aged 69, retiree, Opuerede Quarters, Opuba, Arogbo, 6th March, 2016. Also Chief Deminiwei Fari, Aged 71, Traditionalist, Safarau-Ugbo community, Arogbo, 7th March, 2016

¹⁰⁹Mr. James Tinghinkumo. Aged 66. Retired Teacher, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, on April 14th, 2017

¹¹⁰Kirk-Green, A.H.M. 1968. *Lugard and the Amalgamation of Nigeria: A Documentary Record*. London: Frank and Cass co. Ltd. p.81

¹¹¹Ekundare, R.O. 1973. *An Economic History of Nigeria, 1860-1960*. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd. p.96

¹¹²Interview held with P.M.S. Olopele, Aged 72, retiree, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 12th March, 2016.

¹¹³Interview held with High Chief ThankGod Eregha, Aged 69, Traditionalist, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 12th March, 2016.

the Niger Delta.¹¹⁴ As a matter of fact, the demand for large canoes for the movement of the Oil palm and other goods such as rum, guns, gun powder, mirror and coral beads afforded the Arogo Ijo a very strategic position in the period of the legitimate trade within the entire Niger Delta region.¹¹⁵

Remarkably, another principal economic commodity for export to the western world was timber. By 1902, the forest of the region that later metamorphosed into Nigeria was under the control of an expert of the highest scientific repute, Mr. H.M. Thompson, referred to as Timber Thompson.¹¹⁶ Obviously, the task of this British scientist was to secure a large timber market for the benefit of the European demands. Like any other economic activity, the coastal area was renowned for the transportation as well as the supply of timber for European consumptions. Notably, the number of timbers exported from Southern Nigeria during 1906 was 20, 274 valued locally at 68, 718 pounds.¹¹⁷ The implication is that the timber enterprise was very significant to the European merchants. Apparently, the Arogo Ijo area was one of the very important routes through which raft of timbers moved from the Benin River region to Lagos.¹¹⁸ A rise in the rivers between Lagos and Benin caused a series of formidable sudd blocks which posed enormous challenges to the movement of timber along these water ways.¹¹⁹ During this period, the River Oluwa which flows through Arogo into the Siloko River, and other adjoining creeks was identified as having enormous sudd blocks, and thus needed to be removed in order to enhance a smooth movement of timber to Lagos.¹²⁰ Remarkably, the Arogo Ijo became actively involved in the timber enterprise in the early 20th century. Precisely by the 1940s, the Arogo Ijo had established themselves as key players in the timber enterprise.¹²¹ They emerged as formidable middlemen responsible for the trafficking of timber. From the foregoing, the timber enterprise was considered a new form of wealth creation for the people, and there was the need for

¹¹⁴Interview held with Mr. Inaikedi Foloki, Aged 67, retiree, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogo, 13th March, 2016.

¹¹⁵Interview held with Chief Bunawari Ajama, Aged 71, Community head, Quarters, Arogo, 13th March, 2016.

¹¹⁶William, N.M. Geary. 1965. *Nigeria Under British Rule* London: Frank and Cass co. Ltd. p.130

¹¹⁷Colonial Reports: N554 Southern Nigeria Report 1906 presented to both House Parliament by command of His Majesty in 1908

¹¹⁸ Interview held with Mr.Ebikimi Amama, Aged 77, Traditionalist, New Ajapa, Arogo, 14th March,2016. Also interview held with Chief Timibo Okoro, Aged 69, Traditionalist, Agadagba-Obon, Arogo, 14th March, 2016

¹¹⁹Colonial Reports: N554 Southern Nigeria Report 1906 presented to both House Parliament by command of His Majesty in 1908.

¹²⁰Colonial Reports:: N554 Southern Nigeria Report 1906 presented to both House Parliament by command of His Majesty in 1908

¹²¹Interview held with Hon. Justice C.E.T. Ajama, Aged 66, retiree, Erubiri Quarters, 8th March, 2016.

an aggressive supply of timber to the European market. As rightly stated by Falola, “the forest wealth, that is, timber was exploited as much as possible”.¹²² This implies that, the timber enterprise was indeed an advent of a new dimension to economic prosperity for the traders in this enterprise. In short, it was an economic transformation and to this end, the search for timber products by the Arogbo Ijo extended far beyond their frontiers. As timber merchants, they travelled through the water ways as far as the Central Delta (modern day Rivers and Bayelsa States) in search of timber products which they eventually transported to Lagos for exportation.¹²³ This was with the bid to supply the European timber traders as well as make their own economic fortunes from this newly introduced timber trade. Hence, the Arogbo Ijo became connected to the post-Atlantic slave trade of the 20th century.

As noted, the Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta was remarkable for socio-economic transformations in line with the European capitalists’ demands. That is, the economic condition of the people was such that was based on European economic determinism. In spite of this, the orthodox economic system practiced by the people was not jettisoned. Rather, it thrived alongside with the European enterprise. For instance, in the colonial period, there was indeed a satisfactory production of economic goods such as fishies and canoes, which supported their local economy and long distance trade. In absolute terms, the people’s survival depended largely on the nature of their indigenous economic system, which by the way was incorporated into the European colonial economy. That is, the European economy consequently expanded the indigenous economic structure, since the demand for indigenous economic commodities by the Europeans was invariably in high quantity. Unarguably, the founding of most towns and villages that are now referred to as the Arogbo Ijo region are products of the pre-colonial economic nature. In other words, a large number of these settlements were founded upon the availability of economic resources that supported the livelihood of the people.

From all indications, it is clear that economic determinism was indeed a main factor for the availability of the diverse human settlements that make up the entire Arogbo Ijo kingdom in their

¹²² Falola, T. 1984. *The Political Economy of a Pre-colonial African State: Ibadan, 1830-1900*. Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press Limited.p.169

¹²³ Interview held with Senior Apostle Joan Aloro, Aged 83, Timber Trader, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, 12th April, 2016. Also Mr. Ebaragha Pighata, Aged 64, Trader, Community head, Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo, 12th April, 2016

present location, particularly since the beginning of the 20th century.¹²⁴ This, however, did not suffice to conclude that the people were economically self sufficient. Typical of African societies, the people practiced economic exchange of commodities with neighbouring groups. This showcased the lack of economic self reliance on the part of the people. By so doing, it is very clear that economic inter-dependency was a strong prerequisite for inter group relations between the Arogbo Ijo and their neighbours. Falola rightly observed that there has never been the existence of an absolute subsistence economy among African societies.¹²⁵ This clearly expressed that economic interdependency had been the economic life of most African societies. This depicts that, there were some forms of economic inter-dependency between the Arogbo Ijo and their neighbours. Overtime, the need to cater for the economic needs beyond their frontiers arose, and thus, they embarked on surplus and commercial production in order to meet up with the economic demands for canoes and fishes by the Ilaje, Ikale and Apoi neighbours respectively. In fact, the Arogbo Ijo were reputed for enhancing human mobility on the water ways with the production of canoes in commercial quantity which in turn was supplied to some of the other Ijo sub-groups and non-Ijo groups within the Niger Delta region.¹²⁶ The underpinning reason for this was the abundant presence of different species of trees for canoe carving in the Arogbo Ijo region.

Furthermore, the Arogbo Ijo economic survival also depended on the production and distribution of gin.¹²⁷ It is imperative to bring to the fore that the production and marketing of gin was an indigenous economic process that had been part of the people prior to the coming of the Europeans. Generally, Africa has its own long history of alcohol manufacture and use; the ancient Egyptians were described as the first African brewers of beer.¹²⁸ This established the fact that alcohol has for centuries prior to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, played a prominent role in the economic, social and religious life of most African societies. In fact, gin production was one of the most important occupations among the Arogbo Ijo which was particularly determined by the ecological setting of their settlement. As opined by Ehinmore, “the Ijo who are close neighbours to the Ilaje group have been supportive to the growth of gin industry among the Ilaje since the

¹²⁴Interview held with Mr. Ebidaubra Peredenghan, Aged 63, Timber Trader, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, 12th April, 2016.

¹²⁵Falola, T. 1992. African Pre-colonial Domestic Economy. *Tarikh Vol. 10*. Atanda, J.A. Ed. Nigeria: Longman Publishers.p.12

¹²⁶Interview held with Zeblon Opinmi, Aged 76. Trader, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 12th April, 2016.

¹²⁷ Interview held with Mr. Perebo Yeiyah. Aged 61, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, on April 14th, 2017

¹²⁸ Jackson, M.1977. *The World Guide to Beer*. London: Mitchell Beazley Publishers.p.243

18th century”.¹²⁹ This affirms that gin production was not only for the purpose of economic gains. Rather, it also fostered intergroup relations between the Arogbos and their Ilaje neighbours. Apparently, Arogbos are one of the communities occupying the Niger Delta region where there is large swampy mangrove forest encompassed with raffia palms from which palm wine is tapped, fermented and distilled into gin.¹³⁰ To them, gin was not only an economic item, but was a symbol of cultural artifact, as well as a significant means to identifying the people’s technological advancement prior to the colonial period.¹³¹ Remarkably, gin was a reputed aspect of the people’s culture as it was produced for domestic consumptions and perceived as a sacred fluid that was used as a means of communication between the living, the ancestors and the gods through ritual libation, offered as fines for punishment.¹³² Gin was also a very important item requested during marriage ceremonies, naming ceremonies and funeral rites.¹³³ Above all, the socio-cultural importance of gin to the Arogbos is, however, perennial. Therefore, it has been the people’s way of life prior to the British colonisation of Nigeria. Nevertheless, British colonialism was associated with the importation of spirit (gin) into Nigeria.¹³⁴ This was with the British economic motive of making sustainable revenue from the trade in gin to support their colonial venture. As a matter of fact, Simeon Heaps asserts that, “after the abolition of slave trade, and before the discovery of crude oil in the second half of the 20th century, it is not an exaggeration to state that for virtually all the intervening period, the liquor trade was the single most important import trade in Nigeria”.¹³⁵ This simply implies that central to the colonial economy was liquor trade, and hence, cannot be downplayed because liquor became an important commodity of trade in Nigeria as a whole. In effect, the emergence of imported liquor trade in Nigeria resulted into clash of economic interest between the indigenous manufacturers and the European liquor traders, colonial administrators as well as European Missionaries. This is consequent upon the fact that liquor and gin had become a

¹²⁹Ehinmore, O.M. 2010. A Socio-Economic History of the Ilaje of Southwestern Nigeria, 1500-1900. Ph.D. Thesis. Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. p.217

¹³⁰ Alagoa, E.J. and Derefaka, A.A. 1993. The Ijo of the Niger Delta: An Historical Introduction. Bassey W. Andah, A.Ikechukwu and Okpoko and C.A. Folorunsho. Eds. *Some Nigerian Peoples*. Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication.p.2

¹³¹ Interview held with High Chief Seleipiri Lubi, Aged 73, Traditionalist, Upe community, Arogbos, 16th April, 2017

¹³² Interview held with Erepatei Worimegbe, Aged 63, Trader, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbos, 13th April, 2016. Also interview held with High Chief Tunemi Ugah, Aged 71, Traditionalist, Adoloseimo II community, Arogbos, 14th April, 2016

¹³³ Oral interview with N.E. Ege, Aged 72, retiree, Upe community, Ukparamo, Arogbos, April 7th, 2016

¹³⁵Heap, S.D.H. The Liquor Trade and the Nigerian Economy, 1880-1939. University of Ibadan: Department of History, Ph.D. Thesis. p.6

veritable source of income and currency for the colonial regime.¹³⁶ Therefore, in order to derive dependable economic benefits from imported liquor in sustaining the colonial administration, the British declared the locally produced gin illicit and requested for the prohibition of its production, consumption and sales.¹³⁷ Furthermore, in order to create a favourable market for the European manufactured gin, the British description of the local gin was that it was illicitly distilled and its excessive consumption was likely to result into infections such as peripheral neurotics, resulting into the loss of the use of legs, gastro-enteritis, debility, emaciation, optic-neurotics, followed by total blindness, urethritis and prostatitis which are likely to lead to sterility.¹³⁸ Understandably, the locally produced gin was described as unhealthy for human consumption, and on the other hand, European imported gin was reported to have attracted large revenues to the colonial treasury. To place custom charges or duties on commodities such as gin, the British invoked an Order No. 5 of 1906 under the customs of ordinance, 1894 which was earlier applied to Lagos, was extended to goods from Calabar and Lagos.¹³⁹ By so doing, the implementation of this economic policy on the inflow of goods inevitably affected the people of Arogbo Ijo. This is owing to the fact that they are located on the route between Lagos and Forcados precisely. More so, along the coastal communities that were part of the Western Province in the then Southern Nigeria, they were one of the highest producers of local gin that was condemned by the colonialist.¹⁴⁰ However, the outlaw of local gin production by the British did not actually put an end to the production and trade in local gin by the Arogbo Ijo. Particularly, the storage of gin in large quantities was considered as accumulation of wealth, and as such the Arogbo Ijo perceived the colonial policy that outlawed indigenous gin production as a loss of economic power.¹⁴¹ Therefore, they ceaselessly engaged in this form of gin production in the colonial period and up to the present time.¹⁴² The trade in local gin resulted into clashes between the Arogbo Ijo traders and British colonial agents on the high seas enroute

¹³⁶Heap, S.D.H. *The Liquor Trade and the Nigerian Economy, 1880-1939*. University of Ibadan: Department of History, Ph.D. Thesis. P.53-54, 103

¹³⁷N.A.I. O.W.C. 3/1931/52

¹³⁸N.A.I. O.W.C. 3/1931/52

¹³⁹Colonial Reports: N554 Southern Nigeria Reports for 1906, Presented to both House of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, February 1908

¹⁴⁰ Interview held with Mr. F.B.T. Amalagha, Aged 64, retired Teacher, Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo, 10th April, 2016.

¹⁴¹ Interview held with Mrs. Damaere Ilema, Trader, Aged 72, Traditionalist, Oriaran community, Arogbo, 3rd February, 2017

¹⁴² Interview held with High Chief Keniboyegha Abednigo, Traditionalist, Aged 74, New Jerusalem, Arogbo, 10th February, 2017

Lagos.¹⁴³ In short, the Arogbo Ijo gin traders took up arms such as guns and cannons in protecting their goods enroute to Lagos through the water ways.¹⁴⁴ This depicts a contestation for the liquor and gin market between the Arogbo Ijo and the British colonialist. Nevertheless, the Europeans recorded huge success in the implementation of liquor ordinance which invariably permitted the wide presence of imported liquor and spirit in Nigeria at large. As noted, the import duties derived from spirit (gin) in Southern Nigeria in the year 1905 accrued to 504, 025 pounds and in 1906, the total revenue generated from custom duties collected from gin was 600,784 pounds respectively.¹⁴⁵ This in a way provided substantial evidence that the trade in spirit (gin) was a crucial factor in the colonial economy. In fact, the colonial government actually permitted importation of vast quantities of continental spirit because it was a principal source of revenue.¹⁴⁶ This substantiates the fact that, the prohibition of production and trade in locally produced gin was geared towards the economic monopoly of the liquor trade by the British. The British imperial policy demanded that colonies be self financing,¹⁴⁷ and as such, it was inevitable for the British to sustain the colony with the measure of the liquor policy.

In fact, by 1932, the colonial government started the allocation of twenty pounds to informants, and the police information fund was a secret “fund” and vouchers were not prepared in respect of individual informers.¹⁴⁸ In accordance to section fifty eight of the liquor ordinances (law vol.2, p.1257), all illicitly distilled liquor and receptacles for such liquor seized and detained were in every instance forfeited and police officers were instructed to obtain an order of forfeiture from the court.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, as a way of strengthening the imported liquor market, the colonial government tremendously increased the duty of the spirit in order that it may be beyond the means of an ordinary producer.¹⁵⁰ Hence, local production becomes difficult considering the increase in custom duties. This, therefore, in a way drastically reduced indigenous gin production and enhanced

¹⁴³Interview held with Chief Dautaribo Opukutu, Aged 66, Community head, Ogidigba 1 community, Arogbo, 12th February, 2017

¹⁴⁴Interview held with Mr. Perekimi Digha, Traditionalist, Aged 65, Trader, New Ajapa community, Arogbo, 10th February, 2017

¹⁴⁵Colonial Reports: N554 Southern Nigeria Reports for 1906, Presented to both House of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, February 1908.

¹⁴⁶ Kirk-Green.1968. *Lugard and the Amalgamation of Nigeria: A Documentary Record*. London: Frank and Cass co.Ltd. p.139

¹⁴⁷Simeon Heaps.p.131

¹⁴⁸N.A.I. O.W.C./1932/30

¹⁴⁹N.A.I.O.W.C./1932/10

¹⁵⁰N.A.I.O.W.C./1932/10

the importation of European liquor. By and large, the people of Arogbo found in possession of apparatus for the manufacture of spirits were considered criminals, and therefore, possession of distilling apparatus without a license approved by the colonial government were liable to a fine of five hundred pounds or three years imprisonment.¹⁵¹ From the foregoing, it is clear that while the native liquor was declared illegal and referred to as unhealthy for consumption, a veritable market for the sale of European imported liquor was created in Southern Nigeria and Arogbo Ijo in particular. Liquor license was issued to European companies such as Compagnie Francaise de l' Afrique de l' Ouest (C.F.A.O) and United African Company (U.A.C.) as general wholesaler and distributors of liquor to operate in Okitipupa Division.¹⁵² It is important to clearly state that, within the Okitipupa Division, the Arogbo Ijo were the group solely involved in local gin production in commercial scale.¹⁵³ Therefore, the presence of European companies licensed to trade in liquor, was indeed engendered towards the suppression of local gin production by the Arogbo Ijo. Apparently, the colonial government issued license to the people as retailers of European liquor.¹⁵⁴ As a way of completely suppressing the local gin production, European colonial government introduced this retailing license to the people. The criterion for applying to be a retailer was by making payment to the magistrate or district officer. This was done to ensure that the legitimate right to sales of European liquor was granted to retailers. These local liquor merchants were frequently placed under police inspections in order to avoid the sale of native liquor alongside foreign liquor. In fact, the imported liquor as an article of trade was so important in colonial Nigeria that distilleries were already established in the 18th century at Liverpool for the express purpose of supplying ships bound for Africa.¹⁵⁵ However, the growing nature of the liquor market facilitated native gin production among the Arogbo Ijo, despite its prohibition.¹⁵⁶ Basically, it was indeed a very difficult task on the part of the Arogbo Ijo to end gin production since it was a very fundamental aspect of their traditional economy as well as a culturally valued item.

The fact remains that Europeans were highly sentimental in the ban of local gin. The ban on the local gin was indicative of the fact that it was European effort to ensure a steady supply of

¹⁵¹N.A.I.O.W.C.4/1932/18. See also Ayandele, E.A. 1966. *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis*. London: Longman Group Ltd.p.140

¹⁵²N.A.I. OK.D. No.24/1/335

¹⁵³Interview held with Chief Perela Duweigha, Aged 72, Trader, Tebubeleu Quarters, Arogbo, 10th February, 2017

¹⁵⁴N.A.I. OK.D. No.24/1/335

¹⁵⁵Dike, K.O. 1956.*Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885*. London: Oxford University Press.p.8

¹⁵⁶ Interview held with Mr. Ebimobowe Tonye. Aged 69. Timber Merchant, Biagbini, Arogbo, on April 15th, 2017. Also interview held with Chief Bibitibi Yeiyah, Aged 70, Traditionalist, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 17th April, 2017

imported liquor, and that the market should not be dominated by the local gin, thus ensuring the revenue accruing from the European liquor. Notably, the European missionaries were of the opinion that colonialism was indeed an end to the traffic in liquor.¹⁵⁷ Rather, the colonial administrators vigorously engaged in the liquor trade, and thus considered the trade in liquor as a crucial factor in the colonial economy. In short, the 1890 international convention in Brussels only prohibited European liquor from areas in Africa which were without a previous history of liquor consumption.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps, this in a way appeals to the concern expressed by the European missionaries. On the other hand, this decision further endangered African communities such as Arogbo Ijo in relation to local gin production, because the intention of the colonial government was strictly to rapidly kill all local production of gin. Nevertheless, some Europeans condemned the prohibition of local gin as a mere prejudice and a sort of manipulation of the indigenous producers. For Europeans such as Mr. Pitt, the imported liquor was not in any way superior to the native gin. In one of his heart-stirring speeches, he described the liquor trade situation thus:

Alas, says he “We had carried on a trade with them (the Africans)..... which instead of diffusing knowledge; had been a check to a laudable pursuit. We had carried a poison to their country, which speeds its contagious effect from one end to another, which penetrated to the very center.....Thus had the pervasion of British commerce carried misery instead of happiness to one whole quarter of the globe.....How do we hope to obtain forgiveness from heaven, if we refused those means which the mercy of providence had still reserved to us for wiping away the guilt and shame with which we are now covered.

From the above assertion, it is deduced that the imported liquor was no doubt far from being harmful to human body. Hence, it is mischievous on the part of the European traders to refer to the imported liquor as being superior to the locally produced gin. Thus, the emphasis here is that both the imported and native liquor need to be condemned and must not be sold or favoured. Therefore, the apprehension attributed to the local gin as being destructive to human body also applies to the European manufactured liquor. In this regard, it is safe to conclude that the Arogbo Ijo were unjustly cut off from the sale of their own gin. This, therefore, amounted to economic backwardness on the

¹⁵⁷Pan, L.1975. *Alcohol in Africa*. Finland: Aurasen Kirjapaino Forssa Printers.p.15

¹⁵⁸Pan, L.1975.*Alcohol in Africa*. Finland: Aurasen Kirjapaino Forssa Printers.p.15

part of the people, while the colonial government encouraged liquor importation for their own economic gains.

Evidently, the pre-colonial economic structure of the Arogbo Ijo perfectly integrated to the colonial economy. Most of the economic items such as Oil-palm, timber and gin were articles of trade in the Arogbo Ijo pre-colonial economy. That is, the traditional setting of the people was dominated by fishing and allied activities such as canoe building, ferrying, fishing and fish preservation. Nevertheless, the advent of European trade brought about an expansion of the pre-existing economic system of the Arogbo Ijo, thereby making Arogbo Ijo to become players in the western capitalist market. The main form of production and supply of economic items such as fish, canoes, timber, palm oil and gin became geared towards large scale production for the European market, which to a very large extent was an advancement of the local economy. Hence, it is noted that there was a gradual end to a sedentary form of economic culture which mainly supports subsistence. In fact, by the middle of the 20th century, the economic commodities, particularly timber, gin and fish took a high commercial dimension. In short, these commodities were no longer produced only for local consumption by neighbouring people such as Ikale and Apoi. There was a tremendous growth in the production and supply of these commodities in commercial quantity into the hinterland of Yorubaland. Specifically, Lagos and Itsekiri areas also emerged as suitable markets for the fishes and other commodities produced by the Arogbo Ijo. Precisely, Lagos was the economic hub for the trade in Arogbo Ijo timber and gin in the colonial period, and up to this contemporary period.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EUROPEAN RULE, 1885-1915

3.1 Introduction

The establishment of European rule represents a milestone in the history of most Nigerian societies. Significantly, European imposition of colonial rule occurred in two main stages. The first occurred between 1885 and 1903, when European powers transformed their informal territorial interests into formally demarcated zones. The second stage occurred between 1903 and 1920, when the European nations established formal administrative and economic structures of colonial rule with varying degrees of success.¹ These two stages no doubt played a key role in the dynamic nature of the economic, socio-cultural and political life of numerous Nigerian societies. It is pertinent to note that European adventure into the Niger Delta coastline was pivotal to the notable social changes that have affected the region since the nineteenth century. In short, the European rule became a phenomenal process that absolutely redefined the historical developments of the pre-colonial settings of the Niger Delta societies. That is, European economic and political undertakings during the colonial period overwhelmingly brought about new historical developments that changed the course of historical trajectory in the Niger Delta area. As it is often argued, European rule was largely an economic order imposed on the African societies by the European nations for their own economic advantage. Specifically, the Arogbo Ijo was also one of the societies that were politically subjugated since the inception of colonial rule in Nigeria, and as such, the society was ushered into a new historical regime that affected all aspects of the people's life.

The history of the Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta as it is examined in this chapter falls into three main themes. The first established that the Arogbo Ijo area happens to be one of the societies that were directly placed under European control at the inception of colonial regime in Nigeria. This period relates that Arogbo Ijo area was part of the European colonies that were involved in the British and German international rivalry in Africa in the wake of colonialism.

The second theme characterised the influence of the European rule on the traditional monarchical institutions of the Arogbo Ijo people. Despite the impressive Arogbo Ijo traditional

¹ Sean, S. 2002. "The Imposition of Colonial Rule". Falola, T., Ed. *Africa Volume 3, Colonial Africa, 1885-1939*. North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, p.3. See also Iweriebor, E.E.G. 2002. Trends and Patterns in African Nationalism. Falola, T. Ed., *Africa Volume 4, The End of Colonial Rule, Nationalism and Decolonization*. North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, p.3

monarchical institution, European rule established a nexus between tradition and modernity reflective of the social dynamics encountered by the Arogbo Ijo. Generally, the Ijo cosmology acknowledged the king as a spiritual agent of the *Egbesu* deity bestowed with irresistible spiritual powers. Nevertheless, in spite of the extraterrestrial powers and status accorded the king of the Arogbo Ijo society, he was unavoidably the colonial agent that was supportive to the sustenance of European hegemony upon the Arogbo Ijo society. However, throughout the colonial period, the kings in Arogbo upheld much of their traditional spiritual powers, and as such the Arogbo Ijo experienced much of culture and tradition retentions.

Furthermore, a notable aspect of this chapter is the identification of the effects of the European colonial arbitrary boundary creations purportedly did not directly mention the Arogbo Ijo as belonging to a particular regional location of Lagos colony and British Protectorate in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century colonial boundary arrangements. However, the overbearing motive of the European economic and political boundaries placed the Arogbo Ijo area under the European rule and influence.

3.2 German and British Colonisation

The 19th century was a momentous period in the history of the Niger Delta area as a whole, and Arogbo Ijo in particular. It was a century in which there was shift in the pattern of a slave economy to what became known as the legitimate commerce. This indicated that the Niger Delta area, which was actively involved in the supply of slaves in supporting the economy of the New World, was hitherto affected by the changing economic order of the Western world. Hence, the trend of the changing economic situation in Europe indeed, created the quest for colonies by respective European nations since the 1880s. As aptly described by Olorunfemi, “it was believed that the possession of colonies would ultimately serve to extend the resources, powers and commerce of such territories predominantly for the advantage of the colonising metropolitan power.”² In a succinct manner, it is clear that territorial acquisition in Africa was wholly part of the new economic order established by the Europeans affirmed by the Berlin Conference in 1885. In fact, it showed the preparedness of economic exploitation of African societies by respective European nations. In other words, the establishment of European rule in Africa, and the Niger Delta precisely was ultimately

²Olorunfemi, A. 1982. West African and Anglo-German Trade, 1895-1914. *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol.II, NO.1&2.

an inauguration of the European economic appetite for the raw materials available in the Niger Delta region to support European industries in the western world. By so doing, this ushered in diverse European nations to compete for African territories without any recourse to the natural and cultural settings of the people. This had noticeable effects on the diverse Niger Delta societies and the Arogo Ijo in particular.

In short, prior to the scramble for and partition of West African societies, the coastline region occupied by the Arogo Ijo and other groups such as the Ilaje fell primarily under the influence of Germany.³ In explicit manner, the German's by 11th July 1884 had acquired the Cameroons, a district dominated by British consular power.⁴ The effect of this was that, it marked a definite break in British policy in the Niger Delta.⁵ This no doubt laid the foundation for the international rivalry between the British and Germans over the annexation of the Cameroons and the Niger Delta region. Consequently, the British under the supervision of Consul Hewet were able to claim the ascendancy over the Delta and lower Niger.⁶ Precisely on the 5th of June 1885, Great Britain declared a Protectorate over the Niger districts which comprised 'the territories on the coastline between the British Protectorate of Lagos and the right or western bank of the Rio del Rey'.⁷ From the above geographical description of the Niger district, it is clearly understood the territories occupied by the Arogo Ijo forms part of the disputed territories between the British and the German. This signifies that the international rivalry between the British and the German also included the Arogo Ijo territorial spread. In fact, it is important to point out that the British colonisation process was directly experienced the Arogo Ijo. However, Germany was the first European nation that declared the Arogo Ijo and its environs as its colony. As rightly observed, the establishment of a colony by Germany over the Arogo Ijo area was not actually through a direct measure. Precisely on the 11th March, 1885, the *Amapetu*, King of Mahin was presented a treaty of friendship and protection by his imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Germany. This treaty was under the supervision of Dr. N.G.

³An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of Okitipupa Division NAI. Files NOS. 400/1912.401/1921

⁴Dike, K.O. 1956. *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. p. 214-215.

⁵Dike, K.O. 1956. *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*. p.215

⁶Dike, K.O. 1956. *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*. p. 217

⁷Dike, K.O. 1956. *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*. p. 217

Nachtigal, His Majesty's Imperial General Consul and Commissioner for the West coast of Africa.⁸ Germany, during its brief occupation of this region, concluded that the *Amapetu* of Ilaje Mahin was the monarch overseeing the entire region of the water ways including the Arogbo Ijo territory.⁹ Therefore, the treaty of Friendship and Protection presented for the *Amapetu's* acceptance overtly covered the Arogbo Ijo. This, however, could mean a deliberate disregard for the traditional monarchical structure of the Arogbo Ijo by Germany. The motive for Germany's approach to this form of colonisation is well articulated in the policy of paternalism, which invariably was Germany's method in the acquisition of colony. Therefore, referring to the *Amapetu* of Mahin as the sole monarch overseeing a region occupied by diverse groups was indeed a clear case of subjugation of the culture, traditions and language of a group whose histories of origin are strictly at variance with that of the people of Mahin Ilaje. Perhaps, this laid the foundation for the series of inter-group conflicts that later ensued between the two groups of Ilaje and Arogbo Ijo later in the 20th century. Going by this German colonisation, the socio-cultural milieu in which the Arogbo Ijo operated was distorted. In other words, the historical development encountered by this people in the advent of Germany as their first coloniser was indeed a drive towards German's policy of paternalism. By implication, Germany's colonising policy was set out to undermine the cultural and historical significance of all other groups such as Ugbo Ilaje, Ijo and the Ikale occupying this vast region.

Accordingly, it is important to clearly assert that the Arogbo Ijo are culturally and linguistically distinct from the Mahin Ilaje as claimed by the German treaty of friendship and protection. That is, the German treaty in its acclaimed friendly and protective nature of these coastal inhabitants, disregarded the diversity of histories of origin, culture and language among the various occupants of this region. In specific terms, Germany's policy of paternalism undermined pre-existing cultural and linguistic differences regarding the Mahin Ilaje and the Arogbo Ijo precisely. Like any policy of European colonisation of Africa, the policy of the Germans advocated that the European powers should re-organise the indigenous colonial society so as to achieve maximum exploitation of its economic resources. Again, Germany's annexation of the West African coast in 1883 and 1885 could be regarded as part of a general policy of extending imperial protection to the

⁸An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of Okitipupa Division NAI. Files NOS. 400/1912.401/1921

⁹An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of Okitipupa Division NAI. Files NOS. 400/1912.401/1921.

trade of her nationals overseas.¹⁰ This explains the superfluous claims of the German treaty as it referred to the *Amapetu* of Mahin Ilaje as the sole monarch operating within the region inhabited also by the Arogbo Ijo who in terms of their historical developments operate a separate monarchical sovereignty different from that of the *Amapetu* of Mahin.¹¹

Consequently, the German-*Amapetu* of Mahin's treaty became null and void since its Imperial Majesty did not ratify it within eighteen months after the signing as stated in Article VII of the treaty signed with the *Amapetu* of Mahin.¹² This was officially notified by the Consul of Lagos to the German Empire of the expiration of the German treaty in terms of its ownership of the geographical spread as earlier suggested by the treaty. That is, a stretch from the *Amapetu* of Mahin kingdom and its environs specifically included the Arogbo Ijo vast territory. Going by this understanding, the exchange of correspondence between the British Consul of Lagos and Germany was that the entire geographical spread occupied by the Mahin Ilaje and Arogbo Ijo did not fall under the Lagos British colony that was declared in 1861. The historical fact derived at this point revealed that the German's declaration of their colonial policy over the Mahin Ilaje and its environs, Arogbo Ijo inclusive, lasted for a short period. To this end, the British declaration of Protectorate indeed terminated the German's colonial possession of the Arogbo Ijo area and its environs. Indeed, the British colonisation of Arogbo Ijo society in 1885 with the implanting of the Union Jack could be seen to have provided therecognitionof a cultural, linguistic and politically autonomous setting of the Arogbo Ijo.¹³ Fundamentally, the British approach to colonisation as it relates to the Arogbo Ijo area recognised the pre-colonial socio-cultural and political conditions of the people. Incidentally, the British colonisation of the respective communities in this region was the pre-condition for the ephemeral presence of Germany in Mahin Ilaje and Arogbo Ijo territories. This implies that with the German- *Amapetu* of Mahin treaty becoming null and void, the latter was free to gainfully engage any treaty with other European nations. Hence, the Anglo-*Amapetu* of Mahin Ilaje treaty was signed with Her most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria.¹⁴ At this instance, the British treaty with the Mahin Ilaje became covertly limited to the people within the sovereignty of the *Amapetu*. As earlier

¹⁰Olorunfemi, A. 1977. Anglo-German Commercial Rivalry in West Africa, 1884-1918. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University Of Birminingham.p.67

¹¹ Interview held with Mr. Tunmiyenwei Mone. Aged 76. Timber Merchant, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 15th April, 2017. Also interview held with Chief Tibiowei Legbe, Aged 71, Traditionalist, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 15th April, 2017

¹²An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of Okitipupa Division NAI. Files NOS. 400/1912.401/1921

¹³ Interview held with High Chief Bunawari Tikpan, Aged 78, Traditionalist, Akpata, Arogbo, 28th April, 2017.

¹⁴An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of Okitipupa Division NAI. Files NOS. 400/1912.401/1921

mentioned, the Aroibo Ijo colonisation became a separate colonial enterprise under the British colonial policy. This, in a way, showcased the Aroibo Ijo as essentially historically and culturally at divergence with their neighbouring Ilaje people.

Obviously, the competition between the British and the German for the geographical spread comprising the Aroibo Ijo and the Mahin Ilaje was as a result of the importance of the regions to the advancement of the European colonial economic desires. However, the strait settlement pattern of the Aroibo Ijo and Mahin Ilaje enabled them to provide a route into the regions that was later referred to as the Oil Protectorate by the Europeans. From historical purview, available records affirmed that Britain's participation in the new imperialism was actually a defensive step to protect her traders' interest in West Africa as against the challenges presented by the expansion of Germany.¹⁵ Therefore, the position of the British was to put an end to the German's fast growing political and economic possession of the Nigerian societies in the late 19th century. Hence, the Aroibo Ijo area falls within the area that was competed for by the two aforementioned European nations. In support of this, H. H. Johnson, the Vice-Consul for the Oil Rivers and the Cameroons re-enforced this view in 1889 by arguing that:

If free trade were an established principle with all nations, it would matter little to our traders which power controlled the new marts for our commerce: but in as much as the effort of every other nation is to shut out British enterprise and competition, it is a matter of serious importance into whose hands each unoccupied district of Africa is to fall.¹⁶

The inference drawn from the above assertion is that the Berlin Conference of 1885 permitted respective European nations full colonisation and territorial acquisition in Africa. It should be emphasised that colonial rule took the turn of a gradual spread at different time. Apparently, certain areas or regions immediately experienced colonialism, while some others were considered free trade zone which eventually resulted in the creation of tensions and competition among European nations on the African continent. However, in spite of the Aroibo Ijo having acquired the status of British colony on 3rd November, 1885,¹⁷ the area continued as a free trade zone, and thus,

¹⁵Olorunfemi, A. 1977. Anglo-German Commercial Rivalry in West Africa, 1884-1918. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University Of Birmingham.p.67

¹⁶ Johnson, H.H. African Times, February 4, 1889

¹⁷N.A.I., Aroibo Ijo Intelligence Report, Prof 4/4/ NO. 53 of 1932

became vulnerable to dual European influences. To this end, the area was part of the regions fiercely competed for by the Europeans as regarding a free trade zone. The direct declaration by the British on the Mahin Ilaje and the Arogbo Ijo as its colonies was the actual termination of the German's competition for the area. Again, the overbearing political influence of the *Amapetu* of Mahin over the Arogbo Ijo and other groups that were to be created by Germany ended with the British colonisation. Remarkably, it is important to note that with the short lived German occupation of the region, it laid the foundation for the British to relate with the *Amapetu* of Mahin as the most important King in the region. The difference in the colonial policies of both European countries is that, Germany theoretically expanded the political boundaries of the *Amapetu* of Mahin without any regard to the primordial structure of the colonised. On the other hand, the British dimension to colonisation of the region was largely predicated upon as an anthropological understanding of the people. That is, unlike their German counterpart, colonialism was designed along some degree of respect for cultural and political differences as it existed among the people in the pre-colonial times. Therefore, political powers and boundaries of the respective groups were better recognised by the British. In spite of this, the long established supremacy of the *Amapetu* of Mahin in the region was not out rightly to be jettisoned by the British. Having been able to ascertain the need to clearly distinguish the political territory of Arogbo not to be part of the *Amapetu*'s jurisdiction, the British continued to identify the *Amapetu* of Mahin as the paramount king of the entire Ilaje people. That is, the *Olugbo* of Ugbo Ilaje was regarded as being inferior to the *Amapetu* of Mahin. The emphasis here is that, having emasculated the supremacy posture of the *Amapetu* over neighbouring groups of the Arogbo Ijo, the Mahin Ilaje King was declared the supreme king over the entire Ilaje groups, the Ugbo Ilaje extraction inclusive.¹⁸ Perhaps, this became possible because of the strong cultural ties and the similarities in the traditions of origin of both Ilaje clans. In fact, up to the first quarters of the 20th century, the supremacy of the *Amapetu* over the entire Ilaje area was overwhelmingly enforced by the British. To buttress this view, the action taken against the *Olugbo* of Ilaje Ugbo is noted as follow:

Before the judicial enquiry held at Gbekebo in June, 1921, the *Olugbo* had refused to remove his crown when ordered to do so by the District Officer. The memorial addressed to the Secretary of State after *Olugbo*'s deportation presumably contained a reference to the crown.¹⁹

¹⁸ N.A.I. OKD. Ilaje/R.M.P.2044/1900

¹⁹ N.A.I. An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of Okitipupa Division, Appendix XI, The *Olugbo*'s Crown.

The supremacy of the *Amapetu* is also emphasised in the dispatch forwarding the Memorial which contains the following paragraphs;

In 1913 owing to the fact that a number of petty chiefs were making claims to independence and were adopting the insignia of an 'Oba' or 'king' an exhaustive enquiry was made and the Oni of Ife consulted as to what chiefs were entitled to wear the crown of an 'Oba'. As a result of this enquiry, a list of such chiefs was drawn up and that list did not include the Olugbo of Ugbo. It did however include the Amapetu of Mahin.²⁰

In addition, as part of the negotiations of the *Olugbo* of Ugbo Ilaje to be returned from exile in Calabar, *Olugbo* Mafimisebi, with his son Samuel as interpreter, signed before Mr. Falk at Calabar on the 5th of August 1926 clearly stated that, "I renounce formally my claim to wear a Yoruba crown".²¹ This historic happening is not however a main concern of this study. This episode is a reflection of the extent to which the British were able to influence the subjugation of the *Olugbo* under the *Amapetu* kingship in the early 20th century. However, way back to the formal declaration of colonial rule in 1885 (Berlin Conference on West Africa), particularly as it affects the history of the region occupied by both these Ilaje groups and other neighbouring groups, the Arogbo had become a separate entity, specifically considered to be different from the Ilaje by the British colonial establishment precisely in 1885. Therefore, this clearly points to the fact that the British elevation of the *Amapetu* of Mahin had become clearly different from that of the German colonial approach. Hence, it was specifically reduced to the two Ilaje ethnic groups inhabiting the region. Apparently, it is easy to discern that the Arogbo Ijo as it concerns their colonial experience could be seen in the light of the German and British imposition of colonial rule in the twilight of the 19th century. Fundamentally, the colonisation and the recognition of *Amapetu* of Mahin has the sole colonial agent and overlord over the entire neighbouring groups by Germany no doubt a subjugation of the traditional political authority of these respective groups. Specifically, Arogbo Ijo was to be considered as one of the political dependencies of the *Amapetu* of Mahin under German control of the region. Like any of the groups in the environs, it was a colonial process that intended to completely alienate the Arogbo Ijo primordial political institution. Notably, Germany's gradual plan for the reformation of the Arogbo Ijo history was eventually scuttled by the British recognition of the

²⁰N.A.I. An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of Okitipupa Division, Appendix XI, The Olugbo's Crown.

²¹N.A.I. An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of Okitipupa Division, Appendix XI, The Olugbo's Crown.

Arogbo Ijo as a traditionally and politically homogenous society, and as such, was not at any point in their history subjugated by the *Amapetu* of Mahin. Hence, the German's impression of the *Amapetu* as the overall ruler of the entire region occupied by some other groups did not hold sway and could be regarded as a de-construction of the existing history as it relates to all the groups within the region, and the Arogbo Ijo in particular.

Specifically, Germany's deliberate attempt to place the Arogbo Ijo under the political control of the *Amapetu* of Mahin ended because of an existing order that determined the effectiveness and the lifespan of a colonial treaty signed with any African society. Notably, Article VII of the Treaty of Friendship and Protection between the *Amapetu* of Mahin and the Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Germany, signed by Dr. N.G. Nachtigal his Imperial General Consul and Commissioner for the West Coast of Africa clearly defines the terms of agreement.²² This Article VII clearly states that a colonial treaty between a European nation and any African society needs to be supported by the colonial presence and possession of such particular African society.²³ Whereby such is lacking, the European nation was to forfeit the right of the treaty over the acclaimed area. Therefore, with Germany's inability to fulfill the practical phase of the treaty within the specified period, the British emerged as the coloniser of the *Amapetu* of Mahin Ilaje and its environs. At this point, the British colonial policy was able to address the distinctiveness of the Arogbo Ijo as a group that is historically and culturally different from the Mahin Ilaje. Evidently, the British colonial influence on these coastal people inhabiting this region was clearly different from that of the German's colonial policy. In short, the direct erection of the Union Jack in Arogbo Ijo territory clearly was symbolic of the British autonomous colonial conquest of the Arogbo Ijo society and not as a sub-colony as obtained during the German's colonial exercise. Remarkably, the British colonising process took into cognizance the need to understand respective groups in their historical perspectives. That is, a foremost aspect of the British colonial venture was their general idea of a historical knowledge production on the colonised people, and the Arogbo Ijo in particular. In historical sense, the British colonial venture is no doubt the beginning of historical documentation on the Arogbo Ijo and the people of Nigeria generally. By so doing, it became very clear that German colonial approach was indeed a distortion of the cultural and historical differences that pre-existed between the Arogbo Ijo and the Mahin Ilaje. Obviously, German's reference of the *Amapetu* of Ilaje Mahin as the singular

²² N.A.I An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of Okitipupa Division

²³ N.A.I An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of Okitipupa Division

monarchy overseeing the entire region is a testimony of the fact that the separate historical development encountered by these people was not given any form of consideration by the German's colonial policy. Accordingly, in the advent of British colonialisation, they were able to identify socio-cultural and political divergence as it relates to the Arogbo Ijo and the Mahin Ilaje. It was indeed a clear cut understanding of the socio-cultural and political settings of each of these aforementioned groups. To further affirm this view, Captain F.P. Pinket, a British District Commissioner of Epe in 1900 reported as follows on a visit to Ilaje country:

Amapetu told me the Etekon and Ijo people are not under him, they had been on the beach side prior to when Mahin people migrated there. When the Mahin left their capital and established new town on the sea shore they continued to be under the rule and law of their original king. This account to the best of my knowledge, of some places being under Amapetu and others not.²⁴

Hence, this conversation between the British colonialist and the *Amapetu* further strengthened the narrative affirming the existence of separate traditional political institutions which were practically indigenous to the people, and thus a reflection of the diverse cultural evolution of the people. On the other hand, the above assertion also provides a historical fact based on the knowledge of the *Amapetu*, that the Arogbo Ijo seems to have been earlier settlers in the area occupied by both groups. In other words, the Ilaje of Mahin extraction seems to have identified the existence of the Arogbo Ijo on their arrival to the region, although, the *Amapetu* of Ilaje Mahin appears to be at the mainstream of the European penetration into the region. This afforded the *Amapetu* of Mahin the earlier opportunity of having been regarded as the supreme monarch by Germany and Britain respectively. Like any other African society, the partitioning and the delimitation of the geographical area occupied by the Arogbo Ijo are generally considered to have been arbitrary acts imposed by the European powers without reference to local conditions. It is very fundamental to point out that this arbitrary partitioning of African societies along the line of colonial nations' interest was a common phenomenon which no doubt affected Africans in a negative form. For instance, the Anglo-French treaty of 1889 remained a reference point for the partitioning of the culturally homogenous Yoruba group into Nigeria and Republic of Benin.²⁵ As rightly observed in

²⁴N.A.I Ilaje/R.M.P. 2044/1900

²⁵Akinyele, R.T. 2006. *Historiography of Western Yorubalands*. Toyin Falola. Eds. *Yoruba Identity and Power Politics*. U.S.A: University of Rochester Press. p.7

the case of Germany and Britain, it is obvious that the treaties by both nations regarding the Arogo Ijo and Ilaje country were used in support of territorial claims and negotiations to avoid rivalry among the European powers. Nevertheless, the pattern adopted by these European nations was an accord that subsequently brought to limelight the Arogo Ijo cultural and political composition alien from external influences since the pre-colonial period. Above all, the establishment of colonial rule no doubt gave way for the crises experienced between Ilaje and Arogo Ijo in the subsequent years.

3.3 Egbesu, Traditional Kingship and the Era of British Political System

The British colonial influence in Nigeria could be traced back to the appointment of John Beecroft as the first Consul for the Bight of Biafra and Benin in 1849.²⁶ This, however, set in motion the gradual annexation of the diverse societies that became declared as the Nigerian state by the British colonialist. Notably, the British bombardment of Lagos in 1851 and its annexation in 1861 provided the emergence of a new economic order that was referred to as the legitimate trade. Notably, the emerging British capitalist system became the driving force in determining the economic survival of the numerous Nigerian societies. Accordingly, Alao asserts that, administrative and economic motives were the centre-piece of what compelled the expansion of the British English law in virtually all the communities in the southwestern Nigeria.²⁷ Henceforth, monarchs rather than being the custodian of their traditions and culture, evolved to become colonial agents overseeing the British economic ventures in their respective communities. Historically, African monarchs had successfully played the role of economic agents since the emergence of European mercantilism on the continent. Notably, in the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, African kings or monarchs were active collaborators whom the Europeans depended largely on for the supply of Africans as slaves. Incidentally, the era of the legitimate commerce was remarkable with the way the British undermined the traditional monarchical institutions of their former trade partners. The implication is that, under this new European economic condition in Africa, it became necessary for the European to dominate the sovereign authority of the African monarchs in order to derive unalloyed support for their economic venture. Therefore, the respective African monarchs and their subjects, particularly of

²⁶Inyang, A.A. and Bassey, E.E. 2014. Imperial Treaties in Southern Nigeria, 1860-1890. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No.20. p.46

²⁷Alao, A. 2003. Colonial Rule and Judicial Reforms, 1900-1960. *The Foundation of Nigeria: Essay in Honour of Toyin Falola*. Oyeade, A. Ed. Trenton: Africa World Press. p.201-202

the diverse coastal societies in the Niger Delta region were employed as colonial agents used in the pursuit of economic goals. By implication, this set in motion the gradual change in identity and status of the African monarchs, whose traditional obligation was to preserve the African traditional value system into a colonial political class with the absolute aim of supporting the western economic structure.

From the foregoing, it is important to state that the Arogbo Ijo monarchical institution, which strongly depended on the *Egbesu* deity, fell to the British political dominance in the late 19th century. The British determination to colonise the Arogbo Ijo area was actually not because of the abundance of economic resources in the area. Rather, a very important factor in the British conquest of Arogbo Ijo was for the protection and free movement of British ships on voyage en route the Arogbo Ijo area to other parts of the Niger Delta area.²⁸ Identifiably, Arogbo Ijo is geographically located along the entrance route into the Niger Delta region from the Lagos coast; therefore it was as a matter of importance for the British to impose its political authority on the monarch of Arogbo Ijo. In view of this, Ikime describes the activities of the British in the Niger Delta region rightly asserts that, “the British activities in the area was no longer just for the securing of trade alone but also largely for safety of their lives and property”.²⁹ This assertion depicts that, the British were able to create a hospitable Niger Delta region for themselves, particularly through the instrumentality of the British styled political system which became the main tool for the weakening of the African traditional institutions. For this reason, Arogbo Ijo monarchical structure became pivotal to the sustenance of the British political system. A notable feature in the British colonisation of Arogbo Ijo was the absolute failure on their part to understand the relevance of the *Egbesu* deity to the powers of the monarch. This implies that the British conquest was nominal in nature considering the dependency of the sanctity of the kingship institution on *Egbesu* deity for carrying out social functions as it concerns the society.³⁰ The effect is simply that, in spite of the evolution of the monarch as a colonial political agent, there remained unbridled responsibilities towards the society strictly from the traditional

²⁸ Interview held with Hon. Justice C.E.T. Ajama, Aged 66, retiree, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 8th March, 2016. Also interview held with Mr. Saturday Obolo, Aged 63, retiree, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 8th March, 2016.

²⁹ Ikime, O. 1977. *The fall of Nigeria*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. p.3

³⁰ Interview held with Chief Dubagbakumo Kowe, Aged 60, Traditionalist, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, 17th April, 2017

dimension in administering the people.³¹ As a matter of fact, the general affair as it relates to the Arogbo Ijo society was predicated upon by the decisions of the *Egbesu* deity whom the monarch was the Chief priest.³² By and large, throughout the period under study, the Arogbo Ijo traditional institution largely revered the *Egbesu* deity as the divine custodian of the traditional kingship institution. Furthermore, the *Egbesu* deity determines the pre-conditions for the execution of morality, justice, culture and war among the people.³³ From the foregoing, it is very clear that the fundamental celestial rights and powers of the *Egbesu* deity were strongly preserved and depended upon by the people for the daily governance of the society.

In spite of this, the kingship institution became part of the British political system. However, the *Egbesu* deity and its divine powers were not limited by this new political order. In fact, it is not on record that the subjugation of the Arogbo Ijo kingship institution by the British hitherto affected the supremacy of the *Egbesu* deity over the traditional kingship structure.³⁴ In other words, the society was occasioned by the manifestation of certain political features that represented both the traditional values of the people as well as the gradual penetration of a British styled government system as noted in the 20th century.³⁵ In short, the lack of a remarkable resistance to the British conquest by the *Egbesu* deity and the people in general could be viewed from two perspectives. These perspectives are clearly identified as the underpinning factors for the successful British incursion into Arogbo Ijo area in the late 19th century. Firstly, the Arogbo Ijo tradition claims their full participation as middlemen during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade which extended westwards to Lagos and eastward to Itsekiri country.³⁶ As a matter of fact, the Arogbo Ijo people had a monopoly of the slave trade as compared with their close neighbours such as Ikale, Apoi and Ilaje respectively.³⁷ Therefore, the change in the pattern of trade by the British was not seen in its new form by this Ijo people. Rather, to them, their active participation in the Trans Atlantic slave trade was a precursor for their preparedness to engaging

³¹ Interview held with Mr. Elaemi Ugowoni, Aged 66, Fisherman, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 17th April, 2017.

³² Interview held with Mr. Brapatei James Wowo, Aged 65, Traditionalist, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, 15th April, 2017.

³³ Interview held with Chief Godwin Nanaowei, Aged 62, Community head, Quarters, 8th March, 2016. See also Alagoa, E.J.1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An historical interpretation of Ijo oral tradition*, p.34

³⁴ Interview held with High Chief Kiritei Kurokimi, Aged 69, Traditionalist, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 18th April, 2017.

³⁵ Interview held with Chief N.E. Ege, Aged 72, retired sailor, Upe community, Ukparamo, Arogbo, 7th April, 2016. Also interview held with Chief Ebimini Goh, Aged 70, Traditionalist, Agadagba Obon, 6th April, 2016

³⁶ Alagoa, E.J.1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An historical interpretation of Ijo oral tradition*, p.34

³⁷ Interview held with Mr. Oyinbojune Iroju, Aged 84, Trader, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 13th April, 2016.

in the legitimate trade that evolved in the late 19th century.³⁸ That is, by the beginning of the legitimate commerce, it was already needless for the people to resist the British because of their long standing relationship with the Europeans.³⁹ On a second note, geographical location of Arogbo Ijo on the European economic trade route along the coastline of the Niger Delta region is worthy for the easy integration of the Arogbo Ijo into the British new economic order. To a very large extent, this was a pre-condition that dictated the British has been desirous for the political conquest of Arogbo Ijo area in 1885. Specifically, the conquest was designed in a way to allow for unhindered movements of the British economic goods along the coastal area. Thus, the establishment of the British political structure upon the Arogbo Ijo society seems not to have resulted into any kind of resistance from the people against the British. This could be attributed to the fact that the new British political structure did not have much overbearing effects on the traditional kinship structure of the people. It should however be clearly stated that in the advent of the British colonisation or imposition of the western styled political system, the pre-existing traditional kingship structure of the various colonies were often reduced to the status of the British colonial agent through some measures of force or cohesion. Hence, in practical terms, the entire Arogbo Ijo kingship institution seemingly experienced British conquest by the means of force or coercion.⁴⁰ An aspect of the Arogbo Ijo oral tradition claims that, the British annexation of Arogbo Ijo was made possible through diplomacy and coercion.⁴¹ The erection of the Union Jack in 1885 was carried out amidst a well armed military ready to oppose any form of resistance from the people.⁴² To buttress this view, the beginning of British political intervention in Arogbo Ijo dated back to the events of the Egba-Ijebu war in the 19th century.⁴³ As a result of this war, the British became concerned with the movement of their goods from the coastal city of Lagos into the Yoruba hinterland. This alternative route linked Arogbo Ijo region as a nodal area en route from Lagos to Ilaje, Ikale and Ondo into the eastern part of Yoruba hinterland and other parts of Nigeria. From the foregoing, it is clear that the diversion of the British trade through the newly discovered Arogbo Ijo routes was a response to the sustenance of their economic motives which was the driving force for European domination of Nigerian societies.

³⁸ Interview held with Mr. Governor Tarila, Aged 61, Trader, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 13th April, 2016.

³⁹ Interview held with Mr. Jonah Diepiriwei Dominigo, Aged 72, retired Teacher, Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo, 18th April 2016.

⁴⁰ Interview held with Chief Karinatei Totor, Aged 72, Traditionalist, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 13th April, 2016.

⁴¹ Interview held with Mr. Hitler Peretugha, Aged 74, Traditionalist, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, April 13, 2016.

⁴² Interview held with Oweitari Ugulawari, Aged 72, retired Teacher, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 12 April, 2016.

⁴³ Akintoye, S.A. 1969. The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, C.1895. *The Journal of African History*, p.586

The emergence of the British in Arogbó Ijò society no doubt played a new social role which does not absolutely undermine the existing traditional settings. From all indications, it is needless to conclude that the advent of the British in the Arogbó Ijò area did not undermine the pre-existing indigenous political system. Generally, like any other Ijò society, it is evident that the basic emblem of political and religious structure is the *Egbesu*, which is often referred to as the national god. As described by Alagoa, “the only instrument of central control embracing all member Ijò settlements of the Western Delta was the cult of the national god”.⁴⁴ Therefore, in relating the Arogbó Ijò to this general tradition of the Ijò clans in the Western Delta, it is easy to identify why the politico-religious coherence was administered by the king, who was referred to as a kingly priest standing between his subjects and the Supreme Being via the *Egbesu* deity. To a very large extent, the situation in Arogbó in 1885 before the British conquest was that the kingly priest referred to as the *Agadagba* was embodied in traditional Ijò cosmology which entrusted him with the responsibility of maintaining a ritual balance between the ancestors. Also, *Egbesu* symbolises justice and equity, and it also assisted the *Agadagba* in his daily administration of the kingdom.

In the wake of the British colonial political system which began in the late 19th century, the *Agadagba* served as the British colonial agent overseeing his kingdom in support of the British political system. In spite of the dual responsibilities that saddled the Arogbó Ijò king, it is worthy to note that the *Agadagba* did not decline in power, prestige and authority as a result of British colonial rule.⁴⁵ The obvious reason for this is that, colonialism in Arogbó Ijò was a practical conversion of the king (*Agadagba*) to a colonial agent, and not an absolute emasculation of the divine powers vested on the kingship institution by the *Egbesu* deity. In fact, the tradition of the Arogbó Ijò regarded the deity as the spiritual overlord of the entire society. Thus, the *Agadagba* was a mere priest of the deity. Hence, the imposition of British rule on the people is viewed in the light of a nominal conquest since the *Egbesu* deity and its ancillary traditional rights and religious responsibilities were practically not affected. This, however, is to say that the sacredness of the kingship institution of the people largely remained in its traditional form.

⁴⁴ Alagoa, E.J.1976. Niger Delta States and their Neighbours up to 1800. Ade Ajayi, J.F. and Crowder, M. Eds., *History of West Africa Volume. I*. United Kingdom: Longman Group Limited. p.341

⁴⁵ Interview held with Chief Goodluck Goto, Aged 68, Traditionalist, New Ajapa community, Arogbó, 12th April, 2016.

3.4 Aroibo Ijo and the Making of British Political Boundaries

Historically, European colonial rule in the West African region is firmly associated with the arbitrary making of boundaries and its attendant effects on the societies since the 19th century. The reason for this boundary creation is not farfetched from defining the African trading partners of respective European nations, and with a view to avoiding European nation's economic rivalry in West Africa. Incidentally, the Anglo-French Arrangement of 10th August, 1889, marked the relevant recognition that the old system of free trade imperialism in West Africa would have to be replaced by one involving fixed colonial boundaries.⁴⁶ This became supportive to the creation of arbitrary boundaries with the intention to effectively forestall any form of encroachment on the economic territories of each of the European nations.

Apparently, it suffices to say that economic motive was the driving force for the British colonialists to have embarked on the making of arbitrary boundaries across the area that was referred to as Nigeria and the Niger Delta in particular. That is, the process of colonial expansion itself meant the restructuring of the traditional boundaries of respective societies in order to satisfy the European economic and administrative desires. Furthermore, the British profiteering venture in Nigeria needed to be supported by the creation of arbitrary boundaries which affected the traditional boundary system of the people. In short, between 1849 and 1906, West African territories were occupied by several European powers who subjugated the people to a new type of administration.⁴⁷ By so doing, the traditional boundaries of these West African societies were demarcated alongside the Europeans political and economic undertakings. Obviously, the economic motive was the driving force for this European boundary adjustment as noted. For instance, the British bombardment of Lagos in 1851, and its final annexation by the British in 1861 made Lagos to become the single British colony in Nigeria. This implies that Lagos was an extension of the political boundary of British Empire. In historical terms, this is the beginning of the British political machination upon the geographical boundaries of these diverse groups occupying the geographical spread presently referred to as Nigeria. From the foregoing, the conventional geographical description of a group of people occupying a particular area was no

⁴⁶Hargreaves, J.D. 1984. *The Making of the Boundaries: Focus on West Africa*. Asiwaju, A.I. Ed. *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884-1984*. Lagos: Lagos University Press.p.21.

⁴⁷Utuk, E.I. 1975. *Britain's Colonial Administrations and Developments, 1861-1960: An Analysis of Britain's Colonial administration and developments in Nigeria*. Masters Thesis submitted to the Dept. of History, Portland State University.p.9.

longer the singular factor in defining the people's boundary. Therefore, the British policy of boundary creation in Nigeria was a re-enforcement of the British economic desire which was central to their colonial enterprise. Hence, the distortion of the traditional geographical settings of the respective groups occupying the area referred to as Nigeria. In describing colonialism, Ikime clearly emphasised that, "For all the people of Nigeria, colonial conquest and colonial rule was a traumatic and a revolutionary experience".⁴⁸ This showcased the changing pattern as experienced by these societies as it includes the regional boundary lines which were created absolutely to the satisfaction of the British during this period.

From this view, it is clear that the Arogo Ijo society was directly affected by the British economic and political boundaries. However, it is pertinent to engage the historical narratives of the European arbitrary boundary creation from a broader Ijo perspective. Generally, the Ijo heterogeneous settlement pattern allowed for the boundary challenges that bedeviled them since the colonial epoch. Naturally, the Ijo had existed as a separate group in the Niger Delta for a very long time.⁴⁹ However, their migration and spread over the length and breadth of the Niger Delta made them lack a homogenous boundary description since the colonial period. Evidently, the Ijo as an ethnic group was not confined to a specific geographical spread in the Niger Delta area. In fact, they occupied every nook and cranny of the Niger Delta region, and as such, the extent of their boundary is indeterminable. Obviously, this actually prepared the ground for the British balkanisation of the Ijo into various economic and political boundaries spreading across the Niger Delta region. To buttress this position, Ogbogbo noted that, the split, ostensibly for administrative convenience, resulted in the balkanisation of territorially contiguous and culturally homogenous peoples of the Niger Delta into these different political and administrative units as minorities.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Ogbogbo identified that the Ijo as one of the first five largest ethnic groups in Nigeria were split into new administrative units of the Eastern and Western provinces respectively.⁵¹ From all indications, it is very clear that the effect of the British partitioning of the Niger Delta region further deepened the actual loss of ethnic homogeneity for

⁴⁸ Ikime, O. 2006. *History, the Historian and the Nation: The Voice of a Nigerian Historian*. Ibadan: HEBN Publishers PLC. p.192.

⁴⁹ Alagoa, E.J. 1980. Peoples of the Cross River Valley and the Eastern Delta. Ikime, O. Eds. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books PLC. p.68

⁵⁰ Ogbogbo, C.B.N. 2006. Nigeria- Niger Delta Relations, 1960-1995. *Intergroup Relations in Nigeria During the 19th and 20th Centuries*, p.554.

⁵¹ Ogbogbo, C.B.N. 2006. Nigeria- Niger Delta Relations, 1960-1995. *Intergroup Relations in Nigeria During the 19th and 20th Centuries*, p.552

the Ijo people in particular. Consequently, this colonial boundary disorder offers explanation to the reason for the alienation of the Arogbo Ijo from their kith and kin.

Accordingly, the Niger Delta was declared a British Protectorate in 1885, and became known as the Niger Coast Protectorate.⁵² In the same vein, Arogbo Ijo experienced a direct British colonisation at the same time. It is important to note that beyond the declaration of Lagos as a British colony, the British subsequently embarked on a gradual boundary creation that was to determine the extent of the territory that became Nigeria. Apparently, Arogbo Ijo society was not specifically mentioned as being grouped as one of the societies that fell within the newly created British Protectorate. Notably, Consul John Beecroft made treaties with the chiefs of the Oil Rivers (the whole area extending from Benin River west of the Niger to the Cameroun territory in the east).⁵³ The geographical description of the Oil Rivers tends to relate Arogbo Ijo as one of the communities that is covered by the Oil Rivers Protectorate. On the other hand, the geographical proximity of Arogbo Ijo to Lagos colony via the water ways put Arogbo Ijo in a dilemma of the British colonial boundary. Accordingly, it was therefore difficult to expressly refer to Arogbo Ijo as part of Lagos colony in the 19th century, and on the other hand, as a community in the Oil Rivers Protectorate. At this point, there was no specific British geographical description of the Arogbo Ijo as part of Lagos colony or as one of the communities within the Oil Rivers Protectorate. Nevertheless, it is on record that in the dawn of colonial government, precisely 1897, the Arogbo Ijo ferried through the water ways to Epe for judicial matters in the Colonial Native Courts.⁵⁴ As a matter of fact, in that same year 1897, the British influence and power in Lagos overflowed beyond the frontiers of Lagos and achieved supremacy in the Yoruba interior,⁵⁵ which was attached as a protectorate to Lagos and as such was governed by the Crown colony.⁵⁶ With this arrangement, the Arogbo Ijo geographical area became a colonially negotiated one, and as such, Arogbo Ijo became part of the colonial judicial boundary of the Lagos colony despite the fact that historical records on Lagos colony are yet to accept that

⁵²Ogbogbo, C.B.N. and Muojama, O. 2007. The Global Economy and the Niger Delta Crises. *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*. p.181

⁵³Utuk, E.I. 1975. Britain's Colonial Administrations and Developments, 1861-1960: An Analysis of Britain's Colonial administration and developments in Nigeria. Masters Thesis submitted to the Dept. of History, Portland State University. p.9.

⁵⁴Kekemeke, R.A. 1964. *The Light*. Published by the Arogbo Teachers' Union. p.3. See also N.A.I. Ondo Prof. 1/1//1024

⁵⁵Afigbo, A. E. 1991. Background to Nigerian Federalism in Colonial State. *Publius*, Vol.21, No.4

⁵⁶Afigbo, A. E. 1991. Background to Nigerian Federalism in Colonial State. *Publius*, Vol.21, No.4

Arogbo Ijo was carved as part of the Lagos colony. Their movement to Epe for judicial purposes clearly demonstrates their connectivity with the Lagos colony. This, however, shows the Arogbo Ijo long standing relationship with the Lagos colony. Indeed, the Epe-Arogbo Ijo judicial relationship could be seen as a foundational structure that gradually disconnected the Arogbo Ijo from other Ijo groups within the earmarked Niger Coast Protectorate. In short, it was a process that was geared towards British desirous administrative convenience.

On the other hand, with the British acquisition of the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1893, the boundary under the British control expanded from those only in the geographical Niger Delta as earmarked under the Niger Coast Protectorate onto the entire areas that were involved in the production, trade and exportation of the palm oil produce. Notably, the Arogbo Ijo actively participated in the palm oil trade along the coast.⁵⁷ They played the role of middlemen in the movement of oil palm produce and other economic commodities to Lagos for shipment into the western world.⁵⁸ Importantly, the colonial economic plan was a key factor in the geo-political zoning of these diverse societies in the Niger Delta region, and Arogbo Ijo inclusive. To buttress this view, G.I. Jones posits that, with the rise of the Oil palm trade, the trading Rivers of the Bight of Biafra became known as the Oil Rivers.⁵⁹ Jones further asserts that after the establishment of the colony of Lagos, the remainder of the Bight of Benin was added to the trading rivers which became known as the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1889.⁶⁰ This implies that all the communities along the coastal trade routes invariably were carved into the Oil Rivers Protectorate. Therefore, the Arogbo Ijo society could also be classified as one of the coastal communities in the Oil Rivers Protectorate by the 19th century. Since the character of the British was usually to circumvent the traditional boundaries for colonial economic undertakings, the Arogbo Ijo territory was categorised alongside with other Ijo clans in the Niger Delta region. The impact of the wavering pattern of the British colonial boundary creation on the Arogbo Ijo was that of uncertainty on the specific region the people occupied. In fact, relating the Arogbo Ijo as part of the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1889 did not put an end to the judicial relationship of the people with the Lagos colony. This could be traced to administrative convenience on the part

⁵⁷Interview held with Mr. Yintari Pamowei, Aged 67, retiree, Amapere community, Arogbo, 14th April, 2017. Also interview held with Mr. Gboloi Nwusun, Aged 59, Trader, New Jerusalem, Arogbo, 14th April, 2017.

⁵⁸Interview held with High Chief Inaibotei Ojijoh, Aged 65, Traditionalist, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 14th April, 2017

⁵⁹G.I. Jones. 1963. *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*, p.22

⁶⁰G.I. Jones. 1963. *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers: A Study of Political Development in Eastern Nigeria*, p.22

of the British. Hence, the dual presence of the Arogbo Ijo on the administrative boundary of the British was indeed strategic in the pursuit of the economic and political desires of the British colonialists.

Obviously, Arogbo Ijo was continuously affected by the British colonial boundary creation. As common to any Ijo sub-group, this no doubt laid the foundation for their minority identity in their present geo-political location. With the creation of Ondo Province in 1915,⁶¹ Arogbo Ijo became the only culturally and linguistically isolated ethnic group from all other Yoruba speaking groups occupying this province.⁶² In historical sense, this laid the foundation for a complete alienation of a common political boundary for the Arogbo Ijo and other counterpart Ijo sub-groups in the core Western Delta. Indeed, the British economic and political phenomenon in the 19th century is reputed to have been the reason for the constant identity and political problems that eminently confronted the Arogbo Ijo up to the 20th century and beyond. In fact, the Arogbo political boundary is a constant variation on a basic theme. For instance, the Arogbo Ijo was not considered as a group that occupies the Western Ijo Division at its creation in 1932;⁶³ rather, they were nominally referred to as a group of western Ijo living in Okitipupa Division.⁶⁴ This, in a way, further reflects the extent to which the British arbitrary boundary creation undermined the existence of common cultural ties and origin between the Arogbo Ijo and all other Ijo groups within the Western Delta.

Having established the change and continuity in the Arogbo Ijo political boundary as a bye product of the British creation, it is imperative to state that like any other Nigerian society, Arogbo Ijo was ushered into the 20th century under a political boundary that further strengthened the British colonial arrangement. No doubt, in the 1914 amalgamation, Arogbo Ijo became part of the Nigerian state. However, the division of the Southern Province of Nigeria into western and eastern province by Governor Bourdillion on April 1 1939,⁶⁵ again placed the Arogbo Ijo within the western region which has Yoruba as the majority group, and thus further created in the Arogbo Ijo the problem of a minority group. This had an overbearing impact on the Arogbo Ijo

⁶¹ Gavin, C.I. Assistant District Officer, N.A.I. Intelligence Report on Okitipupa Division, Ikale and Ilaje District, part viii.p.2

⁶² Interview held with Chief Ebitimi Ajube, Aged 74, retiree, Upe community, Arogbo, September 30, 2017

⁶³ N.A.I. C.S.O 26/2, File 118567. Vol. 4. Annual Report Warri Province 1932.

⁶⁴ N.A.I. C.S.O 26/2, File 118567. Vol. 4. Annual Report Warri Province 1932

⁶⁵ Tamuno, T.N. 1980. *British Colonial Administration in Nigeria in the Twentieth Century*. Ikime, O. Ed. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books PLC.p.395

since it was a complete loss of sense of belonging with their kith and kin that on the other hand were largely partitioned into the eastern region.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEVELOPMENTS IN AROGBO IJO UNDER BRITISH RULE, 1915-1945

4.1 Introduction

Historically, like most colonised society in Nigeria, the British rule marked the era of overbearing socio-cultural and economic changes in Arogbo Ijo. However, it is imperative to also understand that Arogbo Ijo in the period understudy is enrooted in the economic foundation of the pre-colonial epoch, which was reputed for economic individualism up to the end of colonial rule in Nigeria. That is, the existence of an orthodox dependable political structure that became an agent of the British rule did not in any form result to the establishment of an economic hegemony over the people. Rather, individual economic venture was a common practice. Therefore, a flexible political economic pattern was prevalent. The emphasis is that, the study of the British rule in Arogbo Ijo was to understand the manifestation of the economic and political phenomenon experienced by the Arogbo Ijo during this period. An attempt is made in this chapter to elucidate the unbridled relationship between the Arogbo Ijo orthodox economic structure and its active role in the sustainance of the British economic interest within the Arogbo Ijo society, as well as the coastline economic routes of the Western Delta.

In as much as the practice of individual economic determinism in Arogbo Ijo was not altered by the British. Britain indeed introduced a colonial tax regime which was completely alien to the economic understanding of the people. However, taxation represented the presence of colonial power in a particular society, hence; it affirms the presence of colonial power and government in Arogbo Ijo. This colonial economic venture is viewed in this chapter as one of the main trends in the understanding of certain historical developments as it affected the Arogbo Ijo history during the colonial epoch. In addition, this chapter brings to ones knowledge the activites of pirates induced by the British economic activities along the coastline extending from Benin to Lagos colony. This act of piracy was viewed from two perspectives. First, it was identified by this study that piracy to the Arogbo Ijo was a way of resisting the Europeans economic dominations. Second, the Arogbo traders saw piracy as a protest against perceived British domination of economic resources derived by the Arogbo Ijo within and outside their domain. Also, attempt to undermine the British economic power of monopoly was a major factor for such Arogbo Ijo piratical act during the period covered by this study.

Lastly, this chapter also primarily intends to identify the pattern of religious and cultural changes in Arogbo Ijo. It affirms that the spread of Christianity into Arogbo Ijo society was not initiated by the British missionaries. In fact, throughout the colonial period, the Arogbo Ijo traditional practice wielded much importance, and therefore, was not subjected to noticeable changes by the British influence.

4.2 The Political Economy

The interaction of politics and economics is an old theme in the study of historical events as it affects the developmental process experienced by man. Naturally, the key components in understanding the advancement of human civilization are politics and economics. Therefore, for a proper reconstruction of the history of a people, there is the need to pay attention to their political and economic structures.¹ In support of this assertion, Ake is of the view that a study of the economic structure is indeed a point of departure for studying other aspects of the society.² To buttress this view, Smith affirms that political economy depicts the structure of a society as it relates to economical survival by the people through distinct economic functions by respective groups that make up the society.³ This implies that political economy is simply the pattern of economic relations between man and the society. In a strict sense, the political economy of a particular society dwells more on the relationship that exists between man and his natural environment. The bedrock of the socio-economic and political formation of man has to dwell much on the theory of geographical determinism.⁴ However, the ability of man to exploit his natural environment through the input of labour is a deciding factor in the economy of any society that man could be found. Frederick Engels pointed out that, “Labour is the primary basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, one can conclude that labour created man”.⁵ In a relative term, inferences can be drawn that every man ostensibly engages in one form of labour or the other for survival. The rational determination for man wanting to seek economic survival has, however, made it possible for man to be identified as the main productive force, and thus creating an ambience of entrepreneurship of the said goods or

¹ Claude, Ake. 2008. *A Political Economy of Africa*. England: Longman Group Limited. p.1

² Claude, Ake. 2008. *A Political Economy of Africa*. p.1

³ Smith, A. 1999. *The Wealth of A Nations*, Book I-III. England: Clays Ltd, St. Ives plc. p.40

⁴ Faluyi, E.K. 1995. *A History of Agriculture in Western Nigeria, 1900-1960*. University of Lagos: Department of History, PhD Thesis. p.18.

⁵ Chernikov, G.P. and Rydina, M.N. 1985. *Political Economy of Capitalism*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. p.7

items produced. It is, however, no gainsaying that the individual producer in most typical African societies has the absolute control over the goods or article produced by him. In a nutshell, the management of the processes of production varies in African societies. While in some societies, the economic determinism of production is mainly decided by an individual, in some other societies, it is indeed the traditional obligation of the traditional and political leadership to prevail upon economic situations in their domains. That is, such society refers to the political head as the sole custodian of the economic life of the particular society. From the foregoing, it is acknowledged that political economy is a reflection of societal economic development in its historical continuity.⁶

A historical study of the Arogbó Ijò from a political and economic point of view is to really identify the nature of development that has evolved in the society within the specified period of this study. However, it is pertinent to say that the era under study is enrooted in the economic foundation of the Arogbó Ijò since the pre-colonial period. Therefore, the purview to understanding the dynamics of the political economy needs to have its background in the historical trends that affected the Arogbó Ijò up to the end of colonial rule in Nigeria. The Arogbó Ijò economy since the pre-colonial period has been situated within its socio- economic and political context as a way of underscoring the pervasive and fundamental relationship between these factors. From the standpoint of political economy, it could be observed that the dynamics of state formation process has been mainly affected by the indigenous economic activities that evolved in the Arogbó Ijò society. Historical facts had been able to bring to ones knowledge that at inception, the Arogbó Ijò could be identified with a dependable political structure. In terms of political development, it has been noticed that from the earliest period of their emergence to the 20th century, there was in place monarchical structure with the kingly priest as the symbol of communal bond as well as the sole overseer of the entire kingdom.⁷ In spite of this, the nature of the socio- political economy was purely capitalist inclined, and there was no existence of a large scale political interference on the economic affairs.⁸ In other words, economic matters were largely depended on self determinism, and not the responsibility of the political head, that is, the king, to decide on the operational pattern of the Arogbó Ijò economy. In essence, the making of

⁶Chernikov, G.P. and Rydina, M.N. 1985. *Political Economy of Capitalism*. P.18

⁷Interview held with Chief Ebikiri Gandoghu, Aged 70, Traditionalist, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbó, 12th March, 2016

⁸Interview held with Mr. Doghobowei Oweike, Aged 72, Traditionalist, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbó, 12th, March, 2016.

the king as the colonial agent did not translate to an absolute subjugation of the Arogbo Ijo economic structure under his control.

Remarkably, the society was still firmly entrenched in its pre-colonial settings even in the advent of the colonial economic structure. Hence, the ecological and socio- political factors were of strategic importance in the outlook of the Arogbo Ijo economy. Obviously, the traditional hospitality of the area where they are located enhanced their spatial settlement pattern which in a way is reflective of an individual economic dependency. In clear terms, the formation of settlement was usually informed by the availability of resources which supported the economic survival of individuals or group.⁹ This, in line with the nature of the flexible political economic pattern of the society. Obviously, the meeting point between political development and economic advancement could be noticed in the creation of new settlements under a particular traditional political leader whose responsibility was to ensure social relations of the people within his jurisdiction. It could be observed that formation of new settlements was not for political motives. Rather, such movement largely reflects economic mobility of the people to a larger environment within the region. Fundamentally, the 19th century was the background to legitimate trade in the Niger Delta region and Nigeria at large. Therefore, the economic transformation from the Atlantic commerce to what became known as the legitimate trade by the latter part of the 19th century contributed to the expansion of the Arogbo Ijo kingdom. This expansion was driven by two factors, namely; security and on the other hand, the motive to meet up with the European economic request.¹⁰ As a matter of fact, the people were ushered into the 20th century with profound economic undertakings that supported their local economy and the colonial legitimate trade. Like most societies, the legitimate trade is considered to have added a new dimension to the local economy and the long distance trade of the participating communities.¹¹ Notably, the local economy of the Arogbo Ijo overwhelmingly formed part of the British legitimate commerce that traversed the entire coastal area. In fact, economic articles such as canoes, palm produce, timber highly demanded by the Europeans formed the bases for the local economy of

⁹ Interview held with Mr. Johnson Kilegha, Aged 69, Fisherman, Fiyebraasinghintei Village, Arogbo, 18th March, 2016.

¹⁰ Interview held with Mr. Ibadouju Ogiori, Aged 66, Traditionalist, Ilerikiri Village, Arogbo, 18th March, 2016.

¹¹ Okpevra, U.B.2005. Ijo-Itsekiri Relations. Akinwumi, O. Ed. *Pre-colonialNigeria*. Trenton: Africa World Press.p.395

the people. Therefore, there was the need to drive towards increasing the production and supply in order to meet up with the international trade as well as to satisfy local consumptions.

The effect of the legitimate trade on the Arogbos Ijo society was the expansion of settlements purely for economic reasons. In order for an adequate supply of the economic goods to meet up with the European demands, new settlements emerged as a result of the European economic purpose. Therefore, apart from the flexible and the tradition of non interference in the economic matters by the political leader, perhaps, the ecological setting was also a factor that strongly supports the individual approach to economic undertakings. By so doing, the people had unbridled economic reliance on their environment with little or no interference by the political class. Furthermore, from ecological point of view, it could be identified that the Arogbos Ijo as a people had occupied the present coastal geographical location in a period that is yet to be historically dated. Hence, ecological determinism was a major factor that designed the pattern which the economy of the Arogbos Ijo operated upon. As a people with a kind of settlement that has a natural topography of both coastal terrain with little presence of land, their economy did not undergo much changes. Rather, throughout the period under study, they dominantly engaged in fishing, gin distillation and all other forms of coastal occupations naturally supported by the ecological zone which they are settled. In fact, the ecological impact on the Arogbos Ijo economy is that, as migrants from the riverine area of the Central Delta; they continued to depend on coastal economic activities for survival in this new geographical location.¹² These relations of production constitute the economic structure of a society. By the late 19th century upward, the economy of the Arogbos Ijo depended mainly on fishing activities, gin and timber trade as the most popular and widely practiced occupations. Notably, a large scale production and supply of gin and timber by the Arogbos Ijo to Lagos colony clearly indicated a gradual shift from the local economy to an international trade of the Europeans. As rightly stated by Dike, “the history of modern West Africa is largely the history of five centuries of trade with European nations”.¹³ In relating this to the Arogbos Ijo of the Western Delta, it seems indisputable that the economy manifested certain changes as influenced by the European colonial

¹²Interview held with Mr. Elokumo Erenatei, Aged 66, Fisherman, Fiyebasinghintei Village, Arogbos, 18th March, 2016. Also interview held with Chief Ekpo Digha, Aged 68, Traditionalist, Agadagba Obon, Arogbos, 19th March, 2016

¹³Dike, K.O. 1956. *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.p.1

economic policies. This, however, was not able to undermine the independent economic character of individual traders in Arogbo Ijo. To them, their involvement in the European commerce was a system of exchange which linked them to the global capitalist market, which was not to be seen in the light of an absolute economic conquest of Arogbo Ijo by the Europeans. In fact, during this period, there was a remarkable continuous existence of the people's traditional economy in its form. Economic activities such as fishing, canoe carving, gin distillation and lumbering, survived the local economy in its traditional method of individual freedom to participate in these trades. Remarkably, individual traders were major players in the timber economy introduced by the European colonial government in Southern Nigeria. Since 1870, J.H. Glover, the then administrator of the British colony of Lagos opened up a route to the interior through the Mahin, Ijo, Ikale and Ondo territories.¹⁴ From the foregoing, it is very clear that Arogbo Ijo was one of the established trading colonies for both European and Lagos traders. As further described by Akintoye, the traders from Lagos brought commodities such as guns, gunpowder, ammunitions, salt, European clothes, spirits, tobacco, cowries and oral beads into these territories.¹⁵ This means that individuals from Arogbo Ijo and other communities exchanged palm produce with these European commodities. The people were often restricted to the role of middlemen in the legitimate trade; they benefitted more from the acquisition of most of the European commodities. As individual traders and as middlemen, they relied on self defence to certain violence from Makun, Epe and Igbekun people, respectively, barring them from directly taking their goods to Lagos.¹⁶ Arguably, the Arogbo Ijo considered the obstruction of their middlemen role by the people of the aforementioned towns as an economic loss, and thus, they were always prepared to smuggle oil palm commodity to the sea port of Lagos in the midst of stiff oppositions.

Furthermore, the European legitimate trade included timber as an economic commodity by the beginning of the 20th century. Precisely, by 1902, the Nigerian forest was controlled by an expert of highest scientific repute, Mr. H.M. Thompson known as Timber Thompson.¹⁷ The expansion in the timber trade was noticeable in most communities along the coastline of the Niger Delta. In short, for the Arogbo Ijo, the timber enterprise became a veritable source of

¹⁴Akintoye, S.A.1969. The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, 1870-1895, The Journal of African History,p.581

¹⁵Akintoye, S.A.1969. The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, 1870-1895,p.581

¹⁶Akintoye, S.A.1969. The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, 1870-1895,p.586

¹⁷Geary, W.N.M.1965. *Nigeria under British Rule*. United Kingdom: Frank and Cass Co. Ltd. p.129.

economy even up to the postcolonial period. In order to satisfy the British timber merchants, they massively engaged in lumbering in the coastal mangrove forest in their immediate surroundings, and they also travelled as far as to the mangrove forests in the Central Delta where they tapped abundant timbers for the colonial market in Lagos. As a matter of fact, by the 1930s, the people of Arogbo became established as the principal suppliers and middlemen of the timber to the European buyers.¹⁸ The Arogbo Ijo traders appeared to have the economic monopoly of transporting logs from any part of the Niger Delta enroute the waterways to Lagos for shipment into the western world.¹⁹ The direct effect of the timber trade on the people was noted in their overbearing impact on the European international trade.

The Arogbo Ijo economy was equally characterised by subsistence economic production. This, however, did not undermine the fact that they engaged in the exchange of economic items that are not available in their own immediate region.²⁰ As rightly observed by Falola, there has never been the existence of an absolute subsistence economy among African societies.²¹ In other words, economic interdependency had been the economic life of most African societies. This, therefore, depicts that there were some forms of economic interrelationship between the Arogbo Ijo and their neighbours. Every individual tapped into the abundant economic resources located in the indeterminable mangrove forest for his survival. Therefore, the need to cater for the economic needs beyond their frontiers arose, and thus, they embarked on surplus and commercial production in order to meet up with the economic demands for the agrarian products by their immediate neighbours, particularly the Ilaje, Ikale and Ijo-Apoi people, respectively. Therefore, the economic character that was principally subsistence took a new form. Hence, there existed large scale production of the economic items which equally provided an opportunity for them to exchange their products with essential economic commodities that were produced outside their own domain. Evidently, the Arogbo Ijo were inescapable from economic inter-group relation with their neighbours because location and geographical differences could be seen as the major determinant of market variations in terms of goods produced, and thus

¹⁸Interview held with Chief Onaidou Warikobo, Aged 72, Traditionalist, Erubiri, Arogbo, 7th April, 2016.

¹⁹Interview held with Chief Kirifagha Lubi. Aged 89, Fisherman, Upe community, Upkaramo, Arogbo, April 7th, 2016

²⁰Interview held with Chief Clement Mumboh, Aged 71, retiree, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, and 30th September, 2017.

²¹Toyin Falola. 1992. African Pre-colonial Domestic Economy. Atanda, J.A. Ed. *Tarikh, Vol. 10*. Nigeria: Longman Publishers. p.12.

encouraging and promoting trade. Furthermore, within the same society, be it a town, a village or a clan, division of labour and specialisation in economic functions encouraged the need for markets and trade.²² This reason also seems to be responsible for the indispensability of trading and market activities between the Arogbo Ijo and their neighbours. For a long period, the barter system of exchange was the dominant means of economic relationship with people within and outside Arogbo Ijo geographical setting.

With respect to the fishing system of the Arogbo Ijo, the extent to which the availability of abundant fishing forests played a decisive role could not be under-estimated. Generally in the West African society in the 19th century and 20th centuries, land was the only factor of production that seems to be in abundance.²³ Land in the context of the Arogbo Ijo society could be referred to as the abundantly available coastal mangrove forest which supports the people's fishing culture. It was unimaginable that a prospective fisherman would have any difficulty obtaining a fishing farm in the forest. Each of the Arogbo Ijo settlement was surrounded by vast mangrove forest whose ownership is usually based on people from the same lineage or family tree.²⁴ Therefore, the human entrepreneurship required for production in the traditional fishing, canoe carving, gin production and lumbering economy of the Arogbo Ijo was individually based. In other words, collective ownership of economic proceeds was not in existence, and thus, every individual managed his own resources.²⁵ Since there was abundant forest, there was actually no restriction in the extent to which an individual could embark on economic exploitation. Nevertheless, individuals were not permitted to derive economic resources from a forest owned by a particular family which he was not a member. Rather, such individual paid tax to the family claiming ownership to the forest resources.

There is no doubt that palm oil product was one of the major economic commodities that attracted the British to Nigeria in the early 19th century. The greatest exporting centre of this palm oil article was the Niger Delta.²⁶ However, the Arogbo Ijo region which through its rivers has

²²Hellenier, G.K. 1966. *Peasant Agriculture, Government and Economic Growth in Nigeria*. Illinois: Homewood Publishing Ltd. p.54.

²³Oyemakinde, W. 1996. *The Structure of the West African Economy*. Ogunremi G.O. and Faluyi, E.k. Eds. *An Economic History of West Africa since 1750*. Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication. p.1

²⁴Interview held with Mr. Worimegbe Israel, Aged 63, retiree, Tebubeleu Quarters, Arogbo, March 22, 2016

²⁵Interview held with Mr. Ebibomini Perekonte, Aged 63, Hunter, Tebubeleu Quarters, Arogbo, 22nd March, 2016.

²⁶Grant, J.A.P. 1957. Okitipupa: A Brief Survey. *Nigeria Geographical Journal, Vol.1, NO.1*. p.205.

direct contact with other parts of the Niger Delta was afforded the opportunity of participating in the palm oil trade.²⁷ Consequently, the British desire for the palm oil products also led to the establishment of a branch of United African Company (U.A.C) at Igbekebo an Ijo Apoi town.²⁸ This was to enhance the trade in palm oil in the entire region that became known as Okitipupa Division. Obviously, Arogbo Ijoare geographically located on the coastal region enroute Lagos, Benin and Itsekiri towns as well as extending to the hinterlands where palm oil was produced in commercial scale. In essence, this supported their role as middlemen in the Oil palm trade. As it has been observed by other economic activities of the people, the trade in the oil palm did not include any form of interference from the political leader of the people. Apparently, the Arogbo Ijo area was inhospitable for oil palm plantations and production. Nevertheless, the middlemen role of the Arogbo Ijo enhanced the supply of oil palm products to the appropriate destinations.²⁹ The colonial palm oil enterprise no doubt brought about a noticeable social and economic change in Arogbo Ijo. The economy experienced change in a way that the oil palm trade influenced individual or private traders who further brought in European goods into the society.

Within a specific society, the economic structure is the real foundation in which legal and political structure rest on and which corresponds to definite forms of social consciousness. Bajowa, reinforcing this assertion, expressed the view that politics itself is concentrated economics.³⁰ The form in which a group settled in an environment to meet up with economic pursuit often determines the political structure. Again, social experience or contract is formed by the environment. In this regard, it is clearly observed that the political structure of any society rests upon the economic and geographical factors. It is, therefore, imperative to note that the economic self reliant nature of the individuals in Arogbo Ijo is mainly a product of the geographical influence. This corroborated the fact that capitalism was the common economic practice in Arogbo Ijo, and the political structure was positioned in such a way that there was little or no intervention on the economic means of livelihood of respective individuals by the political leadership.

²⁷ Interview held with Chief Seighmokumo Digha, Aged 71, retired civil servant, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, 22nd March, 2016. Also interview held with Mrs Yoyo Ojogo, Traditionalist, Aged 75, Egbesubir Quarters, Arogbo, 23th March, 2016.

²⁸ N.A.I., O.K.D. 761/76/Volume 1.

²⁹ Interview held with Mr. Owei Kurekure, Aged 58, Trader, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 18th April, 2017.

³⁰ Olusegun Bajowa, 1993. *Ikale*. Lagos: Newswatch Books Ltd. p.106.

One of the most important economic considerations in the foundation of human settlement in any region is the ecological potentials for food production. As earlier stated, the ability to economically depend on the environment was individual-based. Nevertheless, this trend witnessed some transformations at the wake of the 20th century. Precisely, the emergence of Europeans in Arogbo Ijo area was occasioned first, by a slave economy in which some individuals became slave merchants,³¹ and thus their participation in the slave trade economy produced an outlook of a political economy that placed the economic sector under each of the slave merchant.³² Secondly, the political pattern during colonialism includes the annexation of the Arogbo Ijo into British political arrangement through the popular policy of indirect rule. This was evident in the erection of the Union Jack in Arogbo which represented direct British political and economic domination of the Arogbo Ijo area. Again, the payment of taxes into the colonial government treasury by the Arogbo Ijo Native Council was also introduced.³³

Above all, it is clearly identified that the concept of political-economy which commonly accepts political leadership as the judicious and prudent manager of the resources of a community,³⁴ is however loosely operated in Arogbo Ijo society. Accordingly, the indigenous or traditional governments took care of the maintenance of law and order, but there was never a recorded time when the indigenous leadership interfered in the economic force of the people.³⁵ Rather, it was a free society where all and sundry privately operated through the economy.³⁶ In other words, the people operated a market with an autonomous economic activity in which individuals sought to achieve his or her interest by the exchange of their goods and services through a process of negotiation.³⁷ Obviously, co-ordination of the market system was the product of the interaction of all economic actors.

In conclusion, the nature of Arogbo Ijo political economy could be viewed from the Marxist notion of history, whereby economic forces rather than great leaders or ideas lead to

³¹Interview held with Chief Seighmokumo Digha, Aged 71, retired civil servant, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, 22nd March, 2016.

³² Interview held with Mrs. Warilatei Toikum Aged 70, Fisherwoman, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 23rd March, 2016.

³³ N.A.I.,The Native Council Ordinance (CAP 140) 1953.

³⁴ Afolabi, Ayeni Akeke.2001. *State and Economy: An Introduction*. Ile-Ife: Coronet Books. p.1.

³⁵High Chief Seiyefa Ebiatorou, Aged 67, Traditionalist, Osari community, Arogbo, 22nd March, 2016

³⁶Interview held with Mrs. Kimideinghan Worikum Aged 70, Fisherwoman, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 23th March, 2016.

³⁷ Interview held with Mr. Bigha Aloro Aged 68, Trader, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo on March 23, 2016.

progress.³⁸ The fact remains that the potency of economic forces rather than political power is a major determinant of the economic structure of a given society. Thus, the Arogbo Ijo political economy could largely be described from the aforementioned pattern. Furthermore, the Arogbo Ijo political economy reflects an economic character whereby everyman survived independently by economic exchange or in some measures a merchant of his own economic commodities for survival.

4.3 Colonial Tax Regime and Arogbo Ijo Identity Crisis

Taxation eventually became pivotal as part of the British economic interest in colonial Nigeria. With the Native Revenue Proclamation enacted in Northern Nigeria in 1906,³⁹ this policy allowed for the direct taxation of the local population. Basically, the establishment of colonial taxation policy could be seen in the light of taxation being central to the indirect rule system of the colonial government. Taxation was a demonstration of colonial power and domination which in a way depicts the extension of the colonial powers to every nook and cranny of the country. In fact, the collection of taxes represented the presence of the colonial government among the grassroots, and as such, affirms the establishment of the colonial indirect rule system of government. However, taxation was a novel phenomenon prior to its introduction in Southern Nigeria by the European colonialists.⁴⁰ Therefore, the difficulty in embracing it was occasioned by the several anti tax protests that span through the Southern Nigeria in the early 20th century. Such notable cases of anti tax violence included the Iseyin-okeiho riots of 1916, the Egba rebellion of 1918, the wide spread riots in Owerri Province 1927 and 1928, and the Aba Women Riot of 1929.⁴¹ This further depicts the extent to which the people of Southern Nigeria in the wake of colonial rule strongly repelled taxation which to the British, was considered as a major mechanism in the pursuance of their colonial economic goals.

Going by the general perspective of anti tax violence in the colonial Southern Nigeria, it easy is to draw the conclusion that taxation was also not part of the pre-colonial Arogbo Ijo society. There was no form of restriction for an individual ownership of a particular economic commodity, and dependency on the environmental and economic resources for livelihood was

³⁸Roger, E. and Wright, A. 1993. *Contemporary Political Ideologies*. London: Pinter Publishers.p.3.

³⁹Toyin Falola. 2009. *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria*. U.S.A.: Indiana University Press.p.79

⁴⁰Toyin Falola. 2009. *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria*.p.79

⁴¹Toyin Falola. 2009. *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria*.p.79-80

unrestricted by any kind of tax.⁴² As a matter of fact, the abundance of economic resources for livelihood that could be found in the indeterminable mangrove forest did not in any way support any form of taxation in the Arogbo Ijo society.⁴³ In a comparative sense, the population of the people was insignificantly few as compared with the immeasurable economic resources provided by their environment. This implies that, the economic dependencies on the ecological resources did not exclude any individual, and in view of this, payment of tax was indeed needless as perceived by the people. In absolute terms, the absence of payment of tax in the pre-colonial Arogbo Ijo setting is considered as a consequence of the presence of vast economic resources in the mangrove forest, and thus, the low population of the people had little or no impact on the economic exploitation of these abundantly available resources. Indeed, a large part of the people's economy was characterised by subsistence form of economic organisation with a high degree of specialisation and exchange. In this regard, it is obvious that the traditional occupation remained central to the bulk of the population.⁴⁴ This has earlier been mentioned as insignificant in terms of their population as compared to the availability of the abundant mangrove forest that surpasses the peoples' population. From this view, it could be understood why the pre-colonial settings of the people operated an economic system that was needless for the payment of tax. In fact, the product from the natural resources belonged to the individual that exploited it and there was no particular class deriving its economic benefits from it.

Having emphasised the nature of the Arogbo Ijo indigenous economy to have excluded a taxationsystem, the British colonial rule had tax as one of the very fundamental instruments of sustaining their colonial economy and political structure in Nigeria, and the Arogbo Ijo in particular. Generally, taxation is often described as a majoraspect of the political changes of the early years of colonial rule that generated a number of crises.⁴⁵ In other words, the ultimate reason for the imposition of tax on Nigerian society was to support colonial economy. Therefore, taxation inevitably distorted the pre-existing peace of respective Nigerian societies, and thus, resistance no doubt resulted inchaoticsituations. One of the cardinal goals of taxation was to create a stable source of funding for each colonially designed local authority. The Arogbo Ijo

⁴² Interview held with J.M. Maggi, Aged 70, retired civil servant, Biagbini, Arogbo, 11th March, 2016.

⁴³ Interview held with Mr. Princewill Tibifabofa, Aged 59, Civil Servant, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, 18th April, 2017.

⁴⁴ High Chief Wariebi Ugoudibowei, Aged 69, Traditionalist, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, 24th March, 2016

⁴⁵ Falola, T. 2010. Neighbours at War: Conflicts over Boundaries in Colonial Nigeria. *JHSN, Vol.19*. p.1

being one of the established economic networks that supported the colonial economy became susceptible to the colonial taxation policy. Shortly after the amalgamation 1914, Arogbo Ijo was earmarked as one of the communities in the Ondo Province established in 1915.⁴⁶ This could be perceived as the gradual official inclusion of Arogbo Ijo into the revenue generation that drove the colonial government towards the formation of the water side District in 1923.⁴⁷ This also coincided with the formation of the first Native Authority Court in the region, that is, the Mahin Native Authority.⁴⁸ Thus, Mahin Native Council emerged as the closest colonial government to the other groups that occupied the Waterside District. Hence, all other groups such as the Ugbo Ilaje, Apoi and the Arogbo Ijo, respectively paid their taxes into the colonial treasury in the Mahin Ilaje Native Authority which was then the headquarters of the Waterside districts. Specifically, the Arogbo Ijo paid fishing tax, canoe tax, bicycle tax and timber tax into the colonial treasury supervised by the *Amapetu* of Mahin of the Ilaje Native Authority.⁴⁹ A letter to the District Officer by T.E. Omowole II expressly stated that the Arogbo Ijo paid tax approved by the colonial government to the *Amapetu* of Mahin.⁵⁰ For instance, the Piawei, a sub-Ijo group of the Arogbo Ijo paid their taxes up to 1927 to the *Amapetu* of Mahin who during this period was the head of the Ilaje Native administration.⁵¹ The hypothetical view of this economic action is often considered by the Ilaje to claim the position of overlordship on the Arogbo Ijo. That is, this colonial taxation policy put these two groups together into one colonial treasury. It is quite clear that such over lordship seems an erroneous claim, and should be seen in light of the impact of colonial historical developments. It is very clear that the lack of an established colonial native administration in Arogbo Ijo was the factor responsible for the direct payment of tax to the *Amapetu* of Mahin by the Piawei of the Arogbo Ijo group and the Apata Obe being controlled by the Ugbo native court.⁵² The motive of the Europeans was for economic exploitation; particularly regarding the collection of tax to sustain the colonial government at every phase in Nigeria. Therefore, the implementation of the taxation policy was regardless of the difference in socio-cultural settings of the two groups, namely, the Ilaje and the Arogbo Ijo.

⁴⁶ N.A.I. Arogbo Ijo Intelligence Report 1930

⁴⁷ N.A.I. Arogbo Ijo Intelligence Report 1930

⁴⁸ N.A.I. Ondo Province 1/1 File No.120 B, annual report OKD

⁴⁹ An Intelligence Report of Ikale/Ilaje District of OKD BY C.I.Gavin- Assistant District Officer.

⁵⁰ N.A.I. An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of OKD.

⁵¹ N.A.I. An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of OKD

⁵² Interview held with Mr. Ejufagha Ojajoh, Aged 60, Trader, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 20th April, 2016.

Furthermore, the other reason for the incorporation of the taxes derived from Arogbo Ijo into the colonial treasury of Mahin Native Authority could be viewed in the light of the geographical proximity of the sub-Arogbo Ijo group referred to as Piawei to the Ilaje Mahin.⁵³ A notable feature in the tax regime in Arogbo Ijo was the introduction of the direct tax in 1925.⁵⁴ This was exactly two years after the creation of the Waterside Districts which was the colonial treasury resident in Mahin. Therefore, it was inevitable for the Arogbo Ijo to pay their head tax to the Ilaje Mahin during this period. This is no doubt a difficult task for the colonial government to appropriately derive taxes from the Arogbo Ijo adults. This is against the backdrop of the spatial settlement nature of the Arogbo Ijo, and thus, posed a big challenge to them in reaching out to the colonial tax agents in Mahin Ilaje. In fact, this could be observed as the reason for the low population of the Arogbo Ijo in the 1931 census. Census population during this period was usually linked to the available tax records. Notably, tax invasion was a very common practice by the people. They showed apprehension for the negative effect of the census on their tradition and culture.⁵⁵ Consequent upon this situation, the outcome of the population census figure for the Arogbo Ijo was six thousand, seven hundred (6,700).⁵⁶ Thus, making the lowest among all other groups that occupied the Okitipupa Division.

Having established the Arogbo Ijo native authority in 1938, the Piawei sub group and other Arogbo Ijo communities directly paid their taxes to the Arogbo Ijo native council. Like most native authorities, the traditional chiefs of Arogbo Ijo were responsible for the administration of this colonial local government, including the appointment of tax collectors for the colonial treasury. Precisely in the 1940s, the native authority appointed the trio of Itipa Olopele, Okoro and Oyinbo as colonial tax collectors.⁵⁷ Apparently, the British colonial government experienced unhindered tax collection in Arogbo Ijo in the better part of the colonial period. To secure a tranquil atmosphere for colonial operations, particularly as regard tax collections, the *Agadagba* devised a strategy by creating what was referred to as ‘Young Men Society’ who ensured the community health sanitation as well as re-organised and improved the

⁵³ N.A.I., Gavin, C.I. An Intelligence Report on the Ilaje District O.K.D. 1932

⁵⁴ N.A.I. An Intelligence Report the Arogbo Ijo of Waterside District, O.K.D. 1941

⁵⁵ Interview held with Ebikumo Feku, Aged 58, civil servant, Epu Idumu, Arogbo, 20th April, 2016.

⁵⁶ Interview held with Mr. Worimegbe Israel, Aged 63, retired teacher, Tebubeleu Quarters, Arogbo, 22nd March, 2016. Also Mr. Ungunnu Taribo, Aged 73, Retired civil servant, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo 18th April, 2016.

⁵⁷ N.A.I.Ond. Prof.1/1 File No.120B OKD Annual Report of 1943

town's market.⁵⁸ By following an example of his neighbor, the *Olugbo* of Ugbo, and the *Agadagba* formed the 'Ladies Improvement Society' which comprised older women who played prominent role in the maintenance of peace in the town. Going by this, the chiefs encountered little or no difficulty in the collection of taxes for the colonial purse. In fact, it suffices that available archival records depict excellent remittance of tax to the colonial purse throughout the first half of the 20th century. From the 1930s up to the 1950s, the British enjoyed overwhelming tax payment by the Arogbo Ijo. Available records indicate that the amount of tax collected from Arogbo Ijo District Native Authority in 1951 accrued to 552 pounds and 11 shillings (five hundred and fifty two pounds, eleven shillings). The total tax collected in 1952 was 550 pounds (five hundred and fifty pounds), and a total of 672 pounds (six hundred seventy two pounds) was realised in 1953.⁵⁹

In spite of this, the crisis in 1942 between the *Agadagba* and Chief David Oyinbo, one of the tax collectors disrupted tax collection. To buttress the extent of the conflict between the two parties, E.A. Lewis, the Assistant District Officer, Okitipupa Division in 1943, he stressed thus:

The most worthy event in this little area was the reconciliation between the *Agadagba* and Chief David Oyinbo, who in May wereliterarily at daggersdrawn. The reconciliation has resulted in a remarkable peace in the atmosphere of the town, as the two men families are both strong and numerous. The effects of the settlement were reflected in the ease with which tax was over-collected and the complete absence of complaints from the area during the last four or five month of the year. If peaceful relations are maintained, it is probable that good progress will be made, as the area is self contained and homogenous, while the people are virile and alive to new ideas.⁶⁰

From this point, it is obvious that colonial tax policy in Arogbo Ijo area practically did not experience any form of resistance. As noted, the two persons were seemingly colonial agents whose responsibilities were to boost the colonial treasury through tax collection. Obviously, Lewis's accounts tend to indicate that the Arogbo Ijo had little or no problem with the colonial tax regime. In fact, available records relate the crises that ensued between the duo of *Agadagba* Mesarawon and David Oyinbo as the main disruption to the flow of tax collection in the Arogbo

⁵⁸N.A.I.Ond . Prof.1/1 File No.120B OKD Annual Report of 1943

⁵⁹ Interview held with Mr. Perelawei Duweigha, Aged 63, retired teacher, Tebubeleu Quarters, Arogbo, 22nd March, 2016.

⁶⁰N.A.I.Ond. PROF.File No.120B. Annual Report OKD 1943, registered 15th March, 1944.

Ijo domain during the colonial period. Furthermore, Lewis referred to the peace established in 1943 to have remained undisturbed and the administration and Native Court worked smoothly and well. Tax collection was completed without difficulty or prosecutions and the area was conspicuous for the complete absence of complaints.⁶¹ On account of the tranquil atmosphere in Arogbo Ijo which hitherto encouraged tax collection, the District Officer paid more frequent visits to the Arogbo Ijo area than in the past.⁶² This no doubt, showcased that the European colonialists found the area highly supportive to their colonial economic agenda.

Be that as it may, the people engaged in tax violence or resistance outside their domain. Often times, they engaged in fierce battle with tax collectors in most of their distance trade expedition.⁶³ Particularly, in the movement of goods such as palm oil, gin and timber to Lagos for trade, where they alleged double taxation. That is, having paid tax to colonial agents in their domain, they considered any subsequent tax charges as being oppressive and should be averted.⁶⁴ Hence, invasion of any form often resulted in the attack of the colonial agents by these Arogbo Ijo traders. In short, they carried along with them arms and ammunition to attack any colonial tax agent attempting to impose any kind of oppressive tax on their economic goods.⁶⁵

In conclusion, taxation hitherto created little or no conflict between the Arogbo Ijo and the Europeans. Rather, Arogbo Ijo traders en route the coast to Lagos thus engaged in frequent resistance of what they considered double imposition of tax on their goods. Again, aspect of tax payment to the *Amapetu* of Mahin by a group of the Arogbo Ijo is not to be seen or interpreted to mean that the Ilaje Mahin were overlords on the Piawei sub Arogbo Ijo group. This is considered as a stereotype as there was no such situation in the historical relationship between the Arogbo Ijo and the Ilaje Mahin prior to the British colonial era. From the foregoing, it becomes clear that the payment of tax to the Ilaje Mahin was a colonial invention suitable for them, and should not be taken as a symbol of superiority by one group over another. That is, this mode of tax collection was a historical development deliberately created by the Europeans in the early 20th century to support their colonial exploitative activities of the region. In essence, this

⁶¹N.A.I.Ond. Prof.File No.120B. Annual Report OKD 1943, registered 15th March 1944

⁶²N.A.I.Ond. Prof.File No.120B. Annual Report OKD 1943, registered 15th March 1944

⁶³ Interview held with Mr. Birimelomo Inami, Aged 67, Retired civil servant, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 9th February, 2017.

⁶⁴ Interview held with Rotimi Jojo, Aged 66, retired teacher and Fisherman, New Jerusalem, Arogbo, 9th February, 2017.

⁶⁵Interview held with Tibipatei Ikpoho, Aged 61, Trader, New Jerusalem, Arogbo, 10th February, 2017.

colonial economic design undermined the cultural and traditional status quo of the Arogbo Ijo and Ilaje Mahin as well as other neighbours respectively.

4.4 British Economy and Piracy

Piracy has been in existence for as long as ships started sailing the inland and oversea waters of human societies. Since the twentieth century, piracy has become a social problem on the territorial waters of most nations, and combating this menace have evolved from customary to international laws.⁶⁶ In more clear terms, piracy is a socio-economic phenomenon that could be related to the advent of the European economy in most African states. It could be referred to as a product of the global maritime economy traversing continents, as well as various states and societies. Undoubtedly, the expansion of European economy beyond the frontiers of the western world no doubt resulted in the evolution of piracy on the maritime trade routes to other continents of the world, particularly Africa and Asia. For instance, in the late 16th century, piratical activities from Algeria and Tunisia were noted to have triggered an irreversible decline in the viability of Venice as trading City State.⁶⁷

In a broader sense, piracy is often regarded as the crime committed by Africans consequent upon the establishment of economic nexus between Europeans and Africans. That is, it was perceived by the Europeans as an act of social banditry which was a menace to the flow of economic activities. The Africans on the other hand considered the established maritime economy as being lopsided. That is, the Europeans were seen as mere exploiters of African economic resources. To them, piracy could be seen in the light of forceful resistance, particularly with the use of arms and ammunition; whereby the Europeans ran at a loss because of the piratical attacks, while the Africans profited from this exercise. The thesis drawn from this is the need for a divergent view of relating piracy as an act as it relates to certain factors that induced the actions by Africans, and the Arogbo Ijo in particular. To support this argument, it is imperative to take a critical look at piracy in the purview of Falola in his classification of theft. Hence, piracy could be better understood from a new dimension. Falola opines that theft takes two forms. First, it is a form of reaction to the state as a result of its taxation policy, and secondly, as a result of a means of survival, that is, “an alternative economy” to derive an

⁶⁶Orakwusi, M. 2010. “Legal Tools for Combating Piracy in Nigerian Waters”- A Paper presented at The 2ND Western Naval Command Law Seminar.

⁶⁷Knaska, J and Wilson, B. 2009. Fighting Pirates: The Pen and the Sword. *World Policy Journal*. Vol.25. No.4. p.42-43

income.⁶⁸ This view is indeed a clarification of the act of piracy to mean that it should not only be seen from the perspective of criminality committed by Africans as described by European merchants; rather, piracy connotes a protest against the European obnoxious economic exploitation of African resources, which is relatively a crime committed against Africans by these Europeans. The inferences drawn from this point is that the concept of piracy is applicable to both parties involved in the economic undertakings, that is, both the Europeans and the Africans. From the Afrocentric sense, the contest for maritime trade and security played out in places like Cawthron channel near Bonny.⁶⁹ A legacy of the slave trade whereby war canoes levied “traditional duties” called comey during the colonial times. Such “security fees” resorted to a kind of protection racket in order to keep a monopoly on foreign trade and to tax European that tried to reach the markets in the hinterlands.⁷⁰ This clearly depicts that the indigenous people along the aforementioned coastal settlements were key players in the European economic activities who piratically protected their economic interest in the European commerce.

From the foregoing, it is important to state without any doubt that the British economic demands were the harbinger for piracy in the Niger Delta area. The entire Ijo clans occupying the Western Delta were referred to as troublemakers or pirates by the European traders.⁷¹ The reason was that, the Ijo clans interjected the flow of British economic activities on the coastline of the Niger Delta. As a matter of fact, way back in 1856 and in 1857, the British Consul in charge of the Western Delta region had to take out warships against the Ijo because they had ventured on great force within the sight of the English factories and committed great depredations, capturing several canoes with cargoes of palmoil and making captives of the European crew.⁷² This action in a way depicts the consciousness of the Ijo to resist the British from the perceived uncontrolled economic exploitation of the resources that is naturally accrued to the people. However, no particular Ijo group was directly noted to have engaged in the piracy as pointed out by the British Consul. Nevertheless, it is indubitable that the extensive lagoon system across the length of the Nigerian coastline facilitated commercial and intergroup relations

⁶⁸ Falola, T.1995. Theft in Colonial South-western Nigeria. *Institute Italiano per l' Africa Voriente, Anno 50, No.1*.p.1

⁶⁹ Mac-Atoine, P. 2012. Maritime Piracy in Nigeria: Oldwine in New Bottles. *Routledge, Taylor and Francis*, p. 533.

⁷⁰ Mac-Atoine, P. 2012. Maritime Piracy in Nigeria: Oldwine in New Bottles, p. 533.

⁷¹ Ikime, O. 1967. The Western Ijo 1900-1950: A Preliminary Survey. *JHSN Vol. 4, No.1. 1967*.p.69

⁷² N.A.I. F.O. 84/1031, Campbell to F.O. (slave trade) No. 3 of February 1857.

among many Nigerian ethnic groups.⁷³The immediate eastern section of the lagoon linked the Arogbo Ijo with Epe-Ijebu and Lagos, and as such was very important trade route for the British economy along the coast to the hinterlands, particularly the movement of economic goods from Lagos to Ondo and other parts of Yorubaland. It is interesting to note that when Kosoko was driven from Lagos by the British in 1851, he fled to Epe and settled down to trade extensively in slaves and palm oil on the lagoon.⁷⁴ Furthermore, as upheld by Oguntomisin and Falola, “the lagoon provided for Kosoko an extensive waterway for commercial transactions with Ijebu as well as providing contacts with the Ijebu ports and market towns of Okitipupa...”⁷⁵From this point, it is concluded that this coastal area was a dominant economic trade route since the pre-colonial period, and as such, has a long standing history of competition for economic control which often result into piracy. Therefore, with Arogbo Ijo strategic location along the economic network of the coast, this factor provided the people with an opportunity of engaging in piracy which was largely intended towards the control of the economic flow in the region. As argued by Alagoa, with the emergence of the European trade in the Niger Delta area, piracy became a common act among the Arogbo Ijo. This claim is supported by the early 19th century account whereby an Ijebu slave, Osifekunde was captured by Ijo pirates whom Alagoa referred to as the Arogbo Ijo.⁷⁶ The reason for this piratical act was not other than the supremacy of the control of the trade routes covering the same area claimed by the Arogbo Ijo with centres at Ughoton (the port of Benin) and Warri (the capital of the Itsekiri kingdom).⁷⁷ Osifekunde was as an Ijebu trader traversing the Ijebu routes in the delta, covering the same area claimed by the Arogbo Ijo. Hence, the need for capturing him was to allow for a monopoly of trade along the coast by the Arogbo Ijo. This, however, suffices the fact that the European trade along the coast of the Niger Delta actually provided the piratical tendencies among the people. This is against the backdrop that the continuous presence of the European trade along the coast of the Niger Delta engendered piracy.

⁷³Olukoju, A. 2002.Fishing, Migrations and Intergroup Relations in the Gulf of Guinea (Atlantic Coast of West Africa) in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. *ITINERARIO: European Journal of Overseas History*, Vol.1.p.73

⁷⁴Ogen, O.J. 2006.The Ikafe of South-eastern Yorubaland, 1500-1900: A study in Ethnic Identity and Traditional Economy. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos.

⁷⁵Oguntomisin, G.O. and Falola,T. 1998. Refugees in 19th Century Yorubaland, 1793-1893. Akinjogbin, A. Eds., *War and Peace in Yorubaland*. Ibadan: Heinemann Publishers.p.387

⁷⁶Alagoa, E.J. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition* p.34

⁷⁷Alagoa, E.J. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition* p.34

Actually, the colonial economy induced the piratical acts put up by the Arogbo Ijo, and thus disturbed the free flow of British economic activities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁷⁸ In actual sense, the participation of the Arogbo Ijo in the act of piracy needs not be seen in the Eurocentric view absolutely relating pirates as bandits or criminals.⁷⁹ Rather, the perceived notion of the European traders as economic exploiters could be seen as the driving force for the Arogbo Ijo piratical tendencies. In fact, a remarkable aspect of Arogbo Ijo involvement in long distance trade, particularly trade in economic commodities of gin and timber no doubt was confronted with much of European influences at the expense of the Arogbo Ijo. Particularly, the local gin industry was out rightly condemned at the expense of the European manufactured gin. Hence, for the people to sustain their local production of this commodity, they needed to have direct confrontation on the coastal routes with colonial agents who were out to destroy their produce. The people usually resorted to piracy by attacking European agents on the sea who were to destroy the locally produced gin.⁸⁰ In other words, the form of maritime macro-parasitism termed piracy adversely affected trade and productivity in ways not always recognised.⁸¹ This simply describes piracy from dual dimensions. That is, the possible destruction of the Arogbo Ijo local gin was outrightly motivated by a strong desire of an European domination of the gin market for their economic benefits. On the other hand, the Arogbo Ijo was vehemently opposed to the suppression of their local gin economy. Therefore, there were notable exchange of defensive measures and attacks by both the Europeans and the local Arogbo Ijo along the water routes.⁸² Indeed, this became a factor of involving in piracy in order to preserve ones economic commodities by both parties. The position posited here is that piracy should be clearly viewed from a dual dimension as it involved the economic security of both local and international merchants on the coastal routes. Apparently, the emphasis on piracy on the Niger Delta coast is often being regarded as an act carried out predominantly by the Ijo people, and not to see the Europeans as participators in piracy as rightly pointed out by this thesis. Apparently, Alagoa complements the presence of piratical activities by saying that, the

⁷⁸ Interview held with Mr. Bekekimi Idiarh, Aged 54, Politician, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 14th March, 2016.

⁷⁹ Interview held with Mr. James Duweigha, Aged 63, Timber Merchant, Tebubeleou Quarters, Arogbo, 18th April, 2016.

⁸⁰ N.A.I.Ond Prof. File No.120B OKD Annual Report

⁸¹ Anderson. J.L 1995. Piracy and the World History: An Economic Perspective on Maritime Predation. *Journal of World History*, Vol. 6.No.2. University of Hawei Press. p.175

⁸² Interview held with Mr. Bekekimi Idiarhi, Aged 54, Politician, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 14th March, 2016.

enduring picture of the Ijo communities living around the Benin River was that of piracy.⁸³ Notably, this assertion broadly refers to Ijo people occupying the Western Delta. This further limits the piratical activities only to the Ijo people as against their European counterparts whose activities have been said to have also been piratical in a sense. Since there is a general description of the participation of the Ijo of the Western Delta in piracy, it thus seems impossible to alienate the Arogbo Ijo involvement in piracy during this period. To buttress this view, Lloyd asserts the Ijo pirates a menace for centuries along the coastline of the Niger Delta.⁸⁴ In critical terms, this view connotes piracy as social phenomenon undertaken by all Ijo groups occupying the Niger Delta region during this period. From this point, it is easy to conclude that the Arogbo Ijo participated in this phenomenon.

In spite of all this, the developments that followed suit was that the European colonial administrators regarded the prevention of piracy as part of their primary goal in maintaining law and order.⁸⁵ This implies that piracy was purely seen as a punishable act committed by the local people of the Niger Delta region. This depicts the lopsidedness in the European policy against piracy as it could be taken strictly to mean the prevention of the people of the Niger Delta against the protection of their economic goods. In a relative term, since the 17th and 18th centuries, fire arms had already penetrated and used by the coastal people of West Africa.⁸⁶ This did not specifically refer to the Arogbo Ijo. However, this could account for the reason for the availability of weapons and firearms in Arogbo Ijo in the 19th and 20th centuries. Before embarking on any of their trading expeditions along the trading routes to either Lagos in the eastern side or Benin and Warri on the west coast, their trading canoes were fortified with guns and cannons in preparation for any attack by pirates from other neighbouring groups as well as European maritime guards along the water ways.⁸⁷ Relatively, the protection of their economic goods such as palmoil and timber with guns and ammunition often led to crises between the Arogbo Ijo and some of these sea marauders. However, the forceful attempt to seize people's economic goods also became part of the economic behaviour of the Arogbo Ijo. Thus, they

⁸³Alagoa, E.J. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*.p.26

⁸⁴Lloyd, P.C. 1963. The Itsekiri in the 19th Century: An Outline of Social History. *Journal of African History*, Vol.2.p. 31

⁸⁵Ikime, O. 1967. The Western Ijo 1900-1950: A Preliminary Survey. *JHSN Vol. 4, No.1. 1967*.p.69

⁸⁶Robert Smith. 1970. The Canoe in West African History. *Journal of African History*, xi, 4.p.530

⁸⁷ Interview held with Mr. Bekekimi Idiarh, Aged 54, Politician, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 14th March, 2016.

emerged as a menace on the water ways extending from Lagos to Benin throughout the colonial period.

4.5 Religion and Cultural Changes

Typical of most Southern Nigerian societies, the traditional and communal religious settings was a common practice. This simply posits that in terms of religion, there was a complete absence of any conception of a homogenous religious trend. As a matter of fact, the African mythology is permissive of a heterogeneous religious structure. Traditionally, there is a tribal god, a lesser god for each village of the tribe, a household god for every family in the village and a personal god for every member of the family.⁸⁸ This showcased that, the existence of humans is largely controlled from the metaphysical understanding which is largely influenced by their religious world view. This, however, suffices to conclude that religion and societies are two inseparable entities. It is quite important to note that societal values, norms and institutions were predicated upon by the traditional religious undertakings of most African societies. In fact, the cosmology of the traditional religion among African societies also offers the ideas to explain the evolution of these societies. Therefore, religion is considered to be critical to the functionality of the society by developing its cohesion, understanding and explaining the events between people and nature.⁸⁹ In short, among many Nigerian societies, the traditional religious beliefs are an assurance of good health, children and prosperity which strongly depends on the worship of a spiritual being.⁹⁰ In spite of this, the advent of the western culture, ideas and religion has created social conflicts, which no doubt affected the traditional religion and by so doing became susceptible to noticeable changes. Indeed, the colonial phenomenon was strictly about supplanting the traditional religion of the people in order to create an enabling environment for the British economic motives. Notably, British rule is reputed to have accelerated the pace of social and cultural changes that rewarded large scale producers and foreign traders.⁹¹ For this reason, the establishment of the British colonial rule in Nigeria strongly aided by the European missionary activities in evangelising against the traditional religion of the people. In fact, Ayandele ascribed the success of the British administrators and traders in Nigeria to the

⁸⁸Alan Burns.1955. *History of Nigeria*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.p.249

⁸⁹Toyin Falola. 2001. *Culture and Customs of Nigeria*. Westport: Greenwood Press. p. 30

⁹⁰Toyin Falola. 2001. *Culture and Customs of Nigeria*. Westport: Greenwood Press. p. 30

⁹¹Toyin Falola. 2001. *Culture and Customs of Nigeria*. Westport: Greenwood Press. p. 152

missionaries.⁹² He emphatically asserts that, regarding the people of Yorubaland and the Niger Delta, the missionaries were the pathfinders of British influence.⁹³ In essence, the evolution of social and religious changes in the various societies in Nigeria was midwived by the missionaries for the supreme economic objective of the British colonialists.

Therefore, an aspect of the Arogbo Ijo historical experience which also connotes the influence of Christianity seems inevitable in the proper understanding of the evolving society in the colonial era. Remarkably, the British occupation of Arogbo Ijo land had been identified as violence free in its outlook. This suggests that the spread of Christianity to Arogbo was indeed not by forceful imposition. Perhaps, this is indicative of the reason for the overwhelming continuity in the practice of the traditional religion in spite of the advent of Christianity in the area. Apparently, the traditional practices were, however, not subjected to noticeable changes with the British influence. Fundamentally, it is worthy of note that the incursion of Christianity into Arogbo Ijo area was not by an evangelistic mission of any appointed European missionaries.⁹⁴ This supposedly means that the European missionaries did not in the early period establish the process of European occupation of the Arogbo Ijo society. Rather, the British administrators were at the fore front of the political subjugation of the area. Arogbo Ijo oral tradition postulates that the people's first encounter with Christianity was precisely in 1897 through an illiterate Arogbo Ijo indigene by name Pa. Abraham Aiku.⁹⁵ In one of his trading expeditions along the coast, Aiku came in contact with the United Native African Church at Igbotu, an Ijo-Apoi town, and thus, was converted to Christianity.⁹⁶ Abraham Aiku as an African missionary established the mission in Arogbo on January 5th 1904.⁹⁷ This marked the formal establishment of the Christian religion in Arogbo Ijo. Subsequently, Arogbo Ijo in the 20th century played host to Christian missions such as the Catholic mission in 1921, and it happened

⁹²Ayandele, E.A. 1966.*The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914, A Political and Social Analysis.* London: Longman Group LTD.p. 29

⁹³Ayandele, E.A. 1966.*The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914*,p.29

⁹⁴ Interview held with Benson Idhiarhi, Aged 58, Teacher, Tebubeleu Quarters, Arogbo, 18th February, 2017

⁹⁵ Interview held with Rev. L.E. Torhukerhijoh, Aged 82, retired Head Teacher, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, on February 19th, 2017.

⁹⁶Interview held with Rev. L.E. Torhukerhijoh, Aged 82, retired Head Teacher, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo 19th February, 2017.

⁹⁷Program of events. 2004. *Centenary (100) years Anniversary Celebration and Thanksgiving Service of Saint Peters Parish, Arogbo.* Okitipupa: Eburnola Printers.p.3

to be the first catholic church in the whole of the then Okitipupa Division.⁹⁸ Significantly, these two Christian groups were the only already established ones in the Arogbo Ijo area before 1960.⁹⁹

This historical narrative above clearly established that the British political subjugation of Arogbo Ijo was with the exclusion of European missionaries as forerunners of the British colonial administration. In other words, The British conquest of Arogbo Ijo pre-dates the advent of Christianity in the area. The reason for this is not historically ascertained. Perhaps, it could be likened to the geographical proximity of Arogbo Ijo to some parts of Yorubaland. The reason being that the missionary propaganda was one of the potent factors in the expansion of British influence in some neighbouring Yoruba communities. Hence, the possibility of a subtle reception of the British colonialists in Arogbo Ijo is not in doubt. Particularly, the lack of European missionaries in the early phase of the British colonisation of Arogbo Ijo seems to have been responsible for the much retention of their traditional structure alongside with the British administration. Nevertheless, the Arogbo Ijo indigene Christian missionaries such as Abraham Aiku, Ifiti Okolobawei and their ardent converts embarked on the condemnation of certain aspects of the people's traditional values and beliefs.¹⁰⁰ This included the abolition of the killing of twins and the burying of wealthy individuals with their slaves.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, these missionaries embarked on massive campaign against the worship of idols, and this led to the abolition of the worship of idols such as Kpokotin, Igodo, Biniwolo, Biapele, and Sighibosei. The abolition of the worship of these idols also drastically reduced masquerades' ceremonies as some of them were associated with such ceremonies.¹⁰² In addition to this, new Arogbo Ijo Christian converts such as Jacob Oriamaja, Daniel Ashidi, Samuel Tonibor and Abraham Amama were energetically committed to the spread of Christianity in Arogbo Ijo. In respect to

⁹⁸A welcome address paper presented by Saint Patrick Catholic Church Arogbo to His Lordship, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Folorunsho Alonge, and January 3rd 1886.

⁹⁹ Interview held with Rev. L.E. Torhukerhijoh, Aged 82, retired Head Teacher, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, 19th February, 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Interview held with Senior Apostle James Ebiowei, Aged 69, Religious leader, Ileri-Kiri, Arogbo, 20th February, 2017.

¹⁰¹ Interview held with Mr. Simeon Warikobowei Aged 64, Traditionalist, Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo, 20th February, 2017.

¹⁰² Interview held with Mr. Kebieri Ilem, Aged 71, retired teacher. Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 20th February, 2017.

their dynamic assurance to spread the religion, they exchanged their surnames for Christian names, and were indeed the hors de'oeuvre for the spread of Christianity.¹⁰³

At this juncture, it is pertinent to bring to the fore that the spread of Christianity in the Arogbo Ijo area encountered some forms of resistance from the people. As a matter of fact, the people perceived these indigenous missionaries as infidels, and as such, they were intolerant to their newly found Christian faith. Apparently, between the year 1904 and 1919, the Christians remained a minority group in the society. As such, their exorbitant condemnation of the worship of idols was often repelled by protests from the people who incessantly showed discontent to Christianity. In fact, these ceaseless protests prevented the first white missionary Reverend J. N. D. Newton, who was supposedly on evangelism into the Arogbo town.¹⁰⁴ However, Newton was able to meet with the indigenous missionaries at Agadagba-Obon, a satellite Arogbo Ijo hamlet.¹⁰⁵ The implication is that the Arogbo Ijo in the larger part of the 20th century were yet to embrace Christianity. This is because the cultural and traditional settings of the people depended absolutely on their traditional religion with the monarchical institution central to their religious view. In other words, the inability of the missionaries to convert respective Arogbo Ijo monarchs into Christianity portrays the continuous dependence on the divinity of *Egbesu* (Ijo national deity) for the societal existence. In a practical sense, the society upholds the view that for any indigene to be effective, his ideology as well as character must be ultimately shaped by the traditional beliefs of the society. This belief, however, was a popular aspect of the peoples' culture even in the advent of the Christian religion. In essence, the traditional religion provides the basis for Arogbo Ijo national loyalty as well as a very important part of the daily affairs of the people. Like most Nigerian societies, the traditional understanding of the worship of a supreme being occurred simultaneously with the establishment of the Christian God among the Arogbo Ijo.¹⁰⁶ In fact, religion is viewed as the ligament holding together the various joints of the social, cultural and political structure of the people.¹⁰⁷ This could be considered as the

¹⁰³Interview held with Reverend Tibilatei Waripere, Aged 62, Religious leader, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 21st February, 2017.

¹⁰⁴Program of events. 2004. *Centenary (100) years Anniversary Celebration and Thanksgiving Service of Saint Peters Parish, Arogbo*. Okitipupa: Ebunola Printers.p.3

¹⁰⁵Program of events. 2004. *Centenary(100)years Anniversary Celebration and Thanksgiving Service of Saint Peters Parish*,p.3

¹⁰⁶ Interview held with Chief N.E. Ege, Aged 72, retired sailor, Upe community, Ukparamo, Arogbo, 7th April, 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Interview held with Chief N.E. Ege, Aged 72, retired sailor, Upe community, Ukparamo, Arogbo, 7th April, 2016.

underpinning factor for the continuous survival of the traditional and cultural heritage of the people, in spite of the introduction of Christianity up to the middle of the 20th century.

Apparently, scholars are of the view that, broad cultural heritage of a society as it is influenced by Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Confucian, or Communist leaves an imprint on values that endure despite modernisation.¹⁰⁸ The relevance of this view is to clearly understand that any form of external influence experienced by any human society is not to be considered as an outright termination of the pre-existing socio-cultural values. This underscores the fact that the fundamental aspect of the indigenous religion as well as culture is usually in continuum in a particular society. This, however, connotes that among the Arogbo Ijo, religion was a phenomenon, and not just the worshipping of deities but also a way of sustaining the people's culture. To this people, the combination of the worship of many spiritual beings and veneration of ancestors was symbolic of their kingship and religious institution throughout the colonial epoch. This is indicative of the fact that Arogbo Ijo's religious world view strictly differs from the general perspective of the European Christian missionary's evangelism cutting across African societies with its clear advantage of the Europeans. The people's tradition testifies that there was no complete departure from the pre-colonial religious system. Having established the presence of Christianity in Arogbo Ijo in 1897,¹⁰⁹ the people no doubt experienced some aspect of disruption in their culture. On the other hand, cultural continuity was equally pervasive, and thus, creating retention of the indigenous cultural value system of the people. Even with the spread of Christianity, much of the communal affairs were largely determined by the traditional religion. For instance, in the western law and justice system, punishment of offenders was carried out as demanded by their traditional religious style.¹¹⁰ As a matter of fact, Arogbo Ijo during the colonial period maintained a high degree of traditional religious system which in a way allowed for a little identification of the western religious ideas among the people. By and large, the Arogbo Ijo traditional religion was embedded in communal social conformity which supports individual's deference to traditional authority, and a high level of regard for the sanctity of cultural heritage of the people. A notable aspect of their

¹⁰⁸Ronald Inglehart and Wayne, E. Baker. 2001. Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 65, No. 1.p.108

¹⁰⁹ Interview held with Mr. Ebenezer, k. Egene, Aged 69, retired civil servant, Opuerede Quarters, Opuba, 6th March, 2016.

¹¹⁰ Interview held with Mr. Ebenezer, k. Egene, Aged 69, retired civil servant, Opuerede Quarters, Opuba, 6th March, 2016.

traditional approach to existence could be seen in the way and manner the people practiced polygamous marriage. In fact, all through the period under study, the practice of polygamous marriage thrived, thus, showcasing the simplistic understanding of Christianity among the people.

In spite of the traditional religious settings, and the sanctity accorded the authority of the king, the British colonial rule largely succeeded in relating to the people through the *Agadagba* (kingly priest) as the colonial agent. That is, the king superintended over the society as the lackey's of the colonial government. However, the religious sanctity of the king's authority was not affected. That is, the establishment of the British administration did not in any way affect the traditional practices of the people. Unlike the European approach in Benin kingdom as well as to Islam and some *emirs* in northern Nigeria, little or no attention was recorded to have been offered to the traditional beliefs or religion of the Arogo Ijo. This is indicative of the fact that there was no perceived resistance to the British presence in their society. In as much as the society is devoid of any form of danger to the Europeans, the readiness to clampdown on religious institution was not an option to the British. From all indications, traditional religion remained popular among the people. Thus, customary laws were acceptable legal codes of conducting the society. This was made possible with the fact that the society was indeed inseparable from the traditional religion. In fact, any attempt to absolutely substitute the traditional religion with British culture and religion seems to mean an end to the existence of the Arogo Ijo society.

4.6 Territorial Crisis: Background to Arogo Ijo-Ilaje Boundary Conflicts

The European presence in Africa was remarkable for arbitrary allocation of African territories to European nations who deliberately undermined the primordial territorial structure of the African societies. Obviously, the tool for the re-adjustment of the African boundaries lies in the decision of scrambling and the partitioning of African societies by the European colonialists in the late 19th century. Consequent upon the decision of the European was the series of territorial crises that became eminent across African societies. As rightly posited by Tamuno, "the Berlin West African Conference of 1884 and 1885 ended by considering the traditional boundary arrangement as negative to the indigenous African people".¹¹¹ This view aptly

¹¹¹Tamuno, T.N. 1972. *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase, 1898-1914*. London: Longman Group Limited. p.225

upholds that, the decision to colonise African societies was associated with the redrawing of African boundaries to satisfy the proposed European political and economic administration over the entire continent. This colonial action clearly undermined the cultural, linguistic and ethnic identity differences that were primordial to the people. Again, it also depicts that, the West African societies became entangled in territorial crises because of the European unfavourable approach to their boundary demarcation. Agreeably, most Nigerian societies were reduced to the British political boundaries at the expense of their traditional boundaries. As such, the Arogbo Ijo society was affected by this British arbitrary boundary allocation process.

By and large, the British colonial boundary creation seemingly affected the Arogbo Ijo within their geographical space. Characteristically, there was no form of consultation with the Arogbo Ijo by the British colonisers regarding grouping them with the Southern Protectorate. This was in line with the principle of administrative convenience which was one of the most pivotal approaches to the colonisation process. This, no doubt, jettisoned the pre-history economic order which described the way groups sought to modify their physical environment to satisfy their basic needs for food and shelter.¹¹² Obviously, the colonial boundary re-adjustment was strictly for the benefit of the European nations with a larger effect on the relationship of Africans with the traditional society to satisfying the economic desires of the Europeans in Africa.

During the British colonial rule, the Arogbo Ijo, like many other ethnic groups in Nigeria, were affected by the British colonial boundary creations with its attendant socio-economic and political effects. Fundamentally, in the British colonial economic plan in the Niger Delta region, the geographical area occupied by their colonies was also a source of concern to them. This no doubt was to ascertain the extent to which their economic exploitations would be enforced. Hence, with the Arogbo Ijo, it was extremely difficult to ascertain the extent of their boundary belt because of the presence of indeterminable swampy mangrove forest which spread to their neighbouring Ikale of the Benin confederation, Ijo Apoi, and the Ilaje Yoruba group.¹¹³ It is important to state clearly that the presence of a massive coastal forest was not just limited to the Arogbo Ijo alone, but also applied to the neighbouring groups aforementioned. Notably, the

¹¹²Derefaka, A.A. and Anozie, F.N. 2002. Economic and Cultural Pre-history of the Niger Delta. *African Arts*, Vol.35, No.1.p. 56

¹¹³ Interview held with Mr. Okibegha Woniebi, Aged 73, retired teacher, New Jerusalem, Arogbo, 29th September, 2017.

traditional form of economic reliance on the environment for livelihood by the people seems not to have generated crises until the emergence of the Europeans in the area.¹¹⁴ This is because there were no historical records pointing to land or boundary disputes between the two in the pre-colonial period. In fact, it is a common observation that the colonial administration in Africa had a hand in the creation of ethno-linguistic units.¹¹⁵ This is due to a deliberate lack of a clear identification of the socio-cultural and territorial differences among the groups within certain geographical spread. The overbearing effect of this was strictly to prepare the Africans and their environment for colonial administration in the 20th century.

Before 1900, the territory was arbitrarily partitioned for the benefit of the two sets of British controlling agencies, that is, the Royal Niger Company and the administration of the Oil Rivers Protectorate by the foreign office.¹¹⁶ The result was that for about fifteen years, the traditional, commercial and ritual links which bound together widely scattered groups was sundered.¹¹⁷ Obviously, issues relating to boundary disputes between the Arogbo Ijo and their Ilaje neighbours are indeed rooted in the colonial economic and political motives which deliberately affected the boundaries of these societies for their own gains in the era of colonisation. Evidently, the pre-colonial setting of the people was such that territorial or boundary conflicts seem not to be part of the people. As a matter of fact, there seems to be a mutual understanding of the socio-cultural divergence between both groups which tends to determine the respective territories occupied by each of them in the region. Apparently, in 1900, Captain F.P. Pinket, the District Commissioner, Epe, reported as follows on a visit paid to Ilaje country:

Amapetu told me the Etekon and Ijo people are not under him, they have been on the beach side prior to the people from migrating there when the Mahin left their capital and established new town on the sea shore they continued to be under their original king. This accounts, to the very best of my knowledge, of some places being under the Amapetu and others not.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Interview held with Chief Erenatei Jowei, Aged 75, Traditionalist, Igangboh Town, Arogbo, 25th February, 2017.

¹¹⁵ Bamgbose, A. 1982. Social structures and The Evolution of Language Boundaries in Nigeria. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 7, No. 3. p.19

¹¹⁶ Anene, J.C. 1966. *Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906*. London: Cambridge University Press. p.4

¹¹⁷ Anene, J.C. 1966. *Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906*. p.4

¹¹⁸ N.A.I. Ilaje/ R.M.P.2044/1900

The above statement by the then *Amapetu* of Mahin aptly affirms the political and territorial independence between the Ilaje Mahin and the Arogbo Ijo since the pre-colonial period. Furthermore, it gives an insight that the Arogbo Ijo had migrated to the present location before Mahin people. Nevertheless, issues of boundary disputes were never part of the history of both people at this time. Accordingly, the statement above showcased the lack of historical evidence depicting boundary conflicts between the Arogbo Ijo and any of their neighbouring Ilaje groups before the advent of the British in these areas. Perhaps, there existed mutual co-existence between the Arogbo Ijo and the Ilaje in the pre-British era. Nevertheless, the early twentieth century was indeed remarkable for the arbitrary British influence upon the Arogbo Ijo cultural and physical boundaries. In short, the British provided the ground for the boundary conflicts that subsequently ensued between the Arogbo Ijo and Ilaje in the 20th century. It is important to note that as part of the British policy of colonialism, the instrument of administrative convenience associated with the discovery of economic resources in some of these regions no doubt practically created a contest for territorial ownership by both parties.

Evidently, the British were in all measures responsible for the historical discontinuity of the boundary structure of the Arogbo Ijo. Apparently, at the establishment of the Ilaje Mahin Native Authority in 1928, a larger part of the Arogbo Ijo territory was made to differ to the colonial administration of the *Amapetu* of Mahin.¹¹⁹ The implication is that, the Europeans purely disregarded the historical divergences earlier noticed to have existed between the people. Hence, their main concern was for the possible means of establishing colonial government. This laid the foundation for the unprecedented territorial claims by the Ilaje people over the Arogbo Ijo area. Furthermore, the colonial effect on the territorial claims is also noticed in the British approval of the establishment of the Ugbo Native courts in May 1936.¹²⁰ Consequent upon this, notable controversy was entrenched on ownership of some of the prominent towns that were overseen by the Ugbo Native court Authority. Precisely, Akpata- Uba became central in the agitations of ownership by both parties, that is, the Arogbo Ijo and the Ugbo Ilaje ethnic extraction. However, available colonial records specifically ascribed Akpata Ube to be part of the Arogbo Ijo territory.¹²¹

¹¹⁹N.A.I. Ond.Prof.1/1 OKD. File No.120B, Annual Report of 1943

¹²⁰N.A.I.An Intelligence Report of Ilaje, 14th May, 1936/14-March 1937 Districts of OKD

¹²¹N.A.I.An Intelligence Report of Ilaje, 14th May, 1936/14-March 1937 Districts of OKD

From all indications, the purpose of administrative convenience of the British undermined the Arogbo Ijo as an independent group different from the people of Ilaje, and as such the effects of this colonial government decisions became notable on the territorial claims proposed by the Ilaje over the Arogbo Ijo territories. In short, the colonial administrators deliberately failed to accord cultural and traditional differences of these groups, and as such, this was the beginning of a new historical development as encountered by the Arogbo Ijo from the early 20th century. Furthermore, the Piawei Arogbo Ijo sub-clan (Dibighigbini, Awodikuro and Orieran) was carved under the Ilaje Mahin Native courts for adjudications.¹²² This indeed further strengthened the unsubstantiated claims by the Ilaje over the Arogbo Ijo territories. This is simply a representation of the purported plan by the British colonial administration for their own convenience. Apparently, this arrangement undermined the historical differences of the Arogbo Ijo and Ilaje Mahin as noted earlier with the Ugbo Ilaje group. From the foregoing, it could be observed that, the Arogbo Ijo territorial boundary in terms of towns and villages no doubt felt the effect of the colonial decision to merge them with their neighbouring Ilaje people. The implication is that, the colonial judicial boundary designed by the colonial agents created the conditions for certain territorial claims made by the Ilaje over some of the Arogbo Ijo traditional towns. As a matter of fact, these colonial developments became inherent in the way and manner the extent to which the areas covered by the colonial native court system was later referred to as the territorial spread of the Ilaje. In other words, the colonial judicial boundaries which obviously undermined certain differences between the people were often erroneously considered as an extension of the Ilaje boundaries. At this point, disputes over boundaries became an unavoidable phenomenon between the two groups since the inception of the British rule.

Incidentally, boundary crises between the Arogbo Ijo and the Ilaje groups became pronounced with the coincidence of the European search for crude oil in the area. Specifically, on the 2nd November, 1939, the Shell D'arcy exploration Company began investigation on the possible availability of oil resources in the entire Okitipupa Division of the Southern Province.¹²³ In the usual character of the colonial agencies, the traditional boundaries was also not taking into cognisance by this Oil firm, therefore, boundary disputes became eminent between the two

¹²²N.A.I. Ondo Division File Nos. 400/1912.401/1921. See also An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of Okitipupa Division. 14TH May 1936/14th March 1937

¹²³N.A.I. Oil Exploration File-Ijaw (w) 4.I.182.

groups. It is considered that the mapping of the region for oil explorations further consolidated the supposedly erroneous Native Authority boundary structure established by the colonial government. The far reaching effect was that the colonial administrative map for oil search in the region remained lopsided in spite of the establishment of an independent Arogbo Ijo Native Authority by 1938.¹²⁴ This should be understood as not a coincidence on the part of the Oil firm. Rather, it was a continuation of the British styled colonial boundaries in the region. Hitherto, the template for the earmarking of boundary for the search of oil further excluded the nature of the traditional boundaries of the people. Indeed, it advanced the lack of regard for the pre-colonial boundary structure. In short, the Oil firm had much effect on the superfluous claim of boundaries by these Ilaje groups as against the Arogbo Ijo territories. In historical sense, the discovery of crude oil in the coastal area no doubt escalated the boundary disputes between the Arogbo Ijo and the Ilaje groups. However, the on-going oil exploration in the region coincided with the Second World War, 1939 to 1945; therefore, the oil firms had to stop exploration during this period. Immediately after the war, oil exploration campaign rigorously commenced in the Arogbo Ijo and Ilaje region of the Okitipupa Division in 1946 up to 1953.¹²⁵ Prior, to the end of the war, both parties had begun to engage in territorial claims. Precisely in 1943, with the presence of skeletal seismic investigations, the duo struggled for ownership of certain locations.¹²⁶ By the end of the war in 1945, the Oil firm was reputed for the oil exploration exercise which had little or no regard for the traditional boundary settings in the region. In view of this, the *Agadagba* of Arogbo Ijo called for the need to put in place a proper measure to end the continuous encroachment on the locations that are supposedly owned by his people. In a formal establishment of his grievance, the *Agadagba* wrote a letter to the District Officer of the Okitipupa Division indicating the way and manner the European Oil firm adopted the colonially created boundary in earmarking of its oil explorations and its overwhelming effects on the satellites Arogbo Ijo towns and villages, which were immediate neighbours to the Ilaje.¹²⁷ This letter expressly affirmed the maneuvering of the pre-colonial boundary structure of the Arogbo Ijo by a way of identifying some of the historic towns of the Arogbo Ijo as part of the Ilaje

¹²⁴N.A.I. Okiti Div. 46/4-1ST October 1953- A letter from the Agadagba to the District Officer OKD on His grievances on the claim of Arogbo Ijo territories by Ilaje

¹²⁵N.A.I. Ondo Province 1/1 OKD File No. 120B, 1953 Annual Report

¹²⁶N.A.I.Ondo.Prof.1/1 OKD File No 120B Annual Report of 1943

¹²⁷N.A.I. Okiti Div. 46/4-1ST October 1953- A letter from the Agadagba to the District Officer OKD on His grievances on the claim of Arogbo Ijo territories by Ilaje

kingdom. In fact, this could be seen as an administrative problem created by the colonial government for the Arogbo Ijo, and thus, this is reputed as the historical background to the boundary crises experienced by both parties beyond the colonial era. As a matter of fact, this European erroneous boundary creation continuously caused the reduction in size of the Arogbo Ijo boundary, particularly the administrative map meant for the purpose of governance.

Notably, the *Agadagba's* petition to the District Officer of the Okitipupa Division in 1946 did not receive a response until 1953 for a consideration of the matter.¹²⁸ The reasons for the delay in the exchange of correspondence from the District Officer are not quite clear. Nevertheless, the District Officer was unable to bring to an end these issues of boundary disputes between the parties involved. From all indications, the *Agadagba's* letter to the colonial government in 1946 was unattended to for about nine years, and thus the British Oil firms did not restrain from adopting the British colonial map arbitrarily designed for their economic gains. What could be inferred from this is that, rather than a quick reply to the letter in order to look into the proper boundary structure, the delay in the intervention by the British continuously created a division between the Arogbo Ijo and Ilaje sequel to the unbridled oil exploration exercise by the European Oil firm. This no doubt further affirmed the impression that the affected Arogbo Ijo areas belonged to the Ilaje people. Be that as it may, the District Officer acknowledged in his letter that some towns and villages such as Akpata, Opuba, Upe, Igbene, Doloseimo, and koropolo, Dabatobo, Ogidigba and Arogbo were referred to as part of Ilaje Kingdom by the Oil firms for exigency.¹²⁹ Indeed, the overbearing claim of ownership of the aforementioned territories by the Ilaje absolutely depended on the seismic mapping of the area that was carried out by the colonial oil firm. Therefore, it is symbolic of the fact that, the territorial claims were occasioned by the influence of the discovery of oil and not within the purview of traditional ownership of the purported territories as claimed by the Ilaje. In short, it is needless to assume that these Arogbo Ijo communities are traditionally linked to the Ilaje. In fact, the Colonial District Officer, in his letter to the President, Okitipupa Federal Native Authority, dated 9th of October 1953, affirmed that the aforementioned Ijo towns were represented on the Arogbo Ijo Council, and could scarcely be considered to be within the

¹²⁸N.A.I. Okiti Div. 46/4-1ST October 1953- A letter from the Agadagba to the District Officer OKD on His grievances on the claim of Arogbo Ijo territories by Ilaje

¹²⁹N.A.I. Okiti Div. 46/4-1ST October 1953- A letter from the Agadagba to the District Officer OKD on His grievances on the claim of Arogbo Ijo territories by Ilaje

jurisdiction of either Ilaje Courts or Native Authority.¹³⁰ This showcased that the Arogbo Ijo Native Authority was the first colonial establishment that directly catered for the people, particularly in line with commonality of their histories of origin, traditions and culture as well as linguistic demarcations. This, therefore, depicts that such territorial claims on the part of the Ilaje groups was a maneuvering of the colonial arbitrary boundary structure. As such, it is not a true representation of the ownership of the areas concerned, taking into cognisance the historical antecedents of the territorial occupation of the region. In clear terms, these communities were acknowledged by the colonial agents as traditionally Arogbo Ijo towns and villages.

From the foregoing, it is easy to discern that the British colonial boundary creation undermined the histories and cultural settings of the people. Naturally, the boundary of the Ilaje Mahin and Ugbo, and that of the Arogbo Ijo under their respective kingship institutions was not clearly defined as it is disputed by all parties. The underlying factor for the lack of clarity in the boundary between these groups is rooted in their pre-colonial setting which had little or no reason to compete for economic resources. In fact, the huge presence of the indeterminable swampy mangrove forest that separated the diverse communities under each of the principal settlements affirms the abundant environmental resources that sustained the economic livelihood of the people in their traditional forms. Hence, the colonial boundaries created were not to determine the extent of the geographical spread of each group. Rather, it was cohesion of human settlements under the control of a superior group created by the colonial policy. In order words, the linking of the Western Delta and the Arogbo Ijo in particular to the global capitalist market was in actual sense responsible for the adjustment of the traditional boundaries, which hitherto, resulted into crises between the Arogbo Ijo and their Ilaje neighbours.

Surprisingly, the District Officer's response to the *Agadagba's* letter in 1953, strictly stating that the communities in dispute was not part of the jurisdiction of either Ilaje courts or native authority that was challenged by the *Olugbo* of Ugbo Ilaje. As noted, the *Olugbo* of Ugbo was dissatisfied with the view of the District Officer on the boundary problems. This dissatisfaction became noticeable with the allegation of the failure of the District Officer to honour the petition on land matter addressed to him in 1953.¹³¹ To them, this was considered as

¹³⁰N.A.I. Documents Relating to Ijo Arogbo District Ondo Prof4/4a.

¹³¹N.A.I.Ondo Prof.1/1 OKD. File No.120B: Annual Report of 1953

injustice, and they strongly proposed to transfer the matter to the Supreme Court.¹³² On the other hand, the District Officer noted that, the summon of the *Agadagba* of Arogbo by the Mahin and Ugbo kings respectively, to present himself for hearing of the boundary crises at the Ilaje District Court would not in any way provide the expected justice.¹³³ This further aggravated serious dissatisfaction among the Ilaje people, and thus alleged the District Officer of conniving with the defendant (*Agadagba*).¹³⁴ Hence, they expressed so much distrust for the District Officer, and as such called for a speedy transfer of the matter to the Supreme Court for justice. By March 1955, a service of hearing notice of the matter at the Supreme Court was issued to the appellant and the defendant. Therefore, the case was finally transferred to the Supreme Court for hearing and determination (the Supreme Court was in Benin).¹³⁵ Nevertheless, the Supreme Court application was granted on the condition of a provision of a land survey over the disputed area by both parties. This is with a view to having substantive evidence on the actual owner of these disputed areas. Historical records available suggests that, the *Agadagba* of Arogbo hired the service of a licensed surveyor at Ilesha, J.O. Gilbert to draw a map of the Arogbo Ijo traditional territory which was meant to serve as tenable evidence before the Supreme Court in Benin. Precisely on the 10th of November, 1955, Arogbo Ijo map was returned with a letter signed by J.B. Falayi for the District Officer, Okitipupa Division.¹³⁶ By and large, the boundary disputes between the Arogbo Ijo and the Ilaje people continued, and judgement was not pronounced at the Supreme Court up to the end of colonial rule.

¹³²N.A.I.Ondo Prof.1/1 OKD. File No.120B: Annual Report of 1953

¹³³N.A.I.Ondo Prof.1/1 OKD. File No.120B: Annual Report of 1953

¹³⁴N.A.I.Ondo Prof.1/1 OKD. File No.120B: Annual Report of 1955

¹³⁵ N.A.I. Ondo Prov. 1/1 OKD File 120B: Annual Report OKD., 1955

¹³⁶ N.A.I. Ondo Prov. 1/1 OKD File 120B: Annual Report OKD., 1955

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIO- POLITICAL ADAPTATION AND THE IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE, 1945-1960

5.1 Introduction

Evidently, there is no doubt that the British rule in Nigeria, and Arogbo Ijo established the western form of political structure with its attendant effects of a socio-political revolution. Specifically, with much emphasis on the judicial process of the Arogbo which was central to their socio-cultural and political formations. In short, their justice system was strictly an aspect of their traditional religious practices. Hence, the Arogbo Ijo world view was largely influenced by this traditional setting even during the British rule. Apparently, the British rule in Arogbo is observed in historical perspective as not intended towards a complete alienation of this orthodox judicial process. Rather, it was a clear manifestation of an amalgam of the native and western approaches to adjudication matters. Nevertheless, the western styled justice system held sway and as such represented the full establishment of the colonial rule on the people. In fact, this laid the foundation for subsequent colonial socio-political undertakings on the Arogbo Ijo society by the British.

Apparently, the British rule during the period focused in this chapter was a period of diverse socio-political changes in Arogbo Ijo society. A remarkable aspect of the influence of the British rule was the categorisation of the Arogbo Ijo into the Western region by the colonial government. This, however, is enrooted in the past colonial political arrangement which perpetually put the Arogbo Ijo away from their kith and kin in terms of political space. This chapter concludes that the British rule was pivotal to the numerous socio-political developments experienced by the Arogbo Ijo during the period of this study.

5.2 Customary and the Colonial Justice System: A Historical Analysis

Traditionally, the practice of justice administration was customary to the Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta. This showed the level of their social organisation since the pre-colonial period. At the centre of the Arogbo Ijo judicial system was their traditional religion, which mainly supports the procedure towards affirming justice in any matter.¹ Indeed, the views and powers of respective political authorities on who lay the responsibility of justice administration are strongly being guided by the religious beliefs of their entire society.² In other words, arbitrations is

¹Interview held with Hon. Justice C.E.T. Ajama, Aged 66, retired civil servant, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 8th March, 2016.

² Interview held with Mr. Erepamo Labo, Aged 69, Timber Merchant, Epu Idimu, Arogbo, 30th September, 2017.

undertaken in consonant with the wishes of the traditional gods in the society, particularly, the *Egbesu* deity which had a supreme position in judicial affairs of the people. This implies that, at every phase of the justice system, the final authority rested on the judgement of their ancestors whom they believed were divinely in one accord with the *Egbesu* deity.

Like most Ijo groups, the Arogbo Ijo operated the '*Amagula*' or '*Ugulawari*' judicial practices in the dispensation of justice. The *Amagula* was referred to as the village assembly with the highest political authority bestowed with powers of traditional justice administration.³ This, however, is not to view the entire Arogbo Ijo society as a mono-village setting. Rather, the village assembly should be understood as an institution of government that oversees the affairs of diverse villages and towns within the Arogbo Ijo clan of the Western Delta. Generally, the *Amagula* was known for diverse functions in terms of ensuring the well being of the entire people. However, paramount to the *Amagula* were judicial functions which were indeed a way of assuring the ethics and cultural values of the society. That is, the dispensation of justice was purely based on the unwritten traditions and cultural values with which they govern their society. By so doing, the village council has in finality the right to punish any offender or acquit any individual proven innocent of an allegation brought before the village council. As earlier mentioned, the spatial settlement pattern of the Arogbo Ijo allowed a decentralised customary justice system. That is, each of the villages and towns had an *Amagula* institutional structure which acted in conformity to the generally acceptable cultural values and ethics in the process of dispensing justice. This suffices to say that, the aged were seen as repository of knowledge in terms of the culture and tradition of their society. Hence, the aged across all the Arogbo Ijo settlements were saddled with moral obligations to uphold the sanctity of the customary justice system which was purely based on the traditional religious understanding of the people. As earlier noted, central to the customary justice of the Arogbo Ijo was the national god (*Egbesu*) which was connected with the founding ancestor.⁴ The *Egbesu* was considered as pivotal in the justice system of respective village councils within the Arogbo Ijo of the Western Delta. Hence, there was a collective dependency on the religious beliefs cum *Egbesu* deity by all and sundry in the administration of justice.

³ Alagoa, E.J. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*, p.16

⁴ Alagoa, E.J. 1972. *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*, p.19.

From the foregoing, it is very clear that the approach to judgment by the *Amaokosuowei* (the oldest man in the village), and other senior members of the *Amagula* absolutely depended to a very large extent on their very rich knowledge of the traditional religion, which is embedded in the practice of the societal cultural values as laid down by their unflinching respect for the *Egbesu* deity. Notably, the customary laws were placed upon the deity, and as such, the manipulation of justice was a very rare happening among the people. In fact, there existed standing punishment for particular offences as determined by the deity. For instance, one of the capital offences was murder which was vehemently considered as an offence against *Egbesu* deity. Accordingly, the customary law strongly upholds the punishment for a murder case by subjecting the offender to an open execution as suggested by their religious beliefs.⁵ The process of dispensing justice on murder cases is thus; if the accused was found guilty, he would be bound by the hand and feet and executed the same day.⁶ Before execution of the murderer, the wish of the family perhaps to offer the offender food was granted, and also the offender was allowed to make a choice to will his wives and personal estate to his respective family members. Hence, gunshot was fired at him by a chosen member from his family and the corpse is discarded to *Seibou* (evil forest).⁷ Furthermore, the judgment of the village council included the payment of compensation by giving out a girl child and some bottles of gin to the family of the deceased.⁸ On the other hand, civil cases such as arson, defamation of character, perjury, land disputes and adultery were also handled in accordance to the native laws and customs. However, it is imperative to note that up to the middle of the 20th century, twin's murder was permissible by native laws and customs. By and large, it is worthy to note that the traditional judicial process of the Arogbo Ijo depended largely on the practice of some forms of ordeal and swearing of oath in order to affirm justice. This process was, however, reputed even in the advent of the European western styled civil justice system in the 20th century.

From all indications, the mechanism of justice system in Arogbo Ijo in the colonial period was that of a dual judicial frame work. Indeed, there was a continuous practice of the customary justice approach, as well as the British judicial approach which no doubt was an essential tool for the British colonial administration in general. Therefore, there was an amalgam

⁵ N.A.I. Documents Relating to Ijo Arogbo District Ondo Prof 4/4a

⁶ Interview held with Chief Karina Tonibor, Aged 61, Traditionalist, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 22nd April, 2017.

⁷ Interview held with Mr. Kimideinbo Nwosun, Aged 82, retired Hunter, New Jerusalem, Arogbo, 22nd April, 2017.

⁸ Interview held with Mr. Kimideinbo Nwosun, Aged 82, retired Hunter, New Jerusalem, Arogbo, 22nd April, 2017.

of the Arogbó Ijò customary and British laws in the legal frame work of the people. Remarkably, the British colonial justice system did not result to the alienation of the orthodox means of justice system. In actual sense, it played a complementary role in the justice system of the people, and was indeed symbolic to the presence of the colonial rule in Arogbó Ijò area. The reason for the sustenance of the customary dimension to the pursuit of justice is not farfetched. In clear terms, the survival of the people's tradition and culture depended largely on their traditional religion which in turn absolutely upheld the good maintenance of the justice system.⁹ As a matter of fact, the Arogbó Ijò customary justice system did not in any form suffered setback at the establishment of colonial rule in the area. The society was such that the customary laws and the colonial styled laws operated side by side in the better part of the 20th century.¹⁰ As emphasised by Tamuno, before 1908, the apparatus of Law Courts in Southern Nigeria was a blend of Western European and African forms and standard of justice.¹¹ Furthermore, Tamuno concluded that the mixing process distorted the customary law and seriously threatened its validity in parts of southern Nigeria.¹² This could be taken to mean that the customary laws of some societies in Southern Nigeria were negatively affected by the western styled judicial process. However, Arogbó Ijò society witnessed a continuous practice of their customary laws in the governance of the societal affairs, in spite of the establishment of the British legal system.

Notably, the advent of the British Native Court system in Arogbó Ijò land took a gradual dimension. This was in view of the fact that the divisional, district and native court did not necessarily follow the ethnic line.¹³ Prior to the creation of Ondo Province in 1915, the Arogbó Ijò travelled as far as Epe for judicial adjudications.¹⁴ Furthermore, at the creation of Ondo Province in 1915, and Okitipupa Division in 1923,¹⁵ the Arogbó Ijò further participated in British styled judicial system outside their domain. The very first Native Court established close to the Arogbó Ijò was the one established in Ugbo Ilaje district in 1936.¹⁶ The Arogbó Ijò were, therefore, enlisted under the Ugbo Native Courts for adjudications whenever necessary. This implies that, the British failure to establish the Arogbó Ijò Native Courts in the earliest period of

⁹ Interview held with Ebtimi Ofoyeju, Aged 58, civil servant, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbó, 23rd April, 2017.

¹⁰ Interview held with Ebtimi Ofoyeju, Aged 58, civil servant, Erubiri Quarters, Arogbó, 23rd April, 2017.

¹¹ Tamuno, T.N. 1972. *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase, 1898-1914*. p.148

¹² Tamuno, T.N. 1972. *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase, 1898-1914*. p.148

¹³ Tamuno, T.N. 1972. *The Evolution of the Nigerian State: The Southern Phase, 1898-1914*.

¹⁴ Ikuloh, R.A. 1964. *The Light*. Published by the Arogbó Ijò Teachers Union. See also N.A.I. Ondo Prof 1/1 1024

¹⁵ N.A.I. An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of OKD., by C.I. Gavin-District Officer

¹⁶ N.A.I. An Intelligence Report of Ilaje District of OKD., by C.I. Gavin-District Officer

colonial rule was also a key factor that was responsible for the much dependence on the customary laws up to the end of colonial rule. With the establishment of the Arogbo Ijo Native Authority in 1938,¹⁷ the British colonial laws and style of judicial administration became inevitably part of their justice system. Apparently, the configuration of the court personnel such as the *Agadagba* as the president and other chiefs as members allowed for the handling of certain matters in accordance to the colonial justice pattern. Obviously, the appointment of these chiefs as colonial agents in the court conditioned them to the British approach of seeking justice. Matters such as stealing, adultery and assaults were handled in the court and also transferred to High Court at Okitipupa whenever justice was not attained at the Native Court of Arogbo Ijo. This notwithstanding, the customary laws were also very much prevalent in the Arogbo Ijo society, particularly for the fact that its *modus operandi* was strongly linked to the traditional and cultural settings of the people. In other words, the pro-native policy regarding the justice system was not out rightly excluded from the Arogbo Ijo society.

A remarkable impact of the British political system on Arogbo Ijo is highly established in their traditional judicial institution. Notably, the traditional judicial institution represented the prominence accorded to the Arogbo Ijo traditions and cultural values of the people. The traditional legal institution of the people strongly indicated the divinity and sacredness of their kingship institution. In absolute terms, the judicial framework of the society operated in connection with the celestial powers controlled by the divinity of the *Egbesu* deity.¹⁸ Emphatically, customary to the people during this period, juridical matters were largely determined in the spiritual space by communing with their ancestors, whom they believed were deposited with judicial wisdom and powers in solving societal problems. This implies that the Arogbo Ijo indigenous judicial process did not solely depended on human judgement as to be permitted by the British styled judicial pattern.¹⁹

¹⁷N.A.I. Documents Relating to Ijo Arogbo District Ondo Prof 4/4a

¹⁸Interview held with Mr. Oyinbojune Iroju, Aged 84, Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo, 13th April, 2016.

¹⁹ Interview held with Reverend L.E. Torhukerhijoh, Aged 82, retired Head Teacher, Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo, 13th April, 2016.

5.3 Aroibo Ijo and Western Regional Government, 1946-1960

Historical background to the placement of the Aroibo Ijo as part of the Western regional government is not far from the colonial arbitrary boundary creation that pre-dated the creation of the regional system of government in Nigeria. That is, it is derived from the antecedence of the arbitrary boundary creation by the colonial government which completely disregarded the historical traditions of origin and cultural commonality of the people they colonised. In fact, the pattern of the creation of the regional structure depicts British continuous tampering with the boundary structure of the affected people. In view of this situation, the Aroibo Ijo continuously experienced boundary challenges throughout the colonial period. Therefore, at the establishment of the regional government in Nigeria, the positioning of the Aroibo Ijo into the Western region was enrooted in the past colonial boundary settings.

However, the major administrative reforms of April 1st 1939 by the then Governor-General, Sir Bernard Bourdillion, rearranged the existing Southern Province into two groups of Western and the Eastern Provinces, respectively.²⁰ Basically, this division by Bourdillion did not establish autonomous Province along ethnographic consideration. Rather, the British colonialists engendered by the desire for colonial administrative satisfaction, being the absolute reason for the formation of the Nigerian State in 1914, further strengthened the regional creations in an erroneous form. The emphasis here is that, the continuous creation of new administrative policies outrightly repudiated the linguistic, origin and traditional commonalities of the people even in the subsequent partitioning of Nigeria by the British. This underscores the geo-political experience of the Aroibo Ijo as one of the units that made up the Western region in the colonial period. Identifiably, the Aroibo Ijo ..areas were partitioned alongside the dominant Yoruba group in the Western region. Thus, the Aroibo Ijo was one of the smallest ethnic components in the Western region. Be that as it may, a holistic view of the Ijo in general during the colonial era was the lack of a colonial creation of a homogenous Ijo region. Hence, the Ijo were partitioned into the Western and Eastern regions, respectively. Incidentally, the Aroibo Ijo and the Ijo-Apoi fell into the Western region among the diverse Ijo groups in the Western Delta. Nevertheless, within the purview of the British arbitrary approach to creating political units, the making of Aroibo Ijo as part of the Western region was seen as a complete alienation of the people from their Ijo counterparts in the Western Delta. On the other

²⁰Otoide, L.E. 2003. Renegotiating Political Space: Minorities, Border Disputes and Inter-Communal Clashes. Olaniyan, R.O. Ed., *Amalgamation and its Enemies (An Interpretative History of Modern Nigeria)*. p. 99

hand, the Yoruba as ethnic entrepreneur in the Western region seems to have little or no consideration for the Arogbos in terms of regional policies as it affects the people. Indeed, this puts the Arogbos perpetually in the minority status in the Western region. Evidently, the Arogbos suffered from lack of representation in the Western regional government up to the end of British rule in Nigeria. This connotes that they were a non active ethnic group when it comes to policy formulation in the region.

Moreover, Sir Arthur Richards's constitutional arrangement of 1946 provided the political consciousness of an ethnic configuration of the country.²¹ Consequently, this constitution engendered ethnicity and ethnicism within the Nigerian polity. From all indications, the effect of this political arrangement enshrined in the British colonial constitution was purely the creation of ethnic chauvinism among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Obviously, the effect of this on the Arogbos was that of the ethnic minority status attained in the Western region. In view of this, a critical look at the Ibadan General Conference of 1950 declaration, with aim of providing the opportunity for regional representatives and securing maximum advantages for respective regions in subsuming the Nigerian project.²² Apparently, available records did not refer to the Arogbos as participants in this conference. The general assumption is that, the affairs of the region were mainly determined by its representatives who were largely of Yoruba extraction as well as the majority group in the region. Therefore, there was hardly any form of direct representation by anybody from the Arogbos ethnic group. In fact, with the enactment of the Macpherson Constitution in May 1951, this was auspicious to the creation of three major ethnic based regional structures which include the Eastern Region, the Northern Region and the Western Region.²³ From this point, it is very clear that the colonial government constitutionally created the ethnic imbalance in Nigeria. That is, with the constitution referring to some ethnic groups as majority, no doubt all others not captured by this description falls into the minority category. Hence, the Arogbos perpetually remained a minority group in the Western region.

²¹Olaniyan, R.O. and Alao, A.A. 2003. *The Amalgamation, Colonial Politics and Nationalism*. Olaniyan, R.O. Ed., *The Amalgamation and its Enemies (An Interpretative History of Modern Nigeria)*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.p.12.

²²Olaniyan, R.O. and Alao, A.A. 2003. *The Amalgamation, Colonial Politics and Nationalism*. Olaniyan, R.O. Ed., *The Amalgamation and its Enemies (An Interpretative History of Modern Nigeria)*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.p.13.

²³Elias, T.O. 1954. *Groundwork of Nigerian Law*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. p.166

Notably, these political developments associated to the formation of the regional structure were by-products of the British colonial boundary system which further served as the measure to determine the extent of geographical spread of each of the regions. In any case, the arbitrary boundary allocation by the British since the earliest time of colonial rule drove the Arogbo Ijo area out of the mainstream of ethnic superiority and political supremacy during this period. The background to this could be reckoned with the Okitipupa Division's colonial arrangement of 1915 which comprised the Ikale, Ilaje, Apoi and Arogbo Ijo ethnic components.²⁴ To a great extent, the political arrangement was purely referred to as a disconnect of the Arogbo Ijo clan from their kith and kin Ijo in the Western Ijo Province. In a lucid term, with the creation of the three regional structures, the geo-political area referred to as the Okitipupa Division was brought under the Western Region. Therefore, the Arogbo Ijo geographical area automatically became one of the ethnic groups that occupied the Western region. Apparently, it is affirmed that the two most prominently organised culture areas were the Yoruba and Edo, and these were used as a cultural description of all other groups within the Western Region.²⁵ The point made here is that, while the Yoruba ethnic group was considered as the dominant ethnic group within the region, on the other hand, all other groups such as Ijo, Itsekiri and Urhobo who were basically non-Edo were referred to as a sub-group of the Edo ethnic extraction in the region.

As a matter of fact, the Arogbo Ijo relationship in terms of governance with the Yoruba ethnic group was a colonial creation. This began with the separation of the Arogbo under a common political entity with other Ijo sub-groups in the Niger Delta region. Apparently, the effect of colonialism on the Arogbo Ijo is their longstanding affinity with the Yoruba group. As noted earlier, prior to the establishment of the Ondo Province in 1915, Arogbo Ijo was a judicial appendage to the British Lagos colony. This is not to say that Arogbo Ijo was part of the geographical area that was declared as the British Lagos colony. However, it is considered that the colonial administrative convenience inevitably was the reason for this long distance paddling to Epe and Lagos for adjudications. This further clearly affirms the historical foundation of how Arogbo Ijo was partitioned alongside their Yoruba neighbours in Ondo Province in 1915 and the Okitipupa Division in 1923. To a great extent, the political arrangement of the early colonial period became a veritable crucible for the emergence of the regional system, and the Western region in particular in the

²⁴N.A.I. An Intelligence Report of the Okitipupa Division by Gavin C.I. (Ikale/Ilaje/Apoi/Ijo Arogbo Report)

²⁵ Amalgamation and its Enemies, p.105

twilight of colonial rule. In view of this, it became inevitable to relate the Arogbo Ijo outside the Western region geo-political structure in the 1950s. From the foregoing, the political configuration of the western region was such that the Yoruba and Edo were described as the two prominent groups with an organised culture in the region.²⁶ By implication, this political arrangement was the obliteration of the institutions and cultures of other groups such as, the Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijo, who were also brought within the Western Region political structure. By and large, the far reaching consequence was the laying of the foundation of the minority status and identity crises experienced by the Arogbo Ijo.

5.4 Adaptation and Continuity

The foundation of any socio-political nature of a society depends much on the cultural evolution experienced by such people. This could be said to have ascertained the socio-political order within the context of the immediate culture of Arogbo Ijo. An illustration by G.J. Afolabi Ojo affirmed that “in normal circumstances, the culture of any particular region or country is connected with other external cultures, whatever the degree more or less in the same way as it is made up of its own sub culture”²⁷. As a result of this, one may hold to the fact that the Arogbo Ijo society was susceptible to socio-political changes upon the external British colonial political structure. Fundamentally, the process of socio-political transformation in Arogbo Ijo society is without any doubt traceable to the impact of colonialism spanning from the immediate imposition of European rule in the late 19th century, and to the end of colonial rule generally in Nigeria in 1960. At the instance of the erection of the British flag in Arogbo Ijo, the social change that became associated to this was its gradual influence on the orthodox judicial settings of the people. The far reaching effect is that the *Agadagba* (kingly priest) who was *prima facie* the overseer of judicial matters gradually began to lose his traditional authority over his kingdom. As noted earlier, way back in 1897, the Arogbo Ijo had begun to take judicial matters to the colonial courts in Epe and Lagos. This in a way affirms the extent of the British impact on the socio-political system of the people at the inception of the colonial rule. Nevertheless, remarkable changes in the socio-political settings of the people began precisely in the 20th century with the introduction of the British Indirect rule system.

²⁶Otoide, L.E. Renegotiating Political Space: Minorities, Border Disputes and Inter-Communal Clashes. p. 105.

²⁷Afolabi Ojo, G.J. 1975. *Culture and Modernization in Nigeria*, Faculty of Arts Lecture Series, Ife: University of Ife press. p.2.

Indeed, the indirect rule system was a complete establishment of the British authority in Nigeria, and Arogbo Ijo in particular. The political head of Arogbo, that is, the *Agadagba*, became a subordinate or an agent of the British authority. This, no doubt, affected the traditional structure. Within the period of British presence in this society, the socio-political reorganisation included the establishment of Native Authority, Native Court and Native Treasury. Although the traditional processes of coronation was not altered, the king deriving his powers from the deity “*Egbesu*” was not undermined and this depicts that colonial authority was not able to totally freeze the existing traditional system. An aspect of transformation that could be pointed out was the political and judicial powers of the king. Specifically, there emerged a plural approach to judicial matters within the society, while the cultural dimension to affirming judgements on certain matters were accorded to the king, there was also a shift to the British styled judicial system. Thus, the king was a colonial agent, and this practically means the loss of his traditional authority over the people to the colonial government. Peculiar to the Arogbo Ijo, adjudication was accorded much regard, and it was considered as one of the ways of the retaining the culture and traditions of the people. Consequently, the 20th century was remarkable for the continuity of the traditional approach to adjudication. On the other hand, the establishment of the colonial court presided over by the Colonial District Officer brought about significant changes. More emphatically, the *Agadagba* played dual roles as it concerns judicial affairs in the Arogbo Ijo society. As the custodian of the people’s tradition, the *Agadagba* held strongly to the traditional methods of judicial findings. The reason was that, from the perspective of tradition, certain offences particularly murder and manslaughter was strictly attended to by the local court. This is against the background that they were offences committed against the *Egbesu* deity, and the final judgement on these kinds of cases rested upon the deity. On the other hand, he equally served as the colonial agent in the colonial courts for adjudications. By so doing, there was a balancing of the authority and powers of the *Agadagba* between the traditional approach as well as the colonial form of adjudications, respectively. As a matter of fact, the people now had the option of approaching either the colonial court or the local court for the hearing of cases. This signifies that the Arogbo Ijo society experienced judicial plurality throughout the colonial period.

In all of this, it is important to know that British colonial rule with its court, and formal education through Christian schools brought significant changes to the indigenous socio-political culture of Arogbo Ijo society. Besides, there was a mixture of the traditional leadership role of

Agadagba with his functions as an agent of government. No doubt, the king performed all traditional obligations because it was so important to the socio-fabrics of the society. Thus, it is noteworthy that Arogbo Ijo society was not left out in the global rush for western civilization that swept across societies in the 20th century.

5.5 Conclusion

This study has brought to historical limelight a group of people on whom little or no scholarly work has been done. Moreover, it must be emphasised that the basic justification for this study is the fact that Arogbo Ijo represents a void and empty space in the general Ijo historiography. The period 1885-1960 was very pivotal to the history of the Arogbo Ijo because it is found most suitable for a historical observation of this people. Specifically, the origin of the Arogbo Ijo in their present location pre-dates the opening period of this study. The origin of the Arogbo Ijo is cardinal to this study, and thus demands a total reconstruction of the ancestral source of the Arogbo Ijo. This is with the aim of understanding certain features of the people within the focus period of this study and its relativity with their historical past. Realistically, no one can hope to fully understand the level of growth, development and vibrancy of a particular society in the contemporary period without an adequate study of the historical foundations and evolution of such a society. This explains why the preliminary aspect of this study focused on the traditions of origin as well as dwelling on pre-colonial historical developments which served as a solid foundation to understanding the study area in historical perspective. Precisely, the study set out to examine the origin of the Arogbo Ijo and to highlight the enduring relationship between the Arogbo Ijo and the pattern of socio-economic behaviour, settlement pattern and socio-political structure as it is situated within the context of the period of this study. As it has been observed in this study, the Arogbo Ijo had no history of origin that portrays them as being autochthonous to the area they occupy at present. Rather, evidence available clearly suggests their migration to their present abode to have been well over five hundred years. The exact date of the migration of the Arogbo Ijo to their present location could not be precisely stated. This is because there is paucity of historical materials or reports that could have shown their exact date of migration. Nevertheless, evidences available uphold most probable fact that they had begun to inhabit the area prior to the 15th century.

To put on record specific and more reliable history of Arogbo Ijo and their origin, an in-depth historical analysis was conducted. The existing dichotomy in the history of the origin of the Arogbo Ijo had been critically considered to be a product of some immediate factors such as their geographical location as well as domineering cultural and political influences as clearly depicted in the study. Importantly, a focus on the people's origin tends to bring to the fore the people's old and rich repertoire of historical heritage, which had been unresearched over the years. Hence, to a very large extent, this study succeeded in tracing the origin of the Arogbo Ijo to the Central Delta of present day Bayelsa, Nigeria. The study argues that the theory of close origin with Benin experienced by most groups in the Western Delta is an erroneous claim that does not hold sway in the traditions of origin of the Arogbo Ijo.

Arguments on the socio-economic vicissitudes of the incursion of European merchants and colonialists in the Arogbo Ijo socio-economic and political institutions are very important aspects engaged by this study. Consequently, the study attempted to bring to the fore the Arogbo Ijo socio-economic nature, examined their settlement pattern and analysed the material basis of their social existence. This is clearly viewed in the context of Arogbo Ijo economy and its overwhelming supportive role to the flow of the British colonial economy across the coastline of the Niger Delta and beyond. In other words, the study affirms the integration of the Arogbo Ijo socio-economic and political conditions as strength to the eventual imposition of colonial rule on the people. In fact, this economic union to a very large extent was greatly facilitated by the striking presence of economic commodities demanded by the Europeans in and within the Arogbo Ijo region. These commodities include timber products, Oil palm, and gin, which supported the traditional economy of the people. Fundamentally, the Arogbo Ijo economic nexus with the western capitalist trade set the pace for tremendous social influences such as the introduction of taxation system, development of piracy as a means of illegitimate acquisition of goods and a form of economic protectionism from colonial economic exploitation. Indeed, the Arogbo Ijo traditional economy was pivotal to the thriving of the European economy during the colonial period in the Arogbo Ijo area. Remarkably, the study identified that, the Arogbo Ijo religious structure was central to the indigenous culture and traditions. The situation in Arogbo Ijo was such that there was little or no differentiation between political, religious and family structures because they all resided in the kingship structure. Thus, the integration of socio-economic and political activities depended on the kinship structure and on religious traditions

that strengthened them. Therefore, beyond the notable individual independence in economic role, all other aspects of the Arogbo Ijo were often subordinated to kingship considerations. Specifically, the study identified that colonial influences on the culture and traditions of the people during the period of this study was a gradual process that had little or no interruption on the pre-existing socio-political process.

Furthermore, the study explores the social structure of the Arogbo Ijo and supported the customary judicial process as more dependable in the pursuit of justice. It discovers that the *Amagula* which was the apex of the social organisation of the people was very vast in dispensing justice in conformity with the traditional methods which depended largely on the traditional religious structure of the *Egbesu* deity. The colonial judicial style was to an extent considered to be at variance with the customary approach to justice. In fact, certain offences, particularly murder was considered as a sin against the cultural values of the people, and the justice melted on such was the immediate killing of the murderer. This was done with a view to upholding the sacredness of the culture and traditions of the Arogbo Ijo.

No doubt that the imposition of colonial rule had significant effects on the Arogbo Ijo. On the bases of available evidence, the reconstruction of the history of the Arogbo Ijo upholds the fact that British colonisation brought about certain social and political problems that confronted the people during the period covered by this study. It is interesting to note that, in spite of the importance of the Arogbo Ijo geographical area to the colonial economy, the British administrators ended up establishing territorial crises for the people. As rightly observed, Arogbo Ijo area suffered from a distinct description by the British colonial arbitrary boundary plans. The study identified that, the Arogbo Ijo area was not specifically seen as part of the Lagos colony or a part of the Oil Rivers Protectorate in the late 19th century. In short, the far reaching effect is noticed in the further separation by the British political administration of the Arogbo Ijo from their kith and kin in the Western Delta in the 20th century. It is interesting to note that the colonial arbitrary boundary structure was influential to the territorial crises that became incessant between the Arogbo Ijo and their neighbouring Ilaje groups in the middle of the twentieth century. As a matter of fact, the study observed that the territorial crises between the Arogbo Ijo and the Ilaje in the 21st century are anchored on the colonial boundary creations as observed by the history of the study area. It is important to note that, between 1885 and 1960, the Arogbo Ijo

society was not left behind in the advent of effective British occupation and rule in the twentieth century. Like any other group, the Arogbo Ijo experienced significant flexibility and receptiveness of socio-economic and political systems which allowed for a continuous process of change, continuity and adjustment as influenced by the colonial epoch.

From the foregoing, this study will open up new frontiers of research on issues such as migrations and identity, justice system in the colonial era and colonial boundary matters in Africa. Specifically, historical research on Arogbo Ijo and its neighbours such as Ilaje, Ikale, Apoi and Benin could be derived from this study.

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Informant	Age	Occupation	Address	Date
Apiribo, Perewari	59	Teacher	Amapere, Arogbo	April 5, 2017
Amama, Ebikimi	77	Traditionalist	New Ajapa, Arogbo	March, 14, 2016
Adaun, Eleiofaye	56	Gin seller	Adoleseimo, Arogbo	April 6, 2017
Amalagha, F.B.T.	64	Retired Teacher	Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo	April 10 2016
Akiri, Japhet	58	Teacher	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo	October 1, 2017
Balaebiju, Mumbo	72	Community head	Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo	February 9 th 2017
Bunawari, Ajama	71	Community head	Quarters, Arogbo	13 th March, 2016.
Chief Bibitibi, Yeiyah	70	Traditionalist	Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo,	17 th April, 2017
Chief Clement, Mumboh	71	Retiree	Erubiri Quarters Arogbo,	30 th September, 2017
Chief Deminiwei, Fari	71	Traditionalist	Safarau-Ugbo community, Arogbo	7 th March, 2016
Chief Dubagbakumo, Kowei	60	Traditionalist	Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo	17 th April,
Chief Dautaribo, Opukutu,	66	Community head	Ogidigba 1 community, Arogbo,	12 th February, 2017
Chief Ebitimi, Ajube	74	retiree	Upe community, Arogbo,	September 30, 2017

Chief Ebimini, Goh	70	Traditionalist	Agadagba Obon,	6 th April, 2016
Chief Ekpo, Digha	68	Traditionalist	Agadagba Obon, Arogbo	19 th March, 2016
Chief Ege, N.E	72	Retiree	Upe community, Ukparamo	April 7th,2016
Chief Godwin, Nanaowei	62	Community head	Quarters,	8 th March, 2016
Chief Iwabi, Samson	71	Retired Headmaster	Erubiri quarters, Arogbo.	15 th May, 2015
Chief Ikiyouleimo, Edonghan,	71		Adoloseimo 1, Arogbo,	3 rd February 2017.
Chief Jones, Macleans	68	Community head	New Ajapa, Arogbo	2 nd September, 2017
Chief Karinatei, Totor	72	Traditionalist	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo,	13 th April, 2016.
Chief Onaidou, Warikobo,	72	Traditionalist	Erubiri, Arogbo,	7 th April, 2016.
Chief Posi, Ajama	70	Community head	Fiyebasintei, Arogbo,	February 10 th , 2017.
Chief Perela, Duweigha,	72	Trader	Tebubeleu Quarters, Arogbo,	10 th February, 2017
Chief Timidou, Toikumoh, , 7	72	Traditionalist	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo,	4 th September, 201
Chief Tekenatei, Aribo	70	Traditionalist	Igangboh community, Arogbo,	7 th April, 2017
Chief Tibiowei, Legbe	71	Traditionalist	Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo,	15 th April, 2017 2017

Dimini, Kobobioko	52	Trader	Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo	September 30, 2017
Doghobowei, Oweike	72	Retiree	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo	March 12, 2016
Duweigha, Festus	68	Timber Trader	No 38, Ajanlekoko street, Kirikiri Town, Lagos	June 5, 2015.
Duweigha, James	63	Timber Merchant	Tebubebu Quaters, Arogbo	April 18, 2017
Diepiriwei, Jonah Dominigo.	72	Retiree	Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo,	April 18, 2016
Dimoh, Funmi	68	Trader	Biegbini, Arogbo	September, 18, 2016
Duweigha, Toruofayei	63	Gin seller	Tebubelou Quarters, Arogbo	September 3, 2017
Egene, K Ebenezer	69	Retiree	Opuerede Quarters, Opuba	March 6, 2016
Ebimobowei, Tonye	69	Timber Merchant	Biagbini, Arogbo	April 15, 2017
Egeni, Festus Pighata	73	Fisherman	Erubiri quarters	16 th May, 2015
Foloki, Goodluck	58	Teacher	Biagbini , Arogbo	September, 28, 2016
Guntei, London	59	Teacher	Tebubelou Quarters, Arogbo	March 20, 2016
High Chief Dimiyen, Gbamila	75	Traditionalist	Ajapa community, Arogbo	1 st October, 2017
High Chief. Ebibotei, Jiga,	74		Biagbini, Arogbo,	31 st January, 2017.
High Chief Ere, Bekewei R.A.	76		Adoloseimo community, Arogbo,	11 th February, 2017

High Chief Filatei, Ofoyeju	73		Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo,	22 nd November, 2016
High Chief Inaibotei, Ojujoh	65	Traditionalist	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo	14 th April, 2017
High Chief Josaiah, Akofagha	69		Awodikuro community, Arogbo,	February 2 nd , 2017
High Chief Kimipatei, Oweila	70	Traditionalist	Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo,	29 th September, 2017
High Chief Keniboyegha, Abednigo	74	Traditionalist	New Jerusalem, Arogbo,	10 th February, 2017
High Chief Olopele, P.M.S	72	Retiree	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo,	12 th March, 2016.
High Chief Perebo, Kowei	73	Community head,	Adoloseimo II, Arogbo,	March 2016
High Chief Seiyefa, Ebiatorou	67	Traditionalist	Osari community, Arogbo,	22 nd March, 2016
High Chief Seleipiri, Lubi	73	Traditionalist	Upe community, Arogbo,	16 th April, 2017
High Chief ThankGod, Eregha	69	Traditionalist	Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo,	12 th March, 2016.
High Chief Tunemi, Ugah	71	Traditionalist	Adoloseimo II community, Arogbo	14 th April, 2016
High Chief Wariebi, Ugoudibowei	69	Traditionalist	Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo	24 th March, 2016
Idhiarhi, Bekekimi	54	Teacher	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo	March 14, 2016
Iwabi, Lanre	62	Trader	Enibiui Quarters, Arogbo	September, 20, 2016
Ijanboh, Sinla	60	Fisherwoman	Erubiri Quarters	September 2,

				2017
Iroju, Oyinbojune	84	Trader	Egbesubiri Quarters	April 13, 2016.
Inami, Ujokumo	64	Trader	Agadagba-Obon	April 2, 2017
Jojo, Godwin	58	Civil servant	New Jerusalem, Arogbo	September 4, 2017
Kokowei, Aariyiewen	74	Fisherwoman	Tebubelou quarters, Arogbo,	April 8 th , 2016
Kontei, Opuebi	63	Traditionalist	Osari Village, Arogbo	September 22, 2016
Kurekure, Owei	58	Trader	Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 18, 2017
Kemiyenkumo, Samuel	64	Trader	Epu Idimu, Arogbo	March 2 nd 2016
Kondigha, Samuel	70	Retiree	Egbesubiri Quarters	Arogbo, May 11, 2016
Labo, Erepamo	69	Timber Merchant	Epu Idimu, Arogbo	September 30, 2017
Maggi, J.M	70	Retiree	Biagbini, Arogbo	March 11, 2016
Mone, Tunmiyenwei	76	Timber Merchant	Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 15, 2017
Ade, Inami	59	Traditionalist	Adoloseimo I, Arogbo	4 th February, 2017
Bibowei, Kowei	69	Community head	Adoloseimo I, Arogbo,	3 rd February, 2017.
Disegha, Torukoru	70	Traditionalist	Ajapa community, Arogbo,	February 3 rd , 2017.
Damaere, Ilema, Trader	72	Traditionalist	Orieran community,	3 rd February,

			Arogbo,	2017
Akiri, Diете	67	Traditionalist	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo,	2 nd September, 2017.
Ebaragha, Pighata	64	Community head	Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo,	12 th April, 2016
Ebidaubra, Peredenghan, Timber,	63	Trader	Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo,	12 th April, 2016.
Fiafiakimi, Opirijitei	64	Community head	Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo,	3 rd April, 2017.
Governor, Tarila	61	Trader	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo,	13 th April, 2016.
Gboloi, Nwusun	59	Trader	New Jerusalem, Arogbo,	14 th April, 2017.
Hitler, Peretugha	74	Traditionalist	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 13, 2016.
Ijowei, Ominisan, , Otuokubu	69	Traditionalist	Ukparamo, Arogbo	8 th February, 2017
Inaikedi, Foloki	67	Retiree	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo,	13 th March, 2016.
Ibadouju, Ogiori,	66	Traditionalist	Ilerikiri Village, Arogbo,	18 th March, 2016.
Miyenbra, Jojo	76	Traditionalist	New Ajapa,	26 th January, 2017.
Oweitari, Ugulawari, ,	72	Retired Teacher	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo	12 April, 2016.
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Saturday, Obolo	63	Retiree	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo,	8 th March, 2016.
Tibikimi, N.E.	78	Traditionalist	Ileri-kiri, Arogbo,	28 th September, 2017
Yintari, Pamowei	67	Retiree	Amapere community, Arogbo,	14 th April, 2017.
Yoyo, Ojogo	75	Traditionalist	Egbesubir Quarters, Arogbo,	23 th March, 2016
Nwusun, Benjamin	98	Former Trader	New Jerusalem, Arogbo	May 12, 2016
Ngbokuro, Ebikefi	68	Hunter	Agadagba-Obon, Arogbo	May 15, 2015
Ogidiogor Diете	71	Fisherman	Koropolo Village	April 3, 2017
Ojujoh, Gbesinghan	55	Retired Teacher	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 5, 2017
Okibegha, Woniebi	73	Retired Teacher	New Jerusalem, Arogbo	September 29, 2017
Olowo, Powei	87	Traditionalist	New Ajapa Arogbo	September, 30, 2016
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Pughukomo, Eredigha	63	Fisherman	New Ajapa Arogbo	September 2, 2017
Pereyaghi, Deghibofa.	71	Traditionalist	Erubiri quarters, Arogbo	5 th May, 2015

Jemine, Ebipatei	60	Religious Leader	Bolowou Tenen, Arogbo	September, 29, 2016
Aloro, Joan	83	Timber Trader	Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 12, 2016
Tunemi, Finitei	60	Trader	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 6, 2017
Tinshinkumo, James	66	Retired Teacher	Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 14, 2017
Tibifabofa, Princewill	59	Civil servant	Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 18, 2017
Tiewei, Akin	57	Teacher	Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 6, 2017
Ugowoni, Elaemi	66	Fisherman	Erubiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 17, 2017
Ugunnu, Taribo	73	Retiree	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 18, 2017
Wowo, Brapatei James	65	Traditionalist	Agwobiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 15, 2016
Worimegbe, Erepateti	63	Trade	Egbesubiri Quarters, Arogbo	April 13, 2016
Woseebi, Molukio	68	Retired Teacher	Igangboh Teneu, Arogbo	September, 22, 2016
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APPENDICES

No. Case 791/13
District Office,
Okitipupa Division,
Okitipupa. 17th Jan. 1940.

My Good Friend,

Four Europeans of the Shell/B'arcy company are coming to your country. They are looking for kerosene. They work like surveyors but they are not measuring the surface of the ground but are trying to find out what is underneath. Please help them in any way you can.

Your Good Friend,

MR
District Officer,
Okitipupa Division.

The Amapetu of Lanin, Mahin.

The Olugbo of Ubo, Ubo.

J.A. Anderson

To: Kaya 1940

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SEISMIC SURVEY INFORMATION BUREAU - NIGERIA.

Tel. address:
RAMBHELL - OBECHI.

U n e r f i,
southern Nigeria.

22nd December, 1940.

No. 2848.



The Resident,
ONDO.

Sir;

TERMINATION OF SEISMIC SURVEY.

With reference to my letter No. 2848 of 16th November, I have the honour to inform you that I have received instructions from London to terminate the seismic survey work.

In these circumstances the seismic work will not be taking place in the Okitipupa Creek Area, although some other form of prospecting may be carried out in this area at a later date.

I wish to thank you for your assistance and regret the trouble or any inconvenience to which you may have been put.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY
P. L. CHESTER.
Geological Officer.

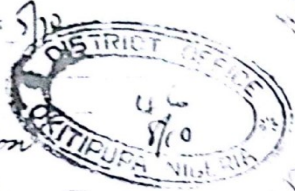


cc. D.O., Ondo.
D.O., Okitipupa.
Comm. of Police, Ondo.

PH

4.6/4

Mr. ... John,
via Okitipupa.
1st October 1953.



The District Officer
Okitipupa Division
Forfeite Irele

My Good Friends,

I am writing to inform you what I see. The following people, namely Messrs J. O. Okunribido, Obudiah Shokisho and Amos Ogburn have sued me at Mahin Native Court to answer a suit by them re the AKPATA LAND Dispute between the late Olufo of Ife and myself.

It is a surprise for me to see this for the matter had once been tabled before the Federal Council upon which it was ordered that each of us must pay the amount of £5 as the cost of Commission of Enquiry. We did pay the money but unfortunately the Commission of Enquiry does not take place before the death of the Olufo. After this, I again reported the said matter to the Federal Council and it was then ordered that the Commission of Enquiry would take place as soon as a new Olufo is installed.

I do not at all know anything about the above named persons neither have I any connection whatsoever with them. Therefore I cannot go to Mahin to hear the case because I do not know these said people and also that the matter had long been lying before the Federal Council Okitipupa.

Their claim against me is for the Declaration of Title to a large tract of land over the whole of the Ife Province section of Okitipupa Division which comprises Akpata, Opuba, Upe, Igbene, Golecimo, Krepole, Dabatoko, Ogidigba and Proqbo. You could see the situation yourself. These people are certainly provoking me.

with which will without loss of time result into a
fierce tribal fight.

May I humbly implore you earnestly to caution
these people to withdraw their actions from me.

I hereby append the civil summons issued at
Mablin for verification.

Their 2nd claim is to restrain my agents servants
from entering or interfering with the said land.

Yours and Friend
Agadadua of
Tribes.

Witness:-
S. E. Oriamaja

- Gratis -

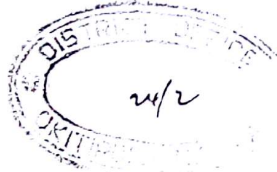
10/53

DC

Ref. No. 16/2/54.E.3.3.

From Mr Amos Ogbaro,
Obe-Town, Ugbu District,
Okitipupa Division, Ondo Province,
24th February, 1954.

The
District Officer,
Okitipupa Division,
Ebute Irele,
Via Okitipupa.



Referent! *

Sir;

Suit No 5/53. Halden In The Ilaje District Court.
I.O. Anikanselu, and 2 Others on behalf of Obe
Town people and themselves Va Chief Mesaraghan,
the Asagha of Arogho.

Transfer from Federal Council of the above
Suit To The Supreme Court of Nigeria
prayed for by the plaintiffs.

That I am one of the plaintiffs in the above action.
That we are three men elected to prosecute this case by the
Chiefs and elders of Obe town and suburbs whose names are as
follows:-

Chief Odudu of Obe Apata, Chief Ieme of Ugbu, Chief
Omamogh of Obe Erowoye, Chief Shokisho, of Ilepete, Chiefs
John Akingboye and Poroye of Obe Ogbaro, Chief Amoye of Ilepete,
Chief Ben Egharegbemi of Ojumole, Chief Lomu of Ugbu, and the
following elders Eramiye of Obe Erowoye, Lihan of Obe Erowoye,
Jeje of Ilepete, Jajo of Obe-Adun, Amoye of Obe Erebinimo,
Paul Erebinimo including many others and Chief Kax Isaac
Omoteyinshe of Ilepete.

2. That it is a waste of time to allow this case to
remain in the Federal Council all these time, since the Council
is not the proper Court of Law and we are not prepared to ~~make~~
make any settlement unless that the case is transferred to the
Supreme Court. Surveyor to survey the area in dispute is at
hand. That if the case is allowed to remain in the Federal
Council before April further trespass will be committed, this
may bring great trouble.

3. That the Chiefs and elders are ready to take Oath
to show that they had elected, I.O. Anikanselu, Obadiah Shokisho
and myself Amos Ogbaro to prosecute this case. Motion to sue
on a representative capacity will follow in the Supreme Court
immediately the Case is Transferred from the Federal Council.
I am instructed by the Chiefs, Elders, and Obe Town people
to submit our request before you for prompt action please.

I have etc.

Amos Ogbaro

Read and certified correct instructions,
as instructed me by him, before affixing
his Signature thereto:-
W/W to Signature: *[Signature]*
Okitipupa Waterside, Triplicate Copies supplied.
Written Gratis.

A.D.O.
I suggest that you call for a copy of the proceedings
in Ilaje Court. Case 5/53; if nothing useful has been done
then, you ask the Hon. Sec. to transfer the case to Lagos N.C.
as per the proviso to Sec 86).
[Signature]
Draft @ K. SP. R 2/2

Ref. No. 472/53. F. C. G. 27/10

From Amos Ogbaro, C. Shokisho and Ora,
Obe Town, Ugbu District,
Okitipupa Division, Ondo Province,
25th October, 1953.

The District Officer,
Okitipupa Division,
Ebute Irele,
Via Okitipupa.

cc. The President,
Okitipupa Federal Council.

" Chief S. Metaraghan,
The Agents of Arogbu,
Arogbu.

Retention for Land Inspection

Sir;

Civil Suit in The Ilaje District Court No. 5/53.
I. O. Anikanelu, and 2 Others for themselves
and the town people Vs S. Metaraghan of Arogbu
petition of:-

We have the honour most respectfully to submit our
protest against the letter read to us at Mahin on the 22nd inst
in connection with the above mentioned case. That we were told
that the District Officer Okitipupa Division wrote to say that
this case is above the jurisdiction of Ilaje District Court
secondly the plaintiffs are Ilaje and the defendant an Ijaw
and the case will be presided over by Ilaje, that he had agreed
at the first instance, that the defendant should come to Mahin
to hear the case, but having visited Arogbu, the explanation
made by defendant to him, induced him to refuse the case being
heard at Mahin and that he refer the dispute to the Federal
Council for intervention.

2. That we beg to say that we did not agree with
your advice, that this case should be taken up in the Federal
Council, this is just a hold-up to enable the defendant and
his people to be using the areas in dispute illegally. The areas
are our own, this is not chieftaincy dispute at all, but
question of declaration of title to these areas. We had submit-
ted complaints to the District Officer Okitipupa and the Federal
Council about the areas being illegally used, but no step taken.

3. We will be pleased if the District Officer by
virtue of his of the power conferred on him transfer this case
to the proper Court of Law, (the Supreme Court) as usually done
in similar cases in this division and not the Federal Council,
since he agreed the case is above the Ilaje District Court's
Jurisdiction. This matter had been with the Federal Council for
over 2 years ago, nothing done to bring it to settlement, and
we have proved that the Federal Council is in favour of the
defendant because at the time that the defendant and his people
were using the areas illegally, complaints were lodged to the
Federal Council by us, but no action taken.

4. That we will not go to the Federal Council for
this case, and we will not leave the case undone, we therefore
beg you to transfer this case to the Supreme Court to enable us
to fight for our rights. We are looking forward for your action
please in our request.

We have etc.

C. E. Shokisho.

*Not submitted in Ilaje Court
to the English language, certified
not translated as instructed to
them. Below office then Registrar
to the Registrar, Ondo Province
Okitipupa Division 9/11/53
Okitipupa Division*
C. E. Shokisho
C. E. Shokisho
100 28/5-2


Ref. No. 473/53. F. I. G.

from Messrs. D. Ogunbemi, Simon
Shedara and others.
Obe town, Ugho District, Okitipupa
Division, Ondo Province,
10th October, 1953.

The District Officer,
Okitipupa Division,
Ebute Irele,
Via Okitipupa.

Sir,

Referent for Land
Dispute



Complaint against Chief S. Ketsaraghan, the
Agadagba of Iroko, intervention of the
District Officer Okitipupa Division prayed
for:-

We have the honour most respectfully to submit
our complaints before you in time, craving for your kind
attention and action necessary, our complaints are as follows:-

2. That we submit our complaints on behalf of
all Obe Towns-people and ourselves. That for the past years
there had been no threatening against the Obe Towns-people
~~xxx~~ from the Agadagba. That recently the Obe Towns-people
Ugho District served ~~with~~ the Agadagba with Notice to sue in
Court for the declaration of title for the lands occupied by
him and his people.

3. That after the expiration of this Notice,
he was served with Summons from the Ilaje Native Court, this
was served on him, and from the time this was served on him
he sent messages to all villages concerned in the claim of
the action in Court, and held meeting with the people, that
they should get ready to fight the Obe Towns-people because
they had sued him.

4. That he will not attend Ilaje Native Court
but that he would fight, and that is, by murdering some ~~xxx~~
important people, and by turning to alligator to catch people
and many other ways. That recently our women who were going to
market were driven back by Agadagba people. We submit our
complaints so that Agadagba should be warned with his people
to stop all these evil practices at once, and to pursue his
case in the proper way. In case of any complaint of missing
people on the waterways from any side to and fro, Agadagba is
responsible for he had instructed his people.

5. That should you think our complaints are not
true, kindly detail Nigeria Police without ~~xxx~~ uniform not
known here, to go for the investigation, you will prove his plan.
We pray for your kind ruling Sir,

We have etc.

D. O. Ogunbemi
Simon Shedara of right

Handwritten signature

6/10

Read & Interpreted in Yoruba
language from the English language,
Certified correct instructions as
instructed me by ~~him~~ them, before
affixing signature and right thumb
impression thereto:-

W/W to Signature and R. T. I. *Soman*
Okitipupa Waterside, Triglicite Copies Supplied.
Rewarded. *(50) Trusty Challenge*
Vide Receipt No. *280/53*

A. 20

Wofa

TTI Deqpd. 1953 11/10

No. 46/377

Ebute Irele, 19th October, 1953.

Copy to :-

The President,
Okitiyupa Federal N.A.,
Okitiyupa.

British Response!

My Good Friend,

For consideration. The area allegedly in dispute is listed as including the villages of Apata, Opuba, Upe, Igbano, Bolosemo, Krepole, Dabatoba, Ogidigba and Arogbo.

2. Apata, Opuba, Upe and, of course, Arogbo are represented on the Ijaw Arogbo Council and can scarcely be considered to be within the jurisdiction for either Klaje Courts or Native Authority.

Your Good Friend,


District Officer,
Okitiyupa Division.

ADE.

A.D.C. H. delin original to behi or how.

B. 15/10.

D. Above. Letter delivered.

R 20/10 at Melin.

Hand 6/375.

Divisional Office,
Okitipupa Division,
Ebatu Irele, via Okitipupa.

19 October, 1953.

The President,
Ilaje District Court,
Makin.

My Good Friend,

L. O. Olatkansalu and Others Versus
The Agadagba of Arogbo.

During my recent visit to Arogbo the members of the Council protested against the service of the attached notice under which the Agadagba is sued in his representative capacity by the people of Oba. I can fully understand their objections and am surprised that your Court should have the temerity to entertain such suit. I wish to comment as follows:-

- (i) The Ilaje District Court is a Grade C Court which, under the terms of its Warrant can ~~NOT~~ hear Civil actions where the demand or damages exceed £50. The area now claimed includes nine Villages and the value of the claim is obviously far in excess of the jurisdiction of the Court.
- (ii) If this regarded purely as a land case the Court can, under the terms of the warrant, hear causes "provided the land lies wholly within the area of jurisdiction of the Court." In this case the land claimed includes Arogbo which is not, and never has been, within the jurisdiction of Ilaje District Court and, as the ownership of remaining villages is now disputed by two Districts it is difficult to understand how the Ilaje Court could possibly be considered to have jurisdiction.
- (iii) Even if your Court had jurisdiction no claim of this nature could be entertained unless the boundary of the land claimed was clearly define, preferably by survey plan. The Defendant can not possibly be expected to answer a claim which merely lists a number of villages without attempting to define either the area or boundaries of the land.
- (iv) I have constantly instructed that it is the duty of the Courts to advise litigants as to the form and method of action which would be appropriate. I consider that you have entirely failed in your duty in this respect. I have also constantly advised that Courts must avoid any possibility of allegation of impartiality. It must surely be obvious that the Ilaje Court could not possibly deal with a case in which they are interested parties against the Defendant from another District.

/(v).....

- 2 -

570

(v) I consider that your action in this matter is most regrettable and can only result in increased antagonism between the Districts concerned. Had further and proper consideration been given to the issues involved it would be realized that a cause of this nature should only be referred to litigation after all methods of settlement by administrative machinery have failed. As far as I am aware no real attempt has yet been made to resolve this dispute by arbitration and in my opinion the matter would be more satisfactorily settled by reference to the Okitipupa Federal Native Authority who could appoint a neutral Commission of Enquiry. Should such enquiry fail then, at the discretion of either party, the matter could be referred to the Supreme Court. This latter course would be both expensive and involve preparation of detailed survey plans of the area claimed without which no case would be considered.

2. I return the hearing notice which is invalid, herewith and must request that you advise Plaintiffs accordingly. If they wish to proceed with this matter they should clearly define the boundaries of the area in dispute and refer the matter by motion through their proper representatives, to the Federal Council praying that Council to institute a Commission of Enquiry to define the boundaries between the Ijaja and Arogbo Districts.

3. A copy of this letter has been addressed to the Okitipupa Federal Council for their information.

Your Good Friend,

District Officer,
Okitipupa Division.

ADE.

Depto. 19/10.

No. 46/376A.

Ebute Irole, 5 October, 1953.

Copy to :-

The President,
Ijaja-Arogbo N.A.
Arogbo.

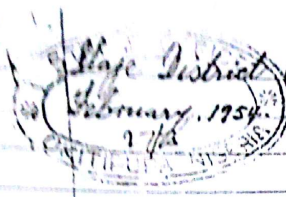
My Good Friend,

For information with reference to your letter dated the 1st of October, 1953.

Your Good Friend,

District Officer,
Okitipupa Division.

ADE.



114-1

Uyo District Court held on Tuesday the 23rd day of February, 1954. before The Amapeter and his chiefs
The Amapeter of Mahin.

- " Ch. Agomo
- " " Medara
- " " J. Iyare
- " " Phillip Ehinmowe
- " " Isaac Omotchiuse of Ugo
- " " Timothy Imuebimi of Mahin

- 5/53
1. I. O. Anikansalu (ms)
 2. Obadiak Sholeisho (ms)
 3. Amos Ogbare (ms)
- on behalf of themselves and the people of Obe Town. Plffs.
- vs:
- Chief S. Mesaraghan the Agadapa of Ugo, on behalf of himself and Ugo people. Deft.

Plaintiffs claim against the Defendant is for Declaration of title to a piece or parcel of land lying being and situate at Obe area in the District of Uyo in Kitipupa Division. The said land comprises Oyata, Opuba, Ugo, Iybone, Dolesema, Kerapeta, Dabatoko, Ogidioba and Ugo. II The Plaintiffs claim for an injunction to restrain the Deft. his agents or servants from entering or interfering with the said land.

Date of issue. 28.9.53.

The court considers that this case can not be heard in this Uyo District court because the claim therein seems to be greater than the power of the court as it concerned eight villages and the value of the claim should be far in excess of the jurisdiction of the court. Furthermore, the President of the court is the

U O B O ,
19th Sept, 1954

The District Officer,
Ebute - Irele.

Sir,

Comments on letter No. OFNA. 115/36 - Ilaje (Ugbo) and
Ijaw Arogo Land Dispute.

We refer you to our letter of the 25th October 1953 in which
we refused to allow the Federal Council to probe ar
into the above dispute. And, but, due to your intercession
this year, we patiently waited for the decisions of the
Federal Council which uptill now is only still to come.

The said Federal Council appointed a Board of Enquiry to go
into it in April 1954 but since then we have been only made
paramulators, waisting both time, money and utility. The
Ijaws are making more uneconomical use of the disputed area
now than hitherto. This much has also been reported to the
Ahaba Board of Enquiry but nothing has been done to check
Even uptill now the said Ijaws still waylay our people in the
said area against the one-time decision of the Federal
Council.

As we suspected that the same fate which befell this matter
since 1950 prior to your intercession, was also befalling
it again, we had to write our most recent letter, where
we took decision to transfer the dispute to the Supreme
Court, to which you have consented. This much we have
that we vehemently resent retaining the dispute in the Federal
Council; let it be tried in the Supreme Court concerned.
has stayed long enough in the Federal Council.

fully

We also wish the District Officer know that the Ahaba Board
of Enquiry has not enquired into the said dispute -- for he
invited us to the Board's meeting of 28th July, where nothing
was done, he himself being absent -- and we therefore fear
what findings he has for the Council at its next sitting are
contained in paragraph 3 of his letter referred to above.

With reference to paragraph 4 of the letter quoted above
(No. OFNA. 115/36) we have to make it clear that a copy of
our letter quoted in paragraph 3 above, transferring the
dispute to the Supreme Court was handed through the Ahaba
Board of Enquiry to the Federal Council.

We therefore beg the District Officer to instruct the said
Board of Enquiry not to interfere any longer with the above
dispute. We want it tried in the Supreme Court.

Copy to:
The Board of Enquiry
into Ugbo and Ijaw Arogo
Land Dispute care Federal Clerk,
O.F.N.A. Central Office, Okitipupa.

We are,
Your Good Friend

1. *[Signature]*

[Signature]

For Ilaje U

Application here on 25/9

O.F.A.

FROM

432

X In the District Officer's Court of Appeal Onitipupa
Division, before Mr. E.H. Catto, District Officer on
25th September, 1954.

1. I.O. Anikinsela
2. Obadiah Shokimo
3. Anos Ogbaro

on behalf of themselves
and the people of Ofo Town.

Versus.

Chief S. Mesawaguan,
The Agadagba of Arogbo

An application for transfer of the case from Ilaje Native
Court to the Supreme Court.

The claim in this case is for a declaration of title against
the Defendant to an area of land lying between Ofo Town and
Arogbo. X

Plaintiffs present
Defendant absent.

Court Messenger Noah Atibo, sworn on the oaths, states
that on 12th September he served a hearing notice on the
Defendants:

questioned by Court the Plaintiffs select the first
plaintiff to speak for each.

1st. Plaintiff, Isaac Anikinsela states that the application
is made because of the difficulty of getting the Defendant to
attend a Native Court, the Defendant being a powerful chief.
Although called by the Native Court to attend several times
he has not done so. He similarly refused to attend the call
of the Federal Council.

Court Order:

X The Court orders the Plaintiffs to submit to this Court
within three months two copies of a survey plan showing the
boundaries, of the land claimed, all adjacent boundaries and
the principal towns, villages, roads and creeks in the
vicinity, one copy to be retained by the Court and one copy
to be served through the Court on the Defendant.

The Court further orders that for the purpose of preparing
the said plan, the Surveyor engaged by the Defendants and such
number of the Defendants as, with regard to the circumstances
shall be reasonable and necessary for the purpose, may enter on
to the land in despite and on to land adjacent thereto. The
Court further enjoins the Defendant not to molest or hinder
such person when engaged in the said work during the said
period of three months.

The Court orders that a copy of this Order be served on
the Defendant.

Parties informed of right of appeal.

Certified true copy.

Deputy Registrar.

(Sd.) E.H. Catto.
District Officer,
Onitipupa Division.

25.9.54

HEARING NOTICE.

(1) J. O. Anikanelu (2) Obadiak Shokisho of Abe Town
(3) Amas Agbaro } Igbo District

V e r s u s

seen

Chief S. Heavaghan
The Agadagba of Arogo & townspeople of Arogo

To: as above

The above named persons

Take Notice that the above case has been listed for hearing by the District Officer, Okitipupa Division, Ebute Irele on the 26th day of February 1955 at 9 a.m.

2. You are hereby warned to bring all the evidence by witnesses or documents which you desire to rely on in support of your case.

AOB
Registrar of Sessions,
Okitipupa Division.

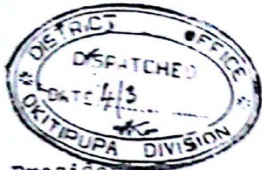
Ebute Irele: 9th February 1955.

NOF.

See pp 37 3

G M Jackson

B.V. 24/2



No. 46/4/39 21

District Office,
Okitipupa Division,
4th March 1955.

Ebute Irele:

The President,

Native Court

Argo

My Good Friend, (1) S. O. Amosuelu (1) Chief S. Mearnaghlan,
(2) Uadish Okisho The Agadagla of Argo
(3) Amos Oghoro Yamspeople
Vs.

I forward herewith Hearing Notices in respect of the above named suit for service on the parties concerned.

2. The Court Messenger who serves Notices must be present in Court to give proof of service.

Your Good Friend,

District Officer,
Okitipupa Division.

AOF.

147

In the District Officer's Court of Appeal, Okitipupa Division before G. Low Esq. District Officer, on 17th March, 1955.

- (1) I.O. Aaikanselu
- (2) Obadiah Shokiso
- (3) Amos Ogbare
on behalf of themselves and
the people of the Town.

Vs.

Chief S. Nasaraban,
The Agadagba of Arogbo.

Case reopened 17th March, 1955.


All parties present:

Court Order.


The Plaintiffs have complied with the previous order of this court and have supplied two copies of a survey plan showing the boundaries of the land claimed, all adjacent boundaries, and principal towns, villages, roads and creeks in the vicinity.

One copy of this plan is retained by the court, one copy has been served on the Defendant.

The Court orders the transfer of this case to the Supreme Court for hearing and determination.


District Officer,
Okitipupa Division.

Certify true copy.


Registrar of Session.

AO:

Order of Transfer

17/1/55

I, CHRISTOPHER LEE, District Officer
Okitipupa Division, by virtue of the powers
conferred upon me under section 28(1) (a) of
the Native Courts Ordinance (Cap. 112 Volume IV
of the Laws) DO HEREBY ORDER on Application by
the Plaintiffs that the suit mentioned in the
sub-joined schedule be transferred from the
Ilaje Native Court to the Supreme Court Benin
Judicial Division for hearing and determination
for the reason that the court has no jurisdiction.
Dated at Okitipupa this 17 day of *March* 1955.

[Signature]
District Officer,
Okitipupa Division.

AO:

SCHEDULE

Suit No. 5/52

1. I.O. Anikanselu
2. Obadiah Shokiso
3. Aros Ogbare
on behalf of themselves
and the people of the
town.

Vs.

1. Chief Mesaraban,
the agadagba of Arogbu
on behalf of himself
and Arogbu people.

(1) Plaintiff's claim
against the Defendants is for
declaration of title to a piece
of parcel of land lying being
and situated in the area in Olo
District of Ilaje, in Okitipupa
Division.

The said land comprises
Arogbu, Ighone,
Ighone, Karamole, Babatoko,
Ighone and Ighone II.

The Defendant's claim for an
injunction to restrain the
Plaintiffs, their agents, or
servants from entering or
interfering with the said land.

46/4
8/5

63

From:
J.O. GILBERT,
Licensed surveyor
c/o P.O. Box 86,
ILEIHA.
23rd APRIL, 1955.

Through
THE DISTRICT OFFICER
OKITIPUPA.

Dear Sir/ AREA IN DISPUTE

- I. ISAIH O. ENIKANLESULU
 - II. OBADIAH L. SOKISO
 - III. AMOS OGBARO
- } PLAINTIFFS

VERSUS

THE AGADAGBA OF AROGBO....(Defendant
Okitipupa Division.

This is to inform you that I have been approached by the Agadagba of Arogbo with regards to the above named suit for the purpose of surveying the area under dispute as ordered by the District Officer's court for use in the Supreme court. And to intimate you of my intention to enter the said Area for the said purpose.

Yours Faithfully,

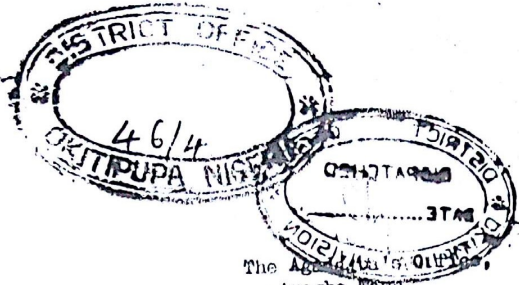
To
ISAIH O. ENIKANLESULU } Above for your
I. OBADIAH L. SOKISO } information
III. AMOS OGBARO } please.

J.O. Gilbert

DC
no action necessary
P.A. 6/17/45

copy
cl
28/5

82



The Agent,
Arogo Town,
19/7/55.

To
The District Officer,
Ebute-Irele.

K.P.C.
H

My Good Friend,

I am hereby sending you the Maps of the Arogo districts of which I intimated you in a letter dated 2nd April 1955; about my employment of a surveyor to survey the said area. Kindly send one of the maps to the Ilajes and return mine after your personal approval.

Yours Good Friend,

Agadade

Arogo Town.

Subtd pl.
ref. 22/7

Handwritten scribbles and numbers at the bottom of the page.



No. 1382/84.

Divisional Office,
Okitiupa Division,
Ehute Irele.

10th November, 1955.

My Good Friend,

P. 86

Arogbo Map Plan.

With reference to your letter dated the
1st of November, I return herewith, the map plan
of your area - Arogbo.

2. Please acknowledge the receipt.

Your Good Friend,

(Sgd.) J. B. Falani

District Officer,
Okitiupa Division.

The Agadagba of Arogbo,
Arogbo.

JA:

E. 11/10

10/12/55
20/11/55
11/11

Anapetu's Office Mahin
4th JULY 1959.

Through:- The Divisional Secretary,
To Divisional Council, 24 JUN 1956
O K I P U P A.

22/7 116/4

My Good Friend,

The attached is for your private information and not for
The Agadagba of Arogbu

I therefore wish you in your power, to help me to advise
the Agadagba and his people using my land from Ori-eran to
Ghoroghoro Mahin creek, to leave this my land for me or you let
him explain, if the said "Ori-eran to Ghoroghoro Mahin creek"
belongs to him.

His explanation can be done in present of both of us and
you the Officials, just to avoid troubles.

P.P. 95-46

Your Good Friend,
J.E. Anapetu
The Anapetu of Mahin.

Copy to:-
The Divisional Adviser,
for information and action.

F. Subd M.
24/7

P.P. 97
as of time is for
11/7

The Board of Inquiry,
Ilafe -Arogbo Land Dispute,
Through, the Federal Clerk,
Okitipupa Federal N.A.,
O K I T I P U P A .

Native Authority Office,
Mehin 31st, May 1954.

Ilafe-Arogbo Land Dispute
Matters affecting.

xxxx

With reference to your letter No. OENWA. 115/16. of 29th, May 1954, my comment and the brief history of the Dispute are as follows:-

- (i) Normally the Ilafes derived from the City of Ife a descendant of Oduduwa. That having left Ife-Ife they first settled at a place called Igoro and this said place is known today as Benin land; from there they sifted to Abe-Alagbe known as Itahokiri land; and ~~tho~~ ~~fr~~ from there they migrated to Iparano known or entitled a Camp. Finally from there they moved to Ode- Mahin where we are still now. The Ijaws had never been known or heard of by that time; It was that Iparano that the Ijaws now named Igbinno and ~~the~~ then the Oloja was known as the Orunfeyimi of Mehin.
- (ii) There is a place called Eiyekora or Awodikora which connected the Lagoon leading to Benin River which extended to Oluwa river, and it was from this Benin river the Ijaws found there way into our land and thereby settled Arogbo. The meaning of Eiyekora or Awodikora is such a straight line of about 6 miles without being curved. It was ~~then~~ this Junction had been known as Ita-Orieran; meaning place where a buffalo was killed by an Ilafe hunter who was a Chief of the Anapetu: the then Anapetu was known as Jagbemi. Up till to-day, there are say two idols of Ilafe at a place between Iparano and Upe i.e. Acorunboro and the other Oghoye. Would there be Ijaws, how could it be possible for Ilafes to have ~~the~~ authority and to be worshipping idols there? The Ijaws were entirely strangers to Ilafes. They were palm-wine tapers for the Ilafes as their main occupations, at that time. Having seen that they Ijaws added fishing to their work as palm-wine tapers into our creeks hence palaver ensued between our people and Ijaws; the palaver was so great that the Ijaws short to death one prominent chief of the Anapetu named Aderomi. The then Anapetu was known as Habardi who afterwards advocated for peace and not very long he died.
- (iii) After a while Ogunseoyin was enthroned who finally made amicable settlement that the Ijaws might have free access to enter into Ori-eran creek and perform whatever work they knew. As soon as the settlement was ended they all decided to make ~~in~~ a curse which resulted to killing of a sheep and the place was named Ori-agan (Juju) between Ilafe and Arogbo Ijaws.
- (iv) Before then a ruling was made that the Ijaws might not enter into Ori-eran creek to do any kind of work. It was not long one Abalaribo violated the rule whereby entered the creek and was smashed with clubs by one Ekejarus entitled Ojapemona to the point of death and he also capture him ~~now~~ fortunately he was given ~~for~~ treatment.

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.....2.....

given treatment and the injury become healed. Before they released him, 2 slaves were substituted.

(v) No longer after, the British Flag was brought to Mahin and all the rest of the Treaties, which necessitated free passages and Freedom to the land. Later on the Ijaws delegated to Mahin some prominent members of their own people for final settlement; and they are as follows:-

- 1. Oye
- 2. Sibo
- 3. Agbebo
- 4. Wonni being the head of Ibilla.
- 5. Ago
- 6. Pirawe and being the head of Pirawe-Camp. (as his own name). for an example.

(vi) Having settled into their various quarters they usually brought percentages of what ever animals being killed to the Amapetu of Mahin in respect of homage and they also paid their Taxes into Ilaje N.A. Mahin up to the year 1927. It was Ogunsemoyin the then Amapetu that delegated his Chief Dogbe of Aboto who took Freedom Flag to Arogbo and they were subjected to Mahin Court Jurisdiction.

(vii) It was of recent the Ijaws cultivated the ideas of appointing head and that is the present Agadagba he is The first man they perhaps installed. He is known as juju worshiper which means "Agadagba" and for instance they have no traditional title as we have in Ilaje -Ikale.

In summarising my comments you will agree with me that they are not one of the decendants of ODUDUWA in one word they are not Yorubas. They are strangers in Ilaje land; now we do not drive them away from our land but, they must bear in mind as being "Strangers" in Ilaje land. "They must not over rule."

(Sgd) T.E. Oduwole II
President,
Ilaje District N.A. Mahin.

COA.

Certify true Copy,
AAR.

ONDO PROVINCE
OKTIPUPA DIVISION
ANNUAL REPORT 1952.

Part 1. Divisional Matters.

BOUNDARIES.

No alterations were made in the divisional boundaries during the year. The boundaries described in Government Notice No. 660 published in Gazette No. 26 of 4th May, 1950, have not yet been demarcated but arrangements have been made to do so in 1953.

AREA AND POPULATION

2. The area of the Division is approximately 1,560 square miles. The population of each District as derived from Census figures is as follows :-

<u>Native Authority</u>	<u>Population</u>
Ikale	69,236
Ilaje	19,232
Ijaw Apoi	13,392
Bini Confederation	13,200
Ijaw Arogbo	6,700
	<u>121,760</u>
	=====

This indicates an increase of 9,832 compared with figures given in the last report.

ADMINISTRATIVE POSTINGS.

3. The following officers served in the Division during the year :-

(a) <u>Officers in charge of the Division.</u>	<u>Time</u>
W.S. Smith	1.1.52 - 3.9.52
A. Bower	4.9.52 - 31.12.52
(b) <u>Assistant District Officer</u>	
J.D. Smith	1.1.52 - 31.12.52

JUNIOR SERVICE STAFF.

4. The following Junior Service Staff served in the Division during the year :-

<u>District Clerk and Local Treasurer</u>		
J.A. Avodole,	1st Class Clerk	1.1.52 - 20.3.52
J.R. Falayi,	1st Class Clerk	21.3.52 - 31.12.52

and Assessment Committees setting out their duties and powers and prescribing the organisation required. Nominal rolls of tax payers are to be prepared annually in March. Assessment Committees will meet regularly and carry out individual assessments; Heads of Guilds etc., will be required to submit details of members and, assessment committees will receive more adequate remuneration by an adjustment in payment of Administrative salaries. It is anticipated that the introduction of this system in the next financial year will result in an improvement in collection and obviate the necessity for adverse comment in the next report.

60. Tables indicating the state of Tax Collection as at 31/12/52 are appended below :-

Authority	Original Demand	Tax Collected up to 31.12.52	Balance to be collected up to 31. 3. 53	Tax Collected up to 31.12.51.
Male	£9,823.3.3d	£7,119. 7. 8d	£2,703.15.7d	£7,048.3.10d
Female	2,662.8.4	1,926. 0. 3	736. 8.1	1,765.14.6
Jav-Apoi	1,851.2.0	1,486. 5. 7	364.16.5	1,131.15.9
Union Federation	1,928.4.5	1,538. 5. 6	389.18.11	1,326.11.3
W-Arogbo	923.8.3	672.10.11	250.17.4	552. 0.0
Total	£17,188.6.3d	£12,742.9.11d	£4,445.16.4d	£11,824.5.4d

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OHIO PROVINCE
OKITIPUPA DIVISION
ANNUAL REPORT 1951.

PART I. DIVISIONAL MATTERS.

No alterations were made in the divisional boundaries during the year. The boundaries described in Government Notice No. 660 published in Gazette No. 26 of 4th May 1950 have not yet been demarcated.

2. The area of the Division is approximately 1,550 square miles. Estimated figures of population for each of the five Native Authority areas, based on the number of tax payers for 1951 - 1952 multiplied by four, are :-

<u>Native Authority.</u>	<u>Population.</u>
Ikale Native Authority	- 64,184
Ilaje Native Authority	- 16,980
Ijaw Apoi Native Authority	- 12,084
Bini Confederation Native Authority-	12,180
Ijaw Arogbo Native Authority	- 6,500
Total :-	<u>111,928</u> =====

The total figure of 111,928 shows an increase of 1,474 over the figure for last year.

3. The following officers served in the division during the year.

(a) Officers in charge of the Division.

W.St.P.M. Hancock	1. 1. 51	-	15. 2. 51.
F.J. Barroll	16. 2. 51	-	19. 3. 51.
W.S. Smith M.C.	20. 3. 51	-	31.12. 51.

(b) Assistant District Officers.

F.J. Barroll	1. 1. 51	-	15. 2. 51.
F.J. Barroll	20. 3. 51	-	19. 5. 51.
C.E.B.E. Simpson	3. 6. 51	-	27. 9. 51.
J. D. Smith	29.10. 51	-	31.12. 51.

COURTS.

41. The Native Courts dealt with a total of 1993 cases during the year (983 civil and 1010 criminal cases), and of this total only 20 cases came before the District Officer on appeal. In 11 of these appeals the judgments of Native Courts were annulled or modified; the remaining 9 judgments were confirmed. This is a fairly high standard, and confirms the general opinion that the Native Courts are popular, and function in a more efficient manner than they are usually given credit for.

Court revenue for the year totalled £5028:16:6d.

42. Tax collection has been poor during the year. No single assessment committee performed its duties properly, and in every case their original assessments were far below that of the previous year. Final and reasonably satisfactory assessments were not completed till November. Service on Assessment Committees is most unpopular, and the Native Authorities, particularly Ilaje, are still far too ready to accept flat rate from any income tax payer who protests vigorously on being assessed for income tax.

43. The position of tax collection at 31st December 1951 was :-

	Original Demand	Tax collected up to 31:12:51 including arrears.	Tax out-standing at 31:12:51	Tax collected up to 31:12:50
	£9132:2:6.	£7048:3:10.	£2097:1:8.	£7762:4:7.
	£2365:7:10.	£1765:14:6.	£661:15:4.	£1585:16:5.
Appl.	£1681:2: =	£1131:15:9.	£550:4:9.	£1341:12:5.
Contribution.	£1787:14:5.	£1326:11:3.	£552:13:6.	£1288:16:2.
	£765: = : =	£552: = : =	£297: 2:6.	£552: 11:3.
Totals	£15731: 6:9.	£11824: 5:4.	£4158:17:9.	£12531: =:10.

The percentage of total tax collected is 75.

While

48. The prison staff have worked well, and Senior Warder Grade 1, H.M. Elemelu is to be congratulated on his work and interest in the prison. The prison ration contract was at the rate of 1/- per day. The average lock-up for the year was 40.78.

48.

49. The Postmaster reports that sales and transactions during the year are higher than ever before. There has been an improvement in the mail service, and direct despatches and receipts from Lagos and Akure are now in operation, in lieu of the old method of bulk despatch via Oshogbo. There have been no serious breakdowns in the wireless communications, though both the charging engines have given trouble.

49.

50. The control of their own forests has brought a considerable revenue to the Native Authority, a sum of £18,386 being realized during the year.

51. The boom in timber has resulted in several petty land disputes, and the Native Authorities have not been very successful in settling these misunderstandings. Abura trees might well be called the curse of this division; there are 'abura timber contractors' all over the creek areas, working with a complete disregard for boundaries. The present drop in the market for abura will be welcomed by the Native Authority, even though it will mean a slight drop in revenue.

52.

52. The Manager, Africa Timber and Plywood Company reports :-

" Logs hauled to Agbaje waterside and evacuated by river totalled 20,000 tons. The Agbaje waterside is now being taken up for completion and it is hoped that by May, 1952, it will be complete with work shops, pile driven quays and wharf, and an overhead gantry crane with a lift of 25 tons. All the Ife-Agbabu areas will eventually evacuate log production to Agbaje waterside, and tonnage should reach 50,000 tons per year when the new organisation is complete. Local relations have been very satisfactory"

53. There was a Marine Officer stationed in the division in charge of sudd cutting operation from the end of April until the end of December; work was not so extensive as usual, but most of the arrears were completed during November and December.

The Igbokoda canal (as mentioned previously in this report) was completed early in September and the Marine Engineer was withdrawn to Lagos then. The Marine Department carried out a survey of the Sheba bank with a view to dredging operations being put in hand next year.

54. The Public Works Department have been in charge of the buildings on the new Government Station site at Ebute Irele. By the end of the year the following buildings were complete :-

- One A2 quarter.
- Two A3 quarters.
- District Office.
- Nigeria Police Charge Office.
- Rest House.

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55.

ONDO PROVINCE
OKITIPUPA DIVISION
ANNUAL REPORT 1953.
PART I. DIVISIONAL MATTERS.

No alterations were made in Divisional boundaries during the year.

2. The area of the Division is approximately 1,550 square miles. The population for each District as derived from Census figures is as follows :-

<u>Native Authority</u>	<u>Population.</u>
Ikale	93,462
Ilaje	24,259
Ijaw-Apoi	13,565
Bini-Confederation	12,489
Ijaw-Arogbo	6,410
	<u>150,185</u>

3. The following officers served in the division during the year :-

(a) Officers in charge of the Division.

Mr. A. Bower, 1st January - 11th August, 1953.

2nd September - 31st December, 1953.

Mr. J. D. Smith, 12th August, 1953 - 1st September, 1953.

(b) Assistant District Officers.

Mr. J. D. Smith, 1st January, 1953 - 28th January, 1953.

Mr. D. C. Igwe, 7th September, 1953 - 31st December, 1953.

4. The following Junior Service Staff served in the Division during the year :-

(a) District Clerk and Local Treasurer.

Mr. J. B. Falayi, 1st January, 1953 - 24th September, 1953.

Mr. A. A. Rotilu, 25th September, 1953 - 31st December, 1953.

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whatever boundary is fixed now will be subject of dispute in five or ten years' time when Ilaje's have moved over the border and settled in Ijebu territory and vice-versa. In such circumstances and with an attenuated Administrative Service it is highly improbable that there will be opportunity for further enquiry and even more improbable that any such enquiry would be successful.

34. The Ilaje - Arogbo boundary dispute which lay dormant during 1952 was also resurrected this year. The reason was that the Ugbo Chiefs instituted an action in Mahin Native Court claiming ownership of some eight villages including Arogbo and seeking an injunction against the Agadagba. The Amapetu promptly caused a hearing notice to be served on the Agadagba to appear in Mahin Court. Apart from the fact that the Plaintiffs made no attempt to define the boundary of the land claimed and apart from the fact that Arogbo was clearly not within their jurisdiction, the Mahin Court obviously had no power to hear such a case and the Amapetu's action was a blunder which only served to increase antagonism. The matter has now been referred to the Federal Council in order that a Committee of Enquiry may be appointed with the object of settling the dispute out of Court. The chances of such settlement are, however, very remote and it is probable that an action will be instituted in the Supreme Court next year.

35. If the year has ended on a note of discord at least this is a sign of awakening interest and preferable to the acute lethargy with the Ilaje's bade fare-well to 1952.

36. "..... the infrequent and often ill-attended Council meetings have borne testimony to the lethargy of the older generation which is yet to be overcome." This quotation from the Annual Report

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year and shew signs of growing weary of contributing towards lawyers fees. No doubt for this reason the Bale's claim against the Kalashuwe for rent paid by Messrs John Holts Limited at Olawooba although reported "to be in the hands of a lawyer" has not reached the Supreme Court.

40. In September the Federal Council endorsed the recommendation of the Ijaw-Apoi Council for the appointment of Zacheaus Fagbohun as Bale of Gbekebo. The other contender, Chief Pebabo, having no other supporter has withdrawn from the contest and it is anticipated that Fagbohun's appointment will be recognised in the new year. This is, perhaps, the only thing which has been accomplished in this District during the year.

41. This small Native Authority has had a quiet and unremarkable year. In January new Standing Rules were adopted and this has helped to improve the conduct of meetings which have since been less rowdy than of yore.

42. In April one third of the members of the Council retired in accordance with the Instrument of Appointment. Fresh elections were scheduled for May but as vacancies were uncontested candidates nominated were automatically appointed.

43. The land dispute with Ilaje referred to in paragraph 34 of this Report caused a slight stir when the Hearing Notice was served on the Agadagba to appear in Mahin Court but the Council appear to be prepared to let the matter drift and will probably be content to refer the matter to the Federal Council for arbitration.

44. Towards the end of the year there were signs of public criticism of the Agadagba who is rather prone to seek jobs for his relatives as Tax

.../Collectors...

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Collectors, Court Members etc. He will incur considerable displeasure if he pursues this policy but his ready answer is "But all the people in Arogbo are my relatives"!

-CONFEE-
WION NA-
AUTHORITY.

45. The Bini-Confederation Council has functioned well throughout the year and its members have done good work in Committees of the Federal Council. The Ahaba of Ajagba, whose appointment was recognised in February 1953, has taken a keen and active interest in District affairs and I have been favourably impressed by his conduct of Council meetings over which he has presided. He is however, rather prone to emphasise the seniority of his title over that of the Bale of Akotogbo and this has, at times, led to considerable friction in Council meetings. It is to be hoped that, with experience, he will learn diplomacy.

46. The Bale of Akotogbo's claim to the non-hereditary title of Laba Esigie granted him by the Oba of Benin was "noted" by His Honour, the Lieutenant-Governor in October. The Ahaba has resented this and has given the matter more prominence than it deserves since the title, being non-hereditary, in no wise affects the status of the Bale.

47. In December new Standing Rules for the Council were approved by the Senior Resident and these will considerably help the conduct of business by providing for the appointment of Standing Committees on whom much of the routine work will fall.

48. In April one third of the Council members retired, names being selected by ballot and elections were held throughout the District in May. Elections were held as far as possible in accordance with the

../regulations.....

them in their duties and inaugurate a proper system of individual assessment. These arrangements were made on the assumption that tax rates would remain unaltered and that extra revenue for the Native Authority would be derived by closer assessment. The announcement in May that a Capitation Tax of 10/6d would be levied materially altered the situation since in most cases tax payers would thus be faced with a double increase in one year i. e. an increase due to more accurate assessment and the inevitable increase due to Capitation Tax. Despite the fact that all Native Authorities had agreed to payment of Capitation Tax (albeit reluctantly in some cases) they did not appreciate the rate of tax which would thus have to be imposed. All might have gone well had tax rates been approved early in the year and Tax receipts issued since this would, at any rate, have afforded longer time for propaganda and collection. The tardiness of the Secretariat in approving tax rates in consequence of which Tax Receipts were not available until October considerably aggravated the difficulties.

57. Assessment Committees had met regularly and, on the whole, had worked exceedingly well, but when the new tax rates were applied to the revised assessments of income and demand notices issued the public out-cry began. It will be remembered that the majority of people in this Division paid only 10/- tax last year and the increase was, therefore, considerable. In the face of strong opposition the Native Authorities weakened and sought to appease the people by demanding a reduction in tax rates instead of doing their duty and explaining why the rates were higher than last year.

58. In October and November Administrative
.../Officer....

Officers toured extensively holding public meetings in most towns to explain the tax rates and pointing out that at the lowest rate (18/-) the Native Authority received only 7/6d - less than the minimum tax last year. People were notified of their right of appeal if dissatisfied with their assessments and a considerable number of appeals were heard during this tour. It became apparent, however, that many of the members of the Native Authorities (Tax Collection Authorities) were doing nothing to assist but were content to put the whole blame for the higher tax rates onto the Administration. In November and December, therefore, it became necessary to warn Native Authorities that unless they made strenuous efforts, not only to explain to their people the reasons for the increase in tax but to collect the actual tax due, they, and only they, would suffer since Capitation tax had to be paid and if tax was not collected the Native Authority could not hope to maintain, much less improve, public services. On the threat of the withdrawal of the Administration from further tax dealings a more reasonable attitude prevailed and Tax collection began, slowly, in December. It is proposed, in January, that an all-out drive be conducted to complete collection and arrangements to effect this have been made for the Ikale District. With the short time available, before the close of the Financial year, however, it seems unlikely that the original amount estimated will be collected and the Native Authority will thus lose financially.

59. As already stated, Assessment Committees have worked well during the year and the fault for any short-fall in revenue will not lie with them. It is the Native Authorities who have been called

.../upon...

FIRST SCHEDULE

Members of the Ijebu-Aro District Council

The Ayoobu of Aroobu (President)

One Chief
four other members } of whom at least one shall
be literate, elected to
represent the Egbecubiri
quarter of Aroobu.

One Chief
four other members } ditto ... the Erubiri quarter
of Aroobu.

One Chief
one other member } ditto ... the Agwobiri
quarter of Aroobu.

One Chief
three other members } ditto ... represent Uke and
Opuba.

One Chief
two other members } ditto ... represent Apata.

One Chief
one other member } ditto ... represent Ajapa.

SECOND SCHEDULE

Subject to the provisions of the First Schedule, every person shall be entitled to vote or to be a candidate for election to membership of the Council who

- (a) (i) has been resident in the Council area for a period of at least twelve months immediately preceding the election; or
- (ii) is a native of the area; and
- (b) has paid tax anywhere in Nigeria, or been exempted therefrom, in the financial year in which the election occurs or during the preceding financial year; and
- (c) is not, under any law in force in Nigeria, found or declared to be of unsound mind or adjudged to be a lunatic.

For the purpose of these qualifications,

"a native of the Area" means a person who was born in, or whose father was born, in the area.

"tax" means tax imposed under the provisions of the Income Tax Ordinance or the Direct Taxation Ordinance or any laws amended or substituted for them.

2. Notwithstanding the above provisions, no person shall be entitled to be elected as a member of the Council, who has, within a period of five years immediately before the date of election, been serving any part of a sentence of imprisonment for a term exceeding six months.