

**ASPECT OF SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY
OF OMU-IJEBU IN 2000**

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the research project work was carried out by **Olusanya Nofisat Ololade**, Matriculation Number **18012213001** in the Department of HIS/SOS, School of Arts and Social Science, Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu Ijebu Ogun State.

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Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to Almighty Allah, the creation of universe, the ancient of days, you are today, tomorrow and future, I say Alliamdulilahi Robilli Al-amim. I also dedicate it to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Olusanya.

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the aspect of socio-political and economic history of Omu-Ijebu in 2000. Though the Ijebu people are part of the Yoruba people living in the South-western part of Nigeria, who mostly traced their origin to Ife as the source of mankind, there are doubts in some quarters whether the people are Yoruba. The primary data for this research were drawn from oral performance of oriki Omu-Ijebu; and some notable personalities of Omu-Ijebu. The secondary data were internet, books and journal. The study throws more light on the history and origin of the Omu-Ijebu. It also proves that the Ijebu people are connected to the larger Yoruba race and that the Ijebu are still one despite their presence in more than one state and in many towns. The study contributes to the development of Ijebu people literature in that it has added to our corpus of oriki. This work would be of immense value to scholars of not only literary study but also other fields such as history, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, ethnography and cultural study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	i
Copyright	ii
Certification	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vi
Table of contents	vii
CHAPTER ONE	
Introduction	1
Background of the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Objectives of the Study	3
Significance of the Study	3
Scope/Limitation of the Study	3
Literature Review	3
Methodology	4
Endnotes	5
CHAPTER TWO	
Land and People of Ijebu	6
Origin of Ijebu	7
Traditional Festival in Ijebuland	8
Endnotes	21

CHAPTER THREE

History of Omu-Ijebu	24
Economic activities of Omu Ijebu	26
Endnotes	28

CHAPTER FOUR

Traditional Political System in Omu Ijebu	29
Traditional Festival in Omu-Ijebu	32
Endnotes	34

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary	35
Conclusion	35
Bibliography	37

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The Yoruba people are a native West African ethnic group that inhabit western Africa, in mainly the parts of Nigeria, Benin, and Togo that constitute Yorubaland. The Yoruba constitute around 38 million people in Africa, a few hundred thousand outside of its continental borders, and bear some further representation among members of the African diaspora. The vast majority of the Yoruba population is today within the country of Nigeria, where the Yoruba make up 15.5% of the country's population by contemporary estimations,¹ making them one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, by number. Most Yoruba people speak the Yoruba language, which is, also, the Niger-Congo language with the largest number of native speakers².

The Ijebu people are part of the Yoruba people living in the South–Western part of Nigeria to the coast. They are prominently occupying parts of Ogun and Lagos states of Nigeria. The Ijebuland is bounded on the North by the Ibadan land, on the East by the Ondo land, on the West by the Egba land and in the South by the Lagos Lagoon¹.

The Ijebu kingdom is governed by a king and his group of titled elders, who usually are men of a higher status and of considerable influence. The council governed the region and had representatives of further devolved councils who no longer have any power. Since the invasion of Lord Lugard, these councils have continued to meet and advise the Obanta kings, their power, however, is largely ceremonial since the establishment of the colonial administration in their protectorate³. The elders were known to represent their various villages and the will of the people, and are now not such a significant part in the ceremonial

process. The elders were all given individual titles and the lead elder was given the title prince, although he was only ever to inherit the kingship in special circumstances.

Like every other pre-literate people, the history of the Omu-Ijebu people is both obscure and uncertain. It is obscure in that until barely two hundred years ago, there was no written history. Even now, people still have to rely on traditions handed down from one generation to another. This way of recording history, as we all realise, is not entirely reliable. Memory may fail, political exigencies may force on the historian the necessity for hiding the truth or remoulding the whole story⁴. All these factors must be carefully weighted together when reading through the early history of our people. It is as well uncertain. As our history is largely unwritten, it is not possible to compare our records with those of other countries in this way. The king's bards of ancient times and the royal historians are no more⁵. The men who profess to know everything of our history are hampered by the political happenings of our day. We shall however attempt the origin history of the Omu-Ijebu.

Statement of the Problem

This research has to do with the area marked out for research. This has to do with the coverage in terms of areas and locations of Omu-Ijebu. Also, there are major problems confronting omu people right from their early till this present.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research is to examine the aspect of socio-political and economic history of Omu-Ijebu in 2000.

Specifically are the objectives;

- To know the Origin of Ijebu

- To assess the history of Omu-Ijebu
- To know the socio-political of Omu-Ijebu
- To examine the economic activities of Omu-Ijebu

Significance of the Study

The outcome of this research will shed more light on the history of Omu-Ijebu. Also, this study will be helpful for further research on history of Omu-Ijebu.

Scope/Limitation of the Study

This research will lay more emphasizes on the aspect of socio-political and economic history of Omu-Ijebu.

Literature Review

One of the books consulted is, the Early History of Ijebu, by T.O Ogunkoya. His work is based on the rudiment or foundation of the Ijebu people as regards their migration from Ile-Ife to settle in a place now known as Ijebu-Ode. Samuel Johnson, also trail similar trend with Ogunkoya, and some other writers such as; IB, Ogunkoya's History of Ijebu, A.Ayantuga's the Ijebu and its Neighbors, and so on was reviewed on the early history or foundation of Ijebus.

The Economic History of West Africa to 1800, by Osiyale Tunde is reviewed, for clarification on the roles played by the women in farming in Western part of Nigeria. Invariably, Themes in the History of the Ijebu and Remo of Western Nigeria by Oladipupo O. Olubometun. Also, 'Ali Tubogun 1937 account for entered Ijebuland through Epe. Adedeji work a survey of political development in Ijebuland from the colonial period to 1983 and powerful and powerless: women in religion and culture in the traditional Ijebu society in south-west Nigeria.

Methodology

Historical methodology will be adopted. This research work will be carried out using primary source materials mainly oral interview and newspaper articles. It will also make use of secondary materials like textbooks, journal, articles as well as internet materials.

Endnotes

1. Ogunkoya, T. O. 1956. "The Early History of Ijebu :” JHSN December, 1956. Vol. 1, P. 9
2. Oduwobi, T. 2004. Ijebu Under Colonial Rule (1892-1960). An Administrative and Political Analysis. Lagos: First Academic Publishers vol. 3 Pp. 13-44.
3. Epega, D. O. 2009. Iwe Itan Ijebu ati awon ilu Miran (A History of Ijebu and some other Towns) 1st edition. Lagos: Ife –Olu Printing Works p.41.
4. Osiyale, A handout on “Economic History of West Africa to 1800” p.5
5. Ajetunmobi R.O 2010. Historiography and the Nature of History. Ijebu-Ode. Gabby Printing Nigeria Enterprise (2nded) Pp. 24-25

CHAPTER TWO

Land and People of Ijebu

Ijebu was a Yoruba kingdom in pre-colonial Nigeria and is still a kingdom to date. It was formed around the fifteenth century.¹ According to legend, its ruling dynasty was founded by Obanta of Ile-Ife. Its contemporary successor is one of the country's traditional states.

The Ijebu people are considered to be the first among the Yoruba speakers to come into contact with the Europeans, who came to them in the beginning of the 14th century. Ijebu Empire has always been (and still is) an organized and strong nation that was able to protect itself from harm.

The kingdom is one of the most developed in the region with a complex and highly organized government. The capital is at Ijebu Ode where the Awujale has his palace. Counterbalancing the Awujale is the Osugbo (known as the Ogboni in other parts of Nigeria), a council of all free born, titled men that acted as the kingdom's courts. The Osugbo is divided into six groups based on rank, the highest being the iwarefa, whose head the Oliwa was the second most powerful figure in the nation. Also powerful is the Olisa, who could be described as the mayor of Ijebu Ode.

Like many African societies, Ijebu was also divided into three age ranks, and these groups each had their own leaders. The Kingdom is made up of several towns and stretches to parts of Lagos State and borders Ondo State.² These towns includes Ijebu-Igbo, Imota, Ikorodu, Epe, Lagos, Ijebu-Isiwo, Ogun Waterside, Iwopin, Lekki in Lagos State, Ijebu-Imushin, Ijebu-Ife, Apunren, Erunwon, Isonyin, Ososa, Odogbolu and Ago-Iwoye. Now, it remains the largest ethnic group among all Yoruba people³.

There is a lot of origin legends of the Ijebus. Many claim that the origin of Yoruba people and Ijebu in particular are related to the Jebusites and other biblical people. However, it is not very likely. Among other legends, there is one that connect Ijebu to Mecca. According to it, the legendary ancestor of the Yoruba, Oduduwa, had to leave Mecca, so he went and created Ijebuland where today's Lagos and Ogun State stand².

There is, generally, rain throughout the year, though most of it falls during the wet season April to October. The town enjoys two rainfall maxima: one in June, and the other in round about September. (The occurrence of the double maxima is in tune with the overhead passage of the ITCZ). It lies on the boundary separating the 60-80 inch (150-200 cm) mean annual rainfall belt from the 40-60 inch (100-150 cm) belt; the mean annual rainfall is, therefore, about 50 inches (125 cm.). Daily ranges of temperature are usually very small (under 20 F), except during the Harmattan season, when they are slightly higher (25-30 F). Maximum diurnal temperature, generally, lies between 75 and 85 F, while the minimum is seldom below 55 F. Absolute humidity is consistently high, though there is usually a marked drop during the Harmattan i.e. from mid-November till early January. Relative humidity is also high. (The high rate of evapo-transpiration can be accounted for by the high sunshine value – usually more than 7 hours a day – coupled with the occurrence of rain throughout the year).

Origin of Ijebu

Ogunkoya in his book says that the province now called Ijebu was at one time a desolate, uninhabited forest waste and that it was populated by waves of migration from the East. Some have claimed that the “East” referred to was a place called Wadai. Others would go as far as to maintain that it was Mecca. Some Ijebu people also claimed to have come to their present abode from Ife like other Yoruba

in their oral tradition. For clarity reason, we shall therefore consider the following traditions in chronological order as our record of Ijebu origin history:

Extant Ijebu traditions claim that the town of Ijebu-Ode is said to have been founded by three brothers and they are; Olu iwa, Ajebu and Olode who came from Ile-Ife and from the two of them the town got its name.

Same goes for the historical account of the origin of Ijebu-Igbo which was published in 1927.

Commenting on the pre-colonial ethnographic record of European travelers and curio-collectors like D' Avazac, Lloyd and Pereira on Ijebu origin, Oduwobi says:

Contemporary observers knew little of the political characters and institutions of the Ijebu kingdom during the nineteenth century .This was largely because until the eve of the colonial period the Ijebu, for commercial and political reason, kept out foreigners from their country, the British authorities in Lagos, for example, held a wrong impression of the political configuration of the Ijebu kingdom, believing that it was a federal of some sort.²

Ogunkoya in his account says that Ijebuland was populated by three waves of migration and did not mention exactly where they came from. The first Ijebu migration he said was led by a man named Olu-iwa, accompanied by two warriors Ajebu and Olode.

Odukoya says although no living historian knows the meaning of *Ijebu*, being an ancient term, we all do know what it is not. Odukoya says this because Johnson in allusion to Ijebu history in his book History of Yoruba tried to define Ijebu as “je” “Ibu” which he translated into food of the deep and associated the origin of the word with Olowu of Owu who came into existence only about 1,000 A.D.

Ayantuga refers vaguely to a first wave of migration into Ijebu leading to the foundation of the Idoko community in Imusin. Then, using Ogunkoya's account, he attributes the Olu-iwa led migration to be the second in Ijebu. Ayantuga, like Odukoya, did not mention where the Ijebu people came from³.

Adesanya claims that the Ijebu originated from Wadai. According to him, the Ijebu originated directly from Noah of the Biblical and Koranic tradition. Adesanya claims that Noah, the only man saved from the Biblical and Koranic flood had his name corrupted to Onuwa, later to Oluwa and later to Olu-iwa and therefore Oluwabi. Hence, Adesanya argues that the Ijebu should be referred to as 'Omo Oluwabi' and not "Omo Alare" or "Omo Obanta" since, (according to him) Obanta is not the sole "root" of all the Ijebu but only a leader of an Ijebu migratory wave⁴. Further in his thesis, Adesanya says there are eight Ifes namely: Ife Awaye, Ife Owoni, Ife Owolaa, Ife Ilere, Ife Owodaye, Ife Ojugborongu, Ife Oyelagboo and the present Ile-Ife. Further, Adesanya says the Ife Owodaye is the Wadai which he claims that the Ijebu came from. Adesanya interestingly (apart from his early denials of the Ife tradition like the Awujale) made an allusion to Ife by admitting the fact that a wave of the Ijebu migrants came from the known Ife and co-habited with the antedate people at Odoluwa (the original name for Ijebu -Ode).

Ayandele corroborates Ayantuga's position. He submits that the Idoko were the autochthonous dwellers of Ijebu and that they were wiped out by the Ijebu immigrants led by Olu-iwa. Ayandele, However confuses Oluiwa with Obanta as one and the same person.³

Ogunba on the other hand, inverses the order of migration proposed by Ayantuga by postulating that the first settlers in Ijebu were led in by Olu-iwa and that they were followed by another set, the Idoko group presumably under Osifaderin. Ogunba too, did not mention the point of Ijebu origin before their migration to Ijebuland. According to him, the Idoko established political sway over

many settlements in Ijebu including Ijebu-Ode where they placed a viceroy in the person of Osinumesi. The power of the Idoko was subsequently terminated by the establishment of the Awujale dynasty .Ogunba concludes that the political and cultural marginalization of the Idoko by the new dynasty in the succeeding centuries caused many of them to flee their original homes in the Imusin area during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴

Whereas Abimbola on the origin of the Ijebu people says:

*.....it is very important to let researchers be aware that it was political exigencies, conspiracy, hatred, injustice, disrespect for others, fear of domination and other factors that had in the past contributed to not having a proper record on the Ijebu history...The Ijebu migration were in three or more waves and at different times. The first was under the legendary Olu-iwa, the greatest forebear of the Ijebu people. Another leader, Arisu, also led his group of Ijebu migrants to Ijebu-Ode and settled down... the last group of Ijebu migrants was led by Obanta.*⁵

The origin of the Ijebu, according to the incumbent Awujale of Ijebuland, who is also the paramount traditional ruler in the land, Oba S. K. Adetona remains unchanged from his earlier position that the Ijebu people came from Wadai Sudan. Oba Adetona had said this several times and at various fora. To him and his ilk, the Ife tradition, to which several Yoruba states trace their origin, is nothing to write home about. The Awujale maintains this despite the claim of some traditions that he is a son of Oduduwa.

But unlike the Awujale's view, the position of a majority of the Ijebu obas in the course of this research work, notably the Liken of Iwopin, Ajalorun of Ijebu – Ife, Lenuwa of Ode-Omi, Osobiya of Makun omi, Orimolusi's Regent, Ayangbunren of Ikorodu, Akarigbo of Remo, to mention but a few is in support of the Ife tradition as the source of the origin of the Ijebu, like other Yoruba people.

An oral tradition on the history of Ijebu says the origin of the word “Ijebu” is derived from the action of someone who threw a boulder into a river and the resultant sound of the ripple: “jebu!” is the source of Ijebu as a name.⁶

Another oral tradition on Ijebu history (also on the origin of Ijebu name) says that when the Ijebu settlement was founded long ago, a sentry was put at the settlement’s entrance. The sentry had a powerful potion which would make the leg of an invader (robber or any undesirable element) on arrival at the settlement's entrance bleed. And this happened one day when an undesirable element came visiting the Ijebu settlement. It was from the resultant yell of "Ije bu"! that is "blood is gushing! ' from the sentry that the Ijebu settlement's name was formed.

Further on the origin of the Ijebu people and the source of the word "Ijebu”, another oral tradition attributes the source of the name “Ijebu” to the two root word “je” (eat) and " bu" (what is mouldy). That is, ' “je and bu" make " Jebu .⁷

Oduşino in his account made attempt at treating the origin of the Ijebu people as well as the etymology of the word “Ijebu”. Like he said,

Oni mi je nubu omo Oluweri
Omo Ajebujosa de Igbo-bini
O b'onibu rojo aijento
Bee, ii opa oun ko i kon'le
The Rovers of the deep, offspring of Oluweri
The rovers of deep waters as far as Igbobini
Who do not fear the depth of sea
Due to their dexterity on the sea (Oduşino 2004) ⁸

The whole Ijebuland , from the beginning, was water-logged and mostly riverine and the people could reach their neighbours (like the Igbobini people) only through the waterways. A time came when the service of a very powerful Babalawo (called Oniseemu Atikori) was sought. Oniseemu performed some wonder -rituals all over Ijebuland. he later sacrificed himself by sitting on a ritual mat which he spread on the lagoon at Ijebu- Ode and was swept away into the

Atlantic ocean along with the lagoon thus draining the Ijebu-Ode area of water. The remaining part of Ijebuland, still with many water deposit is known as the Ijebu - waterside till today. Oduşino described Obanta as a wayfarer who later became the oba in Ijebu-ode. According to him, the name “Obanta” means “Ebonita (but not in Johnson’s sense). He said Obanta was an intruder who usurped the kingship stool in Ijebu-Ode as “Ewinjaile” that is somebody who was used to swallow (settle) all the existing kingship tussle in Ijebu-Ode but erroneously pronounced “Awujale” today. Oduşino said that the Awujale’s ascension to the throne in Ijebu-Ode is circumstantial in the sense that his arrival in Ijebu history was at the point of a political impasse/logjam caused by Osimade’s (the then Owa-Osi Ijasi) not having a heir, as a result of the curse placed on him by his elder brother Onayelu, (who later became the Orimolusi of Ijebu Igbo) whom Osimade cheated to become the oba in Ijebu- Ode thus making Onayelu to relocate to Ijebu-Igbo as the ruler. Oduşino concluded that the use of the prefix “Ijebu” in Ijebu towns’ names (like Ijebu- Ode, Ijebu-Igbo and other towns) is a post-Ijebu Expedition event and it was also the British imperialists that made Ijebu-Ode the capital of the Ijebu people at the expense of Ijebu-Igbo; the supposed senior town to Ijebu-Ode⁹.

Having considered the diverse views of various scholars and authorities on the history of the origins of the Ijebu people, we can now attempt to draw our conclusion on the Ijebu origin:

There is over-whelming historical evidence that the founder of Ijebuland and Ijebu’s first leader was the legendary Olu-iwa who probably came with Ajebu and Olode. We arrive at this position because at least ten out of our sixteen considered legends alluded to Olu-iwa’s primogeneity in Ijebu history. The “Eastern location” where the Ijebu people were said to have migrated from is either Ife or Mecca/ Egypt.

The meaning of the word “Ijebu” is *Ajebujosa: Oni mi je nubu* (rovers of the sea) as mentioned above.

The origin of Ijebu-Ode could not be central to Ijebu origin because many other Ijebu towns took their sources from elsewhere like Ife.

That Ijebu-Ode was said to be one of the first three towns to be founded and being the seat of the Awujale notwithstanding. Even, the paramount of the Awujale is becoming disputable. His traditional senior siblings like the Liken of Iwopin, Lenuwa of Odeomi, Orimolusi of Ijebu-Igbo and even the Akarigbo of Ijebu-Remo all contest his so-called supremacy. Also is the Oloko of Ijebu-Imusin who claims to be autochthonous in Ijebuland and hence superior to the Awujale.

It is obvious that the Ife origin factor is not absent from the Ijebu origin history and cannot be ruled out. It could be established therefore that the Ijebu have a strong relation with the other Yoruba people. Perhaps, the Ijebu came from Ife, especially those led by Koyelu (Akarigbo) and the Emuren people as noted by Odukoya (above) while a few came from elsewhere¹⁰.

The Ijebu are a Yoruba people with a close link and are allied in language, religious beliefs and traditional culture to the rest of the Yoruba race due probably to acculturation and geographical contiguity especially when considering some *oriki* Ijebu lines like:

Omo Ilaje maro Ode	Offspring of Ilaje from Ode
A d’Ado maa k’Ewii	Offspring of the visitor at Ado -
O k’Ooni galegale	Who needs not pay homage to the Ewi
Ara Iwo r’aawa	One who greets the Ooni familiarly A ii j’iwowo Because we are related to Iwo
Ikole r’aawa	We as such abhor eating of porridge
A ii j’eron ako	Because we are of Ikole origin We herefore abhor eating of male cattle

Omo Olowu oduru	Offspring of Olowu-oduru who specializes in the making of potent curses
Omo Ajifepe sire	Offspring of Olobi wowotiwo
Omo Olobi wowotiwo	Offspring of Olobi wowotiwo
Omo A-duro gb'ofa nay	Offspring of the brave A-duro-gbofa-naya
E e gba t'ee neyin ojo ni	Whoever behaves otherwise is a coward
Omo Koyelu	Offspring of Koyelu
Omo Iremo Oodua	Offspring of Iremo Oodua
Omo Ogbolu Ife Owodaye	Offspring of Ogbolu from Ife Owodaye
Omo Ife Ooye	Offspring of Ife Ooye (Epega 1919)

The Osugbo cult, important as it is in Ijebu socio-political life, has a lot to reveal in the Ife origin link in Ijebu history. The Osugbo greet one another as follows:

Osugbo ree! Oh! That is you Osugbo!

Agbalagba Ufe The elderly one of Ufe

Ogbo Ato o ! Long may you live!

This is to be followed by their left hand shaking and kissing of the hand. The Ogboni/Osugbo we should note was formed in Ile-Ife before its spread to other Yoruba societies.

Yoruba culture attaches much importance to pouring of libation at their spiritual gathering or any drinking spree. In Ijebuland, it is done with Ife link as follows: the server would serve, pour libation, drink first before serving others (especially elders) and say:

Obemu r'aagba nUfe o! The server is the senior in Ufe!

And others would chorus:

Waa mu un pe o! Long may you drink (live)

The single word *owa* and its usage in Ijebu society should be noted. *owa* is a Yoruba word meaning a ruler. It is a truism that it is associated more with the Ijebu, another group of Yoruba people. But that is to the uninformed as it is as well much used in Ijebu. The central ruling council of the Awujale is known as Ajo owa. During some ceremonies, the Awujale is greeted ‘Owa Osi!’ Some traditional rulers in Ijebuland are known as Olowa: Olowa Igbo, Olowa Modisa, Olowa Iberu and so on. If the Ijebu society retains *owa* usage till now, it means that the Ijebu people must be seriously related to the Yoruba¹¹.

Taking a cue from all the above conclusions, the Ijebu are a Yoruba people but not so recognised due to a missing link (perhaps) resultant from inavailability of proper record, political hampering, exigency, conspiracy (or all) as mentioned (above). This is because the Ijebu are closely allied in language, religious beliefs and traditional culture with other Yoruba groups, save for their dialect.

More importantly, about 95% incantations used in the psychotherapeutic healing system in Ijebuland is recited in either the standard Yoruba language or (occasionally) in an admixture of the standard Yoruba and Ijebu dialect, directed to no other place as the source of the world than Ife (oro Ufe). Talking of their ancestral worship, save the Agemo, Eluku and Obinren Ojowu (Eebi) cults that are not common to the other Yoruba people, there is invariably no difference in their traditional belief and worship. Even the Ijebu’s Osi (ancestors) are worshipped with Iyan (pounded yam) which is an irregular food of the Ijebu; needless to talk of their names (as earlier mentioned), except those having to do with their localized native tradition and sub-culture like Usen, Osi, Koya and Oso. They are as meaningful, as structured and allied to the Yoruba’s. Even musicians in Ijebuland do not (always) sing in Ijebu dialect. They either sing in the pure Yoruba language or in (occasional) admixture of Yoruba and Ijebu dialect. This according to them is the belief that the standard Yoruba is an integrated language belonging to all the

“Kaaaro-oojiire“ people; though some of them also agree that singing in the standard Yoruba is for them to be heard and understood better beyond their immediate milieu¹². Speaking in the standard Yoruba, among the Ijebu people, seems to be a sort of “civilization” especially a hallmark of having gone to school. Hence, clerics take pride in speaking in standard Yoruba during their preaching or in an admixture of the standard Yoruba and Ijebu, rather than pure Ijebu dialect, be it in churches, mosques or any public arena, as a “civilized” person. People will therefore, say “Yoba ma ron mi so!” He is speaking Yoruba! It had been so for a long time since the Yoruba language had been reduced to writing.⁹

In addition, folktale story telling in Ijebuland is rendered in Ijebu dialect but the usual closing code is:

Iton mi gbo t’Alufe bo reyen o!
 Ki m ba puro
 Kaago erun mi maa dun
 Ki m baa puro
 Kaago erun mi dun gba meta po! po! po!
 That is the story I collected from Ife (land)
 If I had lied
 The gong of my mouth should not sound
 But if I had not told a lie
 The gong of my mouth should sound po! po! po!¹³

There definitely must be a link between Alufe (Ife) and Ijebu. Nothing to be written in the mother tongue in Ijebuland is written in hundred percent (100%) Ijebu dialect except things written in English, Arabic or Latin Languages. As earlier mentioned, they are either written in pure Yoruba language or an admixture of standard Yoruba and Ijebu dialect. Inscriptions on house frontages, vehicles, commercial centres, schools, graves/ tombs and Ijebu names are not written in hundred percent (100%) Ijebu dialect. For instance names like Opaneye, Adetono, Ogupolu, Ogusipe, Sodemuren, Olountusenn among others are spelled and written as Opaleye, Adetona, Ogunpolu, Ogunsipe, Sodemuren, Olountosin and so on. In

the course of our research, it took a desperate efforts on our part to get some part of the Oriki in this collection written in Ijebu dialect as many informants do not speak pure Ijebu dialect any more but Yoruba. The question then arises: if many things done are in standard Yoruba format, what further proof do we need to confirm that the Ijebu people are Yoruba?

Although, authors of Ijebu extract like Dr. Odusino and Prince Adesanya and authority like the incumbent Awujale are of the opinion that Ijebu is a language and should be a language of its own and not a dialect of the Yoruba language as currently being experienced, some respected political authorities Like Sir Olaniwun Ajayi and his mentor late Chief Obafemi Awolowo who are also Ijebu indigenes have contrary opinion. The duo believe that the Ijebu are descendants of Oduduwa. It is interesting and rather paradoxical to note that despite the incumbent Awujale's stance that the Ijebu people are not Yoruba, his *oriki* written at the bottom of his portrait in the inner sanctuary of his palace is not written in 100% Ijebu dialect but in an admixture of the Yoruba language and Ijebu dialect. Even his own surname: Adetona and his ancestral lineage name: Anikilaya are not written in Ijebu. Paradoxically the Awujale makes it a habit not to speak Yoruba because of his claim that the Ijebu people are not Yoruba. The Awujale only speaks in Ijebu and English! It should be noted that the Awujale in the 1970s established a leather industry in Ijebu Ode named "Wadai Leather Industry" to back his claims that the Ijebu are not Yoruba but a people from a place called Wadai.

Again, considering all the above points one could establish the fact that the Ijebu people are Yoruba. After all, Olu-iwa, the Ijebu legendary leader was said to be Oduduwa's pal, contemporary and in –law. Every other reason apart, history proves that the Ijebu people too used to have three tribal marks 'pele' on each

cheek like their Yoruba neighbours before putting a stop to the practice in about 1920. We conclude therefore that the Ijebu are a Yoruba people.¹⁴

Traditional Festival in Ijebuland

Ojude Oba

The glitz and colors associated with the festival rank among the most celebrated cultural festivals in Nigeria. Ijebu sons and daughters, Muslim and non-Muslim, always look forward to this event. It is an age-long tradition. The ceremony takes place every year on the third day of *eid-l-adha*, when Muslims and non-Muslims go to the Awujale palace, singing and dancing with the principal chiefs of the town and riding on horses to pay homage to the Awujale, no matter his religious affiliation. What is important is that he sits on the throne throughout the length of the ceremony to receive his people¹⁵. Different age groups in specially tailored dresses dance around the town. Although the festival began as purely a Muslim affair, it has over the years acquired new meaning as it now embraces features of local traditions.

The Ojude Oba festival normally begins with prayers by the Imam of Ijebuland, followed by the National Anthem, Ogun state Anthem, and the Awujale Anthem, and finally the lineage praise of the Ijebus. The Awujale anthem goes thus:

*Kaabiyesi o (2ce) Alaiye Oba wa,
K'adepel'ori o kibatape lese,
k'adepel'ori. K'odigbapel'orun, Ki Oba
petiti,
Ki ijobatuwalara, kaabiyesi o.
Oba waoninu re. Kaabiyesi o (2ce).*¹⁶

After the anthems and lineage praise, the parade of different ages in the

community known as *Regberegbe* begins. The age grade societies were established in the 18th century. Wompari is the general name given to all the age grade societies. Some of the age grades are Egbe Gbobaniyi male and female (1962-1964), Egbe Bobagunte male and female (1956-1958), Akile of Ijebu (1959-1961), Mafowoku, Egbe Arobayo male and female, Egbe Jagunmolu (1965-1967), Egbe Bobakeye, and Egbe Bobagbimo. All the age grades present their special gift to the king as they parade.

The Wompari is a unique and age long institution, designed to wield the society into age groups, male and female, and for bringing development and progress to the community. Most of these groups comprise heads of industries, top managers, and chief executive officers. They dance before the king one after the other. Each group is expected to clad in the latest fashion. They file past in turn with their drummers to pay homage to the king¹⁷.

During the 1-day event are the glowing tributes of a festival that is responsive to social trends, while retaining the tradition of having different age groups to entertain and renew their allegiance to the traditional ruler. It is usually a dance, but more importantly, a dance with meaning. Each age group displays at the expansive lawn that separates the king and his guests from the crowd. That makes the festival an inspiring experience.

The Ojude Oba festival has always had enough visual pleasantries for every visitor. Some of the attractions are the beauty of a group of people in the same age group coming together in service of their motherland. Many of the groups' names are related to the king such as Obafuwaji, Bobakeye, Gbobayo, Gbobaniyi, and Gbobalaye¹⁸.

Each of these groups has its uniqueness, either in the manner of appearance, style of dressing, or dance pattern. The Gbobaniyi comprises young middle-age men, and has Governor Gbenga Daniel as its patron (2004-). They make their

appearance known by dressing in rich traditional Aso- Oke clothes. They all hold walking sticks and dance like conquerors. The Bobagbimo, true to the group's name, always appear in learned and cerebral attire. The group has little of dance and pleasantries but more of grins, nods, and prayers. Gaiety and dance are the hallmarks of the all-female Gbobaleye, which has the Waka Music Superstar, Queen Salawa Abeni, as one of its prominent members. The parade of the Baloguns and Eleshins is usually the most colorful and breathtaking event of the festival¹⁹.

A Balogun or an Eleshin is a direct descendant of the war heroes who gained notable victories for the Ijebu during the inter-ethnic Yoruba wars in the pre-colonial history of Nigeria. It is commonly believed that it was at Ojude Oba that the families of the war heroes led by the reigning Balogun and deputies exhibited their equestrian prowess by simulating mock battle shows and displays.

It is always a performance to behold when each Balogun and Eleshin family takes its turn to pay homage to the king amid martial music, jubilation, and hilarity of an estimated crowd of over one million both at the palace square and through the town including participants, visitors, and tourists. This was what made Oba Sikiru Kayode Adetona to describe the Ojude Oba day as the Ijebus' national day. "Ojude Oba is now maturing into a world class event. It has all the ingredients of uniqueness and greatness".²⁰

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CHAPTER THREE

History of Omu-Ijebu

OMU in Ijebu province consists mostly of Owu indigenes who migrated out of Owu Ipole now known as Orile Owu during the war of "Dispersal of 1821 - 1827. Okukumadesi was the founder of Omu –Ijebu¹. He was a grandson of Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yorubas. His father Olowu a prince - from Ile-Ife founded the Owu kingdom. During the war of Dispersal Okukumadesi left Orile-Owu in company of his ancestral brother Prince Olowu of Owu - Ijebu and travelled southwards to Apomu and because of another war there at Apomu, they proceeded to Isomu near Ikija where they stayed for some two years till after the coronation of Olowu. Okukumadesi with all his royal paraphernalia as a prince wanted to settle down at Isomu but could not as it was not convenient. They continued their journey until they got to Ikija-Ijebu where they were camped on the outskirts of the town. As the then traditional ruler of Ikija could not attend to them on time, Okukumadesi grew impatient. He and his cousin Adekiyeri and a large number of the entourage left their kiths and kips who had already established Owu town beside Ikija and moved west-ward on their migrant journey in search of a better place for settlement which is a place by the river as decreed by the Oracle². They moved to Ijebu-Ode where some members of the migrant party also settled while the main group moved to Ala and camped at a place now known as Odo Ramuja. The group still being in search of a better site for settlement again moved from Ala while leaving some members of the migrant group at Odo Ramuja (infact Adetola Ramuja the 1st Oba of Omu performed his Odo rites here) which later became an Omu auxiliary settlement or the town of Ramuja. At this stage, the Awujale began to suspect whether Omu migrant group really meant to settle in

Ijebu land or they had come merely to learn and study the exit and passage facilities available in Ijebu land and sneak out at any opportune time, hence the Awujale appointed Afile or Ajale an intelligence agent, a sort of resident Agent Plenipotentiary to look after the Omu migrant heroes and settle with them wherever they decided to found a settlement in Ijebu land. The Afinle would constitute a link of friendship between the Awujale and Omu people. The Omu migrant party having been assured that the appointment of Afinle was never an encroachment upon their liberty as a sovereign entity moved from Odo Ramuja with Afinle in their entourage and stopped at a place five miles from Ala and ten miles to Ijebu-Ode on Ejinrin Road. Here a suitable site was found for settlement and the town of Omu was founded. The other cofounders were Ramuja, Jawun and Adekiyeri with orunsen and Kelewusi as their warriors. On arrival, the migrant Omu people were granted land to settle by Irete people then under the leadership of Gbogbolu son of Oyenuyi. People also came later to settle there from Motta, Moro, Ode-Omi and Igbein hence you have quarters such as Itun-mota, Oke-Moro, Odo-Okoko, Itun-mobido and Ago-Omu. Omu -Ijebu settlers spread to other villages numbering over twenty-five spreading towards and beyond the Lagos Lagoon in Epe, Ejinrin, Ketu, Itokin and Lekki areas of Lagos State. Infact more than 75% of Omu settlement farmland is in Lagos State³.

Location

Omu town is situated on the coastal plain of Ogun State, South West, Nigeria. Precisely, it is on Kilometer 83 on the Ejinrin Ijebu Ibaclan Federal Trunk "B" Road. It is one of the four towns constituting the Ijebu-Southern District Council Area in the Old "Western State of Nigeria". It is 16km South of Ijebu Ode, the Head quarters of Ijebu Ode Local Government and 6km North of Ketu in Epe Local Government of Lagos State.

Omu Anthem

ilu mi,ilu mi
omu ijebu
ilu mi,ilu mi
omu ijebu
o dara,ol'ewa
ilu aladun
ibikibi to wun ka de lori 'le aiye
Ao ko le gbagbe
Ao ko le gbagbe
Omu ijebu.

Ijebu Anthem

Kabiyes (2ce)
Alaiye Baba wa
Kade pe lori o, kibata pe lese
Kade pe lori o, kodigba pe lorun
Ki joba ko pe titi
Kabeyesi o ba wa, oba wa Oninnre
Kabiyesi o, kabiyesi o

Economic activities of Omu Ijebu

Omu Sons and Daughters are very enterprising in their different economic callings. They are very successful entrepreneurs, merchants, craftsmen, administrators, business managers, politicians etc.

Traditionally, the main occupation of Omu people are fishing, crop farming and mat weaving.

Fishing: This is the main occupation of men and women of Omu-ljebu. Twice in a year they will migrate in large numbers to fish in the swamps of the creek area along the lagoon which stretches from Ijecle in Lagos State to Igbokoda and Agerige in Ondo State. The men folk usually spend about 6 - 8 months of the year fishing in "Idale" (Foreign land). This is spread over the months of May to August referred to as "Ifomi" (early fishing period) and November to February "Ogbemi" or "Ojodun" (peak fishing period).

Crop farming: Men and Women who do not engage in fishing expedition engage in arable farming. When the swamps are dry and fishing becomes uneconomic, some fishermen do settle for crop farming in order not to be idle. They grow cassava, melon, on very large economic scale. Kolanut is also produced in very large commercial quantity.

Mat weaving: This is the major occupation of the women folk. Even women who accompany their husbands on fishing expedition still find to weave mat. Live mat and raffia are the main raw materials needed in this industry and they are obtainable from the swamps. Omu is notable for large scale mat and fishing production, hence the appellation "OMU ELENi" and "OMU ELEJA".

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CHAPTER FOUR

Traditional Political System in Omu

In the traditional history of this Owu settlement a crowned Oba has been a long standing tradition but there was an interregnum during which they were appointing Bales and Olurins under the Osugbo system of administration to govern the tow. Obaship system was restored in 1937¹.

Ruling Houses Of Omu

There are two major ruling houses in Omu Ijebu and they are

1. Adekiyeri
2. Ramuja from where the present Monarch comes.

Adekiyeri Ruling House is made up of three ruling families of Adeloya, Akomadehin and Adegorunsen while Ramuja ruling house is made up of four ruling families of Adetola Ramuja, Adeyowa, Senolu and Adebojoye².

Modern Day Olomus Of Omu-Ijebu

Since 1937 when Obaship system was restored the following are the once that have ruled

1. Otunba Zaccheaus OKe Adekoya from Adekiyeri ruling house ruled from 20^r July, 1937 as Bale until March 1944 when he was made an Otunba and ruled till 31st August, 1959.
2. Oba Samuel Adebayo Sole from Ramuja ruling house ruled from 25th September, 1954 to 18th July, 1982. He first ruled as Otunba until his appointment as an Oba was gazetted on 23^d September, 1965.
3. Oba Adegboyega Olawale Ogunrin from Adekiyeri ruling house ruled from 15^r December, 1984 to 27th February, 2004.
4. Oba (Engr.) Mobolaji Oludaisi Mosuro from Ramuja ruling house ruled from 4 May, 2005 till date.

Regency is part of the Traditional process in Omu-Ijebu. The regency Council which administers the town at the demise of an Oba till a new one is coronated is made of:

1. Olisa
2. Balogun
3. Oluwo and
4. Agbon

There also exist the Parokoyi Chiefs and the Iwarefas

The Parakoyi/Pampa Chiefs are:

1. Agbon-Ofuru
2. Ajiroba
3. Iyalaje and
4. Iyalode

The Iwarefas are the traditional Council of Chiefs headed by Olisa and they are:

1. Olisa
2. Oluti
3. Balogun
4. Oluwo
5. Apena and
6. Akoni-oran

The Kingmakers

The 1958 declaration constitutes 12 kingmakers for Omu Chieftaincy as follows

1. The Oluwo
2. The Olutu Apena
3. The Agbon and his next in rank
4. The head of Ilamuren and his next in rank
5. The head of Iwarefa and his next in rank

7. The head of Akonoran and his next in rank
9. The head of Esugben and his next in rank

Institution of Kingship

The kingship institution in Omu-Ijebu consists of both traditional and modern rules and processes before an Olomu can be chosen and coronated. The process begins with the declaration of a vacancy in the Olomu's stool. When the vacancy exists the Olisa informs the Local Government and a regency council is established. The Local Government writes to the next ruling house to convene a meeting of the house within 14 days³. The house meets and nominates candidates. The (ruling house) meets and there is an election. It is only a selection of those who are interested and who are also considered to be suitable. Their names are forwarded to the kingmakers who will pass the names to the Ifa divinatory. The Ifa priest will consult the Oracle and present the most suitable of them all to the Kingmakers and where there are more than one candidate the kingmakers shall select a suitable candidate by majority vote of kingmakers present and voting⁴. The 1958 declaration of the Chiefs law in respect of Omu Chieftaincy says that the person who may be proposed as candidates by the ruling house entitled to fill the vacancy shall be:-

- (i) Male members of the male lines.
- (ii) Provided that if no suitable male member of the male line is available succession can devolve on a male member of the female line. The law provided that the Secretary of the Local Government or his representative must be present at both the ruling house and Kingmakers' meeting as an observer.

Everything about Kingship in this settlement is traditional from the selection stage through the approval of candidacy by the government stage to the Installation and Coronation stages when an Oba elect is called the Olomu by the council. Once a candidate is approved the Oba elect would be presented to the Awujale of Ijebu to

whom the Olomu owes allegiance. The Awujale is the overlord of Ijebu-Land. After the Awujale's endorsement, the Oba elect would go into the conclave called Ipebi for 3 months. From there, the Oba elect proceeds to Odo-Oba where he will go through the traditional training and the art of ruling his people. On coming out of Odo-Oba, the Oba elect will get Awujale's blessing on the presentation of gifts called Ikaro and thereafter the Awujale of the Ijebu land will give his consent to the government in writing⁷.

Traditional Festival of Omu Ijebu

Omu people are very rich in traditions and Culture. They cherish their ancestors and worship them at Oju Osi for peace and prosperity. They also observe annual festivals e.g. Ebi, Oro, Eiye, Agbo, Eluku, Epa etc. The people of Omu are very sociable and hospitable. They enjoy Apala music, Apepe, Agidigbo and Other cultural activities peculiar to Owu Kingdom believed to be their ancestral home. They always observe "Omu Eleni Day" annually every Esther Saturday with funfair and pageantry.

Oro Festival

This festival is usually held in the month of April/May every year. It is used to cleanse the communities of bad omen. It usually comes up before the before Omu Eleni festival to prepare the ground for the Eleni and expel evil spirit as well as epidemics out of the community.

This time women are ask not to put on things that belongs to men also men should not put on what belong to women likewise sound like music and using of mic in church and mosque are also restricted during this time.

It is believed that communities are safe after Oro festival (Igbalu) and so "Eiye a ke bi eiye and Eran a ke bi eran." (Birds will chirp like birds, animals cry like animals)

Women are not allowed to witness the Oro, who comes out mainly at night, when women naturally are expected to stay indoors.

Egungun Festival

Egungun Festival is a festival that is celebrated amongst the Yoruba people, which is celebrated annually and has been passed successively down to generations. It is believed to help develop trade and commerce and generally bond the people of Omu together regardless of their religious beliefs.⁵ Members of the society dance to marketplaces, wearing their masks to represent the deceased spirits of their ancestors, the spirit to be worshipped is solely decided by Ifa Oracle.

Egungun is otherwise known as masked ancestors of the Yoruba land which assures the people that the dead are among the living. The festival is set off when the Chief priest of the Egugun Masquerades invokes the spirit of the ancestors ,this act is known as "Alapi", it is done when the Egugun masquerade and worshippers dance , drum and are now possessed by the ancestral spirit. The Egungun masquerade is dressed in colourful regalia with a whip ,which is used to flog anyone in the way of the spirits .

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CHAPTER FIVE

Summary

This research examined the aspect of socio-political and economic history of Omu-Ijebu in 2000. The study started with the land and people of Ijebu, the origin of Ijebu, Traditional festival in Ijebuland.

The next chapter, dealt with origin of Omu-Ijebu, and their economics activities of Omu Ijebu.

Also, the last chapter examined traditional political system in Omu and Traditional festival of Omu-Ijebu. These historical antecedents suggest that Omu-Ode has not always been a city mired in poverty. Colonialism undermined its numerous craft industries and its strategic trade location between the interior and the coast. This provoked for most of the colonial period a massive out-migration of younger elements of the population to the new, colonially-created metropolitan centers such as Ala, Irete, Jobore to acquire engage in new types of modern ventures and trading activities. Political independence enhanced the economic opportunities for citizens of Ijebu-Ode in the cities of their sojourn all over Nigeria, where many of them have become important members of the emerging middle class. But in Ijebu-Ode itself, this simply created a situation where local poverty was relieved largely through substantial remittances from these sons and daughters abroad.

Conclusion

The study throws more light on the history of the origin of the Omu-Ijebu, the people are a Yoruba people and that the Ijebu people are linked with Ife. It also proves that the Ijebu people are connected to the larger Yoruba race and that the Ijebu are still a people despite their presence in more than one state and towns. The study reveals that there is connection between the Omu people and the remaining

Ijebu society from the Ijebu praise poetry studied. Through the *oriki* of Omu-Ijebu people, we can locate their source, origin and points of migration to their present location.

Omu-Ijebu stock of social capital seems particularly rich, including traditional ethnic authority, government, neighborhood and occupational organization, and an engaged Diaspora, while at the same time bridging such potentially divisive identity gaps as gender, class, and religion or the inherent tension between traditional leadership and elected political officials. Much of the credit for bridging these identity gaps can be found in the transparent, participatory process that the community engaged in which enabled it to share information, create trust, and utilize its internal norms of reciprocity.

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Mrs Ogunsanya K.	Adegorisin Street, Omu Ijebu	52	Trader	Muslim
Prince Sanya Ademola	Itumota Street, Omu-Ijebu	60	Civil Servant	Christian

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