
Ethno-Cultural Associations as Shadow States: The Case of Ijebu Province in Western Nigeria, 1900–1960

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ABSTRACT

Existing scholarly works on ethno-cultural associations (ECAs) in Nigeria have done little to provide a robust historical perspective on their role in community development in British colonies in Africa. Thus, this paper is an attempt to fill the gap in the body of knowledge on ethno-cultural associations in colonial Africa with specific reference to Ijebu Province in Western Nigeria. The study is aimed at providing a critical historical discourse on the social, economic and political roles of ethno-cultural associations in colonial Ijebu Province of Western Nigeria.

The study uses both primary and secondary sources. While archival materials and oral interviews provide the primary data in this discourse, books, journal articles and newspaper reports are examined as secondary data. The study found out that the efforts made by the ECAs in colonial Ijebuland through several strategies brought about meaningful development at the community level. We also found out that the ECAs represented indigenous organizational structures developed by the Ijebu people and functioned as community-wide forums for problem identification and prioritization, mobilization of social and financial resources and implementation of development projects at the community level in colonial Ijebu Province of Western Nigeria. The study concludes, among other things, that the ECAs were more or less shadow states and that their efforts must be seen against

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the background of the failure of the colonial state and the Ijebu Native Administration between 1900 and 1960.

Keywords: *ethno-cultural associations, colonial state, shadow state, community development.*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of the shadow state gained prominence more than three decades ago, following the theoretical analyses pioneered by Jennifer Wolch (1990: 16), who explained the emergence and implications of the term. Based on the theoretical framework propounded by Wolch, the concept of the shadow state articulates the increasing importance of the voluntary sector in the operation of the welfare state in Europe and the United States (Trudeau 2008: 670). In line with Wolch's theorization, the concept of the shadow state draws attention to the welfare intervention role of voluntary institutions even in the presence of the 'conventional state' which has a statutory responsibility to address the citizens' welfare issues. Thus, the conceptual denotation of the term 'shadow state' as deployed in this paper follows an unorthodox interpretation of what constitutes a conventional 'state'. In the context of this paper, we consider the ECAs which are voluntary institutions as a kind of 'unorthodox government' that has played the role of an orthodox government in modern society.

In pre-colonial African societies, a number of community-based associations and cultural groups existed at different levels of operation. Such community-based groups were of diverse origins and forms and were directed at the transformation and development of various aspects of community life (Taylor 1990). They were an intricate part of the performance and efforts of the community leadership or traditional authorities. In fact, community associations existed in traditional African communities and played specific roles (Oluremi 2003: 32). These groups took care of religious, social and economic issues in the community (Kwando 2002: 19).

Associations and communal groups were not an exclusive attribute of African society. They were found in other parts of the world at different times and their existence in Europe dates back to medieval times. There were two main types of associations that were membership-based in pre-colonial African society. One was economic-focused and the other founded on age. Appiagyei-Atua contends that these groups cut across kinship lines. The age-based associations dominated the political life of most traditional African communities and were

a popular concept in the universal segmented and the ritually stratified segmented systems (Kwando 2002: 21). Examples include the Poro and Sande societies which were exclusive men and women clubs, respectively in the pre-colonial Akan community on the Gold Coast. The third type was economic in nature and was devoted to promoting the economic interests of its members, mainly in the areas of agriculture, hunting and fishing. For example, Ashanti farmers had what they called *Nnobia* groups. In the same vein, these associations emerged and developed in different Nigerian societies. For instance, age-group societies occupied a prominent position in the political, social and economic life of Igbo communities.

Just like the ECAs, community development is a long-standing social activity in African society (Rambaree 2013: 32; Williams 1978: 16). Even before the advent of the colonial administration, people at different times in history had organized themselves into groups and used community resources to provide physical improvements and functional facilities in their respective localities. Significantly, the concept of community development in Nigeria lies deep in the past. Historical records indicate that prior to the advent of colonialism, various communities in what later culminated into the present day Nigeria nation mobilized their resources with the aim of developing their localities or communities. Indeed, the pre-colonial era in Nigeria witnessed a community development approach that emphasized self-help to improve the health and welfare of the community.

In lieu of this, this paper examines the role of ethno-cultural associations in the socio-economic and educational landscapes of colonial Ijebu province from 1900 up to 1960. This paper is structured into three segments or sections. The first section is the introduction, which provides the historical background of ECAs at the global and local levels. The second section provides the conceptual framework for the key concepts in this study by operationalizing the meanings of ethno-cultural associations and community development. The third section critically examines the role of ECAs in promoting the educational development of colonial Ijebu communities. The fourth section of this paper provides a robust historical analysis of the socio-economic impact of the ECAs in colonial Ijebu communities. The fifth section is the conclusion.

THE ROLE OF ETHNO-CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS IN THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF IJEBU COMMUNITIES, 1900–1960

It must be stated unequivocally that the history of education in Ijebuland is incomplete without an attempt to establish the role played by communal associations in its developmental process. Put differently, any historical account or analysis of the development of education in Ijebu province under colonial rule that fails to acknowledge the voluntary efforts made by communal associations and religious institutions is deficient and inadequate, at least in view of the various findings in the course of this study. Of course, education is an integral component of the community development process as it is a major template for launching capacity-building and human capital development. Indeed, our findings indicate that education played a very significant role in improving the wellbeing of the communities in Provincial Ijebuland, as it represented a major instrument of economic and social change through which communities experienced transformation. However, the social, economic and political transformation experienced by the Ijebu communities during our period of study was made possible by the commendable efforts of indigenous ECAs. Indeed, the period between 1945 and 1960 marked the era of educational growth and development in the Ijebu communities for it was an era of unprecedented proliferation of educational institutions, particularly post-primary schools. For the first time, community associations began to emphasize and appreciate the value of secondary school education.

But the role of ECAs in educational development in colonial Ijebu province can be properly understood and appreciated within the context of colonial administrative policy on education in the province. The administrative policy of the provincial government on education was such as to reflect the exploitative instincts of that institution (the British colonial government). The colonial state did not regard education as a priority in the same way as the people, and therefore did not propose a comprehensive education policy that would satisfy the hopes and aspirations of community members. Based on available records, colonial political officers (except P. A. Talbot) in the province were not interested in education as they discouraged the establishment of more post-primary educational institutions. In fact, the Provincial Resident in Ijebuland in 1937 was so hostile to the growth of the only secondary school in the province – Ijebu-Ode Grammar School

in the 1930s – that he had to be called to order by the Secretary of the Southern Provinces (NAI/IjeProf 1276: 4). Perhaps, the economic implications of establishing more post-primary institutions, coupled with the political situation and sub-ethnic politics that characterized Ijebuland during this period, contributed to the inhabitant's indifference and lukewarm disposition towards the establishment of more secondary schools (NAI/IjeProf 1276: 4). Of course, in the 1930s, primary educational institutions were already accessible to most communities in Ijebuland. As a matter of fact, by 1944, statistics revealed the great success of the Ijebu in the area of primary education, with more than 25 per cent of the children in the division having access to primary school education (NAI/IjeProf J.640: 8). However, this was largely due to the efforts of Christian agencies or missions.



**Fig. 1. Epe Grammar School founded in 1954
(The EDU raised part of the funds used in the construction
of this secondary school in 1954)**

Source: author's fieldwork, 2017.

The bottom line, however, is that while there were many primary schools in the province during the period of our study, the only post-primary education was the Ijebu-Ode Grammar School, which was located in the town of Ijebu-ode (Ayandele 1992: 132) The implica-

tion of this was that even those who desired to access post-primary education outside the capital could only do so by travelling many kilometers to the town before they could access post-primary education in the province. This situation was considered unpleasant by many Ijebus, particularly those outside Ijebu-Ode town and some prominent members of community associations who had developed an insatiable appetite for western education.

To this end, some indigenous ECAs felt concerned that the lack of post-primary educational institutions was an indication of educational inequality between Ijebu-Ode and other communities such as Remo, Ijebu-Igbo and Epe. Indeed, these community associations argued that their communities were being marginalized in terms of the development of the educational landscape and that the lack of access to post-primary education by communities outside of Ijebu Ode would create differences in the educational success of community members and ultimately suppress social and economic mobility. Thus, through series of correspondences and meetings, these associations continued to put pressure on the colonial political officers in the province to consider the establishment of post-primary institutions in their communities. However, the efforts of the ECAs and community leadership did not yield positive results, as the colonial government argued that the province was relatively saturated with mission schools and therefore did not deserve to more institutions in terms of government schools (NAI/IjeProf 1102: 15). Thus, realizing that the colonial government was more or less a heaven that would only help those who helped themselves first, these associations had no choice but to take action by taking pragmatic steps to meet the educational needs of community members.

One major ECA that demonstrated this strident voice for the establishment of a post-primary institution in the colonial Ijebu Province was the Epe Descendant Union (Ijebu Ode Branch). From 1940 to 1950, the Epe Descendant Union was engaged in various efforts at convincing the colonial officials in charge of the administration of the province to provide the community with a post-primary educational institution. The agitations for the establishment of secondary school in Epe was not only championed by the union but also supported by the leadership of the community. According to Chief Olufowobi who was one of the pioneer members of EDU and a resident of Ijebu Ode, the series of demands made to the colonial officer in charge of the admin-

istration of Epe district did not yield results until 1954, when the first post-primary institution was established in Epeland. The newly established secondary school was named Epe Grammar School. Indeed, the EDU as an association of Epe indigenes made tremendous efforts to establish the school that produced a new set of educated elites. It should be stressed that while the colonial government eventually supported the establishment of the school, the EDU did not relent in making financial or monetary contribution to the construction of the school that year. As a matter of fact, the association contributed £15 to support the laying of the foundation of Epe Grammar School in 1954. The money raised by the association was contributed by its members. Undoubtedly, Epe Grammar School, which still exists today, has produced men and women of great caliber who have raised the development level of the community in so many ways.

Apart from the EDU, the Old Boys Union of Remo (OBUR) led the struggle and agitation for the establishment of a post-primary school in Remoland. The OBUR was an umbrella organization of Remo indigenes and became an associational platform that worked hard for the educational advancement of Remoland. In the 1940s, the OBUR submitted several request to the government calling for the establishment of a secondary school. It should be stressed that the efforts of this body and other community members were politically motivated. In other words, the agitation for the establishment of a secondary educational institution for Remo was part of the group's secessionist agenda. Perhaps, the OBUR was a subsidiary of the Remo Union (RU). The point of emphasis here is that Remo was not far from the Ijebu Ode Grammar School and so the Remo indigenes could gain access to the school in Ijebu-Ode, but still insisted on having a separate post-primary school for their community. However, the colonial government refused to grant this request, citing lack of funds. Despite the initial lukewarm attitude of the government towards its establishment, Remo Secondary School came into being in October 1945. It should be noted that the approval for the establishment of this great institution should not be considered as a product of the efforts of the OBUR alone; community members and one W.F. Mellor, a white missionary, made tremendous contributions towards the establishment of the school.



Fig. 2. Remo Secondary School, Sagamu founded in 1945

Source: author's fieldwork, 2017.

Another ECA in Ijebu Province whose contribution to the educational development of its community can never be overemphasized was the Ijebu-Igbo Patriotic Society (IPS). The IPS became a formidable associational platform in Ijebu-Igbo, not only for the autonomy of that entity, but also for its educational growth and development. Like the EDU and OBUR, the IPS adopted diplomacy in its effort to provide the community with a functional post-primary educational institution. Of course, the expected did happen when the colonial government rejected the bid to establish a government secondary school in the community. This lukewarm attitude of the colonial state towards the educational plight of the community members and the IPS was based on the logic of proximity between Ijebu-Ode and Ijebu Igbo. Their line of argument was that Ijebu Igbo was not far from Ijebu Ode and therefore those interested in secondary education should patronize the government school in Ijebu-Ode (NAI/IjeProf 2538: 7). This position was conveyed to the community by the Senior Education officer on 3rd July, 1942, in response to the series of demands for the establishment of this institution (NAI/IjeProf 2538: 6). The Senior Education officer stated further: 'I do not think there is a case for a secondary school for this area...' As far as the IPS and community members were concerned, this was nothing but a callous excuse to deny Ijebu-Igbo people of access to secondary education. Thus, the

IPS motivated community members to make voluntary contributions towards the realization of this dream. Apart from the IPS's financial input to this project, community members were asked to contribute two shillings, and this collective effort yielded result in 1949 when the birth of Orimolusi College was registered. Thus, like the RSS, Orimolusi College emerged as another politically fashioned post-primary educational institution, as its development was not unconnected with the struggle of the IPS and other stakeholders for the autonomy of Ijebu-Igbo. In fact, it was through the efforts of Ijebu-Igbo Patriotic Society (IPS) that Molusi College rose to prominence in terms of infrastructure and human resources. This remarkable feat achieved by the IPS in the development of Molusi College (MC) attracted a kind of eulogy from an Education Inspector in the province in 1951. The inspector said:

The community school has made rapid strides in the last year, and in many ways is a credit to its sponsors and the principal... consolidation, step by step, should precede further development, and it is essential that the initial drive behind the start of the school should not be allowed to slacken. It is, however, rare in this country to find such an amount of actual work being done... (NAI/IjeProf 2538: 11)

THE ROLE OF ETHNO-CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF IJEBU COMMUNITIES, 1900–1960

From the surviving records, the score card of the ECAs in terms of socio-economic development of their communities is not just readily readable but also commendable. But before we attempt an interrogation of the developmental efforts made by the ECAs towards the social and economic progress of their communities during the colonial period, it is pertinent to x-ray the colonial government's score card in the rural development agenda. This will enhance our understanding of the role of these indigenous organizations in the community development process. It is disheartening and regrettable to observe that in the area of government provision of amenities in colonial Ijebu province, Ijebu Ode being an urban area was favoured more than the rural Ijebu communities such as Ikenne, Imodi, Ishiwo, Epe, Ijebu-Ife, Ijebu-Igbo, Oru, Ago-Iwoye among others. In colonial Ijebu province, the beneficiaries of government expenditure on education, health, water supply, electricity, and road construction were mainly urban dwellers of Ijebu-Ode. This suggests that the percentage of colonial government development ex-

penditure designed for the benefit of rural communities was significantly low. Put differently, the colonial government allocated more funds to the development of Ijebu Ode as the capital, while little or no attention was given to the development of rural communities. Despite the importance and potentialities of the rural Ijebu communities in terms of their financial contribution (taxation) to the Ijebu Native Administration treasury, these communities were undoubtedly shortchanged in terms of government expenditure on infrastructural amenities.

The net effect of the above analysis is that the rural communities in colonial Ijebuland were greatly neglected in various spheres of development. They lacked the basic infrastructural needs for decent communal existence; they were deprived and exploited, and hence community development in the province had remained a mirage, at least considering the lukewarm attitude of the colonial state towards it (Ayandele 1992: 134). The bottom line, however, is that the communities resorted to a self-help approach to community development and it was within the framework of this volunteerism that the ECAs set up development projects that would improve the social and economic lot of the community members. Thus, since the Colonial Office did not see the need to undertake reasonable development projects in the communities outside of Ijebu-Ode, the ECAs assumed that role and became the 'real state' as far as development projects were concerned.

To this end, markets constituted one major socio-economic facility built or provided by the ECAs in the study area. In fact, the ECAs built so many markets that facilitated economic activities and social development in colonial Ijebu province. A prominent example of this was the *Oja Itale* built in Ijebu Ishiwo through the efforts of the Ishiwo Progressive Union (IPU). This market was situated on six acres of land and comprised several stalls built of bamboo and roofed with palm fronds and banana leaves. The presence of *Oja Itale* in Ijebu Ishiwo quickly turned it into an emporium of trade and the commercial nerve centre of the villages around the eastern side of Ijebu Ode. Being aware of the compelling need to increase the transaction profile and economic activities of the Ishiwo community, the IPU had expanded both *Oja Itale* by building more shops and road networks within the market area to facilitate buying and selling. People from neighbouring villages like Igara, Ladenusi and Oke Moyin came to this market on every market day.

The significance of this market to Ishiwo and those three communities cannot be overstated, as it played a very vital role in the economic life of the people. As a business institution, *Oja Itale* had pro-

vided a great deal of economic opportunity and social security to Ishiwo women, who made up the bulk of the traders. *Oja Itale* was also essential in the chain of commodity distribution, strengthening the economic base of an Ishiwo village and also sustaining the tax base of the Local Authority. Thus, *Oja Itale* was central to the socio-economic development of the Ishiwo community. The strategic socio-economic benefits that the people derived from this market became possible due to the efforts made by the IPU, which established it. Mojoda market and Egiri markets in the waterside areas of Ijebuland were also established through the efforts of community associations.

In addition to building community market stalls, some the ECAs were actively involved in the clearing and construction of footpaths and feeder roads, which also had tremendous socio-economic benefits for communities in the province. Recognizing the immense benefits of road infrastructure underpinned the ECA's huge voluntary efforts in developing the feeder road network. Realising that rural roads formed the basis for transformation and communication between neighbouring towns and villages, some community associations made it a point of duty to construct footpaths and feeder roads in their communities. Indeed, the contributions of these feeder roads and bridges to the socio-economic development of the Ijebu communities during our period of study cannot be overlooked as they helped to facilitate more efficient distribution of goods and services from different locations. The construction of feeder roads by these associations fostered inter-community and inter-group relations. For instance, the IPU was highly instrumental in the construction of the feeder road linking Ijebu-Ishiwo with the villages of Mojoda and Itamapako. The road built by the IPU helped to promote inter-group relations between Ishiwo and the people of Itamapako and Mojoda. The IPU was also responsible for the clearing the bush along the feeder road that connected Ijebu Ishiwo with Ejinrin market in the eastern part of Ijebuland. This effort was also of immense socio-economic importance as far as the development of the village was concerned.

The role of *Egbe Omo Ijebu Ode* in the infrastructural development of the city should also be mentioned here. *Egbe Omo Ijebu Ode* was another indigenous institution that was also actively involved in the construction of drainage systems and feeder roads in the Ijebu-Ode area. For instance, Odo Ikala (Ikala canal) in Oyingbo area of the town was filled with sand by this association. This canal was a major threat

and obstruction to the movement of people, goods and services in the Oyigbo area. Through the efforts of this association, this community project was carried out with ease. Through collaborative effort with the Ijebu Native Administration, the *Egbe* spearheaded the construction of the road that was adjacent of Ijalupe in Itaajana area of Ijebu Ode. The route that linked Remo with Ijebu-Ode was also constructed, at least in pre-modern times, by some associations in Ogere and Iperu communities. Some of the ECAs were also instrumental in the construction and repair of traditional palaces and community halls. This was the case of *Egbe Omo Ijebu Ode* in the 1950s.

In general, the ECAs were able to identify projects, allocate resources, and implement community development projects. Their identification process may not have met the criteria of a development scheme at the community level, but given the high demand for assistance, the identified project represented an important step in community improvement. Put differently, our findings indicate that there were essentially three very important aspects of capacity building among ethno-cultural associations which included their ability to identify projects, allocate resources and plan for the implementation of such projects in their communities. From all indications, the ECAs allocated resources under specific circumstances and generally implemented community projects with the assistance of local intermediaries. They did not only focus on supporting the infrastructural and social objectives of the community, but also engaged in wealth generation projects that helped in building either an economic infrastructure or an economic base for the communities. Even the key members of the migrant associations interviewed (*i.e.*, the Ijebu-Ode branch of the EDU and the Ibadan branch of *Egbe Omo Ijebu-Ode*) noted that their efforts involved helping their hometowns with a variety of projects that reflected a philanthropic interest in strengthening their social and economic base in the community. These projects include support for the community (or town beautification), offering basic assistance in health and education, and constructing and improving public infrastructure. The contribution of these donations is measured not only in terms of the amount raised, but in its proportion to the community's needs and to other social and public expenditures.

Indeed, the impact of these associations on their communities was varied and significant. As far these associations were concerned, the key to development was to improve the quality of life in a community or

a society, which was achieved through the provision of social and/or collective goods. Within this context, ECAs had a direct impact on the community by providing goods that benefitted the collective needs in health, education and economic infrastructure of community members. In particular, the infrastructural activities promoted by ECAs had a positive socio-economic impact on neglected and marginalized communities by expanding access to services to the 'underserved populations'.

Still on the social impact of ECAs on communities in colonial Ijebu Province, these institutions served as instruments of social control and social order of the society in some Ijebu communities. Of course, social order is an essential component of any meaningful development and some of these indigenous institutions played this role. In clear terms, these associations in some cases substituted for traditional agencies of social control and social order, as they had regulations that guided the moral behaviour of members in communities. Not only were positive injunctions for friendly, fraternal and communal conduct embodied in the constitution by which members agreed to bind themselves; many ECAs had rules that proscribed particular misdemeanors and what they regarded as antisocial behavioral tendencies and conducts. In this respect, the frequent inclusion of sexual offenses, such as the seduction of the wife or the daughter of a fellow member, is very significant. Some ECAs also set moral standards in an attempt to control the personal conduct of their members in a number of ways.

The role of ECAs in colonial Ijebu province was not limited to the ones discussed above. From social perspective, these organizations performed other social roles that helped their communities to maintain unity and oneness. The involvement of some of these associations in cultural and social events, especially festivals had tremendous socio-economic benefits on community development process. Among the innumerable festivals that were facilitated by indigenous ECAs in colonial Ijebuland and some of which are still celebrated today include: *Obirinjuwa, Obanta, Magbo and Isemo, Odun Sere, Odun Obeju, Odun Imuni-si-ona, Odun Igbe, Odun Igbesu Osu, Odun Erinna, Odun Ejibi, Odun Ogun, Odun Ijasa, Odun Oro, Odun Agemo, Eluku and Okosi*. Others are: *Agbo, Kayo-kayo and Ebi* festivals.

Of all the festivals, this study focused (through participatory observation) on the role of ECAs in organizing and coordinating the *Okosi* festival in water-side community of Iwopin. *Okosi* was and still is a prominent festival celebrated by the water-side communities of

Ijebu, especially Iwopin. The festival was and still is held annually with the aim of appeasing the gods and goddesses of the river and community members from all kinds of water-related misfortunes. It is meant to propitiate the river gods and goddesses and to protect against misfortunes, accidents and mishaps on water (Seriki 2011: 57). According to our findings, Okosi was institutionalized as community festival in Iwopin community in the 1930s. As a socio-cultural event in Iwopin community, Okosi is organized annually by community associations which were formed in the 1930s. These associations were called *Egbe Okosi*. *Egbe Okosi* played a pivotal role in funding, organizing and coordinating this important festival. There were different *Egbe Okosi* in the colonial Ijebu province. For instance, in the water-side area of Ijebu province, particularly Iwopin, *Egbe Arobadade*, *Egbe Tobalase*, *Egbe Oju Ina*, *Egbe Atobatele*, and *Egbe Abobagunte* organized the *Okosi* festival.



Fig. 3. *Okosi* Festival organized by the *Egbe Okoshi*

Source: author's fieldwork, 2017 (I personally attended this cultural event at the water-side community in Ijebuland where I was told that *Egbe Arobadade*, *Egbe Tobalase*, *Egbe Oju Ina*, *Egbe Atobatele*, and *Egbe Abobagunte* were the organizers of the festival. It should be noted that the origin of this festival could be traced to colonial times).



Fig. 4. *Imale* (also known as *Ajo*) festival organized by the *Egbe*
Source: author's fieldwork, 2017.

The bottom line is that the socio-economic importance of the various festivals organized by these ECAs in the colonial Ijebu province cannot be denied. The festivals had over time proved to be veritable agents of social mobilization, unity and development in Ijebu communities (Seriki 2011: 34). Moreover, these festivals served as catalysts for commercial activities, as their celebration attracted people from far and wide, who ultimately got involved in the fanfare and merrymaking. For instance, the *Okosi* festival enhanced fundamental economic progress through its tourism potential. Thus, through the instrumentality of festivals, the ECAs contributed to the social and economic development of communities in colonial Ijebuland. In addition, the *Egbe Ojugba* in Ijebu-ode funded and organized *Ojude Oba* festivals, which also impacted positively on the community development process (Margeret, 2016). Through the patriotic efforts of the *Egbe Ojugba*, the *Ojude Oba* festival has brought about healthy rivalry, competition, unity, loyalty, development, religious harmony, socio-cultural cohesion, tolerance, beauty, glamour, glitz and fashion to Ijebu-ode. Indeed, social cohesion and integration were also promoted by these

associations through their support for festivals. This had enabled virtues, values and roles that built bridges across class, social, cultural and identity divides among Ijebu communities. They facilitated the development of common sentiments, bonds and attachments and fostered social cohesion, communal solidarity and unity among the Ijebu people.

CONCLUSION

The research findings provide ample historical evidence of the crucial role played by ethno-cultural associations in the areas of educational, cultural, social and economic development of communities in Ijebuland between 1900 and 1960. Our findings indicate that ethno-cultural associations (ECAs) have a comparatively long history in Ijebuland, going back over 100 years. We found out that the ECAs were instrumental agents in bringing the trappings of development and modernity to communities in colonial Ijebu province. In most of the communities studied, the ECAs not only entrenched sustainable development in the educational, social and economic life of their communities, but also promoted the cultural values. As seen in our analysis above, these indigenous institutions developed a number of socio-economic ideas and projects that had a tremendous positive impact on community development in colonial Ijebu province.

It is pertinent to note that in some cases where ECAs were dominated by the educated elite, they became instruments of the elite class rather than organizations concerned with the welfare of community members and development. But apart from those formed by Ijebu citizens, migrant ECAs also emerged in response to certain social and economic forces. In this case, such migrant ECAs acted as a means of maintaining an indigenous sense of cultural identity with the place of origin. It should also be noted that the strength of the ECAs was a result of the weakness or failure of the colonial state and its institutions in the Ijebu Province of Western Nigeria. To a very large extent, the failure and lukewarm attitude of the colonial government towards meeting the developmental needs of the hinterland communities acted as a kind of impetus for the activities of these associations. The development deficits that could not be addressed by the colonial government propelled participation of these associations in certain community-based interventions. In addition, the structural problem created by the state, which gave the Awaujale the status of 'sole authority' over other traditional rulers in Ijebu Province acted as a catalyst for the emergence of some of these ECAs. This was because some of the elites who were

instrumental in the emergence of these ECAs felt that they needed to form a formidable platform to correct the political and structural imbalances created by the colonial state.

In terms of the interactions between these associations and the colonial state, it could be said that the two were related in a number of ways. The interactions of the associations with the state took different dimensions. First, in some cases, the associations interacted with the state by acting as the voice of the people to the colonial authorities, constantly communicating the plights of the people. They wrote petitions and letters of protest to the state on issues related to taxation, marginalization of their communities in terms of the siting of development projects, the overbearing influence of the Awujale and the high-handedness of some colonial officials. In terms of their impact on indigenous culture, the ECAs had a tremendous influence on indigenous culture. They were promoters of traditional and cultural festivals as they mobilized collective resources to organize cultural festivals.

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Interviews

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