

AN APPRAISAL OF THE INTRA AND INTER GROUP RELATIONS AMONG THE IJOS OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Ijaws of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is one of the oldest ethnic nationality in the West African sub-region. They are the fourth largest ethnic group that populates the coastal shore line of the Atlantic, the salt water and fresh water zones of the Niger Delta. The histories of the Ijaw are inundated with various postulations of their origin, their centuries of migrations, primary and secondary areas of settlements. It is also obvious that the Ijaws are broadly divided into the Western Ijaw, central Ijaw and Eastern Ijaw, and are further divided into clans and sub-clans. In all these, there remains a solid bond that intricately unites the Ijaw people. This paper examines these unifying factors and how they had continued to form a sense of brotherhood among the Ijaw people in intra and inter-group relations. Primary source was widely used and supplemented by multi-disciplinary (secondary) approach in this research.

Introduction

The Ijos of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria descended from a pre-historic antiquity and modern historical scholarship are still trying to chronicle their origin, migration and eventual settlement in the Niger Delta and diaspora.

Some of the oral traditions pertaining Ijo origin did not point to anywhere outside Nigeria, but maintained that a Benin origin, but an indepth research acknowledge the fact that Benin was only a stop-over station after centuries of migration from the upper region. (Ama-Ogbari, 2014).

One of such tradition is outlined by Clarkson Yengizifa (2013). According to him the origin of the Ijo could be seen from the biblical records of second chronicles, chapter sixteen verse four, First Kings, chapter fifteen, verse twenty-nine and second kings, chapter fifteen verse twenty-nine. In these passages, it was said that Ijo was a city in Israel which was conquered by Ben-haded.

Due to this crisis, Ijo left Israel, passed through the Middle East to Egypt and continued their journey to West Africa. Their migration was said to have taken them to the region of chad and then to the Western region of Nigeria in the present day Ile-Ife. They left Ile-ife and finally arrived at Wilbefore island and settled at Isomobou.

Talking about the Ijo (Ijaw) P. A. Talbort and J. S. Coleman said the Izon (Ijo) tribe is the oldest in West-Africa that has no similarity with neighbouring language group that the Ijo are the pure Negroes that they are among the Oboriginal inhabitants of the African Continent. Coleman maintains that the Ijaw tribe, divided almost evenly between the Western and Eastern regions, is perhaps the most ancient in West-Africa. Its language has little affinity with any

other in Nigeria except for a small enclave of Serkri, the Ijaws are principal inhabitants of the Delta region of the Niger (1963).

However, what is very apparent now is that there are evidential dispersal point of the Ijo in the Niger Delta. These are the neighbourhood of Wilberforce Island in Isonobou and Ikiribiri, Oporoma, the Apoi creek and Obiama. These sites are regarded as the earliest and primary places of settlements, before been dispersed to secondary sites such as Oboloma, Oruma and Ebela. The excavated sites of Onyoma, Ke, Ogoloma, Okochiri, Saikiripogu, Agadagbabou, Koroama and Isomabou suggests that the Ijos had settled in this region from the ancient times. (Ama-Ogbari, 2014). It is possible as attest by Horton (1995) that the possible route of Ijo migration to the Niger Delta region is through the River Niger. Also Kay Williamson opines that the Ijo language (Ijoid) is a “distinct language from Yoruba, Edo and Igbo and developed within the Niger Delta over a period of seven thousand years (Williamson (1988:95).

In the 20th and 21st centuries however, the Ijo ethnic nationality had come to stay and are scattered among the modern states of Ondo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Edo in the South-South region of Nigeria.

Researches have also unveiled that there are strong Ijo presence outside the Niger Delta, in places such as in Igbo land and the region of Ogoni, as well as in Northern Nigeria, other parts of West and Central Africa, and in Europe, America and Central Africa, also in Europe, America and the Caribbean (Alagoa et all, 2009).

It is also observed that the Ijos are not completely homogenous but have dialectic difference due largely to different geographical habitation; therefore there are various Ijo sub-ethnic groups which have been categorized into clans (Ibe) and sub clans. Some of these clans and sub-clans include Tarakiri, Oporomor, Iduwini, Kolokuma, Opokuma, Nembe, Okoroma, Mini, Kumbowei, Kabowei, Ogobiri, Mein, Ebeni-Oyakiri, Isoko and Tungbo, Oporoma, Bomo, Ogboin, Olodiama, Gbarain, Bassan, Apoi, Ekpetiama, Okordia, Biseni and Zarama, Akassa and the fragmented communities of Cape Formosa.

The Ijaws of the Niger Delta and Development of Institutions

The Ijaw are virtually synonymous with the Niger delta, not because they are the predominant nation living there but also because they were the first to settle in it. The Ijaw ethnic communities have lived in the Niger Delta for possibly ten (10) thousand years (Alagoa, E.J., 2003), they remember no other homeland. They have completely identified with the environment and developed a cultural and social life fully attuned to it. Their occupations and economy practically revolve around the region. They were noted to be occupying all the coastal marshlands of the Nigerian Coast from the Escravos to the Bonny Rivers. They lived in all parts of the Niger Delta from the coastal wetlands to the area where the River Niger divide into the Nun and Forcados Rivers.

Pre-Colonial Ijaw of the Niger Delta regarded themselves as people of one stock, a single coherent knitted nation. Before the period of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism, there was no need to fight amongst themselves because of the consciousness of brotherhood and patriotism they exhibited. The fundamental reasons that necessitated further migration within and outside the original homeland of the Niger Delta was due to demographic factor, that is, over population which then resulted in scampering to acquire the economic resources which were found to be inadequate for all.

From the pre-colonial era to contemporary times, the Ijaws have continuously tapped the economic and natural resources abundantly found in the Niger Delta and use same to boast their economic wellbeing. Their socio-cultural life styles were also adjusted to be at tune with the environment of the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta present to the Ijaw a place where they could showcase their talents especially in areas of culture and economy, for instance, the ancient occupation of salt-making was gotten from the mangrove tree and that greatly helped in trade between the Ijaw and their neighbours and also within themselves in intra-group relations. The closely knitted patterns of the different clans of the Ijaw living in the Niger Delta helped them in terms of trade and inter and intra group relationship. It can be said that pre-colonial Ijaw of the Niger Delta were a people with common identity. These proto-Ijaw were the harbingers and the fore-bearers of the Ijaws in the present world order.

The Ijaws of the Niger Delta developed a system of economy that was tied to their deltaic environment. The Niger Delta was blessed with abundant economic potentials and the Ijaws did not fail to harness these resources. As a result of the common ancestry of the Ijaws, in the Niger Delta, their economy was similar made inevitable by the deltaic environment, thereby revolving around fishing, farming, and gathering. The different in vegetation in the different areas made way for a compulsory inter-dependency among the clans. The inhabitants of the lower delta had to exchange their fish and salt with the farm produce and gin of the inhabitants of the upper delta. These farms produced involved cocoyam, water yam, and plantain. These products were first produced at subsistence level since it was every family for itself at the domestic level but as nature would have it, nobody was an inland of his own, therefore inter-dependency was very necessary which gave rise to intra and inter-group relations among the Ijaw people.

The exchange of food among the clans slowly extended to other ethnic groups outside and within the Niger Delta region and it sometime lead to further migration and co-habitation with these groups. This had both positive and negative effect on the Ijaw people. Positively, the Ijaws were able to expand their trade and slowly gained and acquired new territory and negative because some Ijaws migrated far away from the nucleated settlements and slowly began to forget certain features in Ijaw. Consequently they either develop a variant culture and/or are absolved into a larger neighbouring ethnic group. This is very exemplary in the case of the Ijo dialect where there are many variant to the Ijaw language.

In terms of transport and communication, the Ijaw of the Niger Delta travelled by logs and boats, mainly for trade and other social activities. These wooden boat (canoes) were carved out from strong trees e.g. Iroko. They moved from the River Nun to the coastal regions through many tributaries. The use of canoes for movement was not restricted to trade. Migration and festivity also encouraged the movement of people from one location to another through canoes. Pre-colonial Ijaws were basically traditional worshippers and most of their festivals were "water related", therefore people from different settlements transported by boat to the venue of the festival. For example people from Agadagbabou travelled back there in terms of festival relating to Agadagbou-Egbesu. Canoes were also necessary for competitions during the festivals. In terms of communication, the different clans had messengers or emissaries that delivered message either by boat or by human portrage.

An important cultural trait was the marriage institution. Marriage rites in almost all the clans of the Ijo ethnicity in pre-colonial times were similar. In time past marriages between people of close descent was prohibited.

In cases where such close relatives were allowed to marry, the dowry was not too expensive because it was perceived that the groom's family was paying for their own property. Marriage strengthened the bond of unity between the clans and sometimes helped to prevent wars and disputes.

In the area of education, pre-colonial Ijaws educate their children mostly through music and story-telling e.g. folktales, folklores, myths and legends. They were able to pass down oral history and traditions by fusing them into songs that would not be forgotten in a hurry. Story telling was a form of education practiced every night.

These story were not just about a simple clan, but many others as well. Beside, many occurrences, mysterious happening, reverence to deities/gods, etc. also form part of the traditional education through story telling. The geography, seasons, types of fishing, farming, respect for elders, medicinal plants, wrestling, dances, housekeeping, child bearing, palm cutting, etc. all constitute the traditional education of the Ijaw youths. This kind of education among the Ijaws was highly advantageous because it involved learning through theory and by practical involvement.

The celebration of the birth of a child was almost the same among all the groups in Ijawland. However, death rites and rituals differed slightly amongst them. Some Ijaw believed in reincarnation while others did not. For example the Iduwini clan in Western Delta does not believe in reincarnation. They believe that people die and transcend to be with God (Tamarau) as spirit watching over the living while the Mein clan believes that a person can die and be reborn into the same family or another as a result of the fact that his/her purpose on earth has not been fulfilled, especially if it is a young person (Ariye 2013, p. 29).

This variation among the Ijaw clans does not in any way make them entirely different, rather it showed the uniqueness in their differences and how it has helped them to live with, accept and understand each other in times past and over the centuries.

Intra and Inter-Group Relations among the Ijaw People

In appraising the Intra and inter relations amongst the Ijaw of the Niger Delta, key phenomena such as tradition of origin, socio-cultural consideration, economy and political relationship are considered factors that drive the will of historical and contemporary relations.

Tradition of Origin

Historical sources from tradition of origin which involves handing down of historical facts as statements, beliefs, customs, etc. from generation to generation by words of mouth concerning the migration and settlement patterns give due and support to such relationship. Few Ijaw clans have been chosen as case study.

Foremost of such case is that of Egbema clan in the Western Niger Delta of Nigeria.

The tradition of origin of the Egbema people suggests that the mother settlement which is Ofiniam was founded by two brothers who were traders from Gbekebo in Western Delta. Their habit was to stop at this location to hunt birds (called Ofini in Ijaw dialect hence the name Ofiniam) for food. They made a permanent settlement since it was closer to Iko or Eko which was where they went for trade. They did not have a common ancestor or tradition, but the only

thing that seems to bind them together is their common adherent in the worship of Egbesu. The Egbema people are the most likely Ijaw sub-group to link their origin to the Bini people (Alagoa, E. J. 2005, p. 45).

Another example is the Tarakiri clan which is also in the present Delta State and partly Bayelsa State. There are two major tradition of origin surrounding their existence. One of such traditions is that Tarakiri took its name from Tara, one of the younger sons of Ijo. He was also one of the last to leave the primary settlement of Agadagba-bou. When he left with his household, he settled within the vicinity and founded the site known as Tara and (the land or ground of Tara). The site is where the town of Amatolo now stands (Oral interview with Ekiyozua Boma Daniels, quoted in Deinanagha, 2019).

Some of the descendants of Tarakiri moved to the Andoni and Obiama areas in present Rivers State. Also, from the lineage of Tarakiri, the following descents came into existence. Kolobiri which was founded by Kolo, Angalabiri founded by Agala, Ebedbiri founded by Awaran and Egbemobiri founded by Egbemo. The second tradition states that about the 14th century, a large number of the Ijaws in Benin left Benin because of the oppressive rule of the then king (Oba Esigie). Oba Esigie was said to have confiscated lands, levy heavy tolls on the people and making life unbearable for them. These Ijos that left Benin moved to the Igbedi creek area where they settled among the descendants of Mein. This migration was led by Tara.(Alagoa, et al, 2009, p. 444).

After travelling for some time, Tarakiri had a conflict with Mein at Ogobiri, and as a result they fled their settlements and migrated to the Western Delta. It was from there that the various Western Tarakiri towns and villages were founded including Orua, Sampou, Ayamasa and Gbemangalabiri.

Another clan used as a case study is the Apoi clan in the Western Delta. They sometimes refers to themselves as Kalasuo, Kalashuwe, Oborowei or Oborowe. They derived their name from Apoi (Opoi) the son of Kala-Okun who was a ground-son of Ijo. They were on their way to Ife from the Primary settlement of Agadagba-bou when they got lost and decided to settle down within the vicinity of the Nun River where the present village of Apoi is situated. Ijo who also bore the title of "Kalasuo" became a royal title that passed through the family lineage of Apoi. After the reign of about five (5) Kalasuos, there was a gradual process of dispersal. This dispersal caused the foundations of some towns such as the Igbobiri, Igbotu, Oboro, Gbekebo and Kiribo (Alagoa, E. J. 2005, p. 28).

The Tuomo clan in the Western Delta is another clan that is used in relation to the other clans of the Ijo group. The ancestors of Tuomo (Tuo-ama) where part of the migration that left Gbaranmatu. They accompanied the Arokpo before settling at Ukpe. From there, some of their ancestors moved up the Forcados River and founded a settlement near the Erouha people.

Subsequently, for fear of slave raiders they were forced to flee the area and first moved to the site of Sampou before finally moving to the present site of Tuomo town. There is another tradition of origin that suggest that the Tuomo clan had ties with the Effurun people of present day upper warri area.

Finally, the last clan from Western Delta region that is used as a case study in this discourse is the Mein clan, also called the Mein-Ibe. There are quite a number of tradition of origin surrounding the Mein clan because overtimes, they have separated to form three (3) big sub-clans - the Akugbene Mein, Ngbilebiri Mein and Ogbolubiri Mein. The Mein people got their

name from Mein who was believed to be one of the high chiefs of the Ijo section in Benin City. At a time when Benin was having several internal wars, Mein and his wife, Obolu left the area along with others and fled to Aboh (in present day Delta State) which was an Ijo speaking settlement at the time. Upon settling at Aboh, Mein had a lot of children including Kor and Egbe who gave his name to the Egbedani lineage of Kolokuma (Alagoa, E. J. 2005, p. 62).

Mein, however fled with his family after he killed a woman who violated his deity called Dirimogbiya which was represented by an elephant tusk. Accordingly, he lost his original tusk while fleeing but was given another one by God. After learning Aboh, they migrated down the stream of the River Niger through the Igbedi creek and settled at Ogobiri. The settlement was named after Ogo, one of the grandson of Mein. Mein died here and the new ruler of the settlement was Kor who was a son of Mein. Over times, as a result of overpopulation, internal conflicts with the Tarakiri settlers, sons of Kor moved away from the settlement (Alagoa, et al, 2009, p. 434), some went upstream, others went down stream through the Forcados River and settle with other Ijaw people. The sons of Kor later expanded to form the three biggest Mein settlements - Kalanama founded the Akugbene Mein, Ngbile founded Ngbilebiri Mein and Ogbolu founded Ogbolubiri Mein and the town of Ogodobiri (Alagoa, et al, 2009, p. 435). Other descendants of the Kor and other Mein children that left the original Niger Delta settlement included Perebo-Kekalabebari (who founded and gave his name to Kalabara, Oghoro (the ancestor of Ayama, Okpare and Ovwor in Urhobo) and Ekade, the ancestor of Agoro who founded Esanma and Agorogbene.

In the Central Niger Delta, Kolokuma in the present day Bayelsa is a case study of this relationship. Kolokuma traditions recorded Ndo as the founder of Kolokuma and were from Benin. (Alagoa, 2002, p. 79-80). Other traditions suggest that the Kolokuma took their name from Kala-Okun who was one of the sons of Ijo. Another name for Kala-Okun was "Aluku-Dogo". He left the settlement at Igbedi creek and made a settlement along the Nun River and called it Kala-Okun-ama which was later corrupted to Kolokuma.

Another clan is Opokuma in present day Central Niger Delta, like the Kolokuma, the Opokuma also took their name from Opuokun who was the elder brother of Kala-okun. Opu-Okun had earlier left the original settlement into the Nun area and settled at a place called Ofonitoru, later left there and migrated again to establish the head village of Opokuma, which was translated from Opu-okun-ama. The settlement grew and from there other villages and groups were founded like the Gbaranbiri, Oyabo and Akaranbiri (Alagoa, 2005, p. 107).

Another clan from the Central Delta as a case study is the Ogboin Clan. Tradition have it that the ancestors of the Ogboin Ebe (Ogboin clan) is Ogboin who was a son of Ijo. When Ijo was still at Agadagbabou, he was on a search mission and Ogboin was a leader of it and eventually told his father that he wanted to live on his own. He took his family and left for oribiribaboulou. His sons were said to have come out of the creek to found the two major Ogboin settlements of Amassoma and Otuan in present day Bayelsa.

Gbaran is also another good example to showcase inter and intra-group relation in the Central Niger Delta. Gbaran (Gbarain) who was the founder of this group was among the eldest sons of Ijo. He first settled at Oproza, then finally at a site opposite the Kolokuma town of Kaiama. Gbaran went hunting and founded Taylor creek. He saw the rich resources and decided to bring his family. From this settlement the sons of Gbaran formed the town of Okotiana, Koroama and Agbiaoweiana among others (Alagoa, 2005, P. 108).

Now to the Eastern Niger Delta, a number of groups have also been taken into consideration in this write-up. One of such people is the Okrika group. Tradition of Origin of the Okrika group appears to be ambiguous that there are no less than four variations. Unlike the examples from the Western and Central Niger Delta Ijaw that associate their names to one person, the Okrika people do not have an eponymous ancestor, rather it was founded by a collection of several people that migrated from other settlements and settled at that place. This is why it is difficult to associate the origin of the people of a particular ancestry.

According to one of such traditions, one of the earliest settlers was Oko. He was said to have migrated from Amassoma in the Central Niger Delta. Though there were other settlers, but Oko is always regarded as the leader (Ogan Charles, 2008, p. 10). Another tradition points to a man named Kirike as the first settler. It was said that he migrated from Nembe. This version is accepted more by the Okrika people because of the name Kirike which translate to Okrika.

Another clan in the Eastern Niger delta in the present Rivers State of Nigeia is the Kalabari people. The Kalabari is a group of Ijaw ethnic nationality in the Eastern Niger Delta. The name Kalabari is derived from Perebokekalakebari, one of the sons of Mein who was a son of Ijo. The Kalabari people migrated from the Central Niger Delta region, from around the Igbedi creek which was their original settlement, to their present abode. Over the period the name has been applied as "Elem Kalabari" from where sub-groups such as Buguma and Obonoma have originated from. (Alagoa & Derefaka, 2009, p. 523).

Besides, another group from the Eastern Niger Delta is the Obolo clan. It has been postulated by Ejituwu that the present settlement of Obolo was formed as a result of a wave of immigrants that came from Cameroon through the Cross River inlet. According to traditions, two brothers Abolo and Oro left Rio del Rey in Cameroon and moved to the Niger Delta in search of fishing grounds. There was a rift between the two brothers and Oro left and founded the Oron settlement (in present day Cross River and Akwa-Ibom), while Obolo stayed back and built/formed the primary settlement of Unyangala, Egwede and Agama (Alagoa, et al, 2009, p. 523). A second tradition suggests that Obolo people otherwise known as Andoni were from the lineages of the Kolokuma, Opokuma, Tarakiri, Mein, Olodiana and Ogboin. A man named Indo led them out of Benin to the Niger Delta region. They finally settled at the present place and with the passing times, "Indo" was corrupted to "Ando" by which the Obolo people are known today.

Finally, the coastal communities of Okpoama and Tuwon in the Eastern Niger Delta were said to have migrated from the region of Benin and settled at Obiama in the Nembe Area. From Obiama they had moved to their present location of Okpoama and Tuwon respectively. Similarly, the fragmented communities of Cape Formosa - Igbabeleu, Beletiana, Egwema, Liama and their sub-groups were said to have first settled at Obiama before migrating to their present settlement led by Beleu, Egwe and Lia. These communities have close affinities with the Akassa settlements across the River Nun.

Socio-Cultural Relationship

The socio-cultural relationship that occurred among the different Ijaw groups was a force to be reckoned with. This is because there are many unifying factors that cause them to relate with each other on cultural and social basis. In the case of the Ijaw of the Western Niger

Delta, most of their traditions of Origin point to a particular root of ancestry. Aside from the fact that it gives them a sense of oneness, it affects their social lifestyles in terms of religion, food, dressing and language. The group of Western Niger Delta did not migrate too far from each other after leaving their original settlement; therefore it was easy for them to still keep in touch while at the same time sharing their social and cultural values.

With regards to the Central Niger Delta Ijaw, the issue of not migrating too far was also prominent among them, for instance the Kolokuma and Opokuma groups were formed by two brothers, but as a result of their closeness and sharing in same values, they are often regarded as one entity.

Some of the cultural factors that aided relationship among the various Ijaw groups included marriage. Upon marrying, a woman is required to live with her husband who lives in his father's compound. If a married woman commit adultery, her husband was required to take a fine payment from her lover. Marriage among the Ijaws therefore strengthened the bond of unity among them and fast forward inter and intra ethnic brotherhood.

Another social relationship that existed among the Ijaw groups was the dividing of towns into quarters and naming them after prominent personalities in the village.

The quarters which were called "polo", "Wari" and "Egede" was necessary because in pre-colonial times it enhances communal living. Here one quarter is assigned a particular duty on behalf of the whole community, for instance a quarter could be assigned the task of farming, fishing, security of the community, attend to deities and for a rotatory leadership.

The mode of dressing and diet is another force that the Ijaws of the Niger Delta have in common. A typical pre-colonial Ijaw dressing or outfit for males would be a wrapper tied round the waist and a shirt made of wax fabric.

For the females, it was two wrappers tied around the waist with a blouse and the hair adorned with beads. It might be argued that these forms of dressing were acquired during the colonial and post-colonial eras, but it should be stated that the Ijaw came from a long line of civilization, thus they owned such accessories as at then. In terms of diet, the Ijaw group were great consumer of fish and other marine foods such as periwinkle, water snail, oysters, etc abundantly domiciled in the aquatic environment.

Prior to colonial rule in Nigeria and the introduction of formal education, education among the Ijaw groups was by story-telling folktales and folklores. Practical education was also practiced in the pre-colonial Ijaw education. The practice of Story-telling helps them to pass down histories and traditions from generation to generations. Another thing that was common among the Ijaws was the language. Before major dispersals the language spoken was "Izon" (which means truth). It was their way of communicating truthfully before their merge with other groups which produced dialectic variations.

Religion was another factor that fostered and enhanced relationship among the Ijaw groups. One thing common among them was the use of their deities. In the case of the Ogboin-Ijaw (Central Niger Delta), it was a mango tree. Nobody was allowed to climb the tree or sweep the ground where it stood, for sweeping it meant sweeping good fortune away. For the Mein-Ijaw (Western Niger Delta) it was the use of elephant tusk. In subsequent times, it became a symbol of authority for their rulers. In the tradition that claimed Ile-Ife as their ancestral home, it was believed that the tusk was given to Ijo by Oduduwa himself. (Alagoa, 2005, p. 62).

Similarly festivals, among the Ijaws brought them together. One of such festivals was the Egbesu festival. The Egbesu god/deity was the biggest and greatest religious entity that all Ijaw revered. It was a war god, it is a deity of oath and swearing, it confers titles and anything that had a tone of authority.

It is symbolized with leopard. Ijaw group festivals mostly involved arm wrestling, masquerade displays, fishing, dancing and boat regatta, etc.

In terms of communication, the settlements were not too far from each other, so it was easy to send messages by foot or through traders that shuttled between villages.

Economic relationships among the Ijaws had been a veritable force in the unity of the people. The biggest relationship that existed among the Ijaw was trade. The major economic activities of the Ijaws which doubles as their occupation was fishing and farming. Therefore exchanging aquatic produce for farm produce was more than necessary. Another source of economic livelihood was salt-making and canoe-caving. This was an occupation mainly by the clans that lived along the water ways and they trade these canoes and other carved products for their own needs.

Apart from aquatic and agricultural products, local gin was also another economic product that the Ijaw groups traded in. Gin is distilled from the raffia palm. Upon distillation of the wine, ethanol is gotten and the gin is further distilled from it (Geoffery, W. Y, 2006).

In the political dispensation, it is noteworthy that the pre-colonial Ijaws centred their politics on religion although the amaokoswei (the oldest man in the town) also acknowledged because he was involved in minor political issues. However, generally political relationship between the Ijaw groups was religious than it was civil. This is because they believed that the supernatural force that bond them together was stronger than any other power that could govern them.

This belief was very prevalent among all the Ijaw groups and it was a factor that further nurtured the relationship among Ijaw groups in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Conclusion

The intra and inter group relations among the Ijaws of the Niger Delta of Nigeria is the topical issues of this discourse. It reappraise the suggested origins migration and eventual settlement of the Ijaws in their present homeland. In furtherance of the above the factors that has closely knitted the Ijaws of the Niger Delta in a bond of unity are clearly elaborately discussed. These factors had been the templates on which the present Ijaw nation is predicated upon

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