

**The Political Economy of the Egba Nation: A Study in Modernisation and Diversification,
1830 - 1960.**

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Introduction

Several works have been done on Egba history since the second half of the nineteenth century. Anna Tucker's *Abeokuta or Sunrise within the Tropics* and Saburi Biobaku's book, *The Egba and Their Neighbours* are particularly noteworthy. Pallinder Law's "Government in Abeokuta with particular reference to the period of the Egba United Government" is also of immense contribution to the political history of the Egba. H.B. Harunah's "Evolution of Central Administration in Abeokuta, 1830-1898" is another contribution to the political and military history of the Egba in the nineteenth century. Adebeshin Folarin and Isaac Delano's works were all done on the political history of the Egba. Toyin Falola and Dare Oguntomisin's work on Abeokuta is also a major work on the political and military history of the Egba. Segun Osunkeye's work titled: "Trade and Commerce in Traditional Egba Society " in *Abeokuta Home of the Egba*, and Harunah's article titled "Lagos-Abeokuta Relations in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland" in *The History of The Peoples of Lagos State*, are both written on the economic history of pre-colonial Egbaland. To date, most of what have been written on the Egba treats their political, military, or economic history. It is against this background that one is making the attempt to look into the political economy of the Egba nation in both the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

The term political economy was originally used for studying production and trade, and their relations with law, customs, and government, as well as with the distribution of national income and wealth. The term originated from moral philosophy. It was developed in the eighteenth century as the study of the economies of states, or polities, hence, the term political economy. Essentially, the paper will look at the political economy of the Egba *vis-à-vis* the modernisation and diversification of their body politic in the period under study.

Land and Vegetation

The Egba nation refers to Abeokuta and its environs. It comprised Abeokuta and several adjoining villages in the period under study. The villages of the Egba nation were located in the Egba forest which began on the colony of Lagos in the south and extended to Ketu in the west, to Isoya near Ile-Ife in the north, and to the borders of Ketu in the south-west. The area is far removed from the swampy coast,

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but directly connected by the Ogun River to the sea and had several routes leading to other Yoruba towns like Ijebu-Ode, Ibadan, Lagos, and Porto Novo in the Benin Republic (Ogunremi, 1982: 64).

Abeokuta, the chief city of the Egba nation, lies on the river Ogun about sixty (60) miles from the point where it enters the lagoon. The stretch of country between Abeokuta and the coast is composed of a series of sedimentary rocks, sand and gravel beds and lining shale dipping to the south, in which resistant beds cap two main belts of hilly land trending west-east. The southern highland between Ota and Ifo is interrupted by a broad flood plain of the river Ogun. The northern belt extends to Abeokuta and forms a marked line of flat topped hills composed of ferruginous grits with a hard ferruginous cap resting on sandy clays (Johnson, 1963: 91).

In terms of ecological zone, much of Egbaland falls within the Guinea zone, although its north-western part is in the sub-Guinean zone. According to Mabogunje and Gleave, the Guinean zone, could be further divided into three (3) sub-regions on the basis of their varying soil characteristics (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1).

(a) Well-drained soil region in the north-east. Soil here is developed on metamorphic rocks. They are well drained and tend to be finer in the south where they have been formed on fine-grained biotite gneiss and schist. The rainfall of this region is between 45-50 inches and tends to encourage fairly luxuriant growth of trees.

(b) Poorly drained soil region of the south-east. Soil here are developed on sedimentary rocks and the alluvial deposits of the Ogun flood plain, where water-logged conditions are common in the rainy season, particularly in the south, tend to preclude the use of large stretches of land for cultivation.

(c) The diversified soil of the region of the south-west. Soil here are developed on sand stones and shale. The soil here is well drained, except for the shale which is less fertile than the soil derived from the metamorphic rocks. Rainfall varies from 50-60 inches and given the right soil condition, favours a rich growth of tree vegetation (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1).

Thus forest was the dominant vegetation over most of Egbaland, although its density and richness varied from place to place. Given the level of technology, cultivation was easier in the grassland than in the forest. The forest in turn was more easily cultivated at its margin than deep inside it partly because at its margin,

the growth of trees was at its critical limits. Hence, until the nineteenth century, the Egba were to be found largely in the grassland and the northern margin of the forest where they organised themselves in a number of towns, with their cultivated lands spread out around them.

The landscape of Egbaland in the first half of the nineteenth century was not much different from what it was in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was noticed in 1853 that "fine green forest and giant timber with only single houses belonging to fisher and hunting men" (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1) dominated the landscape on both sides of the River Ogun until the village of Tepona was reached when cultivated land became more noticeable. Later in 1883, it was reported that the boundary between forest and cultivated land in this area was at Mokoloki, a few miles south of Tepona (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1). In the south-west, the forest was properly a marshland separating the Awori in the south from the Yewa and the Egba north of them. The forest was claimed as part of Awori land and its northern limit was at the village of Papa, and by 1858, expansion of the Egba-cultivated area had pushed the forest boundary to about two miles south of Papa. From this point, the forest extended in the direction of Lagos to the Ota farms beyond the ruined town of Ijako.

It should be noted that within the forest area, there was cultivation on a low scale just as there were isolated clusters of woodland and patches of fallow bushes in the cultivated area. A.W. Johnson's writing about the vegetation shows how travelling from Lagos, one emerged from "moist forest with cocoa and cultivated clearings, into open savannah with forest only in patches and along water courses" (Johnson, 1963: 39). There appear not to be a critical rainfall figure in this area which could cause a rapid change from the dominance of trees to that of grasses. The landscape analysed above made it possible for the Egba nation to develop an agrarian economy in the period under study.

The People

The Egba are a sub-group of the Yoruba people who lived at their homestead (Orile) independently for some time before they came under the yoke of the Oyo Empire. The Egba organised themselves into three different provinces of Egba Alake, Egba Gbagura, and Egba Oke-Ona at their Orile homestead. According to Biobaku, the Egba had penetrated the Egba forest in three successive waves in the thirteenth or fourteenth century A.D (Biobaku, 1957: 3). One wave settled towards the north-west of Ile-Ife in the region of present day Oyo. This group of towns constituted the province of Gbagura under their group Oba-Agura. Iddo was the capital of the Gbagura province and is now part of the present Ibadan city. Another

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wave went beyond the first to the south and the Ona River, which gave the people their name - Egba Oke-Ona. The Oshile was their group Oba, and Oko was their capital. The third wave went further still and brought the Egba in contact with the Ijebu Remo (Biobaku, 1957: 3). This group was first known as Egba Agbeyin, with Ojoko of Keesi as the dominant Oba. Its present name Egba Alake was a later development in the Egba forest and this led to the emergence of Alake as the paramount Oba of the province.

Each of the three provinces of the Egba was made up of several towns each having its Oba at their Orile homestead but all of whom recognised the paramountcy of the group Oba-Agura, Oshile, or Alake as the case may be. The Oba of each town was the ultimate source of authority in each town. He was also the High Priest, but never a despot. According to Biobaku, the Oba was much more the symbol of authority than the instrument of its exercise (Biobaku, 1957: 5). The real rulers of the towns were the Ogboni who constituted at once the civic court, the town council, and the Electoral College for the selection of the Oba from candidates nominated by the ruling houses (Biobaku, 1957: 6). The Ogboni used the Oro to pronounce curfew when riots were expected, to apprehend criminals, and to execute the guilty ones in the secret recesses of the Oro grove (Biobaku, 1957: 6). In principle, the Ogboni whose nominal head was the Oluwo stood between the Oba and his subjects preventing the Oba from being despotic on one hand and ensuring the proper subordination of his subjects on the other. The Ogboni met every seventeenth day.

Each town also had its own Parakoyi (trade chiefs) who further the commercial interests of their towns, settled disputes at town markets, made rules and regulations to ensure just prices and safeguard the standards of workmanship in crafts. The Olori Parakoyi was at the head of this organisation ably assisted by other chiefs. It also met every seventeenth day. The third feature of town organisation was the Ode (hunter) society. In the early days, the hunters provided protection against robbers and also kept wild animals away at night. Much later, they were used in wars as scouts and warriors. The Lerin or Olorode was their chief. These three organisations existed side by side in the Egba forest and corresponded to the division of life into youth, middle age, and old age (Biobaku, 1957: 6). Thus, it was possible for a man to have been first an Ode, then a Parakoyi, and finally an Ogboni chief. If the town was the primary political unit, then the province was the secondary political unit - the distinctive group of towns under a senior Oba. The three Egba provinces remained quite distinct in the Egba forest. However, their distinguishing features have been greatly obscured by inter-marriages, common residence in Abeokuta and such other influences. The Owu

who were closely related to the Egba were their neighbours at the Orile Egba. The Olowu was the ruler of the Owu kingdom. During the time of Gaa as Bashorun of Oyo, the Alafin's direct control over the Egba forest diminished. The Oyo Ajele had managed to convert the problem of Oyo to their advantage. The Oyo Ajele were no longer contented with the collection of annual tributes from the Egba. They virtually usurped power from the Egba. They tyrannised the Egba by making excessive demands from them and also harassed their women.

The activities of the Oyo Ajele in administering the Egba people at Orile made Lisabi, an Itoku man who grew up at Igbein, to organise the Egba men into a mutual assistance society called Aaro in every Egba town. Lisabi later converted the society into the Olorogun society (war society) which he used to rid the Egba of the excesses of the Ilari/Ajele stationed in the various Egba towns of the three provinces. His principal lieutenants were Amosu of Ikija, in Oke-Ona, Arinkotu of Ojoo, and Akila of Iddo, in Gbagura (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 114). Lisabi and his associates armed their followers in secret with bows and arrows, slings, spears, daggers, swords, hatchets, and clubs. The violent uprising began in Lisabi's Igbein and soon spread to every other Egba town at their Orile. It is estimated that over 600 Ilari/Ajele were murdered by the Egba in one day (Gailey, 1982: 2). Thus the Egba Olorogun uprising under Lisabi brought an end to the political domination of Egbaland by the Oyo.

The attempt by the Alafin to re-conquer Egbaland proved abortive. An Oyo army made up of troops from Oyo, Ibarapa, and Yewa, crossed the River Ogun at Mokoloki and advanced towards Igbein, Lisabi's town. Lisabi had however, hidden the women and children of the town in a ravine called Melegu. When the Oyo army entered Igbein, they found it deserted. As the invading army was busy ransacking the town, Lisabi's militia suddenly and swiftly descended on them and put them to rout while the Egba remained independent (Gailey, 1982: 2). It has been argued that, apart from the military tactics employed by Lisabi, the Egba's victory could also be attributed to the military weakness of the Oyo army under Alafin Abiodun's prosperous reign (1774-1789) under who the Oyo army became inefficient and as a result of which it was defeated by Borgu in 1783, Ife in 1791, and Lisabi's militia in 1796 (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 116).

The victory of the Egba over the Oyo army made the Oke-Ogun people enter into a treaty of peace with the Egba under Lisabi. The alliance with the Oke-Ogun people made the Egba to pursue an active common frontier policy against Dahomey who raided Oke-Ogun periodically. This treaty was kept till after the Agbaje war, when it was broken by the Oke-Ogun people which resulted in the frequent attack by the Oke-Ogun people against the Egba territories consequent upon the internal feud

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among the Egba after the demise of Lisabi (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 116). Lisabi built a fortress on a hill in order to watch the activities of the enemies more easily. He remained in this fortress at the head of a garrison (Biobaku, 1957: 10). Therefore, it can be safely submitted that Lisabi was the first commander of a united Egba army in history though he was not officially addressed as Balogun of the Egba. He however, functioned as the Jagunna, which was the Egba equivalent of the Balogun title at that time.

But his achievement went beyond commanding the Egba forces. He became a military and a political leader under whom the Egba were not only united, but also prosperous (Ajisafe, 1964: 17). The Egba people took advantage of their newly won independence and security to engage in trade beyond their immediate neighbours. They traded in kolanut with the Hausa of northern Nigeria, and also engaged in coastal trade at Badagry. These commercial activities brought prosperity to the Egba people. J. B. O. Losi recorded how Lisabi was wont to saying that “I fought for them (the Egba people) to wrap alari cloth and I warred for them to wear sekini cloth” (Losi, 1924: 9).

The achievements of Lisabi in the areas of peace, unity, prosperity, and security of the Egba nation notwithstanding, he later became unpopular among his chiefs. Ajisafe, Losi, Biobaku, and Falola and Oguntomisin have given various reasons ranging from: jealousy of his fame by his chiefs; war wariness; resentment of conscription of young people who could be used on the farms into the army; to his old age among others. As a result of all these, Ajisafe and Losi noted how Lisabi was decoyed to a hill in the Egba forest by some of his chiefs who were critical of his government and pushed into the ditch below where he was seen no more (Losi, 1924: 9). Biobaku however, argued that Lisabi either perished in a Dahomian raid on the Egba frontiers or mysteriously took his own life in the forest (Biobaku, 1957: 10).

The importance of the military arrangement under Lisabi in the Egba forest cannot be over-emphasized. Local differences had been submerged under the spell of his personality and the need to combine to meet an external foe. His demise however, brought about a return to *status quo ante* which meant a return to town rivalries and jealousies, and the ineffectiveness of the old federal authorities which according to Biobaku “was neither clearly defined nor able to assert itself” (Biobaku, 1957: 11). With local differences and rivalries re-emerging among the various Egba towns, it was not long before civil wars occurred in the Egba forest. Although Biobaku has argued that many of these might have occurred in the Egba forest before the Owu war, the first to be recorded in Egba history was the

Ogedepagbo war between Igbein and Itoku which was the result of an attempt to run a salt monopoly which Igbein “had either imposed or violated” (Biobaku, 1957: 11). When the parties to the dispute threatened to involve all the other Egba Alake towns, the blockade runner or smuggler (Ogedepagbo of Itoku) was condemned to death and executed by the *Oro* (Biobaku, 1957: 11).

The civil wars attendant on the collapse of the first military arrangement initiated by Lisabi emphasized the weakness of the federal civil authorities in the Egba forest. Even though the Alake was *primus inter pares*, and was universally acknowledged as the supreme judicial authority, there was no binding obligation to resort to his court as powerful individual could ignore it altogether. There was the will to act collectively in settling inter-town disputes (as in the Ilugun civil war) but it did not bear fruit in the absence of recognisable military machinery as experienced under Lisabi. When Egba Alake towns established a central Parakoyi court, their success tempted them towards separatism. Again, when Alake Okikilu failed in his attempt to deal with seceding towns, his office fell into abeyance simply because there was no central coercive machinery (Biobaku, 1957: 14).

Their lack of cohesion and mutual jealousy proved fatal to the existence of the Egba towns at the time of the upheaval which engulfed Yorubaland in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when the allied forces of Ife, Ijebu, and Oyo refugees invaded the Owu kingdom, whose territory was adjacent to the Egba forest. After the destruction of Owu, the victorious forces attacked one Egba town after the other. The Egba lacked the leadership and internal cohesion to contain or even repel the attack of the enemies. Instead of evolving all Egba military machinery as practised under Lisabi, the Egba townships aided the enemies against their fellow Egba towns and even rejoiced at the fate of such towns until the same fate befell them. As a result, the whole Egba forest was completely devastated by the allied forces (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 118).

The inability of the Egba to unite against the invading forces of Ife, Ijebu, and Oyo spelt doom for the Egba towns which were destroyed by the enemies. In the demoralizing atmosphere of the period, the Egba failed to perceive the advantage of a united defensive action. The calamity that befell the Egba rendered many Egba towns desolate. Apart from Awe, Fiditi, Iloba, Abena, Akinmorin, Agerige, Aran, Kojoku, and Oroko, which had submitted one another to Oloyo, Ibadan was the only Egba town which was not destroyed (Ajisafe, 1964: 55). It used to be an Egba Gbagura town but which was now occupied by the invading forces. Dispersed and chastened, the Egba wondered for some time before they finally resorted to Ibadan, now under Okunade, the Maye of Ife, and the Commander-in-Chief of the allied

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forces, which proved to be the rallying point of the Yoruba and later the bulwark of the Yoruba defence against the Fulani.

However, the situation in Ibadan at that time did not encourage the continued co-existence of the Egba with the other Yoruba groups in the town. At this time, the assemblage of motley people in Ibadan lacked food and means of livelihood. As a result, the Oyo, Ijebu, and the Ife allies were in the habit of kidnapping the Egba and selling them into slavery. The Egba people tried to prevent this to no avail as they were outnumbered by the hostile forces in Ibadan. When the situation became unbearable, the Egba people decided to vacate Ibadan and encamped far away from the hostile forces on the western side of the Ona River.

Thereafter, the Egba decided to vacate their Oke-Ona camp for a safer place. It was clear to the Egba that the trans-Ona camp was too close to Ibadan for their safety. Balogun Sodeke had heard of a site far away from Ibadan, where three hunters had escaped in the course of the disturbance that swept away the Egba towns. Tradition claims that the site was the farm of a man from Itoko who was also a member of the Ogboni. It was this man that introduced the Olubara into the Ogboni statecraft. Other traditions maintain that the site belonged to a Yewa man called Adagba. Whatever it was, Sodeke quickly dispatched some hunters to make the necessary investigation preparatory to settlement in the area. Having also made the necessary enquiry from Ifa, through soil sample taken from the site, Balogun Sodeke led the Egba to the new settlement "under the stone." It was this site which grew to become a formidable city called Abeokuta from where military outposts were established at Osiele, Oba, and Aiyetoro.

In between the outposts and the town of Abeokuta, cultivation was intensively concentrated during this period. Beyond the outposts was waste and forest with occasional cultivation by warrior groups and hunters. The southern half between Ofada and Iperu was reported in 1878, as being "a large and thick forest wholly uncultivated said to be site of old Igbein Township" (Johnson, 1963: 91) in former Oke-Ona province. Forest also persisted along the Ogun River, probably for ecological rather than historical reasons.

The Egba provinces which migrated to and re-established at Abeokuta in 1830, retained the names of the places they had come from. This new town had some advantages as a defensive site with the Ogun River forming a barrier for over half of the year. The rocky hills also provided defence. A wall was built round the town with a ditch on the outer side. To the west, it lay beyond the river. To the north, it followed the crest line beyond the Lakuta stream, and to the east and south, the

wall lied beyond the Shokori stream. The wall was extended several times on this side to accommodate the new settlement at Ibara. The surviving Owu people reasoned that to be safe in the nearest future from the attacks of their enemies they would have to go and live in Abeokuta. They therefore joined the Egba in Abeokuta, in 1831. After the destruction of Ijaiye in March 1862, the Ijaiye people also joined the Egba in Abeokuta.

Economic Activities

Economic activities in Egbaland revolved around the production and exchange of goods among the Egba towns and also between the Egba and their neighbours. The economic activities also went beyond a local one to an international one. Trade was an important economic activity in Egbaland. The C.M.S reports show Abeokuta as the centre of trade in the hinterland. Biobaku's analysis of the various efforts made by the missionaries to keep Abeokuta as a centre of trade in the hinterland is illustrative of the above assertion. Trade served as a linking force between groups of people. It also helped to keep up continual inter-communication between adjacent towns as goods were exchanged between them. Towns often specialised in the production of certain commodities that were required by others. These trading relations that existed between the different groups were facilitated by the different trade routes through which trade passed and without which trade would have been limited to areas of production, as production would have remained at a little above subsistence level i.e. peasant economy. From the time the missionaries started arriving in Abeokuta in 1842; available evidence show that agricultural goods were in abundance in Abeokuta such that there was the need for exchange of goods and services, which actually took place. People exchanged or sold their agricultural goods for those they needed. In the first half of the twentieth century, various agricultural crops (both food and cash crops) existed in Egbaland. The Egba, through their interaction with their neighbours and Europeans, traded in all these. More importantly, the Egba took advantage of the vibrant economic activities to establish toll gates and later customs duty posts to generate revenue to run both the Egba United Board of Management (E.U.B.M) and the Egba United Government (E.U.G).

Articles of Trade

The articles of trade during both the pre-colonial and colonial periods were agricultural goods and products, European manufactures and some locally made

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products, which were first battered, and later sold, to the people. The main food crops were yam, maize, beans, rice, guinea corn and cassava, while oil palm served both food and cash crops in the period under study (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1). Other cash crops were cotton, cocoa, kolanut, coffee, pineapple and citrus. Within Egbaland, the main food crops were yam, beans and maize. Subsidiary crops included vegetables, potatoes, groundnuts, pepper, tobacco and plantain. Cassava would come to usurp the pivotal position of yam and become the staple of the people of Egba Division. It is difficult to say when the change-over from yam to cassava took place but it should be noted that it only became a notable food crop in Abeokuta and other parts of Egbaland in the first half of the twentieth century. Mabogunje and Gleave have shown how some farmers claimed that in their youth, before 1914, cassava was largely regarded as food for pigs and sheep (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 8).

Rice had been known on West African Coast since the time of the Portuguese arrival, probably in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. It was later introduced into Egba Division around 1849. Initially it was not popular with the masses of the farmers, because of the trouble and efforts needed to plant, harvest and process the crop. Later evidence however, reveals that the few farmers who tried to plant the crop were Christian converts or people in close touch with the missionaries. The majority of these farmers were in the Christian Village of *Ofada* which by the beginning of the twentieth century had become sufficiently reputed for the production of the crop to give its name to a type of rice called *Ofada*. From there, rice cultivation spread to other parts of Egba Division.

Oil-palm produce served both the food and export crop purposes. Since oil palm was already a part of the food crop complex, it was easy for it to become also an export crop once the existence of an overseas demand for it was appreciated. However, unlike other crops, the oil palm was not cultivated. It grew wild in the Division as in most parts of Southern Nigeria.

Cotton had been grown by farmers for local weaving and there was no move to export it before 1850. The missionaries, through their anti-slavery activities, encouraged the expansion of cotton cultivation in West Africa as a means of undermining the slave-centred cotton economy of the Southern United States. Decline, however, set in after 1870 due to the opening up of better-favoured areas in Northern Nigeria and the greater attraction of cocoa. However, the British Cotton Growing Association later resuscitated interest in cotton cultivation after 1903. The area of production which was sixteen (16) miles radius of Abeokuta in the second half of the nineteenth century had shifted slightly to the east i.e. the

areas just being settled in the twentieth century – Ilugun and Ishan were the main centres (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 1).

The origin and spread of cocoa in Egba Division is not very clear. One can however assume that cocoa spread from Agege plantations into Egbaland after 1880. Webster has shown that by 1880, cocoa plantation had been established at Ijan by J.P.L. Davies (Webster, 1963: 428). It was probably from this area that cocoa spread to the Division via the areas around Ota and to the north of it i.e. Ifo and much later in the north-east i.e. around Asa and Ilogbo where it was reported that over 10,000 trees were planted by 1902 (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 12).

A species of kolanut, *abata* (*cola acuminata*) variety is indigenous to Nigeria. B.A. Agiri has argued that of the three important species of kolanut in the kola trade in Nigeria, *abata* was exported to Brazil from Lagos in the nineteenth century (Agiri, 1972: 48-80). In the nineteenth century, the most important area of its cultivation in Egba Division was in the south-west around Ota. At the beginning of the twentieth century, its cultivation was reported in the north-eastern part of Egbaland. Here, it was being planted along with cocoa by 1902.

Trade within Egbaland

The business of buying and selling or exchange of goods that had taken root since the Egba settled in Abeokuta in 1830, continued unabated and became more organised on a large scale as a result of their colonisation of new areas. By 1914, much of the forested eastern half described by Mabogunje and Gleave had been colonised by the Egba (Mabogunje and Gleave, 1964: 3). In the south-west, their boundary had extended beyond Ota, the Awori town. As a result of this development, local trade was now carried out on a larger scale within Egbaland. The existence of large and permanent settlement such as Abeokuta, Ifo, Owode, Oba, Ota, Osiele, Ofada and several satellite villages also aided trade. Trade within Egbaland in the period under discussion involved both intra and inter-town trade in foodstuffs, cash crops, crafts and imported commodities. The agricultural products that have been listed above were the main articles of trade. Articles such as beans, rice, yam, plantain, vegetable, palm oil, pepper, kolanut, citrus, guinea-corn, groundnut, sweet potato, cassava, and cassava products such as *lafun* and *garri* were consumed as food. The main production centres were the villages from where they got to the various markets.

Trade was organised in such a way that many middlemen emerged. There were those who went to the farms to purchase the foodstuffs directly from the farmers or through their agents. There were those who purchased from middlemen or their agents who had earlier bought directly from the farmers. It should be noted that

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some farmers who were located close to major markets took their goods directly to the markets. When this happened, they still sold their goods to middlemen more often than not. The character of trade was such that it encouraged the proliferation of middlemen. Attendance at major markets such as Sapon, Itoku, Lafenwa, Omida, Olodo, Owode, Obafemi, and Ifo also showed that many people were involved in the trade. Middlemen and farmers sold at these different markets to retailers or in some cases to middlemen who re-sold again to retailers before the goods finally got to the consumers. It must be noted that kolanut, cotton and citrus also entered the local trade. In the period under study, kolanut trade became very important in the Ifo-Ota and Egba Owode area. Oranges and pineapples also featured in the markets from the second decade of the twentieth century. Cotton was still being used in the local weaving industry and as such was sold locally.

Although, there was no rigid division as to what a market could sell, certain ecological factors affected the range of goods available. Some markets were noted for particular articles of trade. For example, when kolanut became important in the first half of the twentieth century, the Ifo and Owode markets became important for the trade in Kolanut. Owode market was noted for the trade in rice because of its proximity to Ofada where rice was cultivated in abundance. Itoku market in Abeokuta was noted for the sale of Adire dye and cloth while Lafenwa was also noted for the sale of kola and cattle. The point being made here is that though these markets were noted for particular trades, other articles of trade could still be purchased from them.

In fact, a particular item, cassava product, garri became the staple food in Egbaland from the second quarter of the twentieth century and could be found in virtually all the markets. Its scarcity between 1949 and 1951 almost caused a crisis in Egbaland. This scarcity was evident in the sharp rise in its price. The price of garri increased from about eight pence (8d) an *olodo* to 2 shillings 2/ (N.A.I. ABP. ED 545). This was an increase of about two hundred percent (200%). Its dearth during this time was such that the Egba Native Administration (E.N.A.) under its three-man regency had to embark on food campaign in order to boost production (N.A.I. ABP. ED. 545) and avert bloody crisis that might result from such scarcity.

It should be noted that this was a period of interregnum in Egbaland, after the forceful removal of Ademola II (Davies, 1992: 17). However, there is nothing to show that the crisis that resulted in the interregnum was responsible for the scarcity of garri about this time. The exportation of gari to the northern part of the country, scarcity of labour in Egbaland and the effect of insects on farms and crops, among others, could be said to be the causes of the dearth of garri in Egbaland about this

time. These problems were recognised by the interim administration, and it embarked on measures of banning exportation of garri out of Egbaland and used various propaganda to enlist young men (especially unmarried ones), in farming through the provision of various incentives like cash and parcels of land. Whether these measures yielded the expected returns is another thing entirely. Suffice it to say that most of the young men that were to be enlisted for the job declined the offer, in spite of the incentive, for greener pasture elsewhere, especially Lagos.

Apart from kolanut and cotton, other cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, palm oil and palm-kernel also featured in the inter-town trade in Egbaland. All these crops were bought from the various production centres (i.e. villages and towns) by traders/middlemen and produce buyers who later resold to those who would export the crops or exported them directly.

Particular attention should also be paid to local craft as products of this sector entered the internal trade of Egbaland although not on a large scale as trade in agricultural products. Egbaland, and in particular Abeokuta, was blessed with experienced carvers. One of them, an Itoko man, was said to be particularly important such that he made masks for Gelede and Egungun dancers (N.A.I. ABP. 902). It was even claimed that the masks were brought back to the carver to be repainted just before the festivals. This man's works were such that the colonial administration proposed to have them exhibited in the Nigerian Crafts Show room, established at building number 9, Martins Street, Lagos, in 1941, as many other works of art were on display there. Although, it is impossible to say exactly how many of his works were sold locally as there is no record of his sales, yet that his works entered the local trade however, is not in doubt. Any analysis of trade in Egbaland in the period under study would be incomplete without mentioning the place of indigo dyeing and Adire cloth in Egbaland. The Adire industry was so important that it became prominent in the West African sub-region. Its products were also proposed for exhibition in the Lagos Craft Show room in 1937.

The importance of trade and the Adire industry in the political economy of the Egba nation cannot be over-emphasised. It showcased the important role of women not only in the economy of the Egba, but also in the modernisation drive of the Egba nation. The Egba women were very prominent in the Adire trade so much that they formed the Adire Dyers' Association in 1926 (Afolabi, 1981). Some of these women became so rich that they became the "economic pillars" of their homes and by extension, the Egba society. Missionary papers revealed several occasions when a local Catechist's family could not stay at his duty post but chose to remain in Abeokuta because of the wife's "trading activities" (C.M.S. Papers, 1847).

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The activities of Madam Tinubu among others and later, members of the Abeokuta Women Union (A.W.U) under the leadership of Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, are particularly noteworthy. It should be noted that the early growth of interest in education by the Egba youth was also aided by the thriving businesses of their mothers which in turn helped the women to be exposed to foreign ideas. Since Adire traders came from faraway places such as Senegal, Dyula in Cameroon, Ghana, Congo, and even all over Nigeria, among others, the Egba traders initially relied on interpreters to translate from English to Yoruba. The Egba women later invested their money in their own children not only to cut cost but also as status symbol. The return of these foreign bred educated elite of the Egba women helped in the modernisation programmes of the Egba nation. For example, Adegboyega Edun and several others were said to have benefitted from their mothers' wealth (Afolabi, 1981).

In addition, as "economic pillars" of their homes and by extension the Egba society, they were at the forefront of political activities in Egbaland, especially after the Ijemo massacre and the Adubi rising. The activities of Abeokuta Ladies Club, which metamorphosed into A.W.U shaped the political development of Egbaland at a time that the colonial government thought that Egbaland had been coerced into political inaction. The Egba women collaborated with some other groups to press the colonial government to back down on some of its policies while the Egba men stayed at the background as a result of the experiences of 1914 and 1918. For example, they organised demonstrations and even kept vigil at the Afin Ake until Ladapo Ademola II, was sent on temporary exile in 1948.

Trade in Egbaland in the period under study was not limited to agricultural products and crafts alone. It also went on in imported commodities. It is true that the economy had become gradually monetised as the barter trade had given way to real money economy by the twentieth century. It should also be noted that the Europeans, the Saro elements and various other nationals had penetrated Egbaland in the nineteenth century. Some of them like J.P.L. Davies, and Madam Tinubu operated retail shops where these imported commodities, some of which were exotic could be procured. The people bought most of these commodities for their social values. Some of them got to the villages through the middlemen and farmers who came to town once in a while and later, frequently with the advent of road and railway transportation. Some of the imported commodities that entered the local trade were soap, matches, clothing materials, cement among others.

External Trade

The external trade concerned the long-distance trade between the Egba and their immediate and distant neighbours and the Europeans. Egba's external trade involved trade in both food and cash crops with the Ijebu, Yewa, Porto Novo, Ibadan, Lagos, Cameroon, Ghana, and Congo among others. They also traded with the people of the 'North'. This trade increased with the construction of the railways that linked Egbaland with the northern part of Nigeria. Also, during this period, Egba's external trade with the Europeans saw the exportation of cash crops to Europe.

In fact, the Egba people had been known to be involved in long-distance trade with their neighbours from the middle of the nineteenth century. That the Egba traded with Yewa and through Yewa with Porto Novo has been well documented. With the rise of the Egba state in early 1830, Abeokuta gradually became the chief nodal point for the northern sector of Yewa's commercial life (Folayan, 1980: 85). Abeokuta traded with Ketu and Badagry and later Oke-Odan and Porto Novo. The Egba-Porto Novo trade tapped the farm products of the region of central and southern Yewa in addition to those of the Egba. In the first half of the nineteenth century, slaves formed the most important article of trade, which the Egba exchanged for the European manufactures from Porto Novo. However, the Egba nation later changed from a slave economy into an agro-based one. The introduction of legitimate trade consequent upon abolition of slave trade, the intensification of agriculture with the advent of missionaries and the Saro elements and the activities of both the E.U.B.M. and the E.U.G in Abeokuta brought about a real change in the slave economy.

The middleman position of the Egba was still jealously guarded by the Egba by the second quarter of the twentieth century until the advent of vehicles. Even then, their middlemen position was not seriously affected. Agricultural products were taken from various production centres to towns such as Abeokuta, Ilugun, Ota, Ifo and Owode from where they were finally taken to different neighbouring areas such as Yewa, Ibadan, the Ijebu country, Kano, Zaria, and Lagos via Ota and Ofada-Gaun route (Davies, 1992: 46). The advantage of road connection made it possible for the above towns within Egbaland to act as receivers of local goods. Various agricultural goods and products like cassava, rice, palm-oil, kolanut, coffee and garri to mention a few, were taken out of Egbaland to these neighbouring towns. The problem here again, is that most of Egba's trades with their neighbours went unrecorded in our period. However, through oral evidence, we know that these agricultural products were taken from Egbaland by road transport to Yewa area where they later found their way to Porto Novo (Benin Republic). It is also claimed that these agricultural goods and products especially garri found their way to Ibadan. The Ijebu also featured prominently in Egba's

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trade with their neighbours. They came to Abeokuta and other towns with road connection to buy garri. Available evidence reveals that the Ijebu and Ibadan were involved in the shipment of gari from Egbaland to the northern part of the country between 1949 and 1951 (N.A.I. ABP. ED. 545). This incidence almost caused civil disturbance in Egbaland as shown earlier. It should be noted that the northern part referred to here is probably Kano and Zaira, which apart from the fact that they enjoyed railway connections were mentioned by some of the informants contacted.

Moreover, strangers' communities such as Sango in Ota and Sabo in both Owode and Abeokuta are reminiscent of Egba's trade with their neighbours. These areas served as transmittal centres of Egba's trade with their distant northern neighbours. Cassava products, garri were railed from Sabo through Lafenwa to the north on a daily basis between 1949 and 1951. Also, kolanut trade featured prominently in Sabo (Abeokuta and Owode), Ifo and Ilugun from where they were railed to the north on a daily basis. It must also be noted that cattle and other northern products such as hides and skin got to Egbaland through these settlers' communities.

Modernisation

Modernisation is a stage in development. Generally, historians attribute modernisation to processes such as urbanisation, industrialisation, and literacy. In an urbanised society, the individual becomes the basic unit of the society and this makes the individual more important than the family or community. The importance of traditional religious beliefs also decline, leading to the loss of distinctive cultural traits. The concept of modernisation adopted by this paper conforms to these processes.

The victory of the Egba over the Ijebu, at the battle of Owiji (1832) and Ibadan, at the battle of Arakanga (1835) marked a turning point in the history of the Egba nation. Refugees poured into Abeokuta between 1836 and 1842. Abeokuta's fame spread far and wide. All the Egba who had hidden in the forest during Egba's dispersal from the Egba forest now found their way back to Abeokuta. Inhabitants of friendly towns, especially from Oke-Ogun, who fled before invaders found refuge in Abeokuta. Captives of war, especially of Oyo, Ife, and Ijebu, brought back by the Olorogun, when not sold into slavery, were absorbed into the Egba household as domestic slaves (Biobaku, 1957: 24). Thus Abeokuta was fortified with immigrants and hence became more impregnable than ever to withstand any attack. More importantly, Egba returnees, missionaries, and Europeans also made Abeokuta their abode. The agglomeration of diverse people in Abeokuta was a factor in the modernisation of the Egba nation.

It should be noted that some Egba citizens, including some Saro who had settled in Lagos, advised the Egba authority on the best way to fashion the body politic of Abeokuta. They therefore acted as stimulus in assisting the Egba nation in establishing the E.U.B.M in 1865 (Biobaku, 1957: 79). The E.U.B.M made attempt to foster cooperation between the traditional chiefs and the educated elements, with a view to establishing a stable and civilised government in Abeokuta. Chief Shomoye, the Bashorun, was styled President-General, Chief Akodu, the Seriki, was the High Sheriff, and Asalu, the head of the Ogboni was also included in this novel arrangement (Biobaku, 1957; 79). The Board was directed by its Secretary, G.W. Johnson and other leading Egba Saro. The E.U.B.M did not evolve a proper council representative of the traditional, sectional and immigrant elements in Abeokuta. However, the E.U.B.M. made some positive achievement in the establishment of Customs Department for levying export duties instead of the customary bills collected at the gates (Biobaku, 1957: 79). Defaulting goods were seized and auctioned. One-third was assigned to the seizer, while the remaining two-thirds went to the E.U.B.M. Customs houses were placed on the Ogun River at Isheri and Agbamaiya to record movements of produce and levy duties according to the Egba Customs Duties Ordinance. The E.U.B.M customs duties were collected and accounted for by the use of printed forms and vouchers (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 70).

By 1873, the E.U.B.M customs duties were discontinued as a result of the British opposition in Lagos. Subsequent attempts to re-establish it by Johnson failed. Despite this, the E.U.B.M still managed to introduce many modernised programmes. It organised a postal service to Lagos via the Ogun River. Senior schools were opened. There was also the encouragement of the use of English language to improve communication in the external political and economic relations of Abeokuta. It also took to sanitary improvements (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 70).

Furthermore, on the invitation of some Egba elite in Lagos, Governor McCallum undertook a political re-organisation of the Egba in 1898. The E.U.G that emerged continued from where the E.U.B.M stopped and was able to finance its undertakings through customs and imported duties on spirits (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 70). The E.U.G did not have full control over its customs duties, as it had to make changes in the tariffs only with the consent of the British government in an agreement concluded in 1903.

The pacification of adjoining territories to Abeokuta by the British seemed to have aided the new political structure in Abeokuta. The establishment of the E.U.G was aided by the situation of 1898 – Lagos, Ilaro, Ijebu, and Ibadan, had been annexed

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by the British. Some studies (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 71) on Egba have described the establishment of the E.U.G in 1898 as a novel one proposed by Governor McCallum. According to Pallinder-Law, although the constitution of the Egba Council of 1898 “shows much influence from ideas put forward and tried by G.W. Johnson and his associates, it included one completely novel feature (Pallinder-Law, 1972L 66). It should however, be noted that there was nothing new in that constitutional arrangement. Years before 1898, that is, as far back as 1871, Johnson (also known as Reversible Johnson) had proposed a re-organisation of Abeokuta government into a three-tier federal structure. The supreme ruler of the town was to bear the title of *Oba Onile* (The king who owns the land). Oyekan was to be first holder. Under *Oba Onile*, there were to be four *Oba Alade* (the king who wears a beaded crown) representing the four sections of Abeokuta. Below the *Oba Alade* were the *Oba Alakete* (the king who wears crown), representing the township kings. Johnson himself was to be the first *Amono Oba* (Vizier/Prime Minister) through whom the *Oba Onile* could be contacted and vice-versa.

This was the first federal structure taking into account the diverse political nature of Abeokuta. It was the precursor of a modern federal system in Nigeria, which gave everybody a sense of belonging and a peaceful society. It can be safely submitted that the Egba nation's modernising programme of political development is today reflected in the Nigeria's government practice of the dichotomy of Ministers of State and substantive or senior ministers. It has also been argued that the proposal put forward in 1898 by McCallum was a suggestion and advice given by Prince Ademola when the Governor sought his advice on the best way to solve the problem of political crisis in Abeokuta (C.M.S. CAZ/90). Prince Ademola was of great help to the Governor in making the new type of government work. He had also been busy in other ways. He arranged the Egba Railway Agreement with the British government in 1898, and three years later became the Egba Government Agent in Lagos (Delano, 1969: 8-9).

Therefore, with the help of Prince Ademola and W.A. Allen, the representative of the Lagos government in Abeokuta, Sir Henry McCallum proposed in February 1898, a state council of eight ministers with the Alake as Chairman (Delano, 1969: 8). The Osile was to become Minister of Justice, the Olowu, Minister of Finance, the Agura, Minister of Roads and Works, the Oba Imale, Minister of Public Order, the Balogun of the Christians, Minister of Sanitation, the Olori Parakoyi, Minister of Trade and Agriculture, the Seriki, Assistant Minister of Justice, and the Apena of Iporo, Government Secretary. It should be pointed out that the composition of the E.U.G continued to be extended as the need was felt for certain individuals or interests to be drawn into the central government. When Gbadebo became the

Alake, his friend and Personal Secretary, Mr. P.P Martins became the Secretary to the E.U.G (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 76). Mr. C.B Moore who had been unpaid treasurer for some time also became paid and full time member of the E.U.G. Reverend D.O Williams was also made a member of the Council. As early as May, 1898, one representative each of Itoko and Ijemo townships had been added.

The argument of Pallinder-Law that these appointments were simply concessions to the “owners of the soil” seems to have been buttressed by the fact that they did not attend any council meeting. The decision to invite the federal or all-Egba Ologun title-holders to the council was an important one. Being wealthy and influential, they might become dangerous leaders of dissenting groups if not incorporated. The Seriki had been a member since the beginning of the E.U.G and by January, 1899, when the Balogun of Ilugun was appointed the Balogun of Abeokuta, following the deportation of Aboaba, he was included in the council. Later in 1899, the Otun Balogun and Osi Balogun became members. They were later joined by the Ekerin Balogun, an Owu Chief. Also, the Apena of Itoku and Apena of Ake who as leaders of the Ogboni Council of *Omo Iya* townships, joined the council in 1901. Two township Ologun, the Jaguna of Igbein and Jaguna of Ijeja (both Egba Alake) joined the council in 1901 (Pallinder-Law, 76).

In addition, provision was also made for chiefs who were not original members of the council to take part in Council meetings occasionally. By 1901, membership of the council had increased to about twenty-two including the Alake. These members received monthly stipend right from the Alake who received an initial amount of £8.6.8d down to the lowest paid who received £1.0.0d totalling £43.13.4d monthly and £524 yearly. Stipends were later increased and the number of councillors also increased such that by April 1899, the yearly cost of council stipends was £915 and by January 1900, £1059. The Alake was then receiving £15 per month while the lowest paid council member received £2. The stipend was paid from the revenue yielded by the government’s customs levy (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 78).

By 1902, J.H Samuel who later became Adegboyega Edun replaced P.P Martins as the Secretary while J.O George succeeded C.B Moore after his death in 1906. In order to fulfil the role of support–generating and generally mediating link between the townships and the central government, the council pursued a policy of enlarged council so as to include increasing number of chiefs with township titles. By the end of 1910, there were eighteen such chiefs on the council. During 1911, four more appointments were made but in August, the council was warned by the Financial Advisory Board (FAB) that no further ‘unnecessary multiplication’ of members of council would be authorised. This intervention by FAB prevented a further appointment which the council had already decided on in principle. Only two more township representatives were admitted in the last three years of the

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EUG. However, as a result of loss through deaths and other causes, the number of townships chiefs on the council had fallen to nineteen by September, 1914. Moreover, the number of chiefs with all-Egba titles fell, as the incumbents died and new appointments were not made. By September, 1914, there were three such title-holders on the council compared to the nine existing before in 1909 (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 78). The total number of membership which had been thirty-two in December, 1910, had risen to a peak of thirty-five in December, 1912, and came down to thirty by December, 1914. Average attendance fell from 26 in May-June 1912 to 19 in December, 1913 – January 1914.

The membership of the council by township chiefs did not stop them from conducting their private courts – a practice which ran counter to E.U.G's policy of centralisation of judicial authority. Individual council members had been repeatedly found guilty of deviations from it. It was obvious that the practice of settling disputes in chiefs' private courts continued to be common. Therefore, the right of chiefs to settle uncomplicated cases concerning people from their own townships was admitted, in 1911, though the chiefs were not officially to receive hearing fees or presents, at least, not until after the amicable settlement of a case. Later in 1911, it was further conceded that township chiefs might settle cases that should properly be heard by the Egba court, provided regular court fees were collected and paid over to the Egba court (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 78). A further concession was made when an order-in-council of September, 1911, empowered township chiefs to investigate cases of burglary. This was in recognition of the traditional role of the Ogboni in suppression of crime.

It has been argued that it is fair to say that the achievements of the E.U.G did not go beyond those of the E.U.B.M, but the “modernizing” interests were far more solidly entrenched than they had been in the 1860s, and there was no risk of a setback like that which the E.U.B.M had suffered (Pallinder-Law, 1974: 75). The development policy of the E.U.G saw a strong push forward with the appointment of Adegboyega Edun. Development was concentrated in three areas vis: the political; the administrative; and the technological. It has been argued above that the E.U.G established a conscious policy of increasing the number of members of the council so as to make it more representative of the many divisions of Abeokuta society.

The administrative establishment of the E.U.G was rapidly expanded. In 1898, about twenty people were employed – clerks, messengers, post-master and a host of others. By 1908, the E.U.G had employed about 350 people of whom eighty-five were in higher and lower clerical positions. The number of government departments also increased. In 1908, there was a secretariat, a treasury, audit

office, customs department, judicial department, public works department, medical and sanitary department, police, prison, printing office, forest and agricultural office, post office and an education department. The annual expenditure which had been about £1,500 in 1898 was about £17,000 in 1908 and over £40,000 in 1911 (Pallinder-Law, 1974: 760). Also, from 1904, yearly estimates of expenditure and revenue were printed by the E.U.G printing office.

In the technological field, the E.U.G undertook a considerable programme of road building, although most of the roads were hammock roads rather than intended for wheeled transport. In Abeokuta town, motor transport was introduced by the E.U.G in the first decade of the twentieth century (N.A.A. Egba Govt. Gazette). The Roman Catholic Hospital was also financially assisted in addition to the employment of two Egba doctors and a number of smallpox vaccinators. A corn mill was installed for the use of the general public and a museum was founded to exhibit the economic products of the country. The E.U.G also built water works which distributed piped water taken from the Ogun River to public fountains along the main roads of Abeokuta. The E.U.G also undertook a considerable programme of building of government offices and other public buildings in Abeokuta and in rural centres (Ajisafe, 1964: 85).

To a large extent, the E.U.G was able to finance its undertakings from its revenue derived mainly from custom duties. Because the E.U.G did not have full control over its main source of revenue – customs duties – since it had agreed to make changes in the tariffs only with the consent of the British, it could not derive the expected revenue to finance its projects. However, the finance of the E.U.G soon dwindled as a result of the dwindling resources of the E.U.G and the over-expansion of the E.U.G among others. Hence, when the E.U.G wanted to embark on the construction of pipe-borne water in 1910, there was no finance for it except through a loan of thirty thousand pounds from the Lagos government (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 70). Subsequently, direct taxation was introduced by the E.U.G to improve its precarious financial situation. The agitation and resentment that followed the introduction of direct taxation culminated in the Ijemo massacre, which the British government used as an excuse to institute a political change in Abeokuta. A new arrangement was carved out and the E.U.G. became the Egba Native Authority (E.N.A) with the Alake as the Sole Native Authority (S.N.A) and assisted by two others in the district (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 70).

The water scheme initiated by the E.U.G and for which it incurred a loan of £30,000.00 initially displeased the general public. However, the E.N.A vigorously pursued the policy such that by the end of the colonial period, a water works had been constructed in Abeokuta and the people benefitted from it. Moreover, arrangement was also made with Lagos Government for the introduction of

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electricity to Abeokuta. By the time electricity was finally introduced to Abeokuta, the Europeans were the first beneficiaries before others could benefit. The E.N.A further reinforced electricity in Abeokuta by a grid link with Lagos (N.A.I./ABE. PROF. ABP. 232).

Diversification

The concept of diversification is not here conceived strictly in terms of its economic sense of reducing non-systemic risk by investing in a variety of assets alone. It is construed in terms of the variety of activities - politically, economically, socially, and otherwise - that the Egba people engaged in, in Abeokuta and its environs.

Like all modernised societies, the Egba people delineated their work places from their towns. Many of their work places in those days were their farmlands where they engaged in their day to day production activities. And so, it was customary in those days to talk of Egba Oko (the Egba of the village) and Egba Ile (the town Egba). Much later, the farmlands developed into towns on their own. It was in this way that areas such as Ifo, Owode, Osiele, Oba, and Ilugun among others transited from mere farmlands to small towns. Furthermore, traditional festivals such as Egungun and Agemo, and modern religious celebrations such as Christmas and Eid-el-Kabir, were occasions for all to return home. During these periods, Abeokuta wore a new look with so much fanfare. Abeokuta's uniqueness lied in the fact that no Egba man would want to be buried in his farmland (Oral information).

The role of the Agege planters in the diversification of the Egba economy must also be mentioned. The Agege planters were the Egba in the diaspora so-called. Jacob Kehinde Coker, whose father Ajobo Coker, owned a cotton farm in Abeokuta, and an export business in Lagos, pioneered the Agege plantation. He was instrumental to the development of the area for plantation agriculture. The initiative of the planters was such that some food and cash crops later borrowed by the Egba entered Egbaland through Agege plantations. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Jacob Kehinde Coker leased the Davies' farm (Woodland Estate) and worked it alongside his own Ifako plantation (Davies, 1992: 84).

It has been argued that a lot of changes were introduced in Abeokuta consequent upon the incursion of the missionaries, Europeans, and the Saro elements. Some of the changes introduced came into being after 1914, in order to boost agricultural production for export. Farmers were now encouraged and assisted to produce cash crops for export. Model farms were set up, nurseries established, cooperative societies formed, marketing boards established, seedling distributed, insecticide introduced, and various incentives given to cash crop farmers. The British Cotton

Growing Association was formed (B.C.G.A) to resuscitate cotton production for export. The production of palm-oil and palm kernel was resuscitated by the Egba nation after 1914 (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 71). There was also the introduction of new cash crops into Egbaland. Cash crops such as coffee and cocoa were introduced around this time. In the same vein, the Egba economy diversified into pineapple, orange, and grape production around this time. The cultivation of cocoa was greatly encouraged by the colonial administration and many farmers took to it at the expense of palm produce and food crops (N.A.I. ABP. 62). The Agege plantation was used as nursery by the colonial government for cocoa cultivation in Egbaland. The cultivation of coffee was also encouraged as an export product. Available evidence however, revealed that not many farmers took to coffee cultivation in Egbaland. Also pineapple, orange, and grape were exported around this time.

Increase in trade revealed the shortcomings of traditional means of transportation - head portage and canoe through the Ogun River. The Ogun River was also dredged to facilitate smooth and easy movement of canoes on the river. The British had introduced the railway system into Egbaland by 1900. It was extended to Ibara by 1901. Ifo junction to Ilaro was opened in the 1930s. Points along the railway track (Railway stations) developed into economic centres and later towns. Thus, areas like Wasimi, Kajola, Ijoko, Agbado, and Itoki among others became economic towns.

The introduction of road transport followed the railway. The E.U.G under Adgboyega Edun first started the construction of good and wide roads preparatory to the introduction of motor vehicle. Thereafter the E.U.G introduced motor vehicle transport into Abeokuta and environs. After the initial operations, individuals were allowed to run vehicle transport in Egbaland (Ajisafe, 1964: 159). However, wheeled transport had serious implication on the average Egba trader as it brought many European merchants and African traders to Abeokuta at the expense of the Egba traders.

The period of the E.U.G also coincided with the diversification of the Egba economy into mechanised industry. Corn crushing machine was introduced by P.V Young, then as President of the Financial Advisory Board (F.A.B) to the E.U.G in 1909. This machine was set up at Sapon and opened for the use of the entire public.

A quarry was opened at Aro in 1904. The stone was sold to the Lagos government for the construction of the break waters in Lagos. Between 1906 and 1916, over two million tons of Abeokuta stone were used. Further large quantities were used

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in harbour development, especially for the extension to Apapa wharf in the 1950s. The stone was also used for buildings and railway ballast (Johnson, 1963: 89).

The Nigerian Concrete Company was established to manufacture poles, bridge beams, fencing posts, culverts etc. The factory was situated in Abeokuta because of the presence of mica-free gravels and sands obtainable locally from the base of the sedimentary rocks. A sawmill was also established at Sapon roundabout. It had a hand saw for cutting logs into planks. Logs were brought from a distance of over forty miles to Sapon.

In addition, the Blaize Memorial Institute established a fruit squash industry where fruit drinks were produced. Grape fruits were grown on the Blaize compound and lemons and pineapples were brought from the Western Nigerian Development Corporation plantation at Ijebu-Igbo and Apitipiti while oranges were bought from farmers in and around Abeokuta. Production later increased to about a thousand bottles a day.

Diversification should also be seen in terms of the political arrangement that was all inclusive. The political arrangement in Abeokuta was such that everybody was accommodated whether at the level of the E.U.B.M or the E.U.G. Apart from this, other sections of Abeokuta that later joined the Egba in Abeokuta, were allowed to have their sectional Oba - Owu, Yewa etc. In addition, the Egba Alake section had Oba who were not originally Egba on their father's side - Ademola (1869-1877) and Ladapo Ademola II (1920-1960). Ademola was an Owu man but whose mother was the daughter of Jibodu, an Alake at the Orile Egba. Ladapo Ademola II was the son of Ademola (Ajisafe, 1964: 211).

Conclusion

The conducive vegetation of Egbaland, no doubt, provided the foundation upon which the Egba erected a stable and strong economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Egba produced and traded in diverse food and cash crops both within Egbaland and with their immediate and distant neighbours. Egba's cash crops and products also entered the European markets. For the most parts of the nineteenth century, Abeokuta was the main hinterland of Lagos. The economic prosperity of Egbaland did not only result in political power for the Egba, which made them to defend their nascent town against all their enemies in the period under study, but also acted as a pull factor for many people who later made Abeokuta their abode.

The modernisation of Egbaland pre-dated colonial rule and it made the Egba people to stand out not only in Nigeria generally, but even among other Yoruba sub-groups. The acceptance of various groups into Egbaland and the evolution of a federal system of government helped in the mutual exchange of ideas on modernisation and integration. The federal system of government which the Egba designed in Abeokuta after 1830 was unique and the first of its kind in Nigeria. It could be said to have foreshadowed the federal principle in Nigeria. It also predated the Richards constitution of 1946, which is today regarded, in many quarters, as an adumbration of federal principle in the evolution of constitutional arrangement in Nigeria.

In addition, the whole idea of senior and junior ministers practiced by the Nigerian state today can be said to have been borrowed from the E.U.B.M and the E.U.G. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that the Egba are pace setters not only in Nigeria but throughout the West African sub-region. The imposition of colonial rule on the Egba nation consequent upon the abrogation of the E. U. G in 1914 retarded the modernisation zeal of the Egba. The E.N.A that succeeded the E.U.G could not match the modernising zeal of its predecessor in office as it had to work within the ambits and dictates of the colonial administration in Nigeria in general.

After independence, Egbaland became part and parcel of the Western Regional Government which later metamorphosed into Western State, out of which the present Ogun State was created in 1976. Therefore, the political evolution of Nigeria, through the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Republics altered the academic climate under which the present exercise was conceived, as it is strictly speaking, difficult to talk about the Egba nation under the various political transformations and agglomeration that Abeokuta, the home of the Egba, has undergone since the 1960s.

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Oral information was also collected from several informants.