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## CHAPTER 5

# “*IJEBU A B’EYAN?*” (“*IJEBU OR HUMAN BEING?*”)

## NINETEENTH-CENTURY ORIGINS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST IJEBU SETTLERS IN COLONIAL IBADAN, NIGERIA

*Sahced Aderinto*

### INTRODUCTION

*Ijebu a b’eyan?*  
*boba ri Ijebu ati ojo,*  
*pa Ijebu, kio fi ojo sile.*

Ijebu or a human being?  
if you run into Ijebu and a snake,  
kill the Ijebu and spare the snake.

Presented here is a popular statement attributed to the Ibadan. Suggestively, it came into existence in the nineteenth century and was used to describe the Ibadan's prejudice against Ijebu strangers in colonial Ibadan. Killing an Ijebu and sparing a snake presupposes that the Ijebu were more dangerous than snakes. The Ijebu, a Yoruba subgroup, were one of the numerous strangers in pre-colonial Ibadan, 1830-1893.<sup>1</sup> The history of their presence dates back to the founding of Ibadan around 1830. Indeed, they were one of the groups that settled at the place that would later become Ibadan after the destruction of Owu around 1825 and the sacking and displacement of the Egba-Gbagura and their villages.<sup>2</sup> Other Yoruba cofounders included the Egba, Ekiti, Ife, and Oyo Yoruba. Between 1830 and 1893, wars and diplomacy dominated the affairs of the town, and the Oyo Yoruba, one of the early settlers, emerged as the majority and laid down the principles of citizenship for the emergent minorities.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, the criteria for citizenship were not only stringent but targeted toward creating perpetual minority status for some of the cofounders, the Ijebu inclusive.

The imposition of colonial rule in 1893 and the incorporation of the town into the vortex of colonial capitalism increased the Ijebu's presence in Ibadan.<sup>4</sup> They were the most populous strangers in the city throughout the colonial era.<sup>5</sup> The need to maximize the economic opportunities created by the new colonial structures coupled with the challenges of living in a colonial urban center created a new platform which heightened the preexisting discontentment between the host and the strangers.<sup>6</sup> I agree with Obaro Ikime's evasive position about the changing nature of inter-group relations in Nigeria: "In terms of inter-group relations, colonial rule was something of a paradox: on the one hand, it brought Nigerian peoples together in new groupings and for new purposes; on the other, it emphasised already existing differences and introduced new ones."<sup>7</sup>

The Ijebu residents in colonial Ibadan (1893-1960) faced institutionalized discrimination, which posed a formidable threat to integration and assimilation. What this suggests is that in spite of intermarriages and other avenues of relations, assimilation remained a challenge partly because citizenship, which was given to the Oyo Yoruba section of the town, was not extended to the Ijebu throughout the pre-colonial period up to the

1960s.<sup>8</sup> The host continuously defined and redefined citizenship in order to limit the access of the minorities to wealth and power. Discrimination also took the dimension of labeling the social character of the Ijebu as "deviant" just because it departs from what the Ibadan saw as "normal" or "traditional."<sup>9</sup> What constituted "traditional" or "untraditional" behavior was not only relative, but determined predominantly by the labeling agent—the Ibadan. The distinction between "deviant" and "normal" behavior influenced the way the Ibadan viewed the social, political, and economic character of the strangers. The Ibadan in their understanding of general ways of life of the Ijebu would say, "*Ijebu o da*" (i.e., "Ijebu is not good").<sup>9</sup> Ibadan's construction of deviance therefore best explains why they host felt it was wrong for the Ijebu not to lavishly spend their money on politics and ceremonies.<sup>10</sup> A popular saying—*Aṣiṣe ni m' onihun* ("Oke Ado" meaning "it is lack of patronage that drives a praise-singer to Oke Ado")—validates this well-received stereotype that the Ijebu are stingy.<sup>11</sup> In the first place, praise-singers were expected to do well with the Ibadan, who believed in celebrating success through praise-singing. The unsuccessful praise-singer who went to Oke Ado would return empty-handed because the Ijebu rarely patronize them. It is like a double tragedy!<sup>1</sup> In 1946 Obafemi Awolowo (an Ijebu), a frontline nationalist and one of the founding fathers of the Nigerian state, wrote a petition to the district officer and *Obabakan* (king) of Ibadan condemning the practices of dedicating licentious and sexist songs such as "*Obo Ijebu bi Ikennu—epon Ijebu Worrownu*" (Ijebu's vagina resembles a wide vessel cup—Ijebu's scrotum is shapeless) to the Ijebu elements during the annual *Oke Ibadan* festival.<sup>12</sup> The Ijebu of Oke Ado also used the *Southern Nigeria Defender*, one of Nnamdi Azikiwe's newspapers, to protest against the alleged neglect of their neighborhood.<sup>13</sup>

Although hatred was mutual in the sense that the Ijebu also detested the Ibadan and rejected their attitude toward accumulation and investment of wealth, the numerical advantage of the majority conferred on them the power to stigmatize the minorities—since in most cases, the public majority had the network and structures needed to discriminate and pass elements of stereotypes and hatred to incoming generations via

a variety of means, some of which we shall be discussing. This does not suggest that minorities cannot direct the affairs of the majority or determine how their identities should be valued or judged. Indeed, history is replete with case studies of how the minorities seized power from the majority, changed their social and political destinies, and set the standard of good and bad. The establishment of colonial rule and social change of the first half of the twentieth century in Africa is a good example on a continental basis. At the regional level, the Fulani Jihad of 1804 (variously called Uthman Dan Fodio Jihad and Sokoto Jihad) and the emergence of a theocratic state (Sokoto Caliphate) in the region that would later become northern Nigeria informs one of how the minority can unleash changes of unquantifiable impact on the majority. For the case under examination, the Ibadan majority had power while the Jebu minority did not. So the Jebu during the pre-colonial and colonial periods contended with two significant forces of social change—power and number.

From what follows, evidence from the study of relations between the Ibadan host and Jebu strangers reveals that memory and historical antecedents play a significant role in determining the pattern of intergroup relations at any given period. Discrimination cannot exist in vacuum but within the framework of social, political, and economic developments and interaction between and among groups over a period of time. In this chapter, I argue that in order to understand why the Ibadan discriminated against the Jebu settlers during the colonial period, a critical appraisal of unpalatable nineteenth-century political and economic relations between Ibadan and Jebu Kingdoms is needed. I also look at the construction of citizenship, the emergence of the Jebu minority status as developments that laid the foundation of prejudices against people of Jebu origin in Ibadan during the colonial period.

#### UNPACKING THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF IBADAN-JEBU RELATIONS: THE MISSING LINK

In terms of the literature on intergroup relations among the Yoruba, the relations between the Ibadan and Jebu are arguably the most extensive.<sup>14</sup>

#### "Jebu a b'ayan?" ("Jebu or Human Being?")

It is impossible to write about Ibadan's relations with its neighbors without mentioning the Jebu and vice versa. In terms of periodization, the two bodies of literature on these people cover the pre-colonial (ca. 1830–1893) and colonial (1893–1960) periods. As shown by Samuel Johnson, Toyin Falola, Bolande Awe, E. A. Ayandele, and Babatunde Sofela, the tension between the Ibadan and the Jebu during the nineteenth century had political and economic undertones.<sup>15</sup> Johnson, whose classic *The History of the Yorubas* remains the "holy book" on pre-colonial Yoruba history, discusses (either in passing or elaborately) the relations between the Ibadan and Jebu. Johnson paints the picture of how Ibadan tried to break the Jebu's middleman monopoly of the coast-hinterland trade by creating alliances with the British and some loyal Jebu towns and how the Jebu exploited Ibadan economically. On the scale of blame, Johnson summarily identified the Ibadan, who were well known for their "aggressive" military expansionism during the nineteenth, as victims of Jebu's commercial and trade cruelty.<sup>16</sup> Johnson's bias is partly influenced by his ethnicity (he was Oyo Yoruba).<sup>17</sup> Also, he and his fellow African Christian converts and white missionaries frowned at the Jebu's refusal to allow Christian evangelical activities in their territories.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the missionaries had to wait until 1892, when the British military subdued the Jebu and opened their territories to trade and Christian missionary activities.

Awe, Falola, and Ayandele's data do not contradict Johnson's—although as academic historians, they do not deploy a style of exposition, which conspicuously establishes Johnson biases against the Jebu.<sup>19</sup> These acclaimed professional historians of the Yoruba use Johnson's data in addition to missionary and explorers' sources and oral tradition to create a nuanced analysis of how warfare created economic and political tension between the Ibadan and the Jebu. Falola aptly describes the major interest of the Ibadan and Jebu: "While Ibadan was imperialist in its agenda, the Jebu were interested more in trade and profit."<sup>20</sup> The wide disparity in the domestic and foreign policies of the two states created an atmosphere of mutual distrust and discontentment. Sofela's findings do not contradict those of his colleagues. However, he presents other ways or avenues the Jebu would have monopolized their middleman role in

the coast-hinterland trade without necessarily exploiting the Ibadan and other neighbors.<sup>21</sup>

On the citizenship status of Ijebu residents in pre-colonial Ibadan, Falola's essay "From Hospitality to Hostility?" examines how Ibadan's hospitable disposition to strangers degenerated into hostility during the nineteenth century and the trajectories associated with the construction of citizenship, civil authority, and agency.<sup>22</sup> He paints a vivid picture of how the Oyo Yoruba overpowered other groups and thus became the majority in a state cofounded by several Yoruba subgroups. He also discusses how access to political and economic power by non-Yoruba ethnic groups was trimmed. But the main contribution of this essay to Yoruba studies is the antithesis that challenged a well-established intellectual tradition that sees Ibadan as a city where strangers were openly welcomed and where their access to wealth and power was not restricted. Falola counters the submission of Awe and S. A. Akintoye, who had earlier argued that Ibadan was a town "free for all."<sup>23</sup>

While these authors' data give enormous insight into the relations between the Ijebu and the Ibadan during the nineteenth century coupled with the construction of minority/majority and the entire political development, which led to the establishment of civil society and citizenship construction, they do not provide any information or argument about effects of these trajectories on the experience of Ijebu residents in colonial Ibadan. One does not expect Johnson to do this because he completed his book in 1897 and died in 1901.<sup>24</sup> However, professional historians of the nineteenth century who wrote during the twentieth century and witnessed the prejudices against Ijebu strangers in Ibadan are expected to create discourses around the origins of the intra-ethnic friction. Why does one expect a historian of nineteenth-century Yorubaland to use developments of the period to establish the origins of inter- and intra-ethnic differences during the colonial and post-independent periods? Here, I am influenced by Ikime's well-received criticism that Nigerians should tailor their research to address the origins of inter- and intra-ethnic differences and crises in colonial and post-independent Nigeria.<sup>25</sup> For Ikime, historical research does not make as much sense

if it cannot answer questions that threatened peaceful coexistence of Nigeria's multiethnic cleavages. Ikime criticizes his colleagues (notably J. F. Ade Ajayi, J. A. Atanda, Ayandele, A. E. Afigbo, T. N. Tamuno, R. A. Adeleye, and others) for not establishing a link between the period they study and period they live—more so since the effects of the nineteenth-century tension among the groups they studied manifested during the period they were writing. For Ikime, the foundations of the crisis of disunity that rocked Nigeria immediately after the demise of colonial rule in 1960 were laid during the pre-colonial times and first half of the twentieth century, which all his colleagues invest quality amount of scholarship on.

If the preceding authors are less sensitive to the long-term effects of nineteenth century differences between the Ibadan and the Ijebu, the scholars we are about to discuss examine Ijebu strangers' identity and relations with their Ibadan host during the colonial period but do not see intra-ethnic hatred and distrusts as a spillover of nineteenth-century tension that arose through citizenship and political and economic rivalry. Akin Mabogunje, whose essay on the Ijebu stranger community in Ibadan is perhaps the first comprehensive account of the experience of this people in Ibadan, does not discuss the tension between the host and the strangers and made no reference to how nineteenth-century developments affected the posterity of Ijebu settlers in colonial Ibadan.<sup>26</sup> In his well-read book, *Politics and Economy in Ibadan*, Falola dedicates five pages to the discussion of the Ijebu's relations with their Ibadan host. He mentions why the Ibadan disliked the Ijebu's attitude toward accumulation and investment of wealth. The political developments that led to a popular chieftaincy dispute in which a man of Ijebu origin was denied a chieftaincy title is also discussed. However, the nineteenth-century origin of this crisis is not given.<sup>27</sup> Dan Aronson's book, *The City Is Our Farm*, examines the life histories of seven migrant Ijebu families in Ibadan. He does not take up the issues of discrimination and how the seven families contested social, economic, and political space with their host.<sup>28</sup> In spite of his lack of treatment of the subject of discrimination, his brief observation in chapter three runs contrary to the well-established position

that painted the Ijebu as economic "aggressors" in Ibadan: "A summary statement of the known facts of the situation could suggest that Ijebu are distributed throughout the occupation range in urban Ibadan, are probably underrepresented at the lowest levels and overrepresented at the higher levels, are probably the single most successful migrant group in trade and commerce but hold a monopoly nowhere."<sup>28</sup> Another brilliant observation that is close to the subject of discrimination goes thus: "The Ibadan speak of the Ijebu not as '*alajo*'; strangers and guests to be accorded generous hospitality in the cultural expectation that such action is reciprocal and pleasurable, but as '*ajiji*' that is strangers who 'eat in two places,' make of hospitality a one way street, or do not reciprocate at all. Because Aronson did not examine this contentious debate in detail but in passing, his contribution to the issue of discrimination is inadequate.

To date, two authors, Olufunke Adebayo and Saheed Aderinto, have given the most elaborate discussion of various avenues that created tension between the Ijebu and the Ibadan host during the colonial period.<sup>29</sup> Adebayo argues along the theme of urban segregation. She posits that the social and political history of intra-ethnic segregation found solace in the development of Ijebu residential districts in Ibadan and the labeling of the various aspects of Ijebu's life in the city. Aderinto extends this argument by looking at how discrimination was socially, politically, geographically, and economically practiced. He looks at how oral literature (songs, popular sayings, proverbs) was used as instruments of discrimination and the social interaction that allowed them to emerge. This approach enhances our understanding of the degree of institutionalization of discrimination, a theme which is absent in existing work. Like others, Adebayo and Aderinto do not discuss the origin of discrimination. Instead, they focus on the various aspects of Ibadan's relations with Ijebu settlers and how segregation and discrimination was practiced.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that we have two bodies of literature (in terms of themes and periodization) that do not speak to each other. The one that dwells on the nineteenth century does not discuss the long-term effects of inter-state rivalry and construction of citizenship

while the one that discusses how segregation and discrimination was practiced does not examine the nineteenth-century origin. In this work, I build on the existing literature and use the case of Ibadan-Ijebu relations to posit that in order to understand why the host treated migrant or stranger communities as they did during the colonial period of Nigerian history, historical research on the relations between and among empires and states before the establishment of colonial rule is important. The construction of citizenship and the changing nature of relations between the majority and minority in pre-colonial times is capable of allowing us to understand how the pattern of inter- and intra-ethnic relations in colonial and post-independent Nigeria are configured and reconfigured. As previously mentioned, discrimination against Ijebu settlers in colonial Ibadan was institutionalized.<sup>31</sup> It was not only practiced by Ibadan authorities, who for instance denied a man of Ijebu ancestry an important chieftaincy title in 1941, but by the public majority, most of whom did not have firsthand information or experience of Ibadan-Ijebu relations during the nineteenth century or how the Ijebu who cofounded the state were denied citizenship.

But institutionalized discrimination cannot exist without memory. Memory in this connection is defined as how groups narrate stories of peace and conflict and how intra- and inter-ethnic differences or harmony entered the social structure of the society. For the Yoruba, sayings, proverbs, songs, and popular history—in fact, oral literature in general—link people to the past, consciously or unconsciously.<sup>32</sup> A good number of unpalatable sayings, songs, and statements the Ibadan used in describing the behavioral pattern of Ijebu were of nineteenth-century origin. A content analysis of oral literature reveals strong historical connection to the well-documented histories of unharmonious relations. For instance, the epigraph indicates that the Ijebu were more dangerous than a snake presumably because they were the main supplier of instruments of human destruction (arms and ammunition) and because they cherished slaves more than any other articles of trade during the 1880s.<sup>33</sup>

The Ibadan citizen who passed ill comments about the Ijebu strangers in 1940s relied on evidence of the period (that is, new forms of tension

created by colonialism) as well as established patterns of belief and dispositions that predate the colonial period. But he or she does not require a firsthand knowledge or experience of what "actually" transpired during the nineteenth century in order to form opinions since oral literature and public/group memory readily provided the justification for beliefs, thoughts, and actions. Robert Daniels captures the interconnectivity between history and memory and group consciousness in the following sentences: "History is the memory of human group experience... It is the events recorded in history that have generated all the emotion, the values, and ideals that make life meaningful, that have given men something to live for, struggle over, die for. Historical events have created all the basic human groupings—countries, religions, classes—and all the loyalties that attached to these."<sup>34</sup>

CITIZENSHIP AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY:  
THE EMERGENCE OF JEJU MINORITY STATUS  
IN IBADAN, 1830-1893

A major factor that determined how the Jebu residents were treated during the pre-colonial and colonial periods was their stranger status. But their emergence as strangers is a manifestation of how the dominant group imposed and maintained its hegemony on the minorities through a combination of means—war and diplomacy. At the head of the new hegemonic force were the Oyo Yoruba co-inhabitants (people from places such as Ogbomoso, Ijaye, Ede, Oyo, Iwo, Ilorin, and Ilora) of Ibadan. The rivalry that dominated the affairs of the nascent settlement during the 1830s tilted in favor of this group, who expelled a good number of their main rival—the Ife—and emerged as the dominant group, politically and militarily. Significantly, it is difficult to know in concrete terms the population of the various Yoruba subgroups during this formative period. Demography is important because it allows us to consider the relationship between power derived from military might and that derived from numerical strength. Both types of power are not mutually exclusive, since in some cases a numerically insignificant group might dominate the

majority through the possession of superior weaponry and appeal to a commonly accepted cultural and mythical bond.<sup>35</sup> The Oyo Yoruba population was probably higher because members of this group were drawn from many towns and villages, including the Old Oyo Empire.

Back to the issue of construction of citizenship, the emergent dominating power had an unwritten constitution, which defined who an Ibadan citizen should be. This definition was not technically: citizens were defined as those Oyo Yoruba driven from Old Oyo Empire by the Fulani jihadist around the second decade of the nineteenth century. This definition is important for two reasons: (1) it relegated the Jebu and other cofounders to the stranger status and (2) it determined the access to power and wealth. The second construct is much more important. This is partly because the possession of wealth did not guarantee access to power. In Ibadan, the most militarized Yoruba state in nineteenth-century Yorubaland, power was derived through military exploits, which brought wealth and the ability to maintain a large following of war-boys and other hangers-on. Warlords demonstrated military might via waging wars and extending Ibadan's territorial influence. It was only a militarily active war-chief who could vie for chieftaincy titles and move on the ladder of succession. Wars brought wealth through collection of tributes from the subjugated and the booties. Summarily, power automatically brought wealth but wealth did not create power.<sup>36</sup>

Logically, it was virtually impossible for the Jebu to possess power, not because of their alien status and lack of involvement in commercial activities that can create wealth, but because they did not have the prerequisite—the ability to raise private armies and wage wars. They could not hold chieftaincy titles, which conferred power, because they did not join the Ibadan army. Jebu residents in Ibadan and at home were principally interested in trade. The various Jebu towns and villages participated in long- and short-distance trade and were in firm control of coast-hinterland commercial interaction. And as we shall see, they had a well-established network that connected people and trade between their quarters in Ibadan and various parts of the Yorubaland. A few Jebu also had land, but the size of their land was not large enough to create the

type of wealth had by war-chiefs who had greater access to land. Trade and agriculture brought wealth, no doubt, but did not give them power. Wealthy Ijebu who were not soldiers had no qualifications to join in the race for titles, since one could only have one through bravery and military exploits.<sup>27</sup>

The only exception to this was Sodeinde of Ijebu Remo origin, who was honored with the chieftaincy title of Balogun Elesin in appreciation of his contribution to the victory of Ibadan at the Iperu war (1862-1865). Sodeinde in supporting the Ibadan had to fight against his own people and went to the extent of ignoring the threat that everybody related to him in Ijebuland would be liquidated. Sodeinde, in spite of his contribution to the development of Ibadan, was not promoted beyond the rank of the Balogun Elesin until his death on April 16, 1880. Two of his descendants later distinguished themselves in the twentieth century. Solaja rose to become Ekefa Baale and Folarin, the Osi Balogun. However, Folarin was not promoted beyond this rank when the Olu Balogun title became vacant in 1941 because he was accused of maintaining his "Ijebu" ancestry. One of the numerous protest songs of the period goes thus:

*E so f' Alake*  
*E so f' Awujale*  
*Ki won o wa mu Folarin lo*  
*Awa o ni i le sin Ijebu*

Tell the Alake [the paramount king of the Egba]  
 Tell the Awujale [the paramount king of the Ijebu]  
 They should come and take Folarin  
 We cannot afford to serve Ijebu.<sup>28</sup>

From what follows, Ijebu settlers were automatically segregated politically and geographically. Newcomers readily settled among their country people in the Ijebu quarters of Isele Ijebu. However, some were integrated into the household of a war-chief through enlistment in their armies. These Ijebu elements of Ibadan households were regarded as *ara ile* (co-inhabitant—different from *omo ile*—that is, people related by blood to the founder of the compound, who of course was also a war-chief).

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The presence of the Ijebu and other strangers in the armies of the war-chiefs conferred respect and power. But such power did not translate into possession of important chieftaincy titles because another citizenship law passed in the 1850s created a barrier. This law stipulated that all compounds must have a head (Mogaji) that must compete to occupy a vacant chieftaincy title at the town level. Expectedly, potential candidates were war-chiefs of Oyo Yoruba origin related to the founder of the compound by blood (*omo ile*). This implies that an Ijebu member of a war-chief household/compound irrespective of his military exploits and success could not vie for the headship of the compound by the virtue of not being *omo ile*. It was not in the best interest of a compound to present an *ara ile* for chieftaincy title because other competitors would readily expose the ethnic identity of the claimants.

#### TRADE RELATIONS DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In order to understand how trade and political relations between the Ibadan and the Ijebu created tension during the period, it is important that we emphasize the general character of these two people. The Ijebu were well known for their "irrepressible flair for trading."<sup>29</sup> This in conjunction with their versatility in countless of other productive ventures earned them the accolade, "the Jews of Nigeria."<sup>30</sup> Some Ijebu towns of Ikorodu and Oru were located along the coast. They were therefore indispensable middlemen in the coast-hinterland trade, which probably dates back to the sixteenth century.<sup>31</sup> The Ijebu traded in a variety of imported articles such as chinaware, printed cloths, rum, guns, and beads for slaves. The main sources of their commercial prosperity up to the 1870s were slaves and ammunition. The wars and population dislocation of the nineteenth century produced a lot of slaves, which the Ijebu sold to their Portuguese and other European trade partners.<sup>32</sup>

From a war camp inhabited by a few thousand in the third decade of the nineteenth century, Ibadan grew steadily, and by the 1850s, missionaries gave the town an estimated population ranging from 60,000 to 100,000.<sup>33</sup> Population growth increased all aspects of human relations

and activities, including trade. European and locally manufactured goods must find their way from the coast to the hinterland or vice versa. Although the nineteenth century was characterized by many wars and revolution that threatened civil order and economic development in the entire Yoruba region, trade relations were central to the execution of wars and the survival of the belligerents. In other words, trade relations and other economic activities, such as agriculture and craft, flourished in spite of the wars that engulfed the entire Yoruba region. Between the 1830s and 1850s, trade relations between the Ibadan and Jebu appeared to have worked perfectly. Jebu Isale, the Jebu quarters in Ibadan, among other social and economic functions, served as entrepot where goods were transported to various parts of the city and Yorubaland.<sup>44</sup> Isale Jebu played a greater commercial role because, as we are going to see, the Jebu confined trade to the outskirts of their towns and barred foreign traders from venturing into their territories. Ann and David Hinderer, the pioneering European missionaries in Ibadan, noted that large caravans came from Jebu twice a month while another came on weekly basis.<sup>45</sup> The Ibadan also sent caravans to Jebu. The major articles of trade included salt, European-made ammunition, agricultural products, gin, and slaves.

What appeared like peaceful trade relations degenerated into mutual distrust and hostility by the 1850s. Ibadan during this period had emerged as a major military power in Yorubaland. The Jebu, like the Egba, began to fear an imminent military attack by Ibadan, whose wars of military expansion seemed to have no bounds. And in order to safeguard their territorial integrity and weaken Ibadan militarily, they were quick to see the need to impose trade embargoes, especially the sale of firearms. It was during the Ibadan-Jaye War (1860-1862) that the Jebu effectively used trade embargoes to limit Ibadan's access to war ammunition. This trade embargo, to use the words of Ayandele, "amounted to an economic stranglehold."<sup>46</sup> Some Jebu towns such as Oru secretly sold ammunition to Ibadan in spite of the trade embargo. In this unusual situation, arms and ammunition were sold at terms, inimical to Ibadan's trade interest. A good example included the alleged exploitative activities of Chief Kuku,

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a prominent Jebu chief who supplied Ibadan with ammunition. He was accused of fixing prices at abnormal rate for the purpose of exploiting the Ibadan. According to Johnson, "Through Chief Kuku of Jebu Ode, who had resided at Ibadan for many years, as well as through the Jebu country, the Ibadans were now able to obtain at a very high prices some rifle and ammunition.... The guns were sold to them at the rate of £10 to £15 a piece, and the cartridges at 6d. each—prices which, considering the scarcity of money and the general impoverishment induced by this prolonged war, only men in desperate condition would care to pay."<sup>47</sup> Ibadan exchanged slaves with firearms, and so important were slaves to the Jebu that as late as 1887, they would not take any other commodity. This situation compelled Ibadan authorities to do an unusual thing—re-enslave slaves who had redeemed themselves and former slaves who had been fully integrated in families.<sup>48</sup> The Jebu were said not only to have maximized all opportunities outside their homeland in prescriptive terms but were "unabashedly aggressive, displaying a unique disposition for economic buccaneering."<sup>49</sup> Jebu's trade antagonism to Ibadan in particular and to the entire Yoruba people is reflected in this statement attributed to an Jebu chief:

*Afi Oyinbo afi Jebu*  
*dede aye dede eru niwon*  
*kosi oja ti a ita Oyinbo*  
*ko si oja ti a ita Jebu*

Except the white man and the Jebu  
 The whole world besides are slaves  
 There is no market in which a white man may be sold  
 and none where Jebu may be sold.<sup>50</sup>

Awe aptly captures the nature of trade unfriendliness during the tail end of the nineteenth century:

During the Kiriji War of 1877-86, and up to 1892, when their country was overrun by the British, the Jebu became so powerful that they dictated the terms of trade to Ibadan traders. They were alleged to have fixed arbitrary prices for selling to and buying



from them, and to have resorted to a number of sharp business practices; for instance, it was alleged that they mixed ashes with their imported salt. Moreover, their traders could not be brought to justice before the Ibadan authorities; on the contrary, they constituted themselves into a kind of court for trying Ibadan traders who broke their rules... They also had a free run of Ibadan markets, but they never gave Ibadan traders free access to their own country; instead they delineated markets on the outskirts where the exchange of goods could take place.<sup>51</sup>

Ibadan was not hapless in the wake of the trade imbalances between them and the Ijebu—attempts were made to end the trade rivalry. Indeed, Ibadan authorities allowed the continued growth of an Ijebu quarter in Ibadan, where Ijebu resident traders preempted from their Ibadan counterparts the landlord and brokerage rights which the latter normally enjoyed.<sup>52</sup> Also Ibadan made efforts to break up Ijebuland by encouraging the Remo, a section of Ijebuland, to break away from the *Awujale's* overlord. This approach could not work because the Ijebu and Egba forces punished the Remo towns that supported Ibadan during the Ibadan-Ijaye War. The trauma of the post-Ijaye war period served as a deterrent and prevented further assistance from the Ijebu Remo. In 1888 the Ibadan expelled Ijebu consuls from their city and prevented them from buying slaves and oil until they threw their territory open for trade. Similarly, the Ibadan between 1880 and 1891 sent petitions to the British government in Lagos complaining bitterly about the Ijebu's exploitation and urging them to intervene by breaking their monopoly. At this point, the British in Lagos were also uncomfortable about the effects of the wars on trade relations with the people of the hinterland and were fervently looking for the opportunity to intervene. This opportunity came in 1892, when the British ordered an expedition that terminated Ijebu's independence and opened their territories to trade and Christian missionary activities.

A major historiographical challenge historians face in discussing the pattern of trade relations between Ibadan and Ijebu during the period under examination is that all available materials point to one direction—the Ijebu were unfair to Ibadan. We do not have evidence that argues

"Ijebu a *b'eyan*?" ("Ijebu or Human Being?")

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the other way. Sofela does not disagree with the observation of Johnson and the conclusion of his professional colleagues that the Ijebu commercially exploited the Ibadan and other Yoruba neighbors. However, he suggests other ways the Ijebu could have monopolized trade other than directly exploiting their neighbors: First, they could allow traders to pass through their territory and collect tolls from them at their town gates; second, they might allow other traders to pass through their territory but the roads might be so unsafe that going through them would be almost impossible; and last, the Ijebu could have made friends with Portuguese traders on the coast and prevent the latter from patronizing other traders from the hinterland.<sup>53</sup>

#### POLITICAL STRAINS AND "SPLENDID ISOLATION"

In nineteenth-century Yorubaland as elsewhere in Africa and the world, the justifications for political and economic policies were closely intertwined to the extent that a clear-cut dichotomy between the two is difficult to establish. The Ijebu's economic policies were partly informed by the character of their foreign policy and vice versa. The Ibadan and Ijebu had rosy political relations before the mid-nineteenth century, as the preceding sections show. At this time, their domestic and foreign policies were in tandem. Indeed, they both had a common enemy that needed to be subdued—the Egba who settled Abeokuta.<sup>54</sup> By 1830, the emerging settlement of Abeokuta had started to interfere with the lucrative commercial activities of the Ijebu. Sodeke, the legendary leader of the Egba, soon discovered that the Ijebu constituted a major threat to the survival of the nascent state.<sup>55</sup> Also, the survival of the nascent settlement depended on direct access to arms and ammunition from the coast. To achieve this objective, they began to move southward in search of farmlands and to have access to the coastal trade. A clash between Ijebu and Abeokuta was inevitable if the former's monopoly status was to continue. Ibadan also viewed the growth of Abeokuta as a potential threat since the land they (the Ibadan) occupied hitherto belonged to the Egba. Ibadan thought of a situation whereby the Abeokuta state would want to

recapture its sequestered territory. Ibadan allied with Ijebu at the Owivi War (1832) against the Egba. The Egba won this war decisively in spite of the Ibadan-Ijebu coalition force.

After 1832, new developments were going to radically change the pattern of political and military relations between the Ibadan and the Ijebu. The new development is explicable in terms of Ibadan's growing military power. By 1840, Ibadan had been able to, among other significant military engagements, halt the advancement of the Fulani jihadists at the popular Battle of Osoobo.<sup>56</sup> The state capitalized on its assigned task of defending the north and northeastern part of Yorubaland against further Fulani jihadist incursion by subduing some of her neighbors, including the Ekiti, Ijesa, and Igboimina. However, Ibadan did not restrict its military aggressiveness to these groups—there were occasions in which its troops unleashed terror on Ijebu caravans and traders stationed in Ibadan markets. This, coupled with the fear that Ibadan might invade Ijebu towns and villages, made Ijebu authorities redefine their foreign policy toward Ibadan. In the emergent power equation, the Ijebu found an ally in their erstwhile enemy (the Egba).<sup>57</sup> The two states discovered the need to tame Ibadan's military restlessness. This decision resonates in a statement credited to Ashipa of Ijebu Ode: "If the Ibadans had been allowed to get down to Lagos and had had the opportunity of buying ammunition from white man, they would have by this time devastated all the countries in the interior."<sup>58</sup>

In spite of the support the Egba-Ijebu alliance gave Ijaye during the Ibadan-Ijaye War (1860–1862), Ibadan was able to destroy the town, making its inhabitants disperse all over Yorubaland to as far as parts of modern Republic of Benin. The sacking of Ijaye did not change the character of the Egba-Ijebu alliance against Ibadan. Indeed, during the last major war of the century (the Ekitiparapo War, 1886–1893), the Egba-Ijebu alliance posed a formidable threat to the success of Ibadan against the insurgency of the Ekitiparapo confederacy.<sup>59</sup> This war was not decided until 1893, when the British made the belligerent sign a trade and peace treaty.

Aside from a military and political strain, the second pattern of distrust was Ijebu's policy of "splendid isolation." Before 1892, when the

British military attacked the Ijebu and ended their centuries of political autonomy, they adopted a policy, unique and devoid of general pattern of foreign relations among pre-colonial Yoruba societies. They splendidly isolated themselves and prevented strangers from venturing into their territory.<sup>60</sup> This policy was not directed toward Yoruba or other Africans. In fact, while its neighbors such as Abeokuta, Ibadan, and Ijaye opened their gates to Christian evangelical activities from the 1840s and 1850s, the Ijebu did not allow missionaries to operate within their domain. This policy is registered in a popular saying about Ijebu Ode: "*Ijebu Ode Ajeji, ko wo; bi ajeji bawo laro, nwon aji se bo lala*," meaning "Ijebu Ode a town forbidden to foreigners: if a foreigner entered it in the morning, he was sure to be sacrificed in the evening."<sup>61</sup> It is interesting to see the contradiction associated with Ijebu's attitude to strangers and their presence outside their domain. Logically, one does not expect them to migrate and settle in other Yoruba towns and villages if they would not allow foreigners to reside in their own communities. Instead, their presence in Ibadan increased throughout the nineteenth century.

By 1887, alarmed by the influx of strangers into their country, some angry Ijebu youth accused Balogun Onafowokan and the *Ayiyale* (the paramount head of all Ijebu towns and villages) for facilitating the influx of strangers. While the former was withdrawn from his base at Oru and subsequently had his military title changed to a civilian one, the latter was forced to pass a law forbidding the Oyo Yoruba from entering Ijebu and making sure that all commercial transactions did not go beyond the border town of Oru. The Ijebu did not restrict their anti-immigration policy to prevent strangers from entering their country. They were said to have asked Ibadan authorities to drive out missionaries and pro-Ibadan elements of Ijebu origin from their town. Examples include Solaja, who supported Ibadan against the Ijebu at the Kuruje War; Kaku, who was reputed to have sold ammunition to Ibadan, albeit at unreasonable rates; and Rev. D. Othubi, who was accused of facilitating the influx of missionaries from the coast into the hinterland. All these men of Ijebu origin were prosecuted in one way or the other for supporting Ibadan militarily and otherwise.

The Ijebu's policy of isolationism remained intact up to 1892, when an expedition was ordered against them. It appeared the British expedition was inevitable judging from the increased hostility to Ijebu's preservation of their trade monopoly as well as culture. As the Ekitiparapo War dragged on, Ibadan's petitions to the British colonial government at Lagos about Ijebu's trade unfriendliness intensified. The missionaries (both white and black) were equally unhappy that the Ijebu did not permit Christian evangelical activities in their country. By the opening years of 1890s, the British at Lagos had accumulated enough evidence and justification to break Ijebu's middleman monopoly. The expedition ordered against them saw Ibadan supplying 100 out of the 284 troops stationed for the attack. Apparently the war was not just between the Ijebu and the British but also between the Ijebu and Ibadan, indicated by the enormous support the British received from Ibadan. The expedition terminated Ijebu's centuries of independence and opened their territories to economic and missionary activities. Ibadan achieved its age-long dream only to succumb to the more superior power of the British. The two states, including the entire Yorubaland, were gradually incorporated into colonial rule after 1893.

#### CONCLUSION

The main focus of this chapter is how the construction of citizenship in pre-colonial Ibadan and political and economic unfriendliness between the Ibadan and Ijebu laid the foundation of discrimination against the people of Ijebu origin in colonial Ibadan. A tributary of the chapter's argument is that, in order to understand the nature of intergroup relations in colonial and post-independent Nigeria, a close look at pre-colonial pattern of relations is imperative. Colonialism represents one of the numerous facets of inter- and intra-ethnic engagement. To see alien rule as the most important period of intergroup relations is to undermine the creative ingenuity of Africans in the arts of making peace and warfare.

The establishment of colonial rule in 1893 ended the century-long wars and revolution in Yorubaland and put a permanent halt to Ibadan's

warlike tradition. On the Ijebu side, they not only lost their monopoly of coast-hinterland trade but were forced by the British to throw their territories open to missionary activities. New colonial machinery of administration allowed Ibadan and Ijebu Kingdoms to be governed separately, thus eliminating any strife between the two archrivals.

Pax Britannica increased the presence of the Ijebu in Ibadan as they migrated into the town to partake in the new economic opportunities that came through colonial capitalism. In the absence of war and other parameters of pre-colonial relations and tension, discrimination against people of Ijebu origin in Ibadan became another subject of friction. Although the Ijebu were discriminated against in pre-colonial Ibadan (for example, they were denied citizenship), the social, political, and economic changes precipitated by colonial rule introduced new forms of relations but could not eliminate the old and preexisting biases. New traits of discord would not have manifested the way they did without the influence of the old.

## ENDNOTES

1. The Ijebu, a Yoruba subgroup, speak mutually intelligible dialects. The *Awayade* of Ijebu Ode is the *primus inter pares* of the chiefs and kings of Ijebu towns and villages. For a general reading on Ijebu history and culture, see, among others, G. O. Oguntonisim, ed., *Studies in Ijebu History and Culture* (Ibadan, Nigeria: John Archers, 2002) and E. A. Ayandele, *The Ijebu of Yorubaland, 1850-1950: Politics, Economy and Society* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Heinemann, 1992).
2. On the Yoruba civil wars of the nineteenth century, see, among others, S. A. Akinye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland 1840-1893: Ibadan Expansion and the Rise of Ekitiparapo* (London: Longman, 1971); Adeagbo Akintjogbin, ed., *War and Peace in Yorubaland 1793-1893* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Heinemann, 1998); J. F. Ade Ajayi and Robert Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Longman, 1964); Toyin Falola and G. O. Oguntonisim, *The Military in Nineteenth Century Yoruba Politics* (Ile Ife, Nigeria: University of Ife Press, 1984); *Yoruba Warriors of the Nineteenth Century* (Iremton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001); R. C. C. Law, "The Chronology of the Yoruba Wars of Early Nineteenth Century: A Reconsideration," *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 2 (1970): 212-222; and Bolanle Awe, "The Rise of Ibadan as Yoruba Power, 1851-1893," (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1964).
3. Toyin Falola, *The Political Economy of a Pre-colonial African State: Ibadan, 1830-1900* (Ile Ife, Nigeria: University of Ife Press, 1984), 15-22; Toyin Falola, "From Hospitality to Hostility: Ibadan and Strangers, 1893-1904," *The Journal of African History* 26, no. 1 (1985): 51-68.
4. The imposition of colonial rule created more economic opportunities, which new migrants wanted to partake of.
5. Oral evidence, interview with Chief Bisiriyu Ajadi of Bere in Ibadan, Nigeria. Interview conducted by the author on July 17, 2004. All my informants agreed that the Ijebu were the most populous strangers in colonial Ibadan. Documented evidence corroborates my oral evidence; see Dan R. Aronson, *The City is Our Farm: Seven Migrant Ijebu Yoruba Families* (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1978), 28.
6. Saheed Aderinto, "Discrimination in an Urban Setting: The Experience of Ijebu Settlers in Colonial Ibadan, 1893-1960," in *Inter-group Relations in Nigeria during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Olayemi Akintunni, Okpoh O. Okpoh Jr., and Gwamna D. Je'adeyibe, eds. (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2006), 356-386.
7. Obaro Ikime, *In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-group Relations in an Evolving Nation State* (Lagos: Impact Publishers, 1983), 17.
8. Aderinto, "Discrimination in an Urban Setting," 361.
9. Oral interview with Pa Akanji Adeleke in Oje Ibadan Nigeria. Conducted by the author on May 21, 2003.
10. Aderinto, "Discrimination in an Urban Setting," 370.
11. Oke Ado is one of Ijebu's quarters in Ibadan and, indeed, the biggest during the colonial period. The Ibadan believed that praise singers who go to Oke Ado will return empty-handed because the Ijebu rarely patronize them.
12. "Oke Ibadan Festival," *Southern Nigeria Defender* (SND) (March 9, 1946): 1.
13. See, among others, "Oke Ado Waits," *SND* (May 1, 1950): 2; "One Stand Pipe for Oke Ado," *SND* (March 28, 1950): 2; "Market for Oke Ado," *SND* (March 28, 1950): 2; "Bad Condition of Oke Ado," *SND* (July 18, 1946): 3.
14. The following materials and many others have elaborate and brief information on Ibadan-Ijebu relations during the pre-colonial and colonial periods: Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (1921; rep. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), 612-613, 616-618, 450-454; Toyin Falola, "Warfare and Trade Relations between Ibadan and the Ijebu in the Nineteenth Century," *Warfare and Diplomacy in Precolonial Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Robert Smith*, Toyin Falola and Robin Law, eds. (Madison: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1992), 26-30; Toyin Falola, *The Political Economy*, 15-18; Bolanle Awe, "Militarism and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Yoruba Country: The Ibadan Example," *Journal of African History* 14, no. 1 (1973): 65-77; Obafemi Oladimomi Ayantuga, "Ijebu and Its Neighbours, 1851-1914," (PhD diss., University of London, 1965); Ayandele, *The Ijebu of Yorubaland*; Babatunde Sofela, *Egba-Ijebu Relations: A Study in Conflict Resolution in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland* (Ibadan, Nigeria: John Archers, 2000); Aronson, *The City is Our Farm*; Akintunni, "Stranger Communities: The Ijebu," in *The City of Ibadan*, P. C. Lloyd, A. L. Mabogunje, and B. Awe, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 85-95; Olu-tunke Adebayo, "Intra-Ethnic Segregation in Colonial Ibadan: The Case of Ijebu Settlers," in *Security, Crime and Segregation in West African Cities Since the Nineteenth Century*, Laurent Fourchard and Isaac Olawale Albert, eds. (Ibadan and Paris: IFRA and Karthala, 2003), 303-319; Aderinto, "Discrimination in an Urban Setting," 356-386; A. B. O. Thompson, "Isele Ijebu as an Enduring Social System: A Historical and Sociological Study" (B.A. Long Essay, University of Ibadan, 1970).

15. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*: Falola, "Warfare and Trade Relations," 26-30; Awe, "Militarism and Economic Development," 65-77; Sofela, *Egba-Ijebu Relations*, 25. Although his book is on Egba-Ijebu relations, Babununde Sofela makes reference to the relations between the Ijebu and the Ibadan.
16. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 612-613, 616-618, 450-454.
17. Although no scholar of Yoruba history can dispense with Johnson's classic, his lack of professional historical training affects the ways he interprets some of the events he recorded. For full critiques of his work, see Toyin Falola, ed., *Pioneer, Patriot and Patriarch: Samuel Johnson and the Yoruba People* (Madison: African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994).
18. Ayandele describes the Ijebu's foreign policy as "splendid isolation" partly because they barred foreigners from their territories. Ayandele, *The Ijebu of Yorubaland*, 45-67.
19. Awe, "Militarism and Economic Development," 45; Falola, "Warfare and Trade Relations," 26-30; Ayandele, *The Ijebu of Yorubaland*, 15-20.
20. Falola, "Warfare and Trade Relations," 27.
21. Sofela, *Egba-Ijebu Relations*, 27.
22. Falola, "From Hospitality to Hostility," 51-68.
23. *Ibid.*
24. The book was completed in 1897 but was not published until 1921, two decades after his death.
25. Obaro Ikime, *Through Changing Scenes: Nigerian History, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1979), 1-20. Although this criticism was broached about three decades ago, Ikime continued to reiterate it. See also Obaro Ikime, "Thoughts on Isoko-Urhubo Relations" (keynote address delivered at the Sixth Annual Conference of Urhubo Historical Society, October 22, 2005, Effurun, Petroleum Training Institute, Nigeria), 1-3.
26. Mabogunje, "Stranger Communities," 85-95.
27. Toyin Falola, *Politics and Economy in Ibadan, 1893-1945* (Lagos: Mod-elor, 1989), 274-275, 335.
28. Aronson, *The City is Our Farm*.
29. *Ibid.*, 30-31.
30. Adeboye, "Intra-Ethnic Segregation," 301-319; Aderinto, "Discrimination," 356-386.
31. See the following *Southern Nigeria Defender* (SND) newspaper stories published about Ijebu quarters of Oke Ado: "Oke Ado Waits," (May 1,

- 1950): 2. "One Strand Pipe for Oke Ado," (March 28, 1950): 2. "Market for Oke Ado," (March 28, 1950): 2. "Bad Condition of Oke Ado," (July 18, 1946): 3.
32. The Ijebu were the main targets of abusive songs during the annual *Oke Badan* festival. Ijebu elites in Ibadan protested against the stereotypical songs and sayings the Ibadan dedicated to them during this festival. See "Oke Badan Festival," SND (March 9, 1946): 2.
33. Ayandele, *The Ijebu of Yorubaland*, 199.
34. Robert V. Daniels, *Studying History: How and Why*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981), 72.
35. The conquest of Africa is a good example.
36. Falola, "From Hospitality to Hostility," 54.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Interview with Madam Aderinto (Iya Ibeji Elepo—*Omo Oje aranti we bi ojo*) of Dede Solu Compound Oje in Ibadan, Nigeria. Oral interview conducted by the author on August 17, 2005.
39. Mabogunje, "Stranger Communities," 85.
40. Ayandele, *The Ijebu of Yorubaland*, x.
41. Robin Law, "Early European Sources Relating to the Kingdom of Ijebu (1500-1700): A Critical Survey," *History in Africa* 13 (1986): 245-260.
42. Ayandele, *The Ijebu of Yorubaland*, 3.
43. Awe, "Militarism and Economic Development," 68.
44. Thompson, "Isale Ijebu," 34.
45. Cited in Falola, "Warfare and Trade Relations," 27.
46. Ayandele, *The Ijebu of Yorubaland*, 198.
47. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 492.
48. Ayandele, *The Ijebu of Yorubaland*, 199.
49. *Ibid.*, 198.
50. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 610.
51. *Ibid.*, 74-75.
52. Awe, "Militarism and Economic Development," 74.
53. Sofela, *Egba-Ijebu Relations*, 25.
54. The Egba are the citizens of Abeokuta.
55. Saburi O. Biobaku, *The Egba and Their Neighbours, 1842-1872* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 17-19.
56. The Fulani jihadist posed a serious threat to the independence of Yoruba states. They were instrumental to the final collapse of Old Oyo Empire and continued to advance southward. The 1840 war halted their southward advancement, though threat of renewed attack continued throughout the

- nineteenth century. See, among others, J. A. Atanda, "The Fulani Jihad and the Collapse of the Old Oyo Empire," in *Yoruba Historiography*, Toyin Falola, ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991), 105-121.
57. See Sofela, *Egba-Jebu Relations*, for a discussion of how the Egba and Jebu resolved their differences.
58. Ayandele, *The Jebu of Yorubaland*, 10.
59. The origins and exploits of Ekitiparapo confederacy is the theme of Akinoye's book. See Akinoye, *Revolution and Power*.
60. Ayandele, *The Jebu of Yorubaland*, 15-23.
61. Bolantle Awe, "Ibadan: Its Early Beginning," in *The City of Ibadan*, P. C. Lloyd, A. L. Mabogunje, and B. Awe, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 22.

## PART II

### COLONIAL STATES AND THE MAKING OF MINORITIES