

About the Book

Professor R.A. Olaoye committed most of his over three decades of teaching and research career toward interrogating the changing contours of African indigenous science, technology and economic development especially since the pre-colonial epoch. Olaoye's key focus was to understand the diverse nature and values of indigenous techno-scientific ideas and to show how they contributed to the socio-economic, cultural and political development of the Nigeria societies prior to the advent of European colonialism. This book provides an especial historical analysis of the corpus of issues that undergird the field of Indigenous science, technology and economic transformation particularly from the repertoire of Professor R.A. Olaoye intellectual sagacity and scholarship over the years. Drawing from rich history of different Nigerian societies, this book demonstrates the *how* and *why* of the various forms, nature, values and challenges associated with the development of indigenous and technology in Africa. From the caboose of history, this book argues that the pursuit and realisation of Africa's sustainable techno-scientific development and industrialization will remain largely a mirage until the enormous potentials that abound in indigenous science and technology across communities in Africa are optimized and prioritized.

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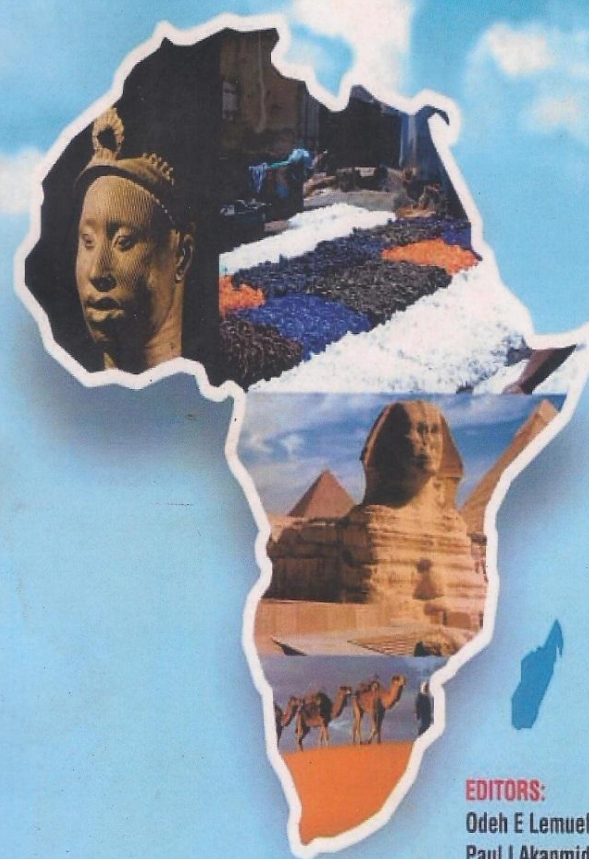
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HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICA

HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICA

Essays in Honor of Professor Raimi A Olaoye



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CHAPTER 17

INDIGENOUS INDUSTRIES IN IGBOMINALAND

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Introduction

The history of West African economy is that of a generalised society, which incorporates different clans, villages, towns, communities, chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires, all coming together, in fusion, to form what, today is West Africa. In other words, without the history and/or activities of these different units, there could not have been any region called West Africa today. One of such smaller units is the Igbomina Yoruba-stock. It suffices to say that their history could neither be divorced nor excised from that of the generalised West African society, or Africa at large. In fact, it is our contention that, without its history, it is plausible to aver that West African and indeed African history, for that matter, is, at best, incomplete.

The word, Igbomina (alternately Igboona), describes/ defines a variant of the Yoruba race, their land and dialectical peculiarities. According to traditional claims, the first leg of Igbomina immigrants, known as the Ife group, might have migrated from Ile-Ife the same time the *Alaafin* did. It is said that Orangun, a paternal brother of the *Alaafin* of Oyo and one of the sons (or grandsons) of Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yoruba, left Ile-Ife, their ancestral home, with his entourage, to found his own kingdom (probably owing to political crises or chieftaincy tussles). He was believed to have been tele-guided by a totem, a special type of cutlass, called the *Opa Ogbo* (*Ogbo* staff) given by his father at Ile-Ife; with which to cut a trace through the wilderness to the spot where his father and the gods would have him go and be established. It was this incident that won him and his followership the appellation *Ologbomona*; and the party was then known as the *Ogbomona* (i.e. the club knows the way to the spot to where father directed us) from which the word *Igbomina* later on metamorphosed.¹

The 'powerful Igbomina', who constitutes one of the major ethnic groupings in Eastern Yorubaland, south and east of Ilorin town, reportedly formed the three-quarters of the inhabitants of the Old Ilorin Province.² Today, with the exception of the Igbomina in Oke-Ila, Ajaba, Ila-Orangun and Ora-Igbomina, located in the present Ila and Ifedayo Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Osun State, all other Igbomina sub-units are believed to be natively situated in Ifelodun, Irepodun and Isin LGAs of Kwara State, with well over 250 communities. However, apart from other Igbominas in diaspora, other pockets of Igbomina communities can also be found in other districts of Kwara State such as Apado in Iponrin District, Apa-Ola, Jeroma, Ilota, Fufu, etc. in Akanbi District, Ogbondoroko in Afon District and Jebba in Lanwa District, many of which are presently classified within the Ilorin Emirate.³ It is also particularly instructive to note, according to Afolayan, that Ilorin, which was initially a fief of the *Alaafin* of Oyo, was originally Igbomina, before cutting a niche for itself. The Hausa-Fulani and others led by Mallam Alimi, defeated Afonja, and proceeded in a manner allegedly 'peculiar to the Fulanis', to extend the territorial limits of Ilorin proper to Igbomina and adjacent areas.⁴

Meanwhile, some Igbomina people confessed not to be aborigines of their present areas. Traditions, for instance, claim that prior to the coming of Orangun to Ila, there had been pockets of pre-Orangun people and communities all over the present Igbominaland, among who probably included Nupe people who were supposedly displaced by the 'powerful Igbomina'.⁵ Furthermore, from a closer examination of the evolutions or arrival of the different Igbomina sub-groups whose arrival came at different times, the Igbomina cultural and linguistic variations are explainable in the light of the diverse origins of the Igbomina. Archival evidence revealed that the composition of the Igbomina comprises the following tribal groups:

Table 1 Showing the tribal groups and classifications among the Igbomina

S/NO.	GROUP	CLASSIFICATION	PERCENTAGE
1	Yoruba of Ile-Ife origin	Igbomina	40%
2	Yoruba of old Oyo origin	Igbomina	20%
3	Yoruba of Ilorin origin	Yoruba proper	26%

4	Yoruba of old Oyo origin	Yoruba proper	3%
5	Yoruba of Offa origin	Yoruba proper	1%
6	Yoruba of other western origin	-	3%
7	Fulani	-	4%
8	Nupe	-	2%
9	Miscellaneous tribes	-	1%

Source: Nak Ilor Prof. NAC/30/C.5, p.12.

Nature and Structure of Igbomina's Indigenous Economy The nature and structure of the indigenous economy of precolonial Igbominaland was such that responded appropriately to the domestic, socio-cultural, medical and commercial needs of the locals. With Hopkins' contention that "*production for use and production for exchange were both common in pre-colonial Africa...*," he demystified the age-long uncomplimentary pseudoEurocentric worldview that Africa's precolonial economy was subsistence.⁷ A critical appraisal of this period, however, reveals a composite productive system marked by occupational differentiations. In other words, just as there were agriculturalists, there were specialist craftsmen and others who took up a particular craft in the farming off-season. This clearly disproves the notion of a subsistence economy and reveals that the indigenous economy was very dynamic and sustainable.

Quite a lot of economic activities capable of transforming the area into a big nerve centre of economic development of the entire Yorubaland were evident in pre-colonial Igbomina. In fact, it was this vibrant economy that drew the attention of the Europeans, particularly the British, to the area around the Niger, and particularly Igbominaland. Note that the British were particularly renowned to have been apparently selective in the annexation struggle with the other European competitors. While France, in most cases, probably for the imperialism of prestige, went about grabbing the desert wastelands of West Africa, Britain, obviously for the economic imperialism and mercantilism, was careful to possess the best of the lands in terms of agricultural potentials,

human, natural and mineral resources. A comparison of French colonies in Africa with the British colonies would be self-instructive enough. Although the British were more obsessed with the east and the south of Africa, their only countries in West Africa were Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia and Sierra-Leone, while the French had Cameroon, Gabon, French Guinea, Senegal, Algeria, Ivory Coast and Dahomey. A comparison of colonies beyond West Africa reveals even more.

The economic activities in precolonial Igbominaland, as it is with most other West African groups, comprised three branches of the economy: the agrarian economy, indigenous production (crafts) techniques, and the indigenous trade and commerce, the exchange and distributions of various agricultural and craft commodities, goods and services. Although emphasis in this chapter is on the indigenous industries of the Igbomina people, a brief description of the agrarian economy and indigenous commerce would suffice. This is particularly necessary as the different sectors were intertwined.

a. The Agrarian Economy

Worldwide, agriculture provides assured supplies of food, stimulates a high degree of urbanisation and specialisation, and encourages an increase in industrial and all forms of production. Igbominaland featured prominently in the two basic aspects of agricultural work, namely the food crop and cash crop economies. This is because Igbominaland is not only savannah in vegetation region, where the extensive grassland is favourable for the production of legumes, tubers and grains, some part of Igbominaland such as Arandun, Omu, Omido, Isanlu, Agbonda, Aran-Orin, Ora, and Olla also extends through the tropical rain forest region. Naturally, the tropical rain forest favours the growth of trees and in this case, economic trees like cocoa, kolanuts, cotton, oil palm, etcetera, in these areas.⁸ Smith attested that the Igbomina area straddles the forest and the savannah, just like the Ekiti, their neighbour.⁹ According to Jolayemi, crops like cotton, peanut, guinea corn, besides maize, yam, cassava, were also profitably cultivated. Furthermore, this is because parts of Igbominaland belong to the northernmost fringe of the lowland rain-forest; while at the same time, Igbominaland could also be described as being in the southern most fringe of the guineasavannah.¹⁰ In the more forested regions of Igbominaland, cash crops like cocoa, cashew and kola nuts grew and flourished in addition to economic trees like Obeche, Iroko

and Mahogany.¹¹ For instance, the founder of the Iwo kingdom reportedly settled under a Mahogany tree (*idi igi Oganwo*), from where the town plausibly derived its name.¹²

Although the production of cash crops was of great importance, the Igbomina also largely produced food crops for both local or domestic use and export. The main food crops produced included yams (different species), cassava, maize, cocoyam, guinea corn, groundnuts, beans, sweet potatoes and different species of amaranthus vegetable as well as tomatoes, peppers and okra. Perennials included bananas, plantains and citrus fruits. The main drinks were palm-wine, tapped from the trunk of the tree, and a beer brewed from maize known as

Burukutu.¹³

b. Trade and Commerce

Besides its military prowess, there are clear indications to suggest that the Igbomina must have attained such a status on account of their sound economic base, contrary to Eurocentric prejudice that suggested a subsistence economy. Extant researches have revealed that despite the constraints suffered, indigenous economy must have been dynamic.¹⁴ A critical appraisal of this period has revealed a complex productive system marked by occupational differentiations, which, as would be agreed upon, disproves the notion of a subsistence economy. There were intra- and inter-community commercial activities in which products found in different ecological zones were exchanged. Goods from even the remotest communities were circulated in local markets from where they were taken to urban market centres. The fact is, West African economy, in general (Igbominaland inclusive), went beyond feeding. It also involved exchange of surplus products. In this case, it cannot be correctly described as subsistence. The view that the coming of the Europeans initiated the impetus to trade is therefore, a blatantly erroneous claim, which also remains not only a colonial legacy, but also a neo-colonial heritage characteristic of the typical Eurocentric prejudice that always seeks to extol Western culture above any other. Indeed, contrary to Eurocentric claims that colonialism triggered off economic activities in West African colonies, a dynamic mode of cultivation, surplus production of agricultural and non-agricultural commodities and extensive distribution of all types of products were all well entrenched in the pre-colonial economy. The basic concept was that the Igbomina economy was also an exchange-economy.

Some of the basic factors of production in Igbominaland, as with most of West Africa included Land, Labour, Tools, and Capital. This is because before any goods could be produced, there must be tools, finance, labour and land. They were the four predominant factors of production. In some fields, all the four were combined (for example, in large-scale farming) while in others, two or three may be adequate.¹⁵

That the Igbomina today are renowned industrialists and reputable business moguls in commercial nerve-centres like Ilorin, Lagos and worldwide provides attestation to this. Alh.

Kamoru Yusuf Abioye—Kamwire Nigeria Ltd. (Iwo), Safe Trip Executive Director, Mr. Segun Adeniyi (Iwo), Chief Jagunmolu Oladimeji (Igbaja), Bishop David Oyedepo (Omu-Aran), are just a few among the living legends.

- Indigenous Production Techniques

Although the indigenous economy in Igbomina rested largely on agrarianism, as it was elsewhere, the pre-colonial economy was agog with industrial activities, indigenous to the people. They were described as indigenous because the skills, techniques and raw materials involved were all internally/ locally generated from within the area. In that case, the technology responded well to the socio-cultural environment of the people. Indeed, in the pre-colonial epoch, the dominant way by which the Igbomina met their material needs was through the products of their indigenous technologies, which could be said to be as old as the various settlements. Indigenous industries, which grew up with the people to become part and parcel of their culture, played a vital role in the economic activities of the Igbomina communities. There was nowhere one would not discover the presence of one industry or the other.

Some Indigenous Industries in Igbominaland

As earlier noted, one prominent feature of human activities in pre-colonial Igbominaland was occupational differentiation. There were specialist craftsmen who took up one particular craft or the other in the farming off-season. In the pre-colonial epoch, the dominant way by which the Igbomina met their material needs was through the products of their indigenous technology. These indigenous industries were mostly

either agro-allied (such as textile,) with some agricultural products serving as rawmaterials for the local industries, or agro-induced, based on mineral working, the predominant ones being iron-smelting and blacksmithing, (also, calabash making, rope-making, etc.), producing implements aiding agricultural activities. Hence, while agrarianism remained the mainstay of the indigenous economy, there were other occupations such as craft manufacture and trade in Igbominaland, which were frequently undertaken on part-time basis.

Throughout Igbominaland, craft production was carried out in several ways. While some were male-oriented, like blacksmithing, others were feminine in nature like the weaving industry. There were specialists and non-specialists as well as full-time and part time craftsmen. As there were home crafts, so also were there outside crafts, by groups or individuals, as demonstrated in the table below.

Table 2 Showing Different Indigenous Industries in Igbominaland

Home Crafts	Outside-crafts by Groups	Individual crafts
?Palm oil manufacture	?Blacksmithing	?Wood-carving
?Palm kernel oil manufacture	?Iron-smelting	?Tanning
?Weaving: cloths, baskets, mats	?Dyeing	?Firewood-collecting
?Soap making (E.g. black soap)	?Pottery	?Charcoal burning
?Tailoring	?Hunting	
?Brewing	?Drums-making	
?Spinning, ginning		

a. Selected Agro-Allied Industries
Cotton/Textile Industry

Of great importance was the production of cash crops, the bulk of which came from the areas that fall under the tropical rain forest region. For instance, on his way to Ila from Ijesa, Clarke observed and remarked on "the marshy, black-looking country, the soil being a mixture of clay and sands and well adopted to agriculture".¹⁶ Igbominaland has long been known for extensive cultivation of cotton way back into the pre-colonial era. Clarke's account only provided a 19th century documented

evidence; a practice that survived even beyond. As a matter of fact, the industry could be said to be as old as the Igbomina communities themselves as they were well known for the production of cloth long before the colonial epoch.

A special attention needs be drawn at the indigenous textile industry in Igbominaland. This is not unconnected with the widespread cultivation of cotton, its major raw-material, in the area. In addition, many economic activities were strongly connected with it. This is not unconnected with the fact that the Igbomina people who had long been known for their clad knowledge, loathed nudity. Accordingly, they discovered the knowledge of weaving with locally grown cotton. Raw cotton spins, hand-woven in simple cloth dyed with colours obtained from native plants provided most of the people's cloths. The quality of these textile products was enough advertisement for their worth, reason for the extensive market, demand and supply, in the pre-colonial era. Farmers, blacksmiths and hunters, for instance, used it as uniform because of the unique toughness.

Clarke would not allow the copious quantity of cotton produced by the Igbomina, especially in Ila, where he visited between 1854 and 1858, to elude his attention. While he observed that, at Ila, every third day, two thousand loads from surrounding communities were brought into town for market, he also confessed how he was attracted to fifteen or twenty cotton loads.¹⁷ Providing evidence for the abundance of cotton in this area, which surpassed anything he had seen elsewhere in all Yorubaland, Clarke wrote:

...While passing through the market this morning, my attention was attracted to fifteen or twenty loads of cotton, the aggregate of which could have been scarcely less than one thousand pounds (£1000). The market for this article is said to be here every third day when, according to native testimony, two thousand loads from the farms of surrounding countries are brought into town. A native told me that the result of a single man's farm was eighty of these loads; so that, allowing much for exaggeration, there can be no doubt that cotton is grown here very extensively and so much more so that I expected to find and that cloths purchased from Ila may be sold in surrounding towns at an advance of 75% and 100%.¹⁸

So extensive and exclusive was the cultivation of cotton that even the manufacturing department, which sprang up as a result of the abundant surplus production, produced on such a very large scale that merchants came from far and near—Ijesa, Ilorin, Yoruba (Oyo), Abeokuta, and even in faraway *Cotonou*¹⁹—to make do with Igbomina quality wears, known as “*Aso Ofi*”. Hence, while recommending “the heart of Igbomina” and the entire eastern country, up to the Niger River for the American Cotton Growers, epitomised by “*Brother Jonathan*”, Clarke also invited business-minded British merchants, represented by *John Bull*, to convert this *gold-mine* into optimal utility, particularly for their textile industries in Manchester and Liverpool. He was very confident that if Igbominaland were to be cultivated for this purpose, there was a prospect of this cotton to compete with those already in the world market²⁰ Thus, as Kano was renowned as the “*Manchester of West Africa*” according to Dr. Henry Barth, by the mid-19th century,²¹ Igbominaland could also be given the appellation, “*The Manchester of Yorubaland*” as products from their weaving industry found an extensive market throughout Yorubaland and beyond.

European traders also bought and sold the local textile materials in the international markets. This was confirmed by the European testimonies of the thickness, durability hard wearing and of the local textile materials, probably, more than the cloths produced in Manchester and Lancashire, and because these cloths were relatively cheap and durable, they were sought for from far and near.²² The *Lander Brothers*, in 1930, for instance, passing through Nupeland, bordering Igbomina to the north, observed that:

The cloth which they manufactured, in common with their countrymen, and the robes and trousers which they wove are more excellent and would not disgrace an European manufacturer, they are worn and valued by kings, chiefs, and great men, and are the admiration of the neighboring nation.²³

Although both men and women engaged in weaving, however, while men's loom among the Yoruba was horizontal, women's was vertical. The type of loom dictated the width of cloth woven.²⁴ The looms were said to be of two varieties with the fixtures of an ordinary loom harness, sleight, treadles, shuttle, etc. The narrow one of six inches was

while the wide ones from a quarter to half a yard in width belonged, principally, to the females who confined their labours to within their yards. Weavers worked with great rapidity and turned out a number of yards of clothes daily, while tailors sew the narrow widths together to make a whole garment. Good articles of cloth were woven by the Yoruba weavers, and “for durability, far excel the prints and homespuns of Manchester. Hence the native cloths are by far the more costly”.²⁵ This accounted for the widespread demand for cheap, quality and durable clothes from far and near, including Nupeland, even to Cotonou.²⁶ It is particularly instructive to note that this much talked about cotton products were not solely from the Ila industries, but from all over Igbominaland. For instance, Malomo noted that at Oke-Ayin in Oro-Ago district, extending to Oreke, the inhabitants of this settlement were also noted for the manufacturing of woven cloth.²⁷

Although both men and women engaged in weaving in precolonial Igbominaland, women predominated. And while farming formed the basic occupation for men, women were preoccupied with one aspect of the indigenous cloth production or the other, especially in the vertical looms weaving, spinning, dyeing, etc.²⁸

Nearly all the weaving equipment were made from the people's initiatives. With an upright broad loom of between 0.5 and 1.6 metres wide, installed inside the house, the weavers, mostly the women folk produced the popular “*Aso Ofi*” (now popularly known as “*Aso Oke*”) in fairly large quantities and gave them in exchange for other products, necessities and luxuries, to people within and outside Igbominaland.²⁹ Ogunremi revealed that generally in Yorubaland, the first duty of a newly married lady was to spin enough cotton to make her husband a robe.³⁰

Dyeing

Another indigenous industry in Igbomina traditional economy was dyeing, exclusively carried out by the womenfolk. This industry was as widespread as the textile/weaving industry. Therefore, the dyeing industry spontaneously existed wherever the textile industry was located. Many 19th century European travellers copiously recorded the considerable number of woven cloths and dyeing pots or pits they came across, as well as the fact that the use of woven cloth in Yorubaland was of considerable antiquity.

Cotton production entailed growing, spinning, weaving, sewing, dyeing and embroidery (although the last two techniques were optional). The planting of cotton and dyeing leaves were part and parcel of farming. Whereas dyeing leaves, usually the indigo (*Indigofera spp*) grew wildly and luxuriantly on its own and in undesignated places and was only spared to grow undisturbed, cotton had to be specially cultivated. However, the cultivation of indigo, with time, probably by the early 20th century, had become an important vocation; grown nearer the dyeing pits as much as possible, and with time, special land was devoted to it.³¹

The womenfolk procured the indigo leaves from the farmers or others having them for sale, and prepared them into balls by heaping into a mortar until they were pressed together. They were thereafter dried and used with dye, caught by dripping from ashes in large pots which received the cloth to be coloured. It has been calculated that in certain instances, an acre of land devoted for indigo often produced twice the income devoted to cotton.³² *Yrona* was said to be used by some dyers to give brilliancy to some bright colours. They excelled in the various shades of blue peculiar to the indigo. They also adapted to other favourite colours like red, green, yellow and purple. *Cam wood (Osun)* is said to yield a fine scarlet and, very often, was used by the dyers to obtain this colour.³³ Dye puts life and good quality designs and status to indigenous production or materials such as clothes, mats, calabash, skins, etcetera, for spiritual purposes and occasions.

Tailoring

Also attached to the weaving industry was tailoring; an art which engaged a certain class, exclusively men, who cut and sew, as well as produced ready-made clothing materials as robes, tunic shirts, pants, caps, garments, wrappers, etc. They often used the common imported needle. This was always in great demand while the spinners served as suppliers of both the needles and threads.³⁴ Among other crops produced by farmers which, in turn, provided job for the women, apart from cotton, included oil palm which grew wild in the bush, providing the vegetable oil needed by the people.³⁵ Local soap was also made from palm-kernel oil in addition to other locally sourced items.

b. Agro-Induced Industries Iron-smithing and Blacksmithing

It may be suggested that of all the industries prevalent in pre-colonial Igbominaland and indeed in Africa, iron-working was the most important to the overall socio-political economy of the area. It is authoritative that a close link existed between ironworking, agriculture and political power. There is no doubt that iron technology revolutionised productions wherever it existed. With iron, the amount of food that was produced and number of people residing in the area, with iron tools such as hoes, cutlasses and knives, were bound to increase.

Iron working has three complex and integrated sections: mining, smelting and smithing, each constituting part of the production processes. Iron was excavated, smelted and forged into agricultural, industrial and warfare implements. In certain cases, the miners doubled as smelters while the smelters could also be the smiths who fashioned the iron into various tools and implements. The process of producing pig iron was similar, involving a protracted search for iron in pits and quarries, and continuously heating the stones in furnaces to a temperature of about 1,500°C to obtain the pig iron and slag. The smelting process was ritualised and practiced in specially built factories in order to give it a sort of occupational secrecy and monopoly. Iron was further smelted and cut into smaller sizes by smiths who also further processed it into tools and implements such as hoes, arrows, cutlasses, sickles, hairpin, needle, dagger, knives and various types of swords. All these revolutionised the efficiency of agriculture, warfare and trade.³⁶

Ogunremi has maintained that iron metallurgy was not only brought economic revolution, it also put political power into the hands of those who knew and used the iron war weapons, such as iron-pointed spear, which helped empires to subjugate their neighbours.³⁷ Research into Igbomina history has indeed validated this claim. The people of Oro-Ago, for instance, were said to be renowned for their bravery in warfare. This was because the settlement had numerous blacksmiths who are said to have produced most of the arrows that the warriors in Oro-Ago used for most of their campaigns during the wars of the 19th century.³⁸ Johnson also put on record how the 'Oro warriors' possessed poisoned arrows which enabled them to wreck untold havoc on the ranks of their invaders.³⁹

Clarke also observed the abundance of iron in

Igbominaland, particularly at Ila.⁴⁰ Besides Ila, however, ironsmithing and blacksmithing were also particularly prominent in the towns usually associated with the worship of Ogun, such as the Ile-Ire segment of Igbominaland, especially Owa-Onire, as well as Babanla, Oba-Isin, Oke-Ayin, Irabon and indeed almost everywhere throughout Oroland.⁴¹ According to Adeyemi, the Owa Onire people maintain that ever before the arrival of the Europeans on their soil, their smiths had been involved in iron tool production, such as hoes and cutlasses. The people of Babanla and Oba-Isin have successfully preserved the evidence of the presence and practice of iron-smelting furnace. Families who specialised in it have, till date, preserved this indigenous heritage and are still there to explain the production processes.⁴² At OkeAyin, Irabon and indeed almost everywhere throughout Oroland, the inhabitants were also noted for blacksmithing industry.⁴³ In fact, at Iwo, there is a compound by the name *Oke-*

Ope Alagbede (that is, Oke-Ope the Blacksmithing family/compound). Oral tradition has it that their progenitors migrated to Iwo from Oro-Ago.⁴⁴ Vis-à-vis the abundance of iron deposit in Igbominaland, Clarke noted that:

...all of the iron ore extracted from the mountains were smelted in large furnaces made for that purpose and sold to the smiths who converted it into desired implements. Every town had its complement of blacksmith shops known by their circular tops where the sound of the hammer and anvil may be heard daily. The implements and fixtures in general usually, were a rock for anvil, a small oblong piece of iron tapering to a handle for a hammer, one or two pairs of tongs similar to those in common use. Coal made from wood is generally used though the shells of the palm nut were used in case of necessity. In fact, nearly every implement, the shape of which was given to a smith, can be made with little difficulty. With judicious instructions, this art might among the raw natives, be carried to a high degree.⁴⁵

The blacksmithing and iron-smelting industries offered good examples of local industries in the Igbomina societies. Accordingly, rarely can one find a community in Igbominaland where there was no blacksmithing industry. The use of the products of these industries, it needs not be over-emphasized, had ensured agricultural production, which sustained the Nigerian communities, domestically and industrially as well as locally and internationally.

There is no doubt that pre-colonial Igbomina people were able to mine and smelt a considerable amount of minerals with the simple and indigenous technology opened to them. Iron was excavated, smelted and forged into agricultural, industrial and warfare implements. Also, in the mining industry a non-ferrous metal was mined and processed for use and marketing. There were also quite a few places with tin deposits, which occurred in shallow terrace deposits, usually covered by varying depths of barren ground said to be called *over-burden*. The *over-burden* was removed by hand, the tools being the pickaxe and the hoe. The tinbearing earth was moved to the riverside where it was washed, collected and smelted through a process similar to that of iron.

Tin smiths used alloys of the smelted tin and other metals to make cooking utensils and plates.⁴⁶ Temple suggested the presence of tin and industries associated with it. He noted the discovery of tin in certain places including the extreme south-east of the province. As he also later stated that the powerful Igbona tribe occupied the southern part of the province, it became crystal clear that this is the Igbomina region.⁴⁷

Carving and Sculpturing

Carving and sculpturing also constituted an important aspect of technology in Igbominaland. Just as *the Benin Bronze Head* attracted the British government who eventually carted away with some of them to the British museums, centres of culture also existed in Igbomina communities.⁴⁸ Carving and sculpturing in wood, calabash and stone constituted an important aspect of technology in traditional Igbominaland. Products of these industries were used as ornamental materials.

At Esie, an annual ceremony was reportedly held which centred on a collection of some 1,000 carved soapstone figures of men, women, children and animals. The existence of these remarkable sculptures, which were stored in a local museum, did not become known outside the area until the early 1930s (though the cult may date from the arrival at the site, of the Esie people; while some un-established arguments have been made that these figurines were brought in there from old Oyo, perhaps after the fall of Oyo, in the early 19th century).

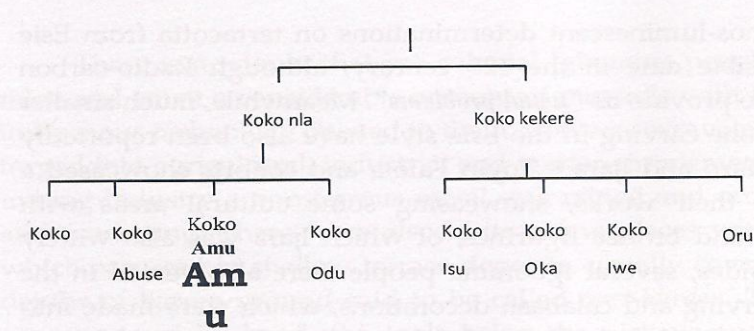
Two thermos-luminescent determinations on terracotta from Esie provided a possible date in the 12th century, although Radio-carbon dating is prone to provide its “usual problems”. Meanwhile, much smaller caches of soapstone carving in the Esie style have also been reportedly discovered in Ofaro and Ijara.⁴⁹ Toyin Falola and cohorts showcased a map in one of their works, showcasing some cultural areas with terracotta, stone and bronze figurines, of which Ijara was also widely recognised.⁵⁰ Besides, several Igbomina people were also versed in the craft of wood-carving and calabash decorations, which were made into beautiful ornamental objects. Some of these designs became, of recent, imitated by the European admirers.⁵¹

Pottery

Igbominaland has a long tradition of pottery-making industry that might have extended into the proto-historic and pre-historic part. Aiyedun identified Igbaja and Idofian, among others, where pottery prospered. In these two places, pottery-making has survived. The locations of these towns were very favourable for the pottery industry. According to him, oral tradition, besides the ethnographical and archaeological evidence has it that the people who settled in Igbaja had certain skills and abilities among them and people practiced different occupations among which was pottery. In Igbaja, potters were full-time specialists, forming recognised groups. Only women moulded pots and it had always been a family occupation since its known inception.⁵² Traditional productions methods, including the hand-making technique and open firing, were applied.

Pot-makers were well-placed in the society in terms of economic remuneration, since they engaged in pottery-making on a full-time basis and since their products were well valued and well-priced. They had a unique form of specialisation in *kolobo*.⁵³ Potters from Igbaja collected their clay from a place known as *Ibu Alapata*, about 2km to their workshop. The availability of the nonclay-soil fraction constituting approximately 80-90%, which included quartz grain and micaceous minerals which must be added to the clay to increase the clay fraction and plasticity, thus, counteracting shrinkage and facilitating uniform drying, reducing strain and lessening the risk of cracking. This binding agent was in the various impurities contained in Igbaja clay.

Firing was also done in Igbaja all the year round, forming the last stage in pottery manufacturing, before sales. It was fired in an open



range designated as *Ikoko* (pots) of different sizes and values, as demonstrated in the chart below.

Table 3: Group of Pots Built in Igbaja Area and their Production Site Distribution

GROUP A	
Koko Aro	
GROUP B	
Awo	
Fitila Ishasun Kudu Awo kokoti konjo	
Wuyan	
GROUP C	
Kolobo	
Group	Where produced
A	Igbaja, Masudo
B	Ada, Ajooko Gboloko
C	Fulani settlements

furnace thus, making firing traditional wares unique. Igbaja vessels fell into the

Source⁵⁴: Aiyedun, K. D. "Pottery in Igbaja District: An EthnoArchaeological Study" p. 6.

There were other smaller ones mainly used for cooking soups—*Isasun*, *koko isu* (yam-cooking pots). Others included *awo amo* (clay plates) used for stew as well as soup while eating. We have the perforated ones, called *ajere* used for smoking meats and other things, like plantain (*booli*), and there was the small clay object with opening which was used for banking, called *kolo* (little penny bank), which was meant to be broken when full. Thus, in this regard, the products of African culture had been of immense use to the Igbomina communities because they met the people's needs and demands. Others included the baking pot, oil lamp *fitila*, etc.

Soap-making: Another industry of significance in Igbomina traditional economy was soap-making, especially black-soap and *Konta*. These soap-types were common in practically all the Igbomina communities; soap was made from local materials such as ashes, palm-kernel oil, cocoa-pods and water.⁵⁵

Trado-medicare: Traditional medicare was another aspect of the indigenous industries and production techniques of pre-colonial Igbomina people. It served the people in the areas of cure such as traditional paediatrics and gynaecology (*elewe-omo*), physiotherapy (bone setting), psychotherapy (madness, mental disorder) and different other ailments such as small- and chickenpox, snake-bite, etcetera. Some of these ailments that cannot be easily and perfectly cured with modern medicine were effectively and perfectly cured with the use of traditional herbal medication. Even today, most cases rejected from the orthodox hospitals were treated with efficacy by the use of local medicine.⁵⁶

It is therefore, worthy of note that Igbomina and Africa for that matter, had a rich past which could be harnessed for technological and industrial development. In Arandun, for instance, oral evidence shows that, till present, certain families still exist that specialise in trado-medical healings like fire-burns, snake-bites, scorpion and insect bites/poison extraction, etcetera.⁵⁷

It is certainly difficult, if not impossible, to catalogue and have an exhaustive discussion of the multifarious works of art and crafts which

the Igbomina people engaged in, in the precolonial epoch. Indeed, hundreds of objects were made from plants, minerals and animal products. All these were widespread industries throughout Igbominaland.

Specialisation, Apprenticeship and Guilds

The various crafts the people engaged themselves in were well organised. Highly developed socio-economic organisations existed like trade unions, facilitating production, distribution and dissemination of goods. Although simple crafts may not require formal apprenticeship, the practice of apprenticeship was a norm for major crafts. Skills were advanced particularly through the institution of apprenticeship, which accounted for the survival, sustenance, preservation and expansion of such crafts and industrial skills.

Crafts, otherwise described as indigenous industries, such as blacksmithing, weaving, pottery, carving, sculpturing, iron works, soap-making, trado-medicare, etcetera, were mostly hereditary professions in which families specialised. Apprenticeship in the hereditary crafts always began informally from childhood when the parents and other older members of the family would take the children to the workshop to watch them work. As the children grew older, they became more involved in the profession by delivering finished products to customers in the village, by handling the tools, in repairing damaged products and by manufacturing others under the strict supervision of experts in the workshop. This went on until he was certified a professional.

Young men were apprenticed to master craftsmen. The apprentice, during the course of his training, paid for his training by providing regular services on the master's farm. Depending on the complexity of the craft being learnt, the duration of apprenticeship varied. Until such a time when they could be certified professional themselves, they remained in the status of subordinates, then, they were initiated into the guild, which postulates that they now had the liberty to establish and operate on their own. But when/if they were unable to establish themselves due to lack of or insufficient capital and equipment, the former apprentices often became "journey-men" under their former master(s), or join up with another. As "journey-men", they received wages partly in kind and partly in commodity-money.

Highly developed socio-economic organisations also existed like division of labour as well as specialisations in the different phases of the production work and guilds or trade unions, facilitating production, distribution and dissemination of goods. An appraisal of the guild system reveals that important crafts were in the hands of special ward guilds that were also members of specific families. Such guilds and family heads were able to control production of goods, fix prices and also punish recalcitrant members violating guild rules and modes of conducts.⁵⁸ Thus, every member of such a guild knows his rights and duties, limitations and liberties. Each was required to strictly observe the binding, even though unwritten or tacit, regulations such as the laws against undercutting inflationary price, punishments for offenders, the length of service for apprentices and other master-servant-relationship protocols. The crafts as well as trade guilds were, in a nutshell, a form of labour union, regulating tendencies towards cheating and all forms of vices inherent in capitalist societies.

Considering the proliferation of indigenous industries in Igbominaland, traditional industries and crafts had responded in various ways to the technological needs of the Igbomina communities, long before the era of modern technology. Generally, therefore, these technologies did not only exist in Igbominaland, but were also valuable due to the many uses to which they could be put. The values of these indigenous industries in Igbominaland would form the basis of a separate discussion. It suffices here to observe that the technology used in Igbomina industries interacted well to the local environments, and responded efficiently to the socio-cultural and economic needs of the Igbomina, and African societies at large. This aspect of the pre-colonial economy, however, came under considerable stress in the 19th century and by the end of the colonial epoch, had almost been completely submerged under foreign influence.

Conclusion

An intensive and extensive study of the indigenous industrial economy in Igbominaland will go a long way to demonstrate that contrary to Eurocentric claims, West Africa generally and Igbominaland in particular had been agog with robust economic activities prior to the incursion of foreign infiltration and influence. As it has been briefly enunciated above, in tandem with other West African groups, economic activities in the pre-colonial Igbominaland comprised a sustainable

agrarian economy, vibrant indigenous industries as well as robust trade and commercial activities. On the whole, the widespread exchange and distribution of goods and services in pre-colonial Igbominaland was essentially driven by these three branches of the economy. Indigenous production of agricultural and nonagricultural commodities and distribution of all types of products were all deep-rooted in the pre-colonial economy. Whereas some of those industries were home-based, others were out-door. While some were individual undertakings, many others were corporate and group. Some were male-oriented, like blacksmithing, others were feminine in nature like the weaving industry. There were specialists and non-specialists as well as full-time and part time craftsmen. Throughout Igbominaland, industrial production took several forms. Whichever form it took, there was no single Igbomina community without some form of industry or the other. In fact, there was economic differentiation to the extent that there were specialisations, apprenticeship and guilds.

Arguments put forward in this chapter demonstrate how misleading it is to persist in describing the indigenous economic system in pre-colonial Igbomina as 'subsistence' sustaining, 'natural economies', 'static', 'tribal' or 'self-contained'. What the Igbomina experience highlights is that African economy in the pre-colonial epoch was such that the different communities could not be regarded as self-contained.⁵⁹ It, thus, suffices to say that while the pre-colonial agricultural system remained the basis for the colonial political economy, it, in turn, allied with and induced indigenous industrial activities and production that led to local, regional and inter-state-cum-national exchange. As such, although the indigenous economy in Igbomina rested largely on agrarianism, the Igbomina society was agog with productive industrial activities, indigenous to the people.

It is therefore plausible to conclude that, considering the wealth of evidences available at our disposal, it was the robust economic engagements evident in pre-colonial Igbominaland and other areas around the Niger that attracted the attention of the British, known for her imperialism of economics. This was a fundamental catalyst for foreign influence on Igbomina.

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