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Rethinking Centrifugal Issues in Intra-Iuleha Relations: From the Pre-Colonial Era to 2000

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Introduction

Iuleha people occupy the north-western part of Edo North in Edo State, in the South-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Iuleha clan is the single largest conglomeration of community in the Owan West Local Government Area of Edo State, in terms of size and population.¹ It has continued to play a vital role in the socio-political, cultural and economic development of the local government area. Like many other clans and sub-clans in the area, the development of Iuleha's history was highly motivated and influenced by the phenomenon of market rings, ancestral figures and age-grade celebrations. At the same time, these factors were very important as unifying elements among the various villages or communities that make up Iulehaland.² Their stories of migrations and settlements are largely woven around the factors of age grade celebrations, market organizations and chanting of primordial songs during major festivals.

Historically, the foundation of Iuleha community is sometimes related to one Irimo who is believed to have had a Yoruba ancestry. For instance, Ife and Ijebu-Ode sometimes feature in the discourse relating to the origin of Irimo. This contentious issue is discussed in detail in the course of this work. In any case, this work examines the roles played by market rings, ancestral figures and age-grade celebrations as unifying elements among the people of Iuleha. It contends that the three cultural elements have acted as centripetal forces as they help to build bonds of kindred identities among the Eruere, Aoma and Okpuje sub-clans that make up the Iuleha clan. Similarly, the same cultural elements have acted as symbols of unity among communities in the various sub-clans. The way markets are scheduled and organized reflected the seniority positions of each community in the sub-clan as well as each sub-clan within the larger clan. In the same vein, festivals were planned to reflect

the position of each community in the whole arrangement in Iulehaland. Each of these elements is discussed in details to x-ray their roles as unifying factors in Iulehaland.

The Role of Market Rings in the Unification of Iule Communities

The operation of market rings was structured to accommodate the role of culture in the scheme of things in the various communities in Iulehaland. In this connection, commercial and economic considerations played secondary roles in favour of cultural design. Although Iuleha markets were organized according to the demands of each community where the markets were located, as well as the demands of the clan, the arrangement was such that the communities were encouraged to relate with one another in appreciation of their kinship ties and ancestral connections.³ In that sense, markets in Iule were not organized at will nor was the timing of market days a matter of impulse or a motivation of economic considerations but also of cultural ties. A market in the sense of Iuleha people is a demarcated and designated site where traders and consumers met at an agreed time to exchange products, ranging from farm produce, domestic animals, dried and fresh game, forest products, herbs, and other sundry items. In most instances, goods were spread on the ground or raised bamboo platforms designed for that purpose. Besides that arrangement, traders had their different stalls located in different places while hawking was done by women and minors who carried and advertised their goods.

An important aspect of the market was that "stalls" or "spaces" in the market could be inherited from parents or other relatives, even though no physical demarcation was needed to indicate the arrangement. The involvement of local government staff in the administration of market, however, changed this cultural design because market stalls were now allocated on the basis of payment of certain amounts to the government. This development can be traced to the beginning of colonialism in Owanland when the people were subjected and subjugated to the dictates of colonial rules. Although there is evidence exist to indicate that the colonial masters in Iulehaland

instituted any policy to abolish the traditional market structures in the locality, it is safe to argue that the new socio-political system introduced by them affected the traditional structure of market system in the area. For instance, the idea of raising revenue through collection of levies from the people made it imperative for those charged with the responsibility of raising revenue for the colonial government to seek new ways of revenue generation and market became a veritable means of actualizing their demands. That was how the supervision of market gradually moved away from the traditional way of doing it to the one controlled by members of the Native Authority designed by the colonial masters as part of the Indirect Rule system.

The colonial system bequeathed to the local government administration that succeeded it control of market structure in Iulehaland as it was in other communities in Nigeria. However, what is important to note is that whether during the pre-colonial times, the colonial period or the period when the control of market was done by the local government authority, traders and buyers operated in perfect harmony and order, and transacted their affairs like one big family without fighting and bloodshed on most of the occasions. Indeed, by virtue of the traditional dictates of the people of Iuleha, fighting was seen as a taboo that should be avoided. By 2000 A.D, however, this norm would seem to have been ignored as many traders and customers lacking in the customs and traditions guiding market operations acted without due considerations for decorum as especially the way culture would have it. This group constituted what can be described as "stranger elements". The presence of stranger elements could not be completely ruled out because it was part of the evolution and development of the communities in Iulehaland in line with the process of urbanization.

The influx of stranger elements in Iulehaland pre-dates the attainment of independence by the Nigerian state. For instance, in the second quarters of the twentieth century, especially during the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918), some Yoruba and Igbo traders came to the area for the purpose of trade. Of these two categories of people, the Yoruba appear to have established a longer

antiquity of socio-economic and political relationships with the people of Iuleha. The contentious issue of the introduction of *Obash* from Ife to Benin and other Edoid communities, as well as the role of Ife is reported to have played in the establishment of the chieftain institutions in the area is well known and should not take much of time in this discussion. In any case, there are indications that Yoruba communities of Idoani, Ogbese, Ukaro, Ifon (Ikhan), Ikpele, Owo and others had been trading with the people of Iuleha long before the introduction of colonial rule. The routes for this contact were most through Uzebba-Ukaro-Ifon footpath, across the Ose River, through Okpuje-Ikpele footpath, and Eruere-Idoani footpath. Of these routes it appears that traffic was heaviest along the Okpuje-Ikpele axis of routes. In the course of these interactions, sundry goods such as beads called *Ikpele* by the people of Iuleha, textile materials, household wares such as earthen pots, wooden spoons, calabashes, in addition to farm implements, farm produce and domestic animals, were exchanged between the two peoples. The two worlds were provided an opportunity for increased socio-economic interactions between Iuleha people and their Yoruba neighbours. In any case, it is safe to argue that several goods of Northern Nigerian origin such as swords and leather materials found their way to Iuleha through the various Yoruba routes. In the course of this relationship, inter-marriages took place between them.

The Igbo elements probably got to Iuleha before the colonial period through footpaths via the Agbor-Ishan-Owan geographic locations. The period did not, however, witness any major socio-economic interactions, except in the area of exchange of foodstuffs through the barter system. During the era of legitimate trade in the nineteenth century, some Igbo traders in present day Delta Igboaland west of the Niger, came to Iuleha to trade in palm kernels and other forest and agricultural products. However, the outbreak of the two world wars offered the Igbo the opportunity to intensify their socio-economic interactions with the people of Iuleha. These interactions witnessed a boom after the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) and by 2000, the Igbo elements had overtaken their Yoruba counterparts in the area of trade and commercial activities in Iuleha. The unattractive nature of the footpaths as well as the astronomical commercial relevance of both Ibadan and Lagos during the colonial and post-colonial periods could have accounted for this development. In a nutshell, we can say that the exigencies of the period attracted stranger elements such as Yoruba and Igbo traders to Iuleha for the purposes of economic and commercial interaction.

Markets in Iuleha had a number of features. First, they were multi-functional, that is they embraced a whole lot of activities, comprising economic and non-economic ones; second, they performed socio-political functions in the sense that they served as venues for socio-political interaction. For instance, the king or chief could use the opportunity of gathering in the market to address the people, most of whom were women, on latest development in respect of the welfare of the community and the people. In the same vein, rituals and sacrifices were also performed in the market. Besides, some festivals were conducted in the market. A typical case in point was the annual appearance of the chief priest (*Ogheren*) of *Uloko* in Aoma market before 1940. The death of Chief Priest Eibo marked the end of this event because of lack of a willing successor. It was said that his eldest son and heir to the chief priesthood, who was a member of the Jehovah Witness refused to be crowned and so the tradition died with Eibo.⁶ He was given power by tradition to pinpoint any item in the market during the observance of the *Uloko Festival* and such items were forfeited to him by the trader. Refusal to comply was viewed as an affront to the tradition of the people and was subsequently punished in form of the violator having to propitiate the "god" through the presentation of certain animals. Markets also served as places where amusement activities involving singers, dancers and drummers were carried out. But unlike the practice in some areas in Yorubaland, such activities were usually limited to festive periods.⁷

As a unifying factor, markets in Iuleha were linked together in a sequence of operations. This meant that most markets belonged to the same ring. The working was such that the communities, which lived in contiguous parts of a region, had their periodic market on different

days of the week to avoid clashes and to make for maximum participation, while at the same time unifying the people. By giving allowance for the operation of this system whereby traders could trade in most days of the week in different markets, forebears of Iuleha who started this practice anticipated the continuous unity of the various communities. For instance, Eruere Market (Ekin Eruere) was held every five days, followed by Aoma Market (Ekin Aoma) and then Okpuje Market (Ekin Okpuje). These represented the three sub-clans in Iuleha, (that is Eruere, Aoma and Okpuje, as earlier indicated). In addition to this arrangement, each village had its own market which was organized in such a way that it did not clash with any main market in the clan, an acceptance of the superiority of clannish arrangements and cultural ties among the people. Examples of such markets included Ekin Ukhuede at Uzebba, Avbiosi Market (Ekin Avbiosi), Ekin Oise at Eruere, and Ekin Ikpeyan in Okpuje sub-clan. All these markets were formed into rings or cycles to guarantee maximum commercial and cultural benefit for the people.

The formation of market rings provided each community of the village with easy and regular access to goods and services which the people needed.⁸ Hopkins commended this probably unique African device that ensured that each market met at a specified interval for keeping the costs of collection and distribution of goods to a minimum level.⁹ Female members of the community were predominantly involved in market organization as local trade was taken as a convenient adjunct to household and farming activities as well as a supplement to domestic occupation, an arrangement that benefited greatly from periodic and rotational organization of market. By operating a rotational or market ring system, the people of Iuleha were able to relate with one another socio-culturally as well as in the area of commercial and economic relationships. It also provided avenues for cultural interaction and by extension helped to unify the people. No community was at liberty to fix markets in such a way as to clash or conflict with markets elsewhere in the clan. Besides, the arrangement favoured traveling traders who had to move from one sub-clan to another, displaying their wares. In the course of this development

any traders got married to their wives or husbands through contact with people outside their immediate communities. In this sense, we can say that the operation of market rings encouraged socio-cultural and economic integration in Iulehal and. This role was not limited to market operations. Ancestral figures connected directly or indirectly to socio-economic activities also served the same purpose of unifiers.

Ancestral Figures as Unifying Factors

Ancestral figures represented another medium of integration among Iuleha people by serving as unifying or rallying ground for the people to interact. Interestingly, each of the sub-groups had an ancestral figure that united the various communities within it. At a larger level, the entire Iuleha clan was united by a common ancestor, known as *Irimo*, a legendary figure earlier mentioned.

Although Iuleha is part of the larger Edoid-speaking group, which has probably occupied its present site for upward of three thousand years,¹⁰ the people have a common ancestral belief that distinguished them from other Edoid-speaking groups, and which served as a unifying factor among them. This ancestral figure, called *Irimo*, is believed to have either migrated from Ile-Ife via Benin or directly from Ife before settling down in Iulehaland after a brief sojourn in Uokha,¹¹ a community believed to be the first and earliest settlement in Ivbiosakon area of present day Owan East in Edo North. It should be added that majority of Ivbiosakon communities and inhabitants claim descent from Benin and it appears that the people of Iuleha are the only clan that is unique for claiming descent from Ile-Ife, the cradle of Yoruba's socio-cultural, technological and political civilization. Marshall's position that *Irimo* was a follower of one Akpwewuma, a possible founder of Uokha community, could not be corroborated, as oral evidence collected from the three sub-clans of Iuleha did not indicate that *Irimo* was a follower of any personality so named.¹² Rather, available evidence indicates that *Irimo* traced his friend from Benin to Uokha. It is safe to conclude that *Irimo* sojourned in Uokha with his friend who might have been Akpwewuma. Akpwewuma is believed to be a Bini.

Whatever may have been the circumstance of Irimo's sojourn in Uokha, one point on which the people of Iuleha are quite unanimous about their history is the claim of descent from a legend called Irimo. Although both oral and written sources in the area agree that Irimo was an Ife priest,¹⁴ Harunah did not agree that Iuleha was founded by a non-Edoid speaking figure.¹⁵ His argument is based on socio-cultural and political institutions which favour the possibility of an Edo creation of Iulehaland and that the personality of Irimo could not have emerged from outside the Edoid enclave. Why Irimo should first go to Benin before coming to Iuleha is an issue begging for historical clarification. The reason is that geographically, Iuleha appears to lie between Benin and Ife, on the Akure axis of Ife-Benin road. Whether geographical obstacles during the time of migration did not favour this conclusion is what this present effort cannot easily provide an answer to. The position of Obayemi is instructive on this matter of origin. According to him:

The overwhelming commitment to the theory of origins from Benin which has now become standard in a region in which, Benin City has enjoyed political and cultural supremacy has effectively obscured the identification of what, properly speaking, should have given us an insight into the states of the region. So spontaneous have been the narration of the stories which say that founding ancestors came from Benin that they have been accepted with little questioning and eminent scholars have been led into taking them as fact or into using them as working hypothesis....The farthest we can go is to say that especially during the past six or more centuries, there were Benin cultural influences like kingship emblems, or the other politics, but emphatically these do not establish folk movement from Benin as the only cause of the first men settling in the area of Urhobo, Isoko, Ivbiosakon, Etsako (sic), Ishan, etc.¹⁶

Be that as it may, our interest in this direction is to establish how the ancestral figure of Irimo was employed as a centrifugal force among the communities in Iulehaland.

Irmo is believed to have had three sons that made up the three sub-clan of Iuleha, namely, as has been stated earlier Eruere, Aoma and Okpuje, in order of seniority and based on customs and traditions. However, Ogbomo's work which employed a theory of "totemism" in the explanation of the formation of communities in Iuleha tends to have challenged this belief and arrangement.¹⁷ The development has altered the seniority status of Eruere vis-à-vis clan arrangement in the Iuleha. Using animal totemic observances as well as social organizations, Ogbomo argued that Irmo was of the leopard totem, and founded Iuleha around c. 1632-1664, and left Benin during the Eweka dynasty.¹⁸ Eweka, like other Benin kings, is associated with the leopard totem. He stressed that given the totemic distribution whereby Okpuje has the boa totem while Eruere has the beads totem, in addition to their father's leopard totem, it would appear that Irmo and Otoi, his wife, have produced Aoma, while Okpuje seems to have been from a second wife of the boa clan and that Eruere is from a third, the bead, clan.¹⁹

An interesting aspect of this position is that the seniority position of Eruere has been challenged and exposed to scrutiny, on the ground that unless unusual circumstances associated with soil or trade intervene, it is natural that an old village would be larger than is the case of Eruere, when its neighbours contain almost a dozen communities. Based on this thinking, Ogbomo, therefore, suggested that Okpuje and Eruere were founded much later than Aoma.²⁰ Evidence at our disposal is too scanty to accept or reject Ogbomo's claim, based on totemic explanation. The writer does not have enough expertise as at now to employ the totemic analysis in the presentation and interpretation of Iuleha history. In any case, it is believed that Otoi lived and died in Oah, a sub-unit of Okpuje. If this is true, it would mean that both Otoi and Okpuje are related. It is hoped that further research will help to shed light on the matter. In all, whatever might have been the situation, Irmo occupied a significant position in the unity of Iuleha people, especially with respect to traditions of origin,

migration and settlement. It also determined, to a very large extent, the traditions, customs and norms of Iuleha people with respect to seniority issues, chieftaincy matters and other related practices such as market arrangement and observances of festival rules.

Other major ancestral figures that contributed to the building of centrifugal forces in Iuleha clan included: Otoi, the mother figure of Iuleha people and possibly wife of Irimo and Obazua, deified and worshipped and revered among Aoma sub-clan. The spirit of Otoi was remembered through the celebration of Okosan, a non-annual feast organized in her honour. The place of the celebration was in Oah, an Okpuje sub-clan, believed to be the last place of abode of Otoi when she agreed to live with her last son, Okpuje. Located in Oah, Okosan was a symbol of unity among the communities in Iulehaland as the occasion for the celebration helped to renew brotherly affection. Chief B.O.I. Eguaioje who shed light on the ancestral figure of Otoi remarked that the entire people of Iuleha community used to sacrifice a cow to the spirit of "their mother during the celebration of Okosan." Available evidence indicates that the ancestral figure of Otoi is rather vague as far as the socio-cultural aspect of Iuleha people was concerned, at least by 2000. Except for the simple fact that the name is mentioned occasionally in the circle of chiefs and priests, not much was known about Otoi. It is also surprising that the Okosan celebration could not produce a system of succession of priestesses to survive in and how such priestesses would be selected, appointed or nominated and whether or not it should rotate among Iuleha people or be limited to the Okpuje sub-clan. The irregular celebration of Okosan festival has not done much to preserve the memory of the ancestral figure of Otoi, and thus the gap in the historiographical knowledge about the figure in Iulehaland.

The ancestral figure of Obazua is well entrenched in the historiography of Aoma people because of the festival that is organized annually in his honour. Obazua is believed to be a Benin noble and hunter who accompanied Irimo on his way to Iviosakon land. Contrary to Omo-Amu's claim, there is no evidence to suggest that Obazua, in whose honour the festival of Obazu is celebrated, was

the founder of Iuleha.²² Marshall admitted that Obazua accompanied Ughuan, the legend believed to have founded the Ora Clan, from Benin and met Irimo at Uokha.²³ Obazua was a great hunter and warrior. Tradition has it that when Ughuan departed Ora for Benin to succeed to the throne of his father after founding the Ora Clan, Obazua was left behind in Iulehaland, probably when Irimo was still alive. It is said that Obazua had no children, but was fond of Aoma, one of the sons of Irimo and decided to stay with him. It is also said that in one of Obazua's hunting expeditions, he stumbled on a group of chimpanzees which seemed to be celebrating a festival.²⁴ This tradition is related to the one about the origin of the acrobatic culture among the Esan (Ishan) people, an Edoid neighbour of Owan people. Tradition indicates that Obazua could understand the signs and speeches made by animals (it is belief among Iuleha people that great hunters possess extraordinary ability to understand the signs, speeches and language of animals).

It is reported that after carefully watching the animals and after they had departed the scene, Obazua carefully packed the instruments they left behind and returned home with them. He taught other hunters and those able-bodied men who had performed the festival of manhood at Aoma the songs and other details about the celebration as well as how to play the instruments, believed to have been made from buffalo horns. The historiographical point to make at this juncture is that the event could have been a convenient way and method of explaining the hunting exploit of Obazua and his ability to successfully hunt down numerous buffalos. Not long before his death, Obazua instructed Aoma to immortalize his (Obazua's) name by all means, possibly by commemorating the festival he introduced and taught the people. Shortly after his death, the people of Aoma instituted the Obazu festival in remembrance of Obazua who was very dear to them. It is instructive to note that the festival is restricted to only communities in Aomaland but males from the other communities in Iuleha and the neighbouring lands could come around to watch the festival. A clue from this festival may shed light on the possibility of different mothers among the three sub-clans of Iuleha.

Up till today, the festival of Obazu is celebrated by all the villages in Aoma to commemorate the ancestral figure of Aoma. Thus, through this means, the people of Uzebba, Avbiosi and Ogbagun (comprising Ivbiughuru, Ukhuse-Oke, Ukhuse-Osi and Ohia) see themselves as belonging to the same family tie by virtue of their celebration of Obazu Festival. The centrifugal force was further cemented by the fact that no member of the aforementioned communities was free to perpetuate evil against another member of the Obazu-celebrating-communities, either through diabolical means or causing harm or injury to same during the period of the celebration of Obazu Festival. It should be emphasized that during the period of the celebration of Obazu Festival, which tradition maintains initially lasted for three months, later nine days and today seven days, mature males from the various communities in Aoma paid visits in form of ritual celebration and procession to one another. The festival was unique in all ramifications. First, unlike many other festivals in Owanland, females and circumcised males were forbidden from watching the festival. Second, no music beside the music of the celebrants or initiates (called "gods" or "spirits" in local circle) was allowed during the period of the festival. Besides, it was forbidden for anybody to weep, even for a deceased, during the period. Also, violent fights were not allowed during the period as it was seen as a period of peace and tranquility. The penalty for disobedience included the payment of a goat and a snail, among other items which must be paid annually, except the goat which was paid once at the time of the festival during which the offender had first made the confession of violation of sacredness of the rules and norms governing the festival. Details of the celebration of the festival are prohibited from non-initiates and women in particular.

Lesser ancestral figures also served as unifying factors in some of the communities below the level of the sub-clan. For instance, in Uzebba, the Uzebba-khile figure presented a unifying and rallying ground for the people. This legendary figure is believed to be responsible for the survival and liberation of Uzebba people during the various inter-tribal wars and conflicts between Iuleha and her

neighbours, especially Ikhan (Ifon-Yoruba) people. It is believed that Uzebba-khile later transformed into a huge tree which is sacred to the people of Uzebba. The main trunk was felled by a mighty wind in the 1980s and a statute was erected in its place by The Okumangbe of Iuleha, T.Omo-Bare as a symbol of the legendary exploit of Uzebba-khile. The name literally means "Uzebba will not run away or be moved from its position". No major festival was organized to celebrate the personality of Uzebba-khile, except occasional sacrifices involving bloodless items such as white cloths, native white chalk, roasted groundnuts and maize, and so on. In any case, the people of Uzebba often invoked the spirit of Uzebba-khile to express their determination and dedication to the dream of a great Uzebba that cannot be defeated by any community.

In all, ancestral figures played vital roles as centrifugal forces in the evolution of the socio-political and spiritual culture Iuleha people. Some figures, such as Irimo and Otoi were accepted at the clan level, with varying degrees of acceptance, while others such as Uzebba-khile occupied a major place in the consciousness of the people of Uzebba.

Festivals as Centrifugal Force in Iulehaland

Iuleha people paid special attention to festivals as part of their socio-cultural organization. Several festivals were organized in the communities of Iuleha at different periods of the year. Our focus will be on the roles played by festivals as elements of unity in the clan. In Erue sub-clan, the *Era-Eruere*, which literally means "father of Erue" was celebrated annually by the people of Erue to commemorate their ancestor. It serves as a rallying point for the people in the area. It also signals a period of peace and tranquility, as well as prosperity for the people. However, it is instructive to note that while Erue people have accepted to call the festival a celebration of the exploit of their ancestor, the other two sub-clans do not refer to the festival as such. This could possibly shed light on the position earlier canvassed in favour of Ogbomo that the three sub-clans might have had different parents.

The Okpuje sub-clan celebrates different festivals, but the *Okpuje-ro* was the most prominent by 2000. Like *Era-Eruere*, *Okpuje-ro* is also referred to by the people of Okpuje as a festival meant to celebrate their ancestor. For this reason, it was normally celebrated every year and restricted to male members of the sub-clan. Unlike the *Obazu Festival*, females were free to watch *Okpuje-ro* and were not restricted in certain aspects of the festival. They could also dance to the music of the festival and assist the male folk in entertaining visitors to the festivals. It was a sort of tourist attraction to the people and to a large extent helped to unite the various communities of Okpuje. The people of Aoma had *Obazu* as their festival of unity. As earlier explained, it was celebrated in honour of the legendary *Obazu*. The festival attracted males from both within and outside Iuleha clan. Unlike the *Okpuje-ro*, it was celebrated in each community of Aoma, but initiates could visit, and indeed it was mandatory upon them to visit, the different communities of Aoma celebrating the festival. If such arrangements did not expose the female members of the sub-clan to the danger of seeing them.

At the community levels, festivals were also organized to reflect the unity of the people. For instance, the people of Ikpeyan in Okpuje had their own *Okodiyen Festival*, which helped to unite the people. Uzebba people occasionally celebrated the *Okhirare*, to mark the memory of their victory during intra-tribal wars. The irregular nature of the celebration indicated the intrusion of colonialism on the culture of the people. There is every indication that it would be part of the festivals that would die in Iulehaland in the nearest future. Both *Oghare* and *Iovbode* represented the biggest festivals that helped to unite both the male and female members of the Iuleha clan. *Oghare* was mainly celebrated by the male members of the clan and took place every four years. On the other hand, *Iovbode* embraced both male and female members of the clan and normally took place every four years, precisely every leap year. They were celebrated to commemorate the attainment of manhood and served as initiation ceremonies. Each community celebrated its own but it was normally between October and December, beginning with *Avbiosi* and ending with *Okpuje*.

Conclusion

Centrifugal forces are *sine qua non* in inter-group relations. This work has demonstrated that market rings, ancestral figures and festivals were vital centrifugal forces in the socio-cultural and political organizations of Iulehaland. It is discovered that the various communities were connected in one way or another by factors of the operation of market rings, beliefs in ancestral figures and organization of festivals. These elements were important in the growth and development of the historical consciousness of the people with respect to peaceful interaction and integration in the area and helped to distinguish the people from other non-Iuleha Owan. The present effort has shed light on the personality of *Irimo* as a centrifugal force in the unity of Iuleha communities as well as playing a vital role in the tradition of origin of the people. He is generally seen as the father and founder of Iuleha clan and the spiritual head of all socio-cultural and political arrangements in the area. The work has concluded on the note that certain socio-cultural symbols such as ancestral figures, market rings and festivals helped to unite the people of Iuleha and made them unique from their neighbours. They also served as a way of preserving the rich cultural heritage of the people. There is therefore the need for the people to continue with the protection of their culture through the aforementioned elements of cultural identity.

Notes and References

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3. See O. M. Osiki, "A Socio-Cultural History of Iuleha in Edo State", B.A. Long Essay, Department of History, University of

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4. For details on market system in West Africa, see Toyin Falola "Trade and Markets in Pre-Colonial Economy", G.O. Ogunremi and E.K. Faluyi (eds.), *An Economic History of West Africa since 1750*, Revised Edition, Ibadan: Rex Charles Publications in association with Connel Publication, 2006, p.64.
 5. See R. H.T. Smith, "West African Market Places: Temporal Periodicity and Locational Spacing", C. Meillassaux, *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* Oxford, 1971, chp. xvi.
 6. Interview: Ms. Akeke Osiki, (c.72 yrs.), Uzebba, 25 February 2003. Ms Osiki was a distant niece of Eibo and had the opportunity of witnessing some of his activities.
 7. Osiki, "A Socio-Cultural History of Iuleha in Edo State", p. 94.
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 15. See interview: H. B. Harunah, University of Lagos, February 2004; H. B. Harunah, *A Cultural History of Uneme*, pp. 33-37.
 16. See Ade Obayemi, "The Yoruba and Edo-speaking Peoples and their Neighbours before 1600" in Ade Ajayi and Crowder Micheal, *History of West Africa*, vol.1, London: Longman, 1977, p. 241.
 17. Ogbomo, *When Men and Women Mattered*., p. 40.
 18. Ogbomo, *When Men and Women Mattered*., p. 40.
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