

# Women and the Age-Group System among the Ijèbú of Southwestern Nigeria

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## Abstract

Contemporary studies have revealed that Yorùbá women, particularly Ijèbú women, have contributed to the development of Yorùbáland. Apart from the traditional roles of women in Yorùbáland, Ijèbú women have cut a niche for themselves in the age-grouping system. It is the intent of this study to establish the contributions of Ijèbú women to the upliftment of their society and indeed of the Ijèbú nation. This study therefore reveals that women in *régbérégbé* (age group) organizations have contributed immensely to the development of Ijèbúland. Just as men in age groups have benefitted, the women's age groups have also enjoyed government patronage, support, and interest. This was demonstrated when the Ogun State government offered employment to some of the age group members. The involvement of these women has shown that Ijèbú women are active in the development of Ijèbúland through the age-group system and this has further debunked the erroneous public opinion that Ijèbú women are party-goers and docile. On the contrary, they are hard-working, social, nationalistic, and community-development oriented.

**Key words:** age group, women, Iléyá (*Eil-d- Kabir*), *Ojúde-Oba*, Ijèbúland

## Introduction

As children grow up within the Yorùbá community, the first social setting that they find themselves in is the age group. Children that are born within two to three years of each other are regarded as peers and are assigned to the

same age group. It is within this age group that they will spend their entire life, passing from birth to death as a group. They climb up on the rungs of the ladder of responsibility within the community in the same group and contribute to the politics, economy, and social development of their communities through the age-group system.

An index of the growth, prosperity, and tranquillity of nineteenth-century Ijẹ̀bùland was the systematic organization of age groups, known as *régbérégbé*, every three years with titles (names) reflecting significant events within their communities or important events surrounding the throne of their king. Most of the names of the age groups centered around the paramount ruler (*awùjalẹ̀*) of Ijẹ̀bùland and indeed around the Ijẹ̀bù nation. The *régbérégbé* constitutes a major instrument of social cohesion and mobilization in Ijẹ̀bùland. Age groups and their individual members come together to help one another in serious need. They help to further strengthen the society and execute community projects

The *régbérégbé* have always been the lynchpin of traditional Ijẹ̀bù democratic form of government. The *awùjalẹ̀*, Oba Adétòṅà, has revived the *régbérégbé* for the continuous and rapid development of Ijẹ̀bùland. This initiative has been yielding fruitful results and the *régbérégbé* are in healthy rivalry for the development of Ijẹ̀bùland

### Age Groups among the Ijẹ̀bù: A Brief

The index of the growth and prosperity of the Ijẹ̀bù people could easily be measured in the organization of what is today called the *régbérégbé* or age groups with their names given at the intervals of three years reflecting significant events around the town or events in the personal life of the paramount ruler of the Ijẹ̀bù nation.

In the words of Adébàjò,<sup>1</sup> the need for cooperation in the areas of the socioeconomic and political well-being of the Ijẹ̀bù people actually informed the setting up of the *régbérégbé*. Although it was recorded by Òkúbótẹ̀<sup>2</sup> to have been established by Obańta, who was regarded as the founding father of Ijẹ̀bù-Òde, the first known and recorded *Régbérégbé* was the people born between 1777 and 1780, and they were known as the *egbé bá sá n lé*,<sup>3</sup> which implies that the people born around that time met certain customs and traditions in the

1. Sola Adebajo, "RÉGBÉRÉGBÉ: A Tradition That Is as Old as the Ijẹ̀bù Nation." Presentation at the Bóbagúntẹ̀ Recognition 2012 at the Ààfin Èbùmàwé of Àgọ̀-Ìwòyè. December 1, 2012.

2. Òkúbótẹ̀, Moses Botu. *The History of the Ijẹ̀bù*. Qnànúgá, C.O. and Sógbèsan, B.A. eds. Ibadàn: Third World Information Service Limited 2013.

3. National Archives Ibadan/ Ije prof 1/656/ Age Grade Societies in Ijebu Province, 1.

society that should be emulated and imbibed. It is therefore not out of place to put on record that the age-group system had started in Ijèbúland even before 1772, as the reign of Obańta who was said to have used them as his army was already well-advanced before 1772.<sup>4</sup>

In yet another vein, Salami<sup>5</sup> posited that the origin of the age-group system is somehow controversial, but it can be suggested that its evolution must have been an unconscious reaction to the need for mutual co-existence among the people of the same age bracket. Its formation could also have been a political device to involve all members of the community in contributing to the development of the society.

The above position is perhaps indicative that the *egbè bá sá n lé* (1777–1780) may not have been the first (*régbèr*)*égbé* to evolve among the Ijèbú people. It may therefore not be out of place to note that the *régbèr**égbé* in Ijèbúland is as old as the Ijèbú nation itself, because the Ijèbú are known as people tied together for social and communal development, a trend that has not changed, even in the twenty-first century.

The *régbèr**égbé* was part of the ancient culture of the Ijèbú people and it has been proudly used for the general administration of the Ijèbú nation. The result is that the groups are consulted at various times and their views represent the consensus opinion of the people, and constitute some of the views that guide the administration of the land.<sup>6</sup>

This grouping, it should be noted, was not based on kinship ties but on the principle of agreement among interested individuals in the society who belonged to the same age group. This trend has changed over the years as membership of the age groups today is based on registration and acceptance of basic terms and conditions for operation, co-existence and co-operation.

According to records, the age groups in Ijèbúland had numbered about a hundred, and today they are attracting more attention and indeed they are one of the catalysts of development in Ijèbúland. Today there are about fifty-five functional age groups in Ijèbú named under the administration of different *awùjalè*.

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4. Okúbótè, 119.

5. Wálé Sálámì, *A Historical Survey of the Pre-Colonial Socio-Cultural Life of the Ijèbú*, in *Studies in Ijèbú History and Culture*, ed. G. O. Oguntómisin (Ibàdàn: John Archers, 2002), 71.

6. S. K. Adétònà, *Awùjalè: The Autobiography of Aláiyélúwà*, Oba S. K. Adétònà *Òg-bágbá II*. Ibàdàn: Mosuro Publishers, 2010. 217.

### The Importance of the Age Groups

The age-group system among the Ìjẹ̀bú and indeed the Yorùbá people was a common way of dating children's dates of birth and important events that took place in the community, since non literate communities were not disposed to use the Western calendar method of dating.<sup>7</sup>

The age-group system is a sociopolitical institution of the state, an ingenious mechanism of organizing the people for the maintenance of social morality, for law and order, and for public works and prosecuting wars. For the performance of public works or other related events, each age group was assigned specific duties to be carried out within a stipulated time-frame.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of the *régbérégbé* in Ìjẹ̀búland is too obvious to be overlooked. It is obvious that modernity, Westernization, and indeed globalization have been unable to kill and subdue the *régbérégbé* activities in Ìjẹ̀búland.

In a society like that of the Yorùbá and indeed the Ìjẹ̀bú people, where seniority is given credence and is of great importance to the people, age groups function as a means of differentiating seniors from juniors in the communities. The age groups at this level also serve as a training ground for leadership, resourcefulness, and discipline.<sup>9</sup>

The members of the different age groups perform economic, social, religious, and recreational functions for their members and the community. They carry out various communal duties like clearing the foot-paths leading into and out of their towns and building and repairing the palace and community halls. In other words, they do public works.<sup>10</sup> In addition, they carry out whatever assignment they are given by the chiefs of their towns, with the supervision of their leaders in most cases, while in some other cases they are without any supervision as it is believed that at that stage they are adults.

This was corroborated by Odùwòbì<sup>11</sup> when he pointed out that "age-groups meetings began from about the age of eighteen or twenty-one. This meant that members were old enough to take up the responsibilities, as well as enjoy the privileges, of citizenship. They could be assigned civil as well as military duties." He explained further that the mobilization of the *régbérégbé* for

7. Victor B. Jatula, "The Life and Times of Timothy Odútáyò Kúti (a.k.a. Àbùsì Èdùmàrè)," in *Themes in the History of the Ìjẹ̀bú and Rẹ̀mọ of Western Nigeria*, ed. O. O. Olúbòmẹ̀hìn, 123–125 Ìbàdàn: Bamon Publishing Company, 2010.

8. N. A. Fádípẹ̀, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Francis Olú Òkédìjì and Oládẹ̀jọ Òkédìjì. O. eds. Ìbàdàn: Ìbàdàn University Press, 2012 (Reprint).

9. A. Fájánà, "Age-groups in Yorùbá Traditional Society," *Nigeria Magazine* 98 (1968): 232–239

10. Sàlámi, 73.

11. Tundé Odùwòbì, *Ìjẹ̀bú under Colonial Rule 1892–1960. An Administrative and Political Analysis* (Lagos: First Academic Publishers, 2004), 15.

communal functions was handled by a political society known as Pampá, which announced the projects to be undertaken and the age groups to be involved in each assignment.<sup>12</sup>

The age groups also function as a systemic welder of people and talents, an organ of growth and development for the community. When they are newly formed the members gather first to learn their civic responsibilities to the land.<sup>13</sup>

The age-group system fosters close relationships among members. Members support one another and this helps to enhance their prestige. In particular, when a member retires, the other members rally round and provide all the necessary support needed by the retiring member.<sup>14</sup>

Further, the age-group system is like other unifying factors among the Ijèbú people such as the *àgémọ*, *ẹbí*, *obinrin òjòwú* and the *Ojúdẹ ọba* festivals, which were regarded as the ultimate unifying factors among the various Ijèbú communities and the people of the same age brackets in the nineteenth century. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, some age groups in Ògèrè and Ipèru<sup>15</sup> were said to have made a route to link Rémo with Ijèbú-Òde, an indication of their community support. And this singular act facilitated the movement of people, goods, and ideas among the people in Ijèbúland and also promoted inter-group relations.<sup>16</sup> The functions to be performed by the age groups may be based on their seniority, as the Ijèbú lay emphasis on seniority and therefore it is expected that youths should respect elders at their various meetings, they discuss matters concerning the welfare of the town and communicate their decisions to the *òsùgbó* in council, depending on the case. When important matters requiring consensus among the age groups are to be discussed, an assembly of the age groups known as the *àjo* is called. The assembly is composed of representatives of age groups in the town. Decisions taken at such meetings are communicated to the *ọlójà* or the *òsùgbó* as the common will of the age group.<sup>17</sup>

The voice of the *awùjalẹ* is indeed the collective voice of the *rẹgbérégbẹ*. This was amply demonstrated in the year 2009 when all the age groups wore the same outfit in total demonstration of a community in support of a singular

12. Odùwòbi, 16.

13. Adétónà, 213.

14. Adétóún Sòtẹ, *Ojúdẹ Ọba Festival of Ijèbú Ọde* (Ibàdàn: African Book Builders Ltd., 2003), 15.

15. Ògèrè and Ipèru are towns in the Rémo area of Ògùn State.

16. O. O. Olúbòmẹhìn, "A Survey of Inter-Group Relations in Ijèbúland in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Ijèbú of Western Nigeria: A Historical and Socio-Cultural Study*, ed. O. O. Olúbòmẹhìn (Ibàdàn: College Press and Publishers Limited, 2010), 21.

17. G. O. Ògúntómisin, *The Transformation of a Nigerian Lagoon Town, Ẹpẹ 1852-1942* (Ibàdàn: John Archers, 1999), 38.

cause: the formation of the Ijèbú State. This shows that the age groups perform political as well as social functions.

In more recent times, attention of the age groups has shifted to the construction of projects such as a modern palace and library, the sinking of boreholes, the building of a mini-theatre to host the annual *Ojúdé Qba* festival, education, and city beautification. The age groups have also provided the much needed security for the towns and villages in and around Ijèbú-Òde. Since their emergence, these contributions by the *régbérégbé* to the development of Ijèbú-Òde and environs have not stopped, or diminished.

The different age groups, in the bid to touch the lives of the residents of Ijèbú-Òde and its environs, provided medical infrastructure for the residents and indigenes of Ijèbú-Òde. This was done by the *egbé qba fùwàjí* age-groups (people born between 1950 and 1952) They donated a 10-bed Special Amenity Ward during the fiftieth coronation anniversary of Qba S. K. Adétònà to the General Hospital in Ijèbú-Òde.<sup>18</sup>

In like vein, the *egbé bóbagbuyi* age group (people born between 1941 and 1943) had contributed to the rehabilitation of the outpatient department of the State Hospital Ijèbú-Òde.

Although most of the projects carried out by the different age groups were done by men, some recent ones were joint projects involving the women also. The *egbé bóbagbimò obinrin* (age group of females born between 1953 and 1955) also donated a borehole for the State Hospital in Ijèbú-Òde. In like sense, the *egbé bóbagbuyi* also initiated a medical scholarship award in November 2005 for indigent but brilliant students of Ijèbú origin, tenable at Olábísi Qnàbánjò University, Àgò Ìwòyè.<sup>19</sup>

In the area of education and educational development, the *egbé máfówókù* has contributed to the development of the community. The age group gave scholarship awards to some selected indigent students of the Olábísi Qnàbánjò University.<sup>20</sup>

In the area of infrastructural development in the town, the age-group associations fulfilled one of the major and significant goals of their establishment. It was on record how the *egbé bóbajólú* commissioned on February 17, 2002 a public borehole at the Òkè-Ajé market in Ijèbú-Òde. The borehole was said to be for the benefit of the market community and the general public. This, it

18. "A Report on Egbé Bóbagbuyi Medical Scholarship Award." *Qbanta Newsday* 18, no. 5 (Sept. 2010): 55.

19. Ibid.

20. Adéwálé Adépojú, "Régbérégbé: An Innovation in Age Group Association for Community Development in Ijèbúland," Proceedings of International Conference on Social Science and Humanities (Ghana: Pan African Book Company, 2011), 17.

should be noted, should be one of the major provisions of the government, but it had failed to do this and it was left to the age groups to attend to.<sup>21</sup>

Further are the contributions of the age groups in the area of security and policing of the communities. As it is said that "security is everybody's business," the age groups have contributed to the security of the community by rehabilitating the Etí'talé Police Station, Ijèbù Òde, which was inaugurated on July 17, 2004. This was done to boost the morale of the Nigerian Police and also contributes to security management in the community.<sup>22</sup>

Apart from the contributions of the age groups to their various communities, they also perform social functions and indeed foster interpersonal relations among individual members. For instance, in the case of a death in any family of their members, he or she is helped by the rest of the *egbé*. They help the grieving member perform tasks that need to be done as well as to make the occasion grand with dancing, singing, and feasting. Their activities continue until the third day after the burial.<sup>23</sup> In other cases, the group may pay a certain amount of money to procure certain items that are needed.

Apart from the various functions of the age groups to both the community and their members, during special community events and occasions such as that of the *Ojúdé Ọba* festival and the *Ọbańta* day celebrations, the members of the age groups are usually in *şo-ẹbí* (uniform) for the purpose of identity and unification. The uniform also serves to demonstrate that the group has purpose and direction. And for the purpose of uniformity of style, the fabric is given to one tailor who is supposed to be a member of one of the age-groups. This is also to uplift the financial standing of the tailor-member. Likewise, for any other goods or services requiring payment, members of the groups are considered first. In a case where more than one member plies the same trade, the business is divided between them.

On the whole, therefore, it could be said that age groups are a convenient way of organizing the people for the performance of their duties as citizens of their various communities and their contributions are felt by all, as their membership cuts across the whole society.

### Sociocultural Contributions of Age Groups

As a welder of the community, the age group has helped to bring the people of the whole community (members of the age groups especially) together to the extent that during the *Ojúde-Ọba* festival, an avenue for all the age groups to meet after a year of dispersal, all the age groups are dressed in matching

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21. Ibid.

22. Personal observation by the researcher, July, 2004.

23. Fádípè, 257.

attire, based on their ages so as to differentiate one from another, which indeed is a sign of unity and solidarity. The male and female arms of each age group society usually choose uniformed attire (e.g., *aşo òkè*) to wear at the Ojúde-Ọba and/or other occasions. Members sit together at festivals under a banner with the group's name on it.

For instance, the *awújalè* stated that:

what outsiders find most striking is our way of dressing. All groups painstakingly go through their outfits and spend as much as a year to plan and organize what they would wear for social events. For uniformity, only the same tailor is used.<sup>24</sup>

The age groups, therefore, buy the same type of clothes which they wore jointly on special occasions to show their uniformity, identity, and togetherness.<sup>25</sup> This cloth is called *aso-ebí* by the *ljèbú*. A group outfit cannot be worn by members except when it is exclusively assigned to be worn by all members. The significance of the *aşo-ebí* in the *ljèbú* society is basically to show a distinction between two or more groups and to establish their interest, one for another. Furthermore, *règbérégbé* (age-group) the clothes are worn to give color, to show differentiation between groups, and to show the uniqueness of the *ljèbú* culture.<sup>26</sup>

The point is that while the men were contributing to the physical development of *ljèbúland*, the women were not left behind, though their contributions were not actually pronounced, but in their own ways they have helped members and non-members with financial and moral support where there is the need to do so.

Also, research has shown that some of the members of the age groups decided to join for the purpose of exchanging community values and dousing stress and tension. According to Aróbayò Àjẹkẹ Adéyẹmí,<sup>27</sup> when asked what benefit she derived from the age group, her response was, "the age group ... oh! the age group is for fun and exchange of pleasantries."

The above position was further corroborated by Alhaja Shoge Binta<sup>28</sup> when she said the age group was basically for "old-time's sake" and to further

24. Adétòná, 219.

25. Sekinat Làsisi A. "The Socio-Cultural Significance of *ljèbú* Fashion," in *Themes in the History of the *ljèbú* and Remo of Western Nigeria*, ed. Olúbùmèhìn (Ibàdàn: Bamon Publishing Company, 2010), 67.

26. Ibid.

27. Aróbayò Àjẹkẹ Adéyẹmí is the *lyálájé* of *Ègbé Aróbayò Obinrin Akilè *ljèbú**. She was interviewed at her shop in Dégún Street, *ljèbú-Óde*, on Saturday, Nov. 8, 2014.

28. Shoge Binta is the founder of the *Ègbé Tọbalàşẹ* age group (1971–1974). She was interviewed at her office at the Department of Petroleum and Petrochemical Studies at Táí Şólàrin University of Education, Ijagun, Ógún State, Dec. 12, 2014.



debunk the Yorùbá saying that *ogún oṃoḍé ò lè šeré fún ogún oḍún*, that is, twenty children cannot be (play continually) together for twenty years. Each age group has at least about twenty members, and more.

As the Ijèbú people are adjudged one of the very social people in Yorùbáland, it is their belief that one should have enough people around for both good and bad contingencies. This is in agreement with the Yorùbá saying that *wò èyìn è wò ... bó lómọ ogun, bí ò lómọ ogun, wẹ' yin è wò*, that is, look behind you, if you have supporters or not. Literally, the Ijèbú believe in having friends and admirers around oneself. It also reflects the Yorùbá saying that *bí mo bá bojú wẹyin, bí mo réni mi, inú mí a dùn, a ra mí a yá gágá, èniyàn laṣọ mí*. This implies, if I look behind me and see my own people, I'll be happy ... for the people are mine (covering)

Further, during the burial ceremony of relatives or other social gatherings, it is expected that all members of the group be present to pay last respects or contribute to the success of the program. In any case, if a member will not be present at any occasion or function, such member is expected to receive permission and pay the assigned due (in cash or as may be stated).<sup>29</sup>

It therefore implies that some people join the age groups so as to get support in the case of any social gathering or social function, especially those that would entail that they have a crowd. In cases where they need a crowd, the male and female age groups come together.<sup>30</sup>

More so, in the collective social responsibility of the groups, they have contributed both in cash and in kind to various aspects of the society. For instance, *egbé jagun mólu obinrin* gave five bags of rice, 50 liters of groundnut-oil, one big pack of Milo, and Peak Milk to the orphanage at Òwu-Ìkijà Ijèbú in 2001. Other items such as toiletries and children's clothing were also donated to the home.<sup>31</sup>

In a like vein, the same quantities of items apart from clothes were donated to the Ijèbú-Òde Prison in 2001. This is indeed one of the social responsibilities of the women's age groups in Ijèbú Òde. These were not done by the *jagunmólú* age group alone; the *aróbayọ* age group also took the same direction when it contributed to the orphanage at Owú-Ìkijà.<sup>32</sup>

It is therefore not out of place to state that the social contributions of the women's age groups are more felt by women than by men. This is probably so

29. Ibid.

30. Interview of *Jagun Iyábọ Shittu* at her shop along New Road, Ijèbú Òde, on Nov. 7, 2014.

31. Interview of *Jagun Kẹmi Hassan*, the Secretary of *Jagunmólú Obinrin*, Akilẹ Ijèbú on Nov. 7, 2014.

32. Interview of *Alhaja Ibrahim*. The *òtún-Iyalóde Egbé Aróbayọ Obinrin Akilẹ Ijèbú*. Nov. 7, 2014.

because, as far as the women's age groups are concerned, they derive fulfilment in sitting one with another and discussing social issues and also sharing personal experiences. While some of the women in the groups are more fascinated by the pleasure they would derive from other people, others are fascinated by the fact that they are the vanguard of the *ljèbú* social values and norms, while yet others take the groups as a source of information, relaxation, and leisure.

### Political Contributions of Age-Groups (Traditional/Civil)

The function and the participation of the age group in community development and social upgrade has been almost exclusively political. Service on public works of various kinds is assigned by the political authorities with apportioned duties to various groups by their officials, after which it becomes the task of the leaders to arrange the details among the rank and file of the group(s).<sup>33</sup>

There is no doubt that women have made relatively significant marks on Nigerian politics since independence; so also have *ljèbú* women contributed to the political "atmosphere" of the *ljèbú* nation. For instance, it was recorded that Òtúnba Gbéngá Daniel, the former Executive Governor of Ògùn State, was supported by members of his age group in *ljèbú-Òde* in his campaign to emerge the Executive Governor. In the words of the executive Governor of Ògùn State. He may have been aided in his prompt and favourable support by the fact that he is a member of the *régbérégbé bóbakéyè*; the age group of people born between 1956 and 1958. He was also, before becoming Governor, a member of the *Ojúde-Ọba* Organising Committee.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to male politicians who have had the support of the age groups, some women have also taken the "bull by the horns" by contesting for elective offices and seeking the support of their group members. For instance, *jagun* (Princess) Títí Adésànyà, a good example from the *jagunmólú* age group, contested for membership in the Ògùn State House of Assembly in 2007. Though she was not elected, the political gladiators nonetheless compensated her with a job as a special assistant at the Federal Capital. And as a means of solidarity, she has contributed money to the *Ojúde-Ọba* festival through her age group every year since her appointment.<sup>35</sup> In the bid to get some of the political office holders to disclose their age groups, it was established that they hold

33. Fádípè, 253.

34. Adétòná, 222.

35. Interview of *Jagun Kémi Hassan*.

such offices for the good of the Ijèbú “sons and daughters” and indeed for the “good” people of Ògùn State and as such, they represent the interest of the entire state and not just that of their age groups.

### Economic Contributions of the Age Groups in Ijèbú

There is no gainsaying that economic interest is the major driving force of most human activities. As such, the age groups in general have benefitted a lot from their membership. For instance, the *aşo-ẹbí* used by the age groups is supplied solely by a member of the group (this is dictated by group statutes). In a case where no member of a particular age group can provide it, the sale is contracted to a member of another age group. But the standard practice is that the fabric be bought from a member of the same age group and be sewn by another member. This is done to lift the finances of members of the group. A good example is that of *ẹgbé jagunmólú*. They buy their fabrics from Jagun “Títí Abímbólá, a member of the *jagunmólú* age group, and have it tailored by Jagun “Tópé Yínúsà. These two members have their shops at the New Market, Ijèbú-Òde.<sup>36</sup>

According to Alhaja (Iyalóde) Shoge Binta, the economic/financial support given to members differs. It mostly depends on their financial standing and their needs. This was also corroborated by Aróbayò Àjoké Adéyemí, when she noted that members are not expected to be “beggars,” but members are given support according to their needs.

In a similar vein, therefore, between 2004 and 2005 the *bàbá ẹgbé* of *jagunmólú* age group, Òtúnba Gbénga Daniel, donated ten tricycles to the *jagunmólú* age group and the tricycles were distributed among the members to ameliorate their financial status/standing. The beneficiaries were Jagun Kémi Hassan, Jagun Kudi Bóyèjò, Jagun Shadé Balógun, Jagun Iyábò Smith and Jagun Ìdáyá Alímì, to mention a few.<sup>37</sup>

Also, in the year 2004, a cooperative multi-functional society was established by the *jagunmólú* age group with an initial investment of five million naira. Of this, ₦200,000 was given to each member to start a new business or revitalize existing ones, with agreement to repay the loan within a specific period of time depending on the particular line of business. Also, within the period of time under discussion, some other members of the group were empowered by the *Bàbá ẹgbé* through the *jagunmólú* age group.<sup>38</sup>

36. Interview of Jagun Kémi Hassan, Jagun Iyábò Sittu and Iyalóde Ẹgbé Jagunmólú Obinrin Akilẹ Ijèbú.

37. Interview of Alhaja Amdalat Olúwatóyin. (Double T) Iyalóde Ẹgbé Jagunmólú (Obinrin) Akilẹ Ijèbú.

38. Ibid.

Further, the *jagunmólú* age group runs a rental service where the money derived therefrom is used for the benefit of members at all levels. The service is for the members of the age group and the general public. Members can rent items at subsidized prices, and the proceeds are used for corporate social responsibilities. Shop attendants are employed to run the business, as most of the officers of the age group live outside of Ijẹ̀bú-Òde.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, during the construction of the Ijẹ̀bú-Òde International Stadium, the Òtúnba Gbéngá Daniel led administration employed (empowered) the women, especially members of the women's age groups, to serve as suppliers of construction materials for the stadium. This would have been contracted out to his political party stalwarts, as it is the practice in Nigeria, where contracts are doled out based on political affiliation rather than expertise and knowledge of the items to be supplied. This is because they (the members of the age groups) were well organized and were traceable to a source: the *àfin* (*awùjalẹ̀s* palace).

### Conclusion

In closing, this research has opened up the fact that though the contributions of women's age groups in Ijẹ̀bú Òde are not as numerous as those of the men, and though they embarked on fewer public projects, in their own ways, the women have contributed to the development of the town.

Also, considering the fact that women have an array of responsibilities to grapple with within their homes and outside, they have also in no small measure contributed to the building of the Ijẹ̀bú nation. Though the contributions may not be considered great, it should be put on record that the women have helped other women against the general belief that "women are their own problems and enemies."

Also, it has been established in this research how the women did complement their male counterparts and not compete with them; complement in the sense that the women were able to take initiatives to establish the age groups and try as much as possible to manage the affairs and also contribute to the decision making process of Ijẹ̀bú-Òde through their representations in the *rẹ̀gbẹ̀rẹ̀gbẹ̀*-in-council where their opinions were communicated to the general public through the *awùjalẹ̀*.

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Jagun Iyabo Sittu and IyalÒde Egbé Jagunmólú Obirin Akile Ijèbú.

Jagun Kemi Hassan, the Secretary of Jagunmólú Obirin, Akile Ijèbú on Nov. 7, 2014.