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**In Search of a Window: An Analysis of Ijaw
Migrations to Central Africa**

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Abstract

By the second half of the nineteenth century, Niger Delta communities in the forefront of the African periphery of the Atlantic world economy have attained an enviable height in indigenous accumulation as the commercial-entrepreneurial class articulated the forces of production and expanded capital generation. The highly resourceful entrepreneur-rulers, with a preponderant combination of power and capital, controlled large territories and a corresponding volume of trade. However, the inability to sustain the process of indigenous accumulation due to the dramatic disruption of natural improvements of mercantile capabilities from the 1870s led to the massive

impoverishment of those communities and cross-border movements of Ijaws in search of a window to escape poverty. This article examines the relationship between the crisis of indigenous accumulation in the Niger Delta and Ijaw migrations to Central Africa; aspects of Ijaw cultural and economic transfers; and Ijaw experiences and contributions to host economies. Locating the beginnings of Ijaw movements to the Central African region in European imperialism and colonial suppression of the process of indigenous accumulation, the article demonstrates that Ijaws could not escape poverty in their host economies due to harsh official policy and socio-political environments.

Introduction

The Ijaw tribe have been occupying the swamps of the coastline of Nigeria including nearly the whole of the Niger Delta area, 'a frontier of opportunity', from very early times (Dike, 1956: 20; Talbot, 1969: 12-13). Historically, millions of people have sought new life chances in other countries due to scarce opportunities at home. The prevalent structural colonial economic dislocations of the 1920s had warranted a massive emigration of Ijaws in search of windows of opportunities in the Central Africa region. Today, entrenched poverty, inequality, and political strife in Nigeria's Niger Delta have intensified cross-border movements, temporarily or permanently, to escape poverty. Incidentally, much of it falls under "*illegal*" and "*undocumented*" migrations, which reflected widespread desperation. There are also large populations of other Nigerian ethnic groups like Igbo, Efik, and Ogoni with very visible presence in the Central Africa markets. Igbos migrated and settled either as colonial labour migrants or refugees in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon during the Nigerian civil war, or as willing migrants in search of economic opportunities in other parts of the Central African region. In Malabo and Libreville, former Igbo refugee camps were referred to as 'Biafran Quarters'. The population of Ogoni in Central Africa increased greatly with the social and political crisis of the 1990s in Nigeria.

In historical terms, international migration, the temporary or permanent movement of persons between countries, is regarded as an ancient globalization flow, with significantly changing forms and impetus. The migratory flows are understood as the most effective means for poor people to escape poverty, which in turn, promote economic growth and enhanced technological progress in the host economies. Internationally, an estimated 10 percent of world's population were permanently relocated during the first phase of modern globalization, 1870-1910. Obviously, this historical pattern of migration has been greatly reduced by the development of nation-states, the introduction and use of international passports, and a growing range of mechanisms to control individual movements. Consequently, new migration is much less free, but is no less important for poverty alleviation. In the contemporary world, few legitimate avenues existed in developed economies to accommodate large population of the world's poorest willing to migrate (Goldin and Reinert, 2007: 14, 243). These lean migration opportunities gave rise to a thriving black market in *illegal migration* with terrible risks and costs, both human and financial. While hundreds of *illegal* migrants have perished in attempts to evade border patrols or security agents, and make it across the unforgiving deserts and treacherous stretches of water, others have been defrauded and left stranded in impoverished *third* countries after entrusting their life savings to smugglers of people (Goldin and Reinert, 2007: 151). There is yet another group of unlucky *illegal* migrants, who after successful entry into countries of choice, were arrested, detained and tortured in the dungeons by security personnel.

Research have shown that trans-border migrations has contributed enormously to the growth of the world's most dynamic and productive economies like the seventeenth-century Netherlands, which hosted entrepreneurs and labourers from across the world. Goldin and Reinert (2007: 152) observe that with the dawn of European colonialism, migration took on a trans-continental dimension, with labour chasing wealth across the globe, and marked the beginning of mass migration.

This is at variant with the forced trans-Atlantic transportation of a large mass of Africans through the slave trade and the establishment of historic Diasporas (Uya, 2005). The present discourse shares a perspective of Francois Manchuelle's *Willing Migrants: Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848-1960* (1997), which demonstrates that the Soninke migrations to France were driven by a search for improved economic options. It also shows a major advance in Africanist labour migration literature to generate new inquiries and wide-ranging debate to which the present work seeks to contribute. It is important to note that early Ijaw immigrant enclaves in Central Africa profoundly eased the financial and psychological adjustment of recent migrants by providing such services as accommodation, information and resources to new arrivals, culminating in the phenomenon of *chain migration* or *network externality*.

Crisis of Indigenous Accumulation and Ijaw Migrations

The difference between forced and willing migration is relative: for even in the context of willing migration, the migrants were *forced* to take the decision to emigrate by harsh and compelling economic realities. The inexorable economic demise of the Niger Delta trading-states as middlemen in the trans-Atlantic commerce between African producers of primary commodities and European merchants marked the beginning of the crisis of indigenous accumulation. Wariboko's (2007: 31) position that the decline provoked two alternating reactions: resignation and rebelliousness, was adumbrated by Captain Wauton (quoted in Nwabughuogu, 1982: 371-2) who observes that when the process of indigenous accumulation defined by the middleman trade, through which the commercial elites to achieve personal wealth and community prosperity, became halted with the penetration of European firms into the interior, which began to regulate produce prices to the detriment of the economic fortunes and interests of the producers, Ijaws, who could not cope with the firms' policies "have had to forgo trading and resort to fishing, in which pursuit they make little progress".

The British authorities' confirmation of the profitability of the 'legitimate trade' by 1856 prompted the supercargoes' establishment of palm oil related 'factories' on the beaches of the trading communities on the Brass River estuary making the river a significant area in the Oil Rivers territory by the 1860s. By the 1870s, Niger Delta merchant-communities struggled to restrain the Liverpool supercargoes from hinterland penetration, which would enable them to receive palm oil and kernels directly from the hinterland producers. Following the arrival of Sir George Taubman Goldie's National African Company in 1879 (which became the Royal Niger Company, Chartered and Limited in 1886), the Liverpool traders, established supercargoes and Niger Delta indigenous traders became allies against a common enemy in the 1880s (Alagoa, 1964: 91). They began to agitate in the British Press and Parliament against the Company's increasingly intolerable monopoly over all the interior markets of the Lower Niger, the attendant diversion of trade, and decline of the middleman trade (Wariboko, 2007).

Realizing that resignation would mean the acceptance of economic ruination and starvation, indigenous population (particularly, Brassmen and Kalabari) began to smuggle goods across the boundaries between the Oil Rivers Protectorate and the Niger Territories. However, as the dispute between the Delta merchants and the Royal Niger Company degenerated, the frontier communities, like Nembe-Brass, lying between the two colonial possessions in question were instigated to rebel against the Company's administration. This resulted in the Akassa War of 1895 culminating in the destruction of the Company's facilities and Akassa itself (Wariboko, 2007: 32). By 1888, the Brass merchant chiefs have become so impoverished by the loss of their Niger trade, and completely ruined due to the severity of RNC's customs policy. Perhaps, while the Akassa War of 1895 accelerated the political and economic demise of Nembe-Brass, the climax of its economic marginalization and collapse came in 1921 when it was shut down as an export-import centre by Nigeria's colonial administration (Wariboko, 2007: 33). Meanwhile, by 1920,

Ijaws have begun to move out with their canoes in search of windows of economic alternatives in neighbouring countries like Cameroon and Gabon in response to their elimination from an effective big trading role between the period 1916 to 1930 (Ebikoro, 10/05/2006; Nwabughuogu, 1982: 367).

Voluntary migration across international boundaries takes place because the recipient economy is capable of providing some economic windows, which the donor economy could not offer. Thus, the 'pull' and 'push' factor: 'push' in the sense of unfavourable conditions like political oppression, lack of economic opportunities, etc., at home; and 'pull' in the sense of an assumed favourable conditions in the recipient economy (Osuntokun, 1993: 57). Contrary to Manchuelle's (1997) reduced emphasis on the role of the colonial state in forcing migration through coercive violence and taxation, Osuntokun's (1992: 58) observation that labourers were driven to Fernando Po (Equatorial Guinea) by pressure of taxation in colonial Nigeria, reinforces the view that Ijaws made choices based on their own historical and colonial socio-political realities. However, the recruitment of labour to anywhere and emigration of Nigerian labourers to Fernando Po was forbidden by Section 14 of the Nigerian Labour Ordinances No.1 of 1929. The British colonial government closure of the Nembe-Brass port in 1921 also warranted the outward movement of Ijaws to Central Africa.

Perspectives on Ijaw Cross-Border Movements to Central Africa

The first group of *willing* Ijaw migrants to Central Africa arrived in the Tiko District of Cameroon in 1920 for an expanded scale of the fishing occupation. This heralded their influx and dispersals to other parts of the region. Bolstered by an adventurous spirit to discover virgin and fertile territories, Chief Oki and some members of his household left Koluama in the present Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa state in 1920 into the Bakassi Peninsula through the Calabar River. When he got to Atabong and discovered that Bakassi was not conducive, he proceeded to Cap Cameroon from

where he relocated to Big Kombo, Tiko District, South-West Cameroon (Abaka, 06/05/2006; Zighifaghe, 08/05/2006). The news of initial economic success prompted a second wave of Ijaw migration. Subsequently, Big Kombo became so populated with Ijaws leading to the founding of about fifty-three fishing-ports in Cameroon, and thirteen in Gabon. Ijaws settled very scantily in Equatorial Guinea due to a profound degree of xenophobia and the unsuitability of its coastline for fishing occupation (Oyakheme, 11/05/2006; Frank, 11/05/2006). However, Osuntokun's (1992: 89) study shows that Ijaws in the Owerri and Calabar Provinces, where a monthly labour recruitment quota of forty persons was implemented, were among the ten thousand (10,000) labour migrants to Equatorial Guinea from colonial Nigeria by 1914.

The settlement of Ijaw fishermen on the coastline was also discouraged by Equatorial Guinea's harsh socio-political environment and closed economy. However, a handful of Ijaws settled in Bata, the second major city after Malabo, the capital city, while an Ijaw Christian Missionary, Pastor Joel, founded the Christ Assurance Mission, with a population of over one thousand worshippers of both Ijaw and non-Ijaw stocks in Malabo (Fayeghe, 04/05/2006; Solomon, 09/05/2006). While there existed a consensus that Ijaw migration to Central Africa began in Tiko, Cameroon, from where they dispersed to Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, the movement to Gabon is enmeshed in two perspectives. The first holds that Chief Didi Oki, the son of Chief Oki of Big Kombo of Cameroon led the earliest group of Ijaws to Gabon in 1963 (Zighifaghe, 08/05/2006). The second view stressed that Isamou from Ekini led the earliest Ijaw migrants from Cameroon to Akaungwa on the shores of Libreville in 1963 (Fawari, 23/04/2006; Boufaghe, 18/04/2006) and *Owendo Office du Bois* in 1964 (Soubaikebula, 19/04/2006). According to this view, on arrival at Akaungwa Chief Isamou was assisted by a Gabonese to secure a plot for the establishment of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) with Mr. Jonathan Fawari as the Evangelist-in-Charge. Ijaws were evacuated from Akaungwa and resettled in Grande Village in 1972

following Gabon Government's decision to build a harbour there (Fawari, 23/04/2006).

Following the defeat of Germany in the First World War, which ended in 1918 and the taking over of its former colonies by the Trusteeship Council of the League of Nations, Britain administered Southern Cameroon, a mandate, as part of colonial Nigeria. British Indirect Rule system had the *warrant* chief system as a governance structure to help in the collection of taxes for the colonial government (Afigbo, 1972). Hence, the appointment of Chief Oki of Koluama, Chief Isaac of Lobia, and Chief Salmon Frank of Ezetu, as warrant chiefs to oversee the native administration of Ijaws in Cameroon, collect taxes, settle disputes, and maintain law and order in colonial Southern Cameroon. Zighifaghe (08/05/2006) and Frank (11/05/2006) observe that Chief Salmon Frank continued this responsibility till 1986 even after the 1961 referendum, which led to the merger between Southern Cameroon and Northern Cameroon to form the Republic of Cameroon. On its part, Gabon's authority gave official recognition to Chief Peter Okegbe and Chief Jonathan Fawari (Jnr.). However, contemporary times present severe challenges culminating in the deterioration of socio-political order and economic environment, which adversely affected Ijaws who struggle to carry on the fishing occupation and other cultural practices into the twenty-first century.

Patterns of Settlement and Aspects of Economic and Cultural Transfers

Ijaws are predominantly fishermen and, therefore, occupied greater part of the stretch and labyrinths of creeks and rivers of the Cameroon and Gabon coastlines. In Cameroon, they are estimated at over forty thousand, occupying a cluster of fifty-three fishing-ports, and thirteen in Gabon, excluding the deserted settlements. Their communities are separated from the mainland and indigenous Cameroon or Gabonese communities by rivers and creeks. Ijaw settlement pattern in Cameroon shares identical features with the homelands'. The clustering of settlements and demographic distribution produced 'a

colony of Ijaws' in Central Africa. In fact, a good number of Ijaws in Cameroon have not visited their native homes since their birth. Chief Jacob Ebideinwei was sixty-one years old in Cameroon by 2006, but yet to visit Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The political organizational structure of Ijaw settlements is a transferred form of what obtains in the homeland. The founder of a settlement becomes its head chief with an assistant in the administration of the community. In Ebikiri Zion, an Ijaw settlement in Cameroon, since the founder, Pastor Livinus, was a Christian, his son became the head chief.

Research shows that, in Gabon, apart from the evacuation and resettlement operation of 1972 from Akaungwa to Grande Village (Fawari, 23/04/2006; Boufaghe, 19/04/2006), there was a more forceful and destructive reoccurrence in July 2002, when the Ijaws were moved from *Grande Village* and *Petit Village*, further inland to enable them mix up with the indigenous population (Okegbe, 18/04/2006; Soubaikebula, 19/04/2006), an imposed trend towards enculturation, and a new form of the French policy of assimilation. Indeed, Ijaw means of livelihood and survival was disrupted and they suffered near destruction as they were uprooted from the more convenient geographical posts. However, few Ijaws who settled in the more distant coastal fishing communities like Monkah, Libi, Nede, and Akenzeh, with distances ranging from 40 to 60 kilometres from Libreville were spared (Okegbe, 18/04/2006; Abaka, 22/04/2006). Empirical evidence demonstrates that during the early settlement period, both the physical and social environments presented favourable and conducive dynamics for uninterrupted economic exploits and cultural operations. Historical evidence also shows that though there were Ilaje and Arogbo fishermen, the arrival and settlement of Ijaws in Central Africa was almost revolutionary.

Chief Boy Soubaikebula (19/04/2006), an Ijaw settler in Gabon since 1964 observes that "before the arrival of Ijaws, the Gabonese population knew very little about large-scale fish production and consumption. The indigenous people depended solely on meat ... The Ilajes who arrived Gabon earlier restricted themselves to the

production of bonga fish". It was demonstrated in Gabon and Cameroon that Ijaws introduced the local populations to the art of large-scale fishing, which served both the commercial needs of the economy and domestic consumption. Ijaws produced the greater proportion of fish in the Gabonese markets. In recognition of their occupational acumen, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, decided to provide financial grants to the Ijaws through the Government of Gabon to improve their fishing ventures, which was truncated due to state corruption (Boufaghe, 18/04/2006; Fawari, 23/04/2006). According to Mr. N. S. Dauda, (18/04/2006), the former Consular Officer, Nigerian Consulate in Libreville, Gabon,

Ijaw people control the coastal lines of Gabon and contribute about 70% of the total fish production in Gabon. During the unfortunate mass repatriation of Nigerians in 1992, Gabon witnessed what could be regarded as a 'great depression' in her economy. There was acute shortage of fish supply in the markets and the entire population fell back on meat consumption, which was grossly inadequate and costly.

Based on this national experience, the repatriation order was relaxed to enable Ijaws return to their fishing occupation, while those who escaped the order were granted "pseudo-acceptance".

To checkmate a reoccurrence of this experience, the Government of Gabon introduced mechanized fishing to develop this key economic sector, which was long ignored, hence, the importation of fishing vessels and sponsorship of citizens to Europe and Asia for manpower development to drive the emergent sector. In October 2005, a fish production and processing industry was established in Libreville, Gabon, while negotiations with China for its accelerated development were being undertaken (Okegbe, 18/04/2006; Abaka, 22/04/2006). Many Ijaws with the capacity for deep-sea fishing engaged the services of a South Korean merchant, Kavakas, in the importation of

outboard engines, fishing nets and gears, and the fabrication of small-boats in Gabon (Okegbe, 18/04/2006; Eberegu, 18/04/2006). For the sustenance of Ijaw traditional fishing occupation, necessary crafts and other economic engagements like the art of canoe-carving, the production of native gin and native bone-fixing were also practised. In Cameroon, canoe-carving and the production of native gin were thriving businesses that enjoyed patronage from the indigenes. In Gabon, which has one of the largest virgin forests in Africa, was intolerant of canoe-carving and could only be undertaken clandestinely in the heart of the forest in connivance with a forest-guard, while the authorities would not permit the production of native gin by Ijaws (Owei, 20/04/2006).

A very traditional and culturally oriented stock, the retention and strict observance of their culture and customs to preserve their identity and worldview was very strategic to Ijaws in the host-lands. Ijaws gave their way of life (cultural practices) enormous pronouncement through their dress codes, their language, periodic display of cultural dances and masquerade like *Owugiri* and *Owugbene*, the observance of traditional funeral and marriage rites (Owei, 20/04/2006). However, the idea of separate settlements from indigenous populations to protect their customs and traditions could not impede the wheel of inter-cultural exchanges and integration. There were flourishing inter-cultural marriages and unofficial exchanges between Ijaws and their hosts, while offspring like Ebi Johnson, a major in the Cameroonian army, whose mother was Ijaw and father Cameroon, inherited dual citizenship (Johnson, 09/05/2006). While Ijaws introduced new ways of fishing and dress codes into their host communities, they were introduced to new dishes and meals like *bobolo*, *mutoka*, *pido*, and *gbundo* by their hosts in Cameroon (Zighifaghe, 08/05/2006). In Cameroon, Ijaws had a central cemetery at Big Kombo where traditional burial rites were observed for the deceased who could not be taken to Nigeria. However, by 2006, Big Kombo was almost deserted.

From the 1990s, Ijaws have begun to form co-operative societies and welfare unions, which served as social networks to help new migrants adapt to new living conditions, provide advice on legal matters related to immigration, promote the solidarity and development of Ijaw migrant community in Cameroon and Gabon, and affirm Ijaw cultural heritage and ethnic identity by organizing cultural and annual religious festivals on the same dates at home. The most outstanding of these co-operatives was the Ijaw Welfare Association with an official recognition from Gabon and Nigeria. Chief Solomon Brisibe (12/05/2006) asserts that:

we try to preserve our cultural heritage by promoting our folklore, our native dances and musical instruments, our traditional dressing and handicrafts, and our traditional dishes. We tell our children moonlight tales and proverbs. It is important that we conserve our culture and our identity for our future generations.

Following the increasing violence and social transformations associated with the culture of poverty in the Niger Delta at the turn of the twenty-first century (Asuk, 2013), Ijaw Diasporas in Central Africa provided safe havens for their children who fled Nigeria. Many Ijaw youths used the opportunities and incentives provided by these viable social networks to engage in cross-border *shadow* economic activities and accumulated profound wealth, which gave them a social status at home. Presently, many Ijaw migrants to Central Africa visit home regularly, send their children to school at home, and send money for diverse, but complementary livelihood needs and construction of residential houses. However, the vast bulk of Ijaw migrants' remitted funds are absorbed by household support and to a lesser extent by community-based social movements, leaving hardly any surplus to boost investment in local development through private enterprise initiatives.

Ijaw Experiences in Central African Host-lands

Currently, Ijaws are struggling hard to retain and improve their economic and cultural ways of life in Central Africa to enable them move out of poverty. Empirical surveys in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon reveal that Ijaws would not generally abandon or relegate their cultural practices to the background even in the face of critical onslaughts by host-land authorities. Separate Ijaw settlements on the coast could not also protect them from frequent untold molestation and harassment, which became heightened from 1992. Several anachronistic policies were introduced by their host governments to reduce Ijaws to subjects and quench their vigour in economic pursuits. The activities of *gendarmeries* smack of extortionist drive and checkmated Ijaws' ability to reap sufficient economic benefits. In Gabon, for instance, Ijaws were stopped from taken fish to the markets directly by themselves, but sold to indigenous population at the coast at a fixed price controlled by a scale system to liquidate the competitive market system at the detriment of Ijaws (Eberegú, 18/04/2006; Owei, 20/04/2006). This is tantamount to the exploitation of Ijaws for the development of the Gabon economy. The policy was interpreted as a reflection of government's desire to obtain a semi-accurate statistics of the quantity of fish supply in the market daily and to ascertain the sector's contribution to the economy. The authority also established a storage, preservation and processing factory at the Libreville wharf, while Ijaws began to send fish to the markets in Port Harcourt and Yenagoa clandestinely as those caught in the act by *gendarmes* would pay huge sums of money.

Ijaws were frequently harassed and molested by *gendarmes* on land and sea, in the day or night, and their properties looted on the pretext of demanding for *carte de sejour* (resident permit) (Eberegú, 18/04/2006). The rate of taxes and *carte de sejour* by 2006 differed from country to country: in Cameroon, it fluctuated between CFA100,000 and CFA130,000 for two years with a renewal fee of CFA60,000 for six months; in Equatorial Guinea, it was CFA500,000

for six months and a renewal fee of CFA100,000 for two months; in Gabon, it was CFA600,000 for two years with a renewal fee of CFA120,000 for six months. While the means of livelihood of most Ijaws could not guarantee effective accumulation for the procurement of *carte de sejour*, the *gendarmes* would begin to harass Ijaws even three months before its expiration. These practices combined to aggravate their anxiety and limit their economic freedom, impoverished Ijaws in the host economies, and blocked their movement out of poverty.

Though very few Ijaws secured casual employment in the oil-rich Gabon's Ponte Gentile, they were excluded from political participation especially in Cameroon: polling booths or centres were not provided in Ijaw settlements, and political campaigns were not extended to them. Human rights violations assumed a record high proportion in all three countries: often times many Ijaws were arrested on frivolous charges and some of them detained die in prison custody, while others suffer worst cases of brutalization. Ijaw experiences warranted several emissaries to the Federal Government of Nigeria for a possible repatriation but without result. On the other hand, Ijaws were seriously apprehensive of their fate in the event of returning home after long years of sojourn in strange lands without any achievements; and secondly, they were doubtful of effective resettlement and reintegration into the society considering the deteriorating political situation in Nigeria and exponential underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. Moreover, many Ijaws did not have the means to return home.

In July 2002, following the wanton destruction of many Ijaw coastal settlements by *gendarmes* on the order of Gabonese authority, Ijaws were forcefully relocated upland to mix up with the indigenous population. The intervention of the Federal Government of Nigeria through a delegation led by the former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon (Rtd), and received by the Vice-President of Gabon, following series of emissaries, was bluffed (Okegbe, 18/04/2006). Consequently, Ijaws who previously lived in their own houses without any harassment of rent-payment were now confronted with the

excruciating experience of rents, and reduced to the status of refugees and subjects in neighbouring African countries. The terror of *gendarmes* redoubled their psychological trauma and sense of disillusionment, which gravitated into a mass of nostalgic feelings. There was an enormous loss of means of livelihood. Forceful 'integration' resulted in the vulnerability of Ijaw culture. Ijaws became susceptible to several forms of taxation and economic strangulation effectively implemented by the *gendarmes* (Okegbe, 18/04/2006; Fawari, 23/04/2006). These developments contributed considerably to the cycle of poverty experienced by migrant Ijaws in Central Africa.

Concluding Remarks

A much neglected theme in the literature on trans-border migrations and the construction of Diasporas is the intra-African movements of sub-groups to escape poverty. This study has shown that economic and political changes attendant on European imperialism and colonialism warranted the first wave of Ijaw movement to escape poverty. While the overwhelming emphasis on the economic impact of European imperialism and colonialism may seem stereotypical, it is obvious that lasting legacies occurred in unusual forms and results of the connections struck in response to contemporaneous economic and political developments. The migration ideology and the cultural construction that framed Ijaw experiences in Central Africa were flux and constantly negotiated and reconfigured. Cultural exchanges and patterns of power relationship provided the context for understanding trans-local identities attendant on population movements due to poverty. Equally intriguing is the issue of diasporic enculturation process among Ijaw migrants, who though remain within Africa, nonetheless were away from their natal homes but retained a connection to the home they left behind by effectively transplanting and spreading aspects of their natal culture into their host societies. Their segregated settlement pattern in Central Africa shows that the relationship between Ijaw migrants and the surrounding host communities has been marked by 'awe and mistrust' in the context of the indigene and settler continuum. The covert settlement pattern

which sought to forcefully integrate Ijaws remains the most perilous. Even within the obvert settlement configuration, discriminations and disabilities deriving from their status as migrants and 'subjects' surfaced regularly.

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Interviews

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Interview with Godwin Joseph Abaka in Alenakiri, Gabon, 22/04/2006.

Interview with Solomon Brisibe in Tiko, Cameroon, 12/05/2006.

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Interview with Ishmael Boufaghe in Alenakiri, Gabon, 18 & 19/04/2006.

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Interview with Salmon Frank in Ebikoro, Cameroon, 11/05/2006.

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