

# Settlement and Inter-Group Relations among the Hausa and the Central Delta Region before 1900

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## **Abstract**

*The paper examines the period before 1900, marked as a watershed in Nigerian history. This period is also known as the pre-colonial era in Nigeria, although there were events, towards the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, that led to colonial conquest in most parts of southern Nigeria while the north officially fell around the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to the periods mentioned, the people of both regions lived and traded with one another peacefully from as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. With the recorded chain of sociopolitical, ethnic and religious tensions in most parts of the country, there is a growing misrepresentation of the relationship that exists between the peoples of the Nigerian area. This paper concludes that the settlement and inter-group relations among the Hausa and the people of the Central Delta before 1900 were mutual.*

## **Introduction**

The history of man is riddled with stories of migrations, either voluntary or involuntary, on the prevailing circumstance at a given period in time. This explains why the early man was described as a wanderer. History has further proven that one of the major factors for the emergence of societies was migration, the movement of people from one place to another. Migration may be permanent, temporary, voluntary or forced. It can be international or internal. Migration can occur as a result of push and pull factors. Push factors are those forcing a person to move.

This can include drought, famine, lack of jobs, overpopulation and civil war. Pull factors encourage people to move. These include a chance of a better job, better education, and a better standard of living and so on.<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that our concern here is for human migration, which is a movement (physical or psychological) by humans from one district to another, sometimes over long distances or in large groups.

## **The Settlements**

The Hausa is an ethnic group predominantly located in northern Nigeria. The people are very industrious and adventurous. This explains their presence in southern Nigeria as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century long before the colonial conquest of Nigeria. Groups of elephant hunters from Hausa and Nupeland both in Northern Nigeria, had operated at intervals in the jungles of Elele, Andoni, Onitsha, Ogoja, Enugu, and Abakaliki between 1890 and 1910.<sup>2</sup> In Elele, the hunters came at the invitation of the indigenes whose crops were routinely ruined by bands of elephants while in Abakaliki they were invited by Hausa soldiers quartered in the town.

Among these hunters was a man called Diko who hailed from Kano in Northern Nigeria. Diko was described by the British Resident Officer of Ahoada Division as one of the Africans who took part in the military subjugation of Arochukwu, Bende, Ahoada, Aba, and parts of Ibibioland between 1901 and 1902. He also took part in the "Expedition of Gun Destruction," a colonial subjugation offensive by which the British relieved communities in Southeast Nigeria of their firearms or weapons after military conquest.<sup>3</sup> Dodo, a member of Diko's party, was credited with acting as a guide for the British expeditions to Alluu, Igrita, Mbodo and Egbeda; all Ikwerre communities of Ahoada Division, now in Rivers State. It is also evident that the presence of the Hausa around these areas also point to the fact that they ventured into Brass, Yenagoa, and Sagbama, all under the then Ahoada Division.

In addition to the involvement of former migrant hunters, the presence, also, of soldiers of Northern Nigerian origin in the 1901-1902 Aro Expedition that was christened "a war to end all wars"<sup>4</sup> is significant to our discussion. From the time colonial rule was established in Southern Nigeria, then a separate protectorate from Northern Nigeria, the

colonial administrators depended on Hausa soldiers to bring Igbo land, which also include our area of study, under British rule.

### **The Hausa in Yenagoa**

Yenagoa is in the Central Niger Delta, geographically located between longitude 6° and 6° 24' East and latitude 4° 50' and 5° 2' North of the Equator<sup>5</sup>. It shares common boundaries with the Engenni to the North and North-East; the Ogbia to the South-East, Taylor Creek to the West and Izon-speaking communities to the South.<sup>6</sup>Yenagoa has a total land area of approximately 181square kilometers. The indigenes of this area speak Epielanguage. The Epie-Atisaare hospitable people who have played hosts to so many other ethnic groups living in Yenagoa. Among these ethnic groups are Igbo, Isoko, Uhrobo, Yoruba, Efik, Ibibio, Hausa and many others.

The Hausa people, like other non-speaking Epie ethnic groups, are immigrants from northern Nigeria whose early contact with the people of the area dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that not all the people from the north who speak or may not speak Hausa are Hausa or Fulani. There are other northerners such as the Nupe from Niger, Zuru from Kebbi, Gwari, Kataf, Bajju from Kaduna, Tiv, Jukun, Idoma from Benue and Nassarawa States to mention a few. It is, however, erroneous to address these ethnic groups, as a majority of the Southerners do, as Hausa. So also the Northerners see all people from the South-South as Igbo.

A majority of Hausa settlers in Yenagoa came from the North-Western and North-Eastern regions of Nigeria. The North-Western section include: Sokoto, Niger, Kwara, Katsina, and Kaduna States while the north-east area include Adamawa, Yobe, Taraba and Borno States. The settlers from the north-west are mostly cattle dealers while those from the north-east supply most of the farm products found in Swali market as well as other markets in the State. Others are water vendors, motorcycle operators (popularly known as *okada* riders), cobblers, and tailors to mention but a few. Notable areas where a large settlement of the Hausa are found in Yenagoa are Igbogene, Akenfa, Opolo, Yenizue-Gene, Amarata; and especially Aritallin, Ovomand Gwegwe. A good number of them are also found in some of the villages across the river

Nun in Swali, Akaba and Ogbogoro. Early Hausa settlement in Yenegoa was around Ovom, <sup>8</sup> although their population dwindles seasonally as few remain in Yenagoa during rainy season, while majority travel back to the North for farming.

### **The Hausa in Ogbia**

Ogbia Local Government Area is the second largest Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. It is bounded in the north by Yenagoa, south by Nembe, in the west by Southern Ijaw L.G.As of Bayelsa State and in the East by the Abua/Odual L.G.A. of Rivers State.<sup>9</sup> The inhabitants of Ogbialand are mainly a mixture of the Ekpeye who are an Igbo sub-group; and Ijaw people. Among the villages in Ogbia are Okporoma, Tarakiri, Oboloma, Obutoru, Otuogidi, Omorokeni, Emeya II, Emeyal II, Otuaseigha, Oloibiri, Elebele and Otuoke.

The Hausa started visiting this area since the 17th century.<sup>10</sup> The early Hausa immigrants were seen during the weekly market days in Ogbia where they trade in different wares like earrings, necklaces and many other ornaments. The main settlement of the Hausas is found in Ogbia main town. Most settlements emerged during the colonial era, the route being the town of Elele in present Rivers State.<sup>11</sup>

There are a good number of Hausa in Ogbia today. They are very industrious and are into different economic ventures in the area. A large number of them are into trading and own most of the big stores in the area. Notable among them are Alhaji Sanusi Nuhu, Alhaji Gambo Mudi, and Alhaji Mohammodu Sale who is the current Sarkin Hausawan Ogbia. The Hausa population in this area has grown astronomically as a result of the recent ban on motorcycle operations in Yenegoa by the present government of the State. About 85% of the motorcycle riders (*okada* men) in Bayelsa are Hausa. With the ban imposed on motorcycle operations in the State Capital, the majority of these riders migrated to other local government areas, especially Ogbia which is one of the nearest among others. Others ventured further across the waters to Nembe and Brass local government areas. This was because the policy was only implemented within the Yenagoa.

## **The Hausa in Nembe**

The area today known as *Nembe* is an ancient city of the people who share common history with *Kalabari* of Rivers State. It is located on latitude 4 32' N and longitude 6 24' E.<sup>12</sup> The Hausa, like others in other part of the State, have settled in Nembe for decades. Trade in yams was the first source of contact between the natives and a group of Nupe merchants who visits the area through the river Niger. During the early period of contact, the Nupe traders always remain in their boats all through the transaction; cooking and sleeping on board.<sup>13</sup>

A new form of relationship was established by the time the Hausa started visiting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest among this group were the 'Sakwatawa,'<sup>14</sup> who are part of the Hausa ethnic group from Sokoto but speak a slightly distinct Hausa dialect. They travel through the River Niger down to the Delta for trade. On arrival, they ventured into the interior of the area carrying their wares; and those with certain skills went about rendering different services as cobblers, and butchers. The visitors took advantage of the environment of their host communities and embarked on fishing. They are today settled in the two main towns of Nembe Ogbolomabiri and Bassambiri. Those in Ogbolomabiri settled in Owusegitotiri while in Bassambiria large community of the Hausa is found in Sand field. This is not to say that they are not found in other areas as they venture into all the villages as far as Brass hawking their wares and providing different services before returning at dusk or after some days.

## **The Hausa in Brass**

Brass, also known as Twon-Brass, is a coastal area. It has a coastline of approximately 90km on the bight of Bonny with an area of 1,404km.<sup>15</sup> Brass has been a home for many Hausa. The Hausa started visiting this area since the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> However, the Nupe were the first to arrive through the river Niger. Shortly after their arrival, the Hausa also arrived. While the Nupe merchants supplied yams, the Hausa traded in a collection of items like necklaces, and ear-rings.

Until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Hausa only visited the area occasionally. This happened during stipulated market days when traders gathered from all the neighbouring villages to sell their wares.

According to an informant, Mallam Jatau Nalado, the early Hausa settlers were fishermen who engaged themselves with fishing alongside the native people and lived on the fishing ports. Trade in cattle and goats are not common in Brass due to the nature of the terrain. Yenagoa has been the major cattle market as buyers either transport the prepared meat or live ones to Brass.

### **The Hausa in Kolokuma/Opokuma**

Kolokuma/Opokuma is also one of the Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State in the Central Niger Delta. Its headquarters is in the town of Kaiama. It has an area of 361 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>17</sup> There are nine communities that made up Kolokuma clan while Opokuma has ten communities. Among all these communities, Kaiama being the headquarters of the local government has the highest Hausa settlement.<sup>18</sup> Hausa presence in this area dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Most of them were traders from Kano who visited the area selling raffia cloths and crocodile medicine for the local people.<sup>19</sup> Today, the Hausa community in Kaiama is large and the people are engaged in different trading activities as well as rendering services in trade commerce.

### **The Hausa in Sagbama**

Sagbama Local Government Area (SALGA) is one of the oldest LGAs in the Central Delta. It was created in 1976 with headquarters at Sagbama town.<sup>20</sup> The Local Government Area shares boundary with Ekeremor LGA of Bayelsa State, Patani LGA of Delta State, and Ogba-EgbemaNdoni LGA of Rivers State. Sagbama Local Government Area is made up of the Ijaw, Isoko and Urhobo ethnic nationalities. This makes the LGA a mixture of three beautiful cultures in the Niger Delta region.

The people are hospitable and accommodating which further encourages the inflow of immigrants like the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa. An interview with Sarkin Hausawan Sagbama, Alhaji Aminu Saminu,<sup>21</sup> shows that the Hausa have settled in this area for a very long time which explains the present political organisation of the people. Again, the Hausa are settled mostly in Sagbama town and usually go about their business in other communities where they engage in trading, and fishing. Others are cobblers, water vendors, butchers as well as

barbecue sellers otherwise known as ‘maisuya’. After the ban on motorcycle operations in 2012, a majority of the okada-riders of Hausa origin joined their kinsmen in Sagbama town.

### *The Economy Activities*

The Niger Delta is strategically located around riverine terrain. This naturally characterises its economy. The people of this region have for centuries mastered the environment by extracting from it most of their economic valuables which has sustained them all the while. Most of the inhabitants of this area are fishermen. They also engage in salt making, canoe carving as well as both domestic and long distance trade.

The arrival of slave traders in the Delta region stimulated the growth of a number of trading activities which were in effect expanded several of small Ijaw fishing villages that happened to occupy favourable positions on the creeks of the Niger Delta Region.<sup>22</sup> The most important among these states were Bonny and Brass, which became a major slave trading centers in the early 19th century.<sup>23</sup>

The Ijaw traded with the peoples of the hinterland who were mainly Igbo and Ibibio. They exported dried fish and salt to the peoples of the hinterland in exchange for vegetables and tools, particularly those made of iron. The pattern of this relationship was radically altered by the advent of the slave trade. The trade stimulated more contact between the Ijaw and *Hausa*. Among their joint ventures was the trafficking of slaves in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.<sup>24</sup> Both the Hausa and Fulani traders also supplied horses from the North to the people of Eastern hinterland.

Trade contact between the Hausa and the people of the Niger Delta was not only predicated on the sales of slaves but also in the exchange of other items. Hausa merchants introduced locally woven raffia cloths from Kano into the Delta long before the coming of the Europeans.<sup>25</sup> Pereira, a Portuguese explorer, wrote in 1508 that ‘canoes made out of a single trunk brought yams, slaves, goats and sheep from as far in the hinterland into the Niger Delta.’<sup>26</sup> The Hausa merchants referred to here, arrived through the great river Niger. As noted previously, among them were traditional medical practitioners who prepared and sold crocodile medicine to the people of the study area around the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Social Formation and Polity**

The Nigerian area is perceived to have been divided into two major religions, that is, the Muslim dominated north and the Christian dominated south. But history has it on record that there are many other ethnic groups in the northern Nigeria that are Christians. The Hausa, however, are predominantly Muslims and practiced this faith wherever they migrated to in Nigeria including the Central Delta Region. This differentiates them from the people of the Delta whose area had not come under Islamic influence. Although the Jihads led by the Fulani Islamic leader, Usman Dan Fodio, and his supporters were unable to penetrate the Delta region, their adventures did alert the Hausa to the various possibilities of the area, especially trade.

Many indigenous polities emerged in Nigeria before the British conquest in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the north there were several large and developed systems, including the Hausa states of Kano, Katsina, Zaria and Gobir, Kanem-Borno, and the Jukun states of Kwararafa. Smaller kingdoms included those of the Igala, Nupe, and Ebira. Notable in the South were the Yoruba states of Ife and Oyo, the Edo state of Benin, the Itsekiri state of Warri, the Efik state of Calabar, and the Ijaw city-states of Nembe, Elem Kalabari, Bonny, and Okrika. The social and political organisation of the Ijaw during this period reflected the structure of the village. The smallest unit of social organisation was the compound where the father served as the head of the family. The lineage group is made up of all the compounds whose heads are responsible for the maintenance of law and order. At the village level, the eldest among the compound heads presides over deliberations. The Hausa in Bayelsa live in a group that defines their social formation. Among the Hausa is a strong cultural feeling that led to the emergence of a political system where the people elect a chief who serve as the leader and symbol of unity known and respected as the Sarkin Hausawan Bayelsa.<sup>27</sup>

## **Inter-Group Relations**

The relationship between the Hausa and their host communities has been cordial over time. There was no evidence of any crisis between the Hausa and the people of the Central Delta before the arrival of the colonialists. Interaction could be in different forms. There were relationships such as trade that required peaceful communications.



River systems probably played a much larger part as means of communication and carriers of trade and ideas, especially around this period. In addition to their uses as carriers of trade; rivers provided a source of plentiful protein in the harvest of fish, which the fishermen were able to bring forth.

Ajayi and Alagoa further buttressed thus:

The importance of the rivers Niger and Benue is further reinforced by the fact that three major kingdoms flourished on their banks. The Jukun Empire embraced most of the Benue valley and exercised influence over much of northern Nigeria as far as Kano, and appears to have been known in the south as far as the estuary of the Cross River which includes our area of study. The Igala kingdom controlled areas around the confluence of the Niger and Benue, and traded below the confluence as far as Aboh and Onyaat the head of the Niger Delta.<sup>28</sup>

The traffic along these rivers led to the flow of downstream produce of the interior to places outside the north. Woven gowns both of Hausa and Nupe, horses, potash from lake Chad; Nupe-made straw mats and hats, fish and rice from the Niger; kolanuts from the markets in Southern Nigeria, all made their way into the Central Delta around the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Introduction of Islamic Culture**

The Hausa were originally traditional religious worshipers. Islam came to northern Nigeria as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century and was well established in the Kanem-Borno Empire during the reign of Humme Jilmi. Although available evidence shows that, Islamic influence was established in Kanem-Borno before the reign of the Mai.<sup>29</sup> Islam came to Hausaland in the 14<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Sarki Ali Yaji (1349-1385) of Kano and spread to the major cities of the North by the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It later spread into the countryside and towards the middle belt uplands. Islam was slow to take root among the Hausa because the rulers and their subjects went back to their old religious way. In early 1800s, Islamic scholar Usman Dan Fodio launched a Jihad against the

Hausa Kingdoms of northern Nigeria. He was victorious and established an Islamic empire with its capital at Sokoto. It was after the Jihad that Islam became deep-rooted in most of Hausaland.

The Jihad also helped in spreading Islam to Ilorin and other parts of the West. But this is not to say that Islam was introduced into those areas only after the outbreak of the jihad. The spread of Islam to the south was made possible through Nupeland. The geographical location of Nupe placed her at a comparative advantage as it was more accessible to the Muslim traders from the North. The advent of Islam in Nupeland is difficult to date. There is some indication that by the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century some Islamic influence was present. How widespread Islam was during this period is not easy to determine. It seems, however, that by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a strong core of Muslim adherents existed in Nupeland. Notable among them was Mallam Dendo who became a jihad leader in Nupeland. The distinguished Mallam and members of the Ulama in Nupeland had become vocal in their preaching while some others had gone further south into Yoruba and Igboland to propagate Islam.<sup>30</sup>

Since the adherents of the Islamic faith (Hausa and Nupe) were mostly traders who have established trade with the people of the Niger Delta around the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Islamic culture must have penetrated the area through them. This has been the trend right from the trans-Saharan trade era when Islam was introduced by the North African merchants. Those elephant hunters from Hausa and Nupeland who operated at intervals in the jungles of Elele, Onitsha, Ogoja, Enugu, and Abakaliki between 1890 and 1910, must have also played an important role to this effect too.

It must be noted here that the inter-group relationship between these two groups of people had a great influence in their cross-culturalisation. Available records, however, shows that Islam emerged as a new religion first in Igboland when Mallam Ibrahim Aduku, a Nupe Muslim, settled in the village of Amufie in Enugu Ezike, in old Nsukka Division;<sup>31</sup> and six years after his death, Garba Oheme, the first indigenous Muslim emerged.<sup>32</sup> This marks the genesis of the spread of Islam in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria which as well had impact on our area of study. According to Mallam Abdulrahman Zikiye, there

were a few Nembe people who travelled wide and returned home as Muslims.<sup>33</sup> This information suggests that those who got converted to Islam must have done so outside Bayelsa and as well serve as important contacts who readily provides accommodation for the early Hausa traders in Nembe. There are a host of indigenous Muslim converts here in Bayelsa, they include Alhaji Abdulrahman Z. Erewari, Alhaji Ali Ogotibo, Alhaji Sama'ila Alagoa, Imam Abeki and Sheik Mohammed Agri. Islamic faith has spread round the state with a number of mosques mostly in Yenegoa. These mosques include the Central mosque in Aritallin. The present Chief Imam is Sheik Abubakar Khalil; the Central mosque, Amarata has a Chief Imam by the name Sheik Abu Safiyanu Uchendu, an Igbo. Others are the Central mosque, *Ogbogoro* with chief Imam, Sheik Ja'afaru Mohammed; and Sheik Kasimu Yusuf, the Chief Imam of Central mosque, Ekeki. Other mosques are located in Opolo, Tombia, Igbogene, and Akenpai.

### **Inter-Marriage among the Hausa and their Host Communities**

The inter-marriage between the Hausa and their host communities was never a recurring incidence but there existed quite a number. However, we would like to observe that there was a big cultural difference between the Hausa and the Ijaw. While the Hausa marriage rites is guided by Islamic injunction, as directed by Prophet Mohammed in the Holy Qur'an, their host communities in the Central Delta still maintained traditional practices alongside the Christian wedding ceremonies. Meanwhile, whenever any member of the Hausa community indicated interest to marry a daughter of any community in the Central Delta, he was granted this request provided the prospective bride was willing to go ahead with the marriage. The parents of the bride-to-be usually will ask their daughter: "do you know that the person you intend to marry is Hausa/Muslim? Do you wish to marry him all the same?"<sup>34</sup> This was usually done in secret, of course, after which the groom-to-be would be expected to come and fulfil the traditional rites.

Now, this was the area where both cultures based on religious beliefs clashed. But there has, over the years, been a workable agreement between them. In general, the marriage between the members of the Hausa community, and the people of the Central Delta, normally was

celebrated at two levels, that is, the family of the bride and that of the groom. In a case where a Hausa was marrying a non-Muslim lady, for instance, the bride's family usually carried out a separate ceremony based on the traditional rites of the people. The groom's family, on the other hand, including the Hausa/Muslim community would do a wedding *fatiya*,<sup>35</sup> according to the Islamic injunction. In this process, the two families were expected to participate in some of the separately organised ceremonies. On the other hand, if the bride was Hausa, there would be a *waliyi*.<sup>36</sup> Either ways, a representative of the bride's family was required to present her at the ceremony. In most cases, a representative was gotten among the Hausa community who was familiar with her either as a result of the fact that he was married to one of her sisters or her family appointed him to fill in the gap.

Our informant, Alhaji Abdulrahaman E. Inewari, a practising Muslim of Nembe origin, who got married to a lady who is also a daughter of Nembeland. Though a Christian, he converted her into Islam immediately after the wedding. When asked if he faces any form of discrimination within his family and community at large, he affirmed that such did not happen as everyone gave him his due respect and regard. He added: "my people respect me and my religion. Many a time they ask me to pray during a family or community meetings". We also gathered that a good number of the members of the Hausa community married Ijaw, Nembe, Ogbia, and Epie ladies. All these ladies were in essence converted to Islam with just a few going back to their former religion after divorce or after losing their husbands. Others went back to their former faith based on mutual understanding between the couple. It must be noted here that not all the Hausa tolerated such practices where a Muslim faithful married a Christian lady and allowed her to practice her faith. Similarly, it was also easier for a Hausa/Muslim to marry a non-Muslim lady than to give out his daughter to a non-Muslim for marriage. This strong policy was responsible for the few marriages recorded between the two communities over the years.

People had conceptualised marriage in their own different ways to serve their purpose. Culturally, marriage is an agreement to live together by a man and a woman, with consent of their families, after the fulfilment of the necessary traditional rites and testified to by some members of the kinship group.<sup>37</sup> Marriage is a universal phenomenon. It is a means

for the replacement of members of the society. It is a recognised way of ensuring the growth of the human race and also serves for companionship. Marriage, like family, is a group affair. It is an event for life between the principal partners, that is, husband and wife as well as members of both families.

However, an interview with Chief Bio Ibogomo Gbeyasa,<sup>38</sup> reveals a deep-rooted relationship between the Hausa and the Central Delta people, which transcends marriage. The informant is one of the descendants of Chief Samuel Sambo, the founder of the Sambo Compound in Twon.<sup>39</sup> There were five distinct chieftaincy houses in Twon. These houses were also known as compounds and they include Cameroon, Shidi, Ada, Kermmer, and Sambo. Members of the Sambo Compound believed that their progenitor was a very successful trader from the North who traded in yams around the Brass Island in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Seeing the business prospect in the community, he took a wife from the family of the founder of Twon who gave him a land which encouraged him to settle among them. As a wealthy and successful merchant, he was able to take a title from the kingdom of Nembe which heralded the genesis of the Sambo House. By the time Christianity was introduced in Twon through the CMS in the year 1868, Sambo was one of the first converts. He was baptised in the Anglican Church where he served as a Pastor's Warden until his death in 1895.

Regardless of modernity, marriage is not the exclusive affair of the very individuals wishing to get married. It helped to recruit new members into one's family and help create alliances. Through families giving out their daughters in marriage the people of these communities saw their in-laws as brothers or sisters. This explains the popular Ijaw adage, "Yeinananimi ere didubamonanimi" meaning husband confers honour, and "Fo-oweinebinaowei" meaning one's in-law is his brother.<sup>40</sup>

### **Impact on the People**

An important aspect of interaction between the people of the Central Delta is the acculturation and inter-dependence, which have taken place among the various indigenous groups within the area and the Hausa immigrants, which have welded them together over the centuries. One

cause of the acculturation could be ascribed to the periodic movement of population from one area to another within the territory. Sometimes the movement was slow, took many years and involved very long distances. In some case, however, it was fast and comparatively short. In either case the consequence was to bring new peoples into new areas and to open opportunities for cultural interaction and diffusion.

Another cause of the acculturation was the economic nexus, which developed in the territory from very early time. Due to the economic interdependence of the various communities, trade tended to flow in all directions and the constant meeting of people from various communities enabled each of them to learn, and, sometimes, to emulate the customs or borrow the vocabulary of the other. For example, two of the most important articles of trade, salt and dried fish, were provided by the Delta communities who then received in exchange some of the farm produce of the hinterland. As might be expected, the constant movement of traders through contiguous areas further encouraged mutual understanding.

The most dramatic changes in these fishing villages, was the rapid expansion of their population through the importation of slaves by the local chiefs from the interior part of the Niger: and the seemingly ability of the slaves to quickly assimilate into the community. Ijaw culture was not, however, markedly affected by these involuntary immigrants because the trading states operated a ruthless system of assimilation whereby those slaves of ability could gain great power and prestige in the society by observing its rules, whilst those who were unable to assimilate were relegated to the most menial tasks, were ill-treated and subjected to severe punishments.

## **Conclusion**

The paper examines the settlement pattern of the Hausa and intergroup with the people of the Central Delta region. This was done to show how peaceful coexistence existed among the different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria since time immemorial; the paper established by diving into the past in order to show the inter-group relations among the Hausa and the people of the Central Delta Region before 20<sup>th</sup> century. As noted in the paper, these peoples have interacted with each other long before the

advent of colonial rule with both sides benefitting positively. The peaceful coexistence among these ethnic groups today is a function of the strong ties that has existed among them centuries ago.

## Endnotes

1. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human\\_migration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_migration)
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13. Interview with Alhaji Badamasi Salihu in Yenagoa, Sarkin Hausawa Bayelsa, on 11/02/13, Aged 56 years.
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15. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/brass>
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