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# The City-Village Interface in Ibadan (Nigeria): Black Soap Entrepreneurship Since 1918



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## ABSTRACT

*In general accounts of black soap production, it is traced to West Africa. And prominent across, Ghana, Benin Republic, Cote de Ivoire and Nigeria. However, this paper examines the nature of entrepreneurship associated with black soap production and trade in Ibadan of the twentieth century. The work analyses how women dominated the industry and its interface between the village and Ibadan city markets. The work locates the characteristics of innovation and market development imaged by women to earn livelihoods in black soap trade in Ibadan city and village. The paper uses the Asuwada sociation theory to explain the entrepreneurial resilience of women in Olode village. The work uses the historical approach to examine the city-village interface. Oral interviews were conducted with women involved in production and trade since the early twentieth century.*

**KEY WORDS:** *City-village interface, women, black soap, entrepreneurship*

## Introduction

Almost a century after the formation of Ibadan from 1829, a village became prominent for the production of black soap. Olode village, one of the settlements dominated by hunters (men) in Ibadan is typical of the areas

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classified as *Oko Egan* (distant forest farmlands). Historical accounts of settlers in Olode village vividly articulated the patrilineal formations that led to the formation of the village from the late nineteenth century. In the accounts, several men from other forest farmlands formed friendly alliances and created a new lineage and kinship structure in Olode Village. However, there is the usual tendency to neglect women's lives in the history of African societies. The early women settlers in Olode village were wives of the hunters and male settlers. In 1918, migration and settlement in Olode village became relatively stable, hence women in the new settings used their indigenous knowledge innovations to produce black soap. In this regard this work analysed the roles of women in the production of black soap. The research questions in this paper are hinged on Cummings (1995) pattern that debates the universal acceptability of entrepreneurship from European perspective. The debates entail dynamics of economic patterns and entrepreneurial practices across geographical locations. With this, what variants are featured in Africa in spite of the western constructs of entrepreneurship, hence central to this paper, this work is based on the following questions:

- How did women in Olode village evolve black soap production?
- How did black soap production in Olode village interface with Ibadan city markets?
- What strategies sustained women's entrepreneurship in black soap production?

Scholars on Ibadan history such as Awe (1973), and Falola (1984, 1987) (2012) established the power dynamics featured in the political economy of the nineteenth century, this mattered in understanding the production and exchange system. The event of the nineteenth century provided a background to understand the nature and factors that aided entrepreneurship in the twentieth century.

## **The Realities of Entrepreneurship in Africa**

Globally, Schumpeter's definition of entrepreneurship in his book *The Theory of Economic Development* explained that it is a process of creating new combinations of factors to produce economic growth. (Schumpeter 1934). The definition of entrepreneurship was articulated based on twentieth century realities. There are several scholarly expositions debating Schumpeter's perspective. But it is most feasible in all entrepreneurial

context. This work affirms this view because the realities of entrepreneurship highlighted by Schumpeter. In the African sense, entrepreneurship is created by the necessity around the entrepreneur. The economic system is created for necessity. This is in line with Chileshe's assertion that entrepreneurs are innovators that create new products or processes, with materials, markets and distribution channels (Chileshe 1992:101). Furthermore, the reality of entrepreneurship in the words of Clemence and Doody (1950:9) puts the innovator has on individual with the ability to visualized profit and possibilities in untapped opportunities, commodities and markets, as well as getting things done.

According to Spring and McDade (1998:2), the peculiarities of entrepreneurship in Africa is hinged on the dilemma of determining the label entrepreneur. This results from the inability of theorists to reach a consensus on a universal measure and specifications. Invariably, the features of entrepreneur in individualized sense vary and it is dependent on the environment. And what features has entrepreneurship is not casted as it is rarely captured in generic terms by varies with peculiarities and specificities. Spring and McDade's methodological submission from empirical studies observations and field work, articulated:

*The merit of this approach lies in the fact that the resultant themes and theoretical explanations derive from concrete examples and never stray too far from the realities of the circumstances upon which they are based (1998:2).*

In this sense the African realities in the theory of Schumpeter gives out the entrepreneurs as coordinators that reconfigure ideas based on the context and milieus. Roschenthaler and Schulz (2016) on entrepreneurship in Africa provides a multifaceted perspective to understand the patterns of entrepreneurship in Africa. The patterns manifest in the book affirms that entrepreneurship is peculiar to each society. The Africa peculiarities reflect how politics, tourism, music, education and religion intertwine as determinants.

Furthermore, Ochonu (2020) emphasized the humanization of entrepreneurship in global south as significant, because the means to capitalism in Africa especially is critical. In two forms Ochonu categorized entrepreneurship: the pre-capitalist and anti-poverty entrepreneurship. The former is typical of indigenous entrepreneurship that subsists from the

colonial era, while the latter is induced by neoliberal reforms of the 1980s to combat poverty in Africa.

Within these two frameworks, black soap entrepreneurship feature in between as there are two categories of women, these stuck to the indigenous modes and those that are modernization savvy. Ochonu posits how difficult it is to precisely describe entrepreneurship from an Africanist perspective thus:

*The proliferation of entrepreneurial projects in Africa in the neoliberal moment inspired unprecedented Africanist scholarly interest in entrepreneurship, enterprise, innovation, African capitalism (or Africapitalism) and the culture of self-help. As new groups of entrepreneurs emerged on the continent and engaged in a variety of capitalist, wealth-creating activities, Africanist scholars from a variety of fields began to develop new vocabularies and concepts to explain this entrepreneurial wave. This scholarly corpus has been illuminating. But it has also been plagued by conceptual imprecision and confusion.*

(Ochonu 2020)

While it is understandable that neoliberal reforms are shaping the perspective of entrepreneurship in contemporary times, this work uses the historical method to manifest how the modes of indigenous capitalism subsists. This is justified as Ochonu puts further that:

*In trying to understand African entrepreneurs in all their diversity, we have hamstrung our own conceptual liberty and boxed ourselves into an analytical corner. The effort to comprehend African entrepreneurial modalities has suffered as a result. Our love of neat, hard categories and vocational identifiers have stifled our ability to appreciate the full range of African entrepreneurship. As a historian, my frame of reference is the African past and that is where I'd like to go to develop this contention.*

(Ochonu 2020)

This exposition is a pathway to understand the features of entrepreneurship in Africa especially when traditional scholarship in African economic history rarely focuses on theorizing the models of entrepreneurship in Africa.

## **Methodology**

The primary source material depicts the social relations of production and trade. From the oral interviews on women producing black soap, a new concept attached to entrepreneurship is its interplay with communalism. The natural endowment from the forest, creates a perspective to understand how black soap production was typical in the forest zones. Austin (2005:10) applied the principles of *'forest rent'* to explain the environmental dimension to understand the nexus between land and labour. The pattern of cocoa and palm oil boom in forest areas shows how profitable it was to rely on environmental resources derived from forest rent. While forest rent is recognized as fundamental in highlighting the factors of production. The accounts of life histories of producers of black soap in the village highlights how culture, ethnicity and kinship-based networks are interwoven. In the African context, this work agrees with Chileshe (1992) that ethnicity is fundamental in defining entrepreneurship with crosscutting examples from the Bamileke in Cameroon Chagga in Tanzania and the Gurage in Ethiopia. With this, this work considers the nexus between trading spaces and production sites of black soap production in Ibadan Nigeria.

The historicity of lifetime experiences of women in black soap production. In the history of Ibadan, trade in market spaces was fundamental to everyday life. Falola (2012) explained how markets were formed in Ibadan of the nineteenth century. The formation of the trading spaces was affirmed in Hodder and Ukwu (1969) work on Markets in West Africa, where the formula of trade networks featured geographical links along communities affiliated by culture and language. Clarke (1972) in the travels and explorations in Yorubaland observed how trade was prominent among communities he visited. These descriptions give insight to question the perspectives of entrepreneurship from the nineteenth century. The mode of entrepreneurship is narrated by Christopher Fyfe (1965) where emphasis was placed on production and exchange system. The chapter 'West Africa trade' explicates how trade connections and commodities interlinked. The human characters involved shaped the paradigms of trade. Historicizing the patterns of entrepreneurship considers economic development through experiences of their entrepreneurs. In theory and practice, entrepreneurship in Africa is not fixated but situational. His work explores the paradigms of entrepreneurship in black soap production.

## **The City-Village Interface in Ibadan**

Ibadan by its formation in 1829 emerged as a settlement of warriors and peoples dispersed from all parts of Yoruba land. The new Ibadan had differing geographical locations and identities as settlers were drawn from all Yoruba societies. The followers of warriors settled around Oja Iba, Oje, Beere, Isale Ijebu among others (Awe, Lloyd & Mabogunje, 1968). The settlers around these areas took advantage of the hills to serve as a space of refuge and security from the nineteenth century Yoruba wars (Oladejo, 2019). The new lives formed around these areas expanded into a city status in the colonial era. Hence, colonialism featured how Ibadan city areas evolved and ultimately, it created a dichotomy between city spaces and villages. Falola (1984) described how Ibadan economic system subsists on account of militarism, by which warriors that led the wars capitlaised on emerging trade opportunities with other Yoruba kingdoms. Then, the major markets from these areas started in the front of Chiefs and King's residences. The commercial networks that evolved from those spaces produced the idea of a city in the colonial era. Yet, the boundaries and demarcation of Ibadan was very expansive, as the nineteenth century warriors acquired farmlands. Falola's geographical exposition of Ibadan farmlands as *Okò Etilé* (farms nearby) and *Okò Egan* (distant farmlands) thus featured in how the warriors acquired *Okò Egan* to cater for the economic and Kinship territorial expansion of the warriors. Through friendly alliances with settlers, village settlements were formed around the *Okò Egan* in the nineteenth century. (Oral interview with Baale Akinkumi Village 2018) Gradually, new forms of kinship networks emerged as there were links between warriors that settled in Oje, Oja-Iba among other and the new settlers in the villages. Invariably, the warriors depended on the farming economy in the villages to foster their power status in the city. The city networks revolved around the *Okò Etilé* and it was pre-conceived as a city in the traditional African model, even before British colonization. Hence, in this work, the conception of Ibadan city was already evident in the colonial era, it was only reinforced by colonial economic interests and infrastructures.

The first impression given by P.C. Lloyd (1967:3) in the 'Introduction' of the book *The City of Ibadan* stated that: "*Ibadan is a City-Village*". This statement affirms the vastness of Ibadan even in its traditional forms. The villages are sites of production and source of raw materials desirable for trading in the city. From the nineteenth century, villages and settlements in

Ibadan were inundated with urbanization pressures, thus, transforming into city spaces, due to colonial influences. Contemporary city spaces were enhanced by the growth of colonial infrastructures such as roads, rails and central business districts. Hence, the old settlement patterns became occupied and transformed to city spaces. In the geographical set up of Ibadan, the places featured as Oko Egan (distant farm areas) became permanently of a village status. Thus, the separate entities of city and village in Ibadan is distinct and gives way to understand the livelihood strategies that suffices.

From the 1850s, Ibadan's city status was transformed by its central role in serving as a clearing space for palm-oil export to Lagos during the era of legitimate trade (Awe, 1967:22). The palm-oil from Ibadan and neighboring districts enriched the local economy such that the warrior contended to maintain supremacy. Palm-oil as a commodity of trade became a key ingredient in black soap production.

The construct of city and village in this work is based on the fact that there is nexus and an interface. Each remains an extension of the other. The extension and dependence on each other mattered in the entrepreneurial dimensions that manifested in black soap production.

The dependency between the city and the village fundamentally defines the perspective of entrepreneurial cultures that evolved in Ibadan. Black soap production is in the category of traditional craft that evolved since the nineteenth century. Manifestation of city-village interface commonly explain the directions of indigenous entrepreneurship as described by Ochonu. The modes of entrepreneurship in black soap from the precolonial era was evidenced with locally devised technologies of production. (Oral interview at Olode Village December 20, 2020 80+). Women's work is based on production of black soap in Olode Village and a second phase is the trade connections in the city. Manifestation of city-village interface commonly explain the directions of indigenous entrepreneurship as described by Ochonu. The modes of entrepreneurship in black soap from the precolonial era was evidenced with locally devised technologies of production. (Oral interview at Olode Village December 20, 2020 80+). Women's work is based on production of black soap in Olode Village and a second phase is the trade connections in the city.

## **Olode Village as a Market Ring for Black Soap**

Domiciled in the West Africa, black soap is an indigenous innovation and for the Yoruba people it features in the accounts of civilization that constitute everyday life in the past. It also serves curative therapy as a herbal remedy in skincare. In the context of cultural entrepreneurship in black soap, there exist a form of '*factor market*' where labour is sought from the family for production and distribution of black soap. The scale of production at Olode village is aided by extra familial labour which was always gender based. The labour system was a product of nineteenth century occupational features used in African societies. The demand for labour was influenced by communalism which also influenced marketing. While men controlled the farming and trade in palm and cocoa, the residual material (by-products) were used by women to produce black soap. The economic implication for women reflected the livelihood, which was entrepreneurial as they took advantage of the by-products in the processing of palm and cocoa to earn income through black soap.

The idea of market rings was brought up by Hodder and Ukwu (1969) in the explanations about *Markets in West Africa*. Each ring had a commodity specialization that supplied a particular trading space in the city markets. In this, Olode village in Akinyele Local Government is a ring for production of black soap.

The existence of Olode Village, the formation of several villages that constitute was typical of the Ibadan since 1829. (Oral interview with Mr. S.B. Ibirogbu December 13, 2020 at Olode Village) The village as the name imply by Yoruba meaning is a village of hunters. Ibadan by its foundation in 1829 was a newly discovered area highly forested. While the dispersals due to nineteenth century Yoruba wars flinged people in different directions several displaced peoples found refuge in the bushes, where the environment was a source of livelihood. Exploring the forests for hunting sustained the men who found the new settlements and the histories of migration to Olode Village entailed several groups of men who maintained friendly alliances through hunting expeditions. The present Olode village historically locates between Iware and Iroko in Akinyele area of Ibadan (Handbook History of Olode Village). Being hunters, there were tendencies to locate several spots for settlements where huts were built. This laid the foundation of Olode village in the late nineteenth century. However, there are lopsidedness that focused on men in historical accounts of the past



necessitated studies in women's history (Oladejo 2018). In this context, primary sources in the history of Olode village left out the lives of women in the modes of migration, settlement and livelihood. Yet, Olode village is renowned for black soap production in Ibadan. (Oral interview with Madam B.O. on December 1, 2020) The idea of relying on environmental resources to produce soap was imported to the village by Madam Ogundeji, a wife to one of the descendants of the founder of the village in the early twentieth century. In Yoruba societies wives played formidable powerful roles in the lineage. In the Sudarkasa's work (1974) of Yoruba women in the home and market place, she analysed how wives had economic power to earn income in the markets and on market days. In this, the status of wives mattered as elderly wives in a lineage had the power to earn more income because they had passed child bearing and rearing stage. Younger wives had little opportunity to earn much because they had younger children.

The wifely relationships in Olode village manifested as a wife of one of the early settlers, Madam Ogundeji imported the skill of black soap production in the 1910s. (Oral interview with Pa Elero on December 20, 2020) For men and women, the environment mattered in the choice of occupation. Men were basically hunters drawn from different villages, while their wives worked in cooperatives in the production of black soap making mapped Olode Village in the map of commercial activities in Ibadan. By this Olode Village emerged as a market ring where the women in the wifely status organized production of black soap as self-help groups. Invariably cultural entrepreneurship evolved from women in Olode village as kinship networks of women in the community transformed to a market ring and a commercial hub to seek for supply of black soap in Ibadan.

Suffice to note that in the colonial era, Ijebu women settlers in Ibadan traded with women in Olode village from the 1950s. (Oral interview with Mrs. Oludunke Akintunde on December 13, 2020 at Olode village) Ijebu women settlers clustered around Oke Ado area, Ekotedo among others relied on supplies from Olode Village to sell at Dugbe and Old Gbagi market. In the sales of black soap, the nuances of power to control trading spaces influenced the dimensions of trade. As women producers in Olode village were less acquainted with the growing spheres of trade in the city in the colonial era, Ijebu women took advantage of this and repackaged black soaps to sell around the central business districts in Ibadan. The market ring in Olode village became prominent as black soap was a needed commodity that connected to the city.

## **Beere-Oje Black Soap Trading Hub in Ibadan**

As Ibadan warrior created new settlements from 1829, the areas around Oja Iba, Oje, Beere evolved as city model from inception. In definition of African city, the areas aforementioned evolved simultaneously as a new settlement and a city. In the early twentieth century the city neighbourhoods were commercial centres that aided the trading networks between the city and the village. It should be recalled that the neighbourhoods were prominent for trade because it increased the revenues accrued to the warriors and chiefs. The quantum of commerce in these areas is a framework to discern the entrepreneurial process in the production and marketing of black soap. The demand for black soap was connected to the nodes of commerce in the marketing of Aso-Oke (*Yoruba woven cloth*) as Oje market was a space of convergence for cloth merchants from Ilorin, Osogbo, Iseyin, Oyo, Ijebu among others. The convergence created markets for other commodities, hence black soap was a necessity desired for everyday consumption. In the words of Hodder and Ukwu (1967) Oje market as at the 1930s was described thus:

*Up to the middle 1930s, Oje was rather like Ibuko in being dominantly a collecting and distributing centre for food crops and the products of craft industries from the surrounding farm districts. From the late 1930s, however people from Iseyin, Osogbo, and Oyo came to settle nearby and introduced into Oje market the products of traditional weaving industry. In the 1940s a wide tarred road leading in from north-east of the town was constructed and passed within a few yards of Oje market and this road improved the contact by motor lorry between Oje and the wearing centres of northern and north-eastern Yorubaland.*

(Hodder and Ukwu, 1967:175).

The description of the trade that evolved in the 1930s and 1940s in the market segment of the city pulled and pushed the demand for other commodities. Initially the black soap producers work within the market days typical for sales in Yoruba societies. The market days varied from three to seventeen days. Commodity availability and specialization of traders determined the particular days to sell. Early women from Olode village of the 1950s sold black soap on wholesale on ninth day markets at Oje. (Oral

interview with Madam Alice at Olode village. November 30, 2020) The women put forth that the presence itinerant traders from other Yoruba towns informed the decisions to focus on Oje Market. Before the 1930s, the traffic of trade was initially high at the markets of other Yoruba towns. For example, the women producers of black soap from Olode village traded in the markets of Fiditi and Oyo. (Oral interview with Madam Alice at Olode village. November 30, 2020) The expanding nature of colonial commerce and its effect on Ibadan city areas increased the influx of new settlers, and merchants. While it was also a period of inter-war years, rural-urban migration to the cities of Lagos and Ibadan was rampant. Black soap trade at village to village markets as at the 1930s, reflected the models of marketing peculiar from the pre-colonial era. Therefore, the population explosion in the city increased the demand and supply dynamics.

### **Life History Narratives of Black Soap Producers in Olode Village**

Scholars of women and gender studies in southwest Nigeria (McIntosh 2010), (Sudarkasa 1974) identified the kind of relationship that sustained the modes of production and trade among Yoruba women. Kinship-based networks aided the production of black soap, where girls adopted and younger women married into new families. From the new familial terrains, apprenticeship and socialization mattered among women in the family. This is affirmed in Alanamu's (2012) description of female socialization in nineteenth century Yoruba land where girls learnt and schooled from their mother. This is tied to the non-formal learning system highlighted by Fafunwa (1973) where the work of girls was attached to learning from older women in lineages. Even in the twentieth century, the indigenous form of capitalism related to kinship and familial networks mattered in the production and trade in black soap.

**Mrs. Oludunke Akintunde** She attended primary and modern school and worked as a teacher from 1979-1983, during Bola Ige's regime as an auxiliary teacher. (Oral interview with Mrs. Oludunke Akintunde 55+ December 14, 2020) She got married on December 19, 1982 and moved with her husband to Kaduna (northern Nigeria). But I moved to Ibadan in 1995 around Agbadagbudu. We left Agbadagbudu because of accommodation crisis. I traded, my family said I should work at Ibadan North Local Government, I could not because of my children because of the distance. I had twins around that time, I learnt Aso-Oke weaving, but there

was no demand and so the trade was not lucrative. I moved to Aleshinloye to sell plastic household needs, while we lived in my husband's family house in the city. My mother-in-law died around 1998, we had to relocate to Olode village and due to demands for black soap produced by my mother-in-law, my husband that taught me how to produce and I started production in 1998. To make sales we move in groups the city markets in Ibadan, where we hang around the filling station at Beere trading area, and once in a while we sell at Oyo town markets. Depending on production capacity, I can have supplies to sell at the markets thrice a week. We used to go to Oyo Villages to buy production materials such as cocoa ashes and dye. I buy on credit at times and pay after making sales from soap produced. With other producers in the village, we contribute to buy production materials in bulk. The suppliers come from Ondo state to deliver cocoa ashes. We store the ashes in drums and use gradually. To improve sales, we shifted from Beere trading area to Oje market. The shift was driven by competition as women from other Yoruba towns such as Ikire, Iwo, Ife Odan compete with us and this affected sales. We are permanent at Oje market where we do direct sales. There is a generational shift in the nature of sellers at Beere trading area as most of them are deceased. And by the growing nature of Ibadan city, sales are not static to a location, it depends on the ability to network around the city. In fact, we target village market days in contemporary times. About ten years ago, a woman comes from Lagos to buy bulk. Being an educated woman, I know vary price to customers depending on the situation to cover for production and transport cost. I work within my resources and my husband does not allow me take microfinance loans because of the risks of repayment. As a form of self-help, we have black soap producers' commodity group, we use weekly collections to facilitate friendliness and welfare among members.

**Oluwabanke Fadeji:** I started this work when I got married into Olode village. (Oral interview with Madam Oluwabanke Fadeji, 70+ December 18, 2020) Once we bore children they started telling us to start learning. I started after bearing children around fifty years ago. I started learning from my mother-in-law. We burn cocoa, we buy and roast palm nut, grind and fry. After that I started learning production from each other. The production skills are tough. We used to follow mother-in-law to learn trading skills on market days. We trade at Oje and Beere trading spaces. Ijebu women sought supplies in Olode village about fifty years ago, they buy from us to resell in Lagos. Most of the women are dead. Some use to buy on credit to sell. Through intra-gender conversations among women of the same lineage, we

started explaining production and trade skills to younger wives, some women do not produce but they sell. When old women in the production circle die, we prepare ekuru (bean pudding) and pepper sauce to celebrate life. Based on Yoruba culture, we chant poems eulogizing the traditional goddess of Iyamapo. The Iyamapo is believed to be a spiritual force for women's empowerment and we chant the praise poems as part of work ethics to give us relief and hope for prosperity in blacksoap production and trade.

**Moji Abioye:** I use to be *Omoiyawo* (girl child placed under guardianship of female family members). (Oral interview with Madam Moji Abioye 75+ on December 18, 2020) There was less civilization, and there was authority in Yoruba culture, but now, girls are well civilized. Wherever they tell you to go, you go there. The family system was closely knit; they gave me out to marriage. In our marital lineage, we were mentored by our elderly wives in production and sale of black soap. The elderly wives do the work and I offer labour under their authority and guidance older women in the family. I do as instruct. I work on the Okiti (mound) we process the dye through the mound. I work on the process, we fetch for sticks and work for the whole production process. The processing is labourious. We move to Beere to sell. We have our prices. Prices depend on production costs people come from places, especially Ijebu women from Lagos bring vans to Olode to buy in bulk. We had commodity groups, but they were not sustainable.

**Alice Oyedeji:** I started learning as a new bride, I learnt from my mother-in-law. (Oral interview Madam Alice Oyedeji 80+ December 20, 2020) I followed her to sell at the village markets such as in Fiditi. I have been into production and sale of black soap for sixty years. As sales dwindled in Fiditi, I focused on selling in Ibadan city markets. I sell at Beere and Oje trading areas about forty years ago. Like other women, I sell to herbal medicine practitioners. Men are rarely involved in the production and sales. Women's resilience in this work, is aided by marriage, as younger wives do what other older wives do.

**OluremiAkande:** I married into this village from Ojerinde village. I started learning before I clocked 20 years. (Oral interview with Oluremi Akande 75+ December, 14, 2020). I offer support in production process. The old women teach the younger ones, they were not self-centred. The old women mentored well and let out the trade secrets. Proceeds from the sales of black soap are used to take care of our children, if our husbands do not have anything to give and my husband offers labour support in the

production process. From the church, people give out title, when you give. Men give support with understanding, for instance not being able to prepare meals, while I was a younger wife, because it is time consuming. About thirty years ago, from my marital family, we can have a huge volume of black soap as much as five pots to sell on a market day. We used to hawk around to Iware, Onidundu on market days. On ninth day markets, women from Ijebu come to Olode village to buy and repackage.

### **Features of Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the Life Histories**

From the above, life history narratives of women producers and traders of black soap affirms the nature of entrepreneurship and innovation propounded by Schumpeter and in the African case, it explicates the notions Ochonu explained. The African realities as seen in the life histories of the women shows how gendered understandings and the Yoruba culture are major determinants of women's work and survival. While it is very fundamental to note that the materials for production of black soap are conditioned by environmental resources, this, to the women producers was an economy of scale and the ability to add the materials for soaps was an innovation. The prominence of cocoa and palm tree in the forest zones of West Africa was a factor in the relations of production. The social construct of gender among the Yoruba also manifest as girls were fostered among the extended lineage family structure, hence the nature of socialization was primarily aimed at traditional domestic education for girls. Invariably, domestic socialization for girls transformed to craft learning and earning power as they grew into older women in their marital family. This kind of socialization an empowerment was aptly expresses in Sudarkasa's (1974) analysis of Yoruba women in the market place and the home. In the process of production of blacksoap, the home is an appendage for the market.

The narratives portray the notions and dynamics of patriarchy and power in Yoruba culture, while this could be argued to be a source of constraints to women's entrepreneurship, rather, time, space, age mattered in the changing status of women, hence, wifely status was a medium of empowerment. A very key factor in qualifying women for ability to produce and trade black soap is motherhood. Within the family structure ability to conceive children stimulated lovely family bonds with elderly women. Hence, being compatible with other women within the family was an economic advantage that advanced entrepreneurial practices. According to

Sheldon (2017;15-17), this culture was profound from the pre-colonial era and it is a manifestation of asuwada sociation theory that internalizes how social values of common good manifests among the Yoruba in Africa. In Olode village the entrepreneurship in blacksoap largely is a function of the bond among women in the village and their interface with other women outside the village and in the city. As the Asuwada theory implies, it becomes strongly embedded in the culture of production and trade as it mattered in the survival of each woman in the Olode market ring. Invariably, the culture of communalism is fundamental to business survival among Yoruba women as Atanda (1980;62) noted that togetherness through the extended family system was typical even after the colonial era.

## **Conclusion**

Black soap is a globalized indigenous commodity that featured in a long duree as an African heritage. Women as major players in the trade networks defined the entrepreneurial dimensions. As discussed earlier in the conceptual framework, entrepreneurship in the process of black soap production is situational and it is dependent of city-village spatial networks, kinship-based networks. The traditional business systems have also defined the market of cosmetics trade as modern business methods are used to repackage black soaps for global consumption. The emphasis on women showed how occupational mainstreaming is reinforced by sex-role differentiation. McIntosh (2009) explained how Yoruba women's work was distinct in the colonial era. While there was different work across societies, the environmental resources influenced the concentration of women on black soap production of course, the desire to have soaps for bodily care for young and adults led to the innovation of black soaps. As evident in Horn's analysis, women's entrepreneurship in black soap production is applicable in Africa. In this work, it is discovered that: black soap production showed how women take risks to produce black soap in spite of technical and resource uncertainties, learn entrepreneurial skills form each other, create market niches as situation demands and they depend on informal capital systems such as from family, money lenders and business partners. The lack of adaptation to modern technologies evidently remains the same as Callaway (1967) made a case from his findings on traditional crafts in Ibadan of the 1960s. He posits concerns for the lack of modernization of

crafts, which are due to sentiments and respect for tradition, yet they constitute economic progress.

In spite of neoliberal reforms that emanated from the 1980s, the village social and economic structure still suffices in certain endeavours. In the case of black soap, culture of entrepreneurship in the indigenous forms co-exist with the ideas of neoliberalism which strove to eradicate poverty, by importing the western values of entrepreneurship. With the Asuwada sociation theory, it is apt to understand that in spite of modern technologies, the social forms of fellowship and cooperation is an innovation that recurs even in the context of globalization and modernization.

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