

## Review

# The relevance of migration to settlement pattern in Igbominaland

E. O. Ibiloye

Department of History and International Studies, Osun State University, Oshogbo, Nigeria.  
E-mail: [ojodumi39@gmail.com](mailto:ojodumi39@gmail.com).

Accepted 01 March, 2011

**Migration is an integral part of the history of mankind. Prior to the evolution of nation-state system, trans-continental migrations were the order of the day in all parts of the globe. Migration has also been part of Yoruba history taking from the classic version of the legend of Lamurudu/Oduduwa that associates the origin of Yoruba to migration from Mecca. It was as a result of migration of Oduduwa from Mecca to Ile-Ife that the seed of Yoruba kingdom was sown. The Igbomina, a dialectic sub-group of the Yoruba, which is the focus of this paper, also generally see their history in terms of migration. The two conflicting traditions of origin associating the founding of Igbomina kingdoms to two separate migrations are reconciled to show the relevance of these to modern political evolution in Igbomina land. The paper concludes that the myth and legend associating the founding of Igbomina kingdoms to migration under Orangun of Ila's leadership cannot be credible, but that individual group migration spanning over several centuries was responsible for the present pattern of settlement.**

**Key words:** Migration, settlement, tradition, origin, culture.

## INTRODUCTION

An important part of the Igbomina history is that the people associated their origin with early trans-continental (trans-regional) migrations. The most popular of the two conflict traditions of origin, is that of the group and individual migrations, which would be considered in this paper was that which traces Igbomina origin to Ila-Orangun (Dada, 1985: 1-10). Although it is difficult to precisely date the waves of these migrations, there is no doubt that some of the towns/kingdoms are of considerable antiquity (Dada, 1985: 1-10). For instance, Elphinstone seems to suggest that the whole of Oke-Ode and Oro-Ago Districts were desolate up to late 17th and early 18th centuries when the Igbomina from Old Oyo settled there (Elphinstone, 1921: 43). However there are traditions of migration that pre-dated 17<sup>th</sup> century, just as there were migrations into Igbomina in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and even in the last century. Some of the people who were displaced by the destruction of Old Oyo Empire, settled in Igbomina land, founding towns like Iji, Ijara Pamo etc. Reference has also been made to Ilorin and Nupe farmers who established hamlets as late as the first two decades of the last century in Oke-Ode and Igbaja Districts (Elphinstone, 1921: 5; Oyeyipo, 1978).

Factitious as these traditions might look, it is clear that

immigrations of various types influenced the demographic shape of the present day Igbomina settlement pattern. For reasons of origin, war, pursuit of fame, socio-political or religious disagreements, people have had to move from one location to another.

The tradition of succession to the ruler-ship of a typical Yoruba polity played a leading role in the Diaspora of this group of Yoruba migrants that metamorphosed into Igbomina. Judging from the fact that in spite of the level of sophistication of Yoruba political system, which allowed for checks and balances, succession disputes often lead to civil strife by which looser often migrate to find a new and independent polity. The situation was such that the Igbomina people today appear to be a product of such crises and complex intermingling of peoples through migration due to enslavement, military conquest, political pressure, trade and search for new settlement (Dada, 1985: 2).

However, migration associated with economic activities did not commence in Igbomina until the second part of the 19th century. This has to do with the long drawn civil war that plagued the entire Yoruba country and restricted long distance trading to a few individuals who enjoyed immunity from abduction through the protective umbrella

of the Lagos Colony Government (Johnson, 1928). A careful survey of the current demographic situation in Igbomina today shows that a great proportion of its economically active population is settled outside the home land, predominantly in the south-western parts of Nigeria, primarily in search of economic fortune. This is not the focus of this paper as the area under consideration is the migration associated with origin of the Igbomina.

The two conflicting traditions of migrations associated with origin are considered here and in the light of available evidence attempt is made to reconcile them to bring out an objective historical facts. The conflicting traditions are those of migration associated with Orangun of Ila's leadership and that which says that migration of individual group from their various primordial homes accounts for the present state of settlement in Igbominaland. The focus of the paper is to consider how migration influenced the pattern of settlement in Igbominaland. A thematic approach is adopted in our analysis of data sourced from oral and archival materials, as very little recent research had been done on the subject.

A little explanation on the concept of migration in relation to the subject under consideration becomes relevant here as ancillary explanation to the main preoccupation of this paper.

### **What is migration?**

Human migration, in broad sense refers to a relatively permanent movement of individual or a group over a significant distance (Clark, 1972: 264). This involves a change of residence from one community to another and usually the crossing of specified kind of internal administrative boundary. Here, internal migration is distinguished from international migration, and intra-community movement. This definition or any paraphrase of it, merely begins to delimit the subject.

Consequently, the exact meaning of the most important terms (permanent and significant) has to be specified. A person who goes to another country and remains there for the rest of his life, we say, is a migrant and one who pays a two hour visit to the nearest town is not. Between these two extremes lies a bewildering array of intermediate instances, which can only partly be distinguished by more or less arbitrary criteria.

What then should be the minimum duration of stays that differentiates a migration from a visit? For the purpose of this paper, we shall adopt the United Nation's recommendation on international migration which defines removal for one year or more as permanent and thus as migration; while a stay for shorter period is classified as a visit. (Clark, 1972: 264) No particular specification of the duration of stay suits all purposes and each analyst has to adopt the available data to his needs as best as he

can.

In the case of "significant" distance, a person who moves from one house to another in the same neighborhood, and who therefore retains the same social frame work is not deemed as migrant. Geographical distance is taken here as a rough measure of whether the migrant crosses into another sub-cultural areas outside his own origin. That is crossing a politically defined boundary such as district; province or state is regarded as a significant distance and therefore regarded as migration.

Since 1885 when Ravestein first formulated his "migration law", (Clark, 1972: 264) a substantial literature has appeared which is concerned with the spatial mobility of population. Migration is much more restricted and related to a permanent change of residence. A migrant is defined as a person who moves from one administrative unit to another with the intention of establishing a new residence in a different country or region. Migration takes place from an area of origin (departure) to one of destination (arrival) and a group of migrants with a common origin and destination is called a migration stream. A good example of the above theoretical framework is the subject under consideration; the Igbomina. The movement of this sub-group of Yoruba called the Igbomina from the various acclaimed sources of origin to their present abode is treated as migration.

For instance Eisenstadt (1953) defined migration as the physical transition of an individual or group from one society to another. The transition always involves abandoning one social setting and entering another different one (Oyeyipo, 1978: 9). In his case, Weinberg (1961) called human migration the changing of the place of abode permanently or when temporarily for an appreciable duration, example, in the case of seasonal workers (Ojo, 1966). In Mangalam (1968) definition, migration is described as a relatively permanent moving away of a collectivity, called migrants, from one geographical location to another. Change of community affords a very rough gauge of the meaning to be assigned to such indeterminate words as "permanent" or "significant" in the common definition of migration. The situation was such that the Igbomina settlement today appears to be a product of a complex intermingling of peoples through migration due to enslavement, military conquest, political pressure, trade and search for new settlement (May, 1860: 212).

History is rich with varying patterns of migrations both internal and international. They have been broadly classified according to the force activating the movement (Encyclopedia Americana, 1980: 98). Migration can be primitive when the inducement to migrate is an ecological push, such as the exhaustion of natural resources or famine or when a group abandons its homeland voluntarily under the pressure of enemies or as a result of local dispute on land or chieftaincy title as in the case of most Igbomina communities. This is the oldest type of human

migration and represents the process by which all the land areas of the world became populated, except the Antarctica. A familiar example is the repeated invasion of the Roman Empire by "Barbarian" peoples in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D (Clement, 1965: 242). A modern example of primitive migration is the exodus of more than a million people from Ireland between 1846 and 1855, due to famine caused by failure of the potato crop (Encyclopedia Americana, 1980: 98). The mass migration of people of Niger origin north of Nigeria to Nigeria and other West African countries due to the prolonged drought of the early 1970s, the desertion of the Igbo country immediately after the civil war for economic reason and the mass movements of various Igbomina people to their present homeland in response to local disputes on land and chieftaincy tittles starting from the 14 to 17<sup>th</sup> century, are vivid local examples of primitive migration. Igbomina migration is associated with the origin of the present settlement pattern.

### **The environment of Igbomina**

The Igbomina are recognised by themselves and by others as a distinct dialectic sub-group of the Yoruba inhabiting the northern part of Yoruba country today, they are found in the two states of Kwara and Osun (Falola, 1988). In 1918, the boundary declaration between the Northern and Southern Nigeria partitioned the Igbomina into these two regions, with Ila Orangun and its Southern neighbours located in the South and the other in the North (Falola, 1988). Even in the Northern part of the present settlement, the Igbomina were again sub-divided between two administrative divisions of Ilorin and Lafajaji/Patigi, until May 1946 when they were all merged under Ilorin. Following the Local Government reforms of 1968 and 1976 and the intense pressure for change (Adeyemi, 1984) the Igbomina were granted local autonomy and the majority now live in Ifelodun, Irepodun and most recently, Isin Local Government Areas of Kwara State and Ila-Orangun area of Osun State (Dada, 1985: 2).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Igbomina were equally divided into two prior to the establishment of colonial administration. Ila-Orangun was situated at the edge of the forest and the other Igbomina group occupied the savannah stretch below the band of the River Niger from latitude 4 and 8°East and longitude 8 and 9°North (May, 1860: 212). There were close to a dozen Igbomina sub-units (each unit having a major town and a cluster of small villages). These were the Share, Isin, Ila, Oke-Ode, Ile-Ire, Esisa, Irese, Ipo, Iyangba and Oro (Herman-Hedge, 1966: 1700).

To the north of Igbomina are the Nupe groups of Lafajaji; to the west are Ilorin, to the north-east are Yagba, the south-east is occupied by the Ekiti, while the Ibolo of Ijagbo in Oyun L.G.A of Kwara State are found in the south west (Adeyemi, 1985: 5). Igbomina covers an area of about 1500 km<sup>2</sup> in Kwara State and belongs to the

grass plain zone of Southern Nigeria (Udo, 1970: 100). This area forms part of the Southern border of what has come to be known as the middle belt of Nigeria (Udo, 1970: 100).

### **Migration and settlement pattern of the Igbomina**

Several attempts have been made by a number of writers to explain who the Igbomina people are and their historical antecedence since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Adeyemi, 1985: 7-8). For the purpose of this paper the Igbomina would be described as a heterogeneous sub-group of the Yoruba who migrated to the present place of settlement from various locations and at different times between the 14 and 17<sup>th</sup> century (Dada, 1985: 10). Although they have traditions of origin that attempt to explain the origin of their common languages (dialect), culture and political institution, from their descent through a single ancestry, Oduduwa, Igbomina never united under a single political authority contrary to Atanda's claim (Atanda, 1973: 132).

Some 19 and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries authors portrayed the Igbomina in different ways based on their levels of understanding of the cultural inter-link among the Yoruba's. Clarke, 1972 for instance did not recognize them as Yoruba, although he acknowledged that they spoke Yoruba Language (Adeyemi, 1995: 39).

However, Talbot (1969) saw the Igbomina as true Yoruba under the sovereignty of the Alafin, but under the direct leadership of the Orangun of Ila (Adeyemi, 1995: 39).

It is confirmed from historical, cultural and geographical location that the Igbomina people are Yoruba both in language and culture. Majority claimed to have migrated to the area of present habitation from either Ife or Oyo, the two main nuclei of Yoruba. The progenitor of the Igbomina was a prince of Oduduwa (Johnson, 1921). If the dialectic variation casts any doubt at all on the genuineness of their Yoruba connection, this could easily be explained on the fact that other Yoruba dialectic sub-groups such as the Egba, Ekiti, Ondo etc would not any way fare better.

All cultural traits of the Igbomina people portray them as Yoruba. Although under colonial rule they were partitioned to the North and South, they still remained either in the Yoruba provinces of the South or in the Southern part of the Northern provinces—contiguous to the Yoruba provinces.

Today, they occupy Irepodun, Ifelodun and Isin Local Government Areas of Kwara State. There are few Igbomina towns in what is now Osun State. These include Ila-Orangun Oke-Ila and Ora Igbomina. Jebba-South is also Igbomina, although the population is now mixed. Towns like Iponrin, Lanwa, Ayetoro-Ile and Agbeyangi that are now in Ilorin East Local Government Area of Kwara State are all Igbomina although Ilorin influence has compromised their identity (Adeyemi, 1995:40).

## Traditions of origin

There is yet to be a universally acceptable history of origin of the Igbomina. However one significant fact about the origin in the context of this paper is that Igbomina generally see their origin in terms of migration. The most popular version of the traditions associated the founders of towns and kingdoms with migrant princess or hunters from either Ife or Oyo (Dada, 1985: 1). Although it is difficult to date precisely the waves of these migrations, there is no doubt that some of the towns are of considerable antiquity as earlier asserted here.

Closely related to this is the tradition which says that the area now called Igbomina was given to and founded by Orangun of Ila as his own share of inheritance from his grandfather, Oduduwa, the purported progenitor of the Yoruba race (Ibiloye, 1994: 33). According to this tradition, Orangun was the second son (and the fourth child) of Okanbi, the only son of Oduduwa. He founded Igbomina through he use of Ogbo. It was this Ogbo that was supposed to know the way to the bank of River Niger, the ultimate destination of this itinerant way-farer; hence the name Ogbomona (that is, Ogbo knows the way) literally translated to Igbomina with the passage of time (Ibiloye, 1994: 33). There exists also tradition in Omu-Aran, particularly after the shifting of Ila-Orangun from the rest of Igbomina to the old Western Region, dating probably to recent past, which claims the possession of similar Ogbo as that in Orangun's custody (Ibiloye, 1994: 34). It has however, been noted that the duplication of Ogbo is closely associated with leadership rivalry in Igbomina. Since the possessor of genuine Ogbo would have stronger claim to the leadership of Igbomina.

Notwithstanding which Ogbo is genuine, the inadequacy of the whole tradition in explaining the origin of the people is glaring. First is that not all people presently inhabiting the present day Igbomina could lay claim to decent from Orangun, the assumed original owner of the land, nor could Igbomina people be considered homogeneous group. Migrations of different waves from different directions and at different times and places, gave rise to the present settlements.

For instance, while the Oro group claimed to have come from Ketu, Isanlu-Isin, Ila Orangun and Omu-Aran groups claimed Ife decent (Adeyemi, 1985: 27). Others such as Ijara, Igbaja and Share etc, trace their own immigration to Oyo.

Owu, the headquarters of Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, traced its own migration to Owu in Abeokuta, while Iwo, its immediate neighbour, claimed Iwo in Osun State as its primordial home. So also there are communities tracing their ancestry to Nupe decent. Of this group, Rore and Opanda are typical examples (Dada, 1985: 1; Elphinstone, 1921: 16). The pattern of migration is as wide and varied as almost the number of recognizable sub-groups in Igbomina.

The Ogbo tradition could be explained in terms of myth, the likes of which exist in all culture. Practically every

African country has its own myths or stories of its origin of creation. A myth is a means of explaining some actual or imaginary reality, which is not adequately understood and so cannot be explained through normal description. Myths do not have to be taken literally, since they are not synonymous with facts. They are intended to communicate and form the basis for a working explanation about something. In societies such as the early Igbomina dating back to its time of origin, where no written records of ideas and events existed, myths are often the most effective means of keeping ideas circulating from one place to another and from one generation to the next (Mbiti, 1975: 75).

It is, however, evident from the above that migrations of various types, namely, innovative, primitive, forced and free, have always been part of Igbomina history. Migration was therefore, not a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. The need to migrate developed out of necessity to seek greater convenience and factors responsible for this could be cultural, political, religious, environmental and economic. The factors responsible for migration in each wave of human movement depend on the circumstances of the potential migrants. While migrations associated with origin of the Igbomina were traceable to disputes over land or chieftaincy titles, later migrations were motivated more by economic imperative rather than cultural necessity.

## Cultural diversity associated with group migration and settlement

P.O.A. Dada has attempted a classification of Igbomina into sub-cultural groups based on old settlement pattern and migrations associated with origin (Dada, 1985: 1) Dada identified the following as autonomous sub-group with close affinity even within the Igbomina nation. These include the Igbomina Esa comprising Oke-Ode and a number of villages under it. Igbomina Ire, comprising the whole of Ile-Ire District, Igbomina Esisa (Old name for Oro-Ago), Igbomina Iyangba, included Omu-Aran and some parts of Isin, Irese included Igbya and its neighbours. Others include the Ipo, comprising Ajasse and its neighbours and the Eku-mesan Oro, the nine groups of villages called Oro (Dada, 1985: 9).

The separate traditions of origin associated with these identified sub-groupings is a clear demonstration of the level of cultural diversity among the Igbomina associated with separate migrations outside Orangun leadership as earlier stated. We would examine a number of these identified sub-groups and their traditions of separate migrations and settlement.

### Igbomina Oro (Oro-Ago)

The people of Oro-Ago claim that their ancestor migrated from Ketu in the present Benin Republic, under the

leadership of Ajagun. Seven hilly settlement emerged under Ajagun leadership, namely, Omugo, Oke-Daba, Iraye, Isaoye, Aworo-ona, Oke-Ayin and Ayetoro. Eight other migrants joined this earlier migrants to make up fifteen that was known as Eku meedogun Oro (Adeyemi, 1995: 46).

### Igbomina Esa (Oke-ode)

Maku, the founder of Oke-Ode, was said to have migrated from Ile Ife and settled on top of a hill in the present location of the town. The defensive position of the location attracted a number of surrounding settlements that flooded it for protection (Adeyemi, 1995: 46).

### Aran

The founders of Aran was named as Alaran Odundun and Enuyomi who were said to have led their people from Ile-Ife to Igbomina land to found three major towns named Aran-Orin, Arandun and Aran quarters in Omu-Aran (Adeyemi, 1995: 47). The first place of settlement was at Igbo Odun Alaro. From there the settlement moved to Ile Aran on the way to Ekan in Ekiti Local Government Area of Kwara State. An outbreak of war precipitated another movement to join Ajo Iyangba along with other Igbominas like Isanlu, Omu and Northern Ekiti towns. The Ajo was located at a point half-way between Ilofa and Oko, the disbandment of which in the 1890s brought some Aran people to settle at Aran-Orin. Others chose to stay at Omu-Aran (Adeyemi, 1995: 48).

### Eku-Apa

The Alapa claimed to have migrated from Ile-Ife with his brothers the Onipee of Ipe and Eleju of Ejuland. Alapa initially settled at a place called bara-Apa near Iludun, however, at the death of the first Alapa, his two sons moved into different locations at Agbonda and Omido. Other groups joined these brothers to form what is now Eku-Apa (Adeyemi, 1995: 48).

### Ejuland

Igbonla and Sanmora are the two principal towns of Ejuland. The founder *Apaarin*, was said to have migrated from Oyo and settled in what was known as Abologun. As a hunter he constantly changed base to Igbo-Eju, and Igbo-Obaje before he finally settled at the present site (Adeyem, 1995: 47).

### Isin

Isin land and people are not homogenous as far as their

origin was concerned. Some came from Oyo, others traced their antecedence to Ile-Ife. Owu claimed to have migrated from Owu, part of which is found in Abeokuta and Iwo traced its own origin to Iwo in the present day Osun State. The Olusin of Isanlu-Isin is recognised as the leader of the group and one major cultural bond of unity in Isin land was the cult of Agbaa-Isin which used to be taken round Isin land annually (Adeyemi, 1995: 47).

### Oro

The Eku-mesan Oro, as the name indicates, is a group of nine villages founded through migration from Oyo by one Olakanmi. He first settled at a place called kanko between Agbeola-Oro and Ajassee. Other settlements later joined until the nine towns that makes up Oro emerged (Adeyemi, 1995).

### CONCLUSION

The list of Igbomina communities/settlements considered above is symbolic of the diversity of the sources of origin of the people. It could be clearly observed that migration was one dominant factor responsible for the emergence of Igbomina as an autonomous sub-group in Yoruba cultural history. However, this migration originated from various sources and took place at widely divergent period that does not adequately corroborate Orangun legend. While Orangun legend/myth may represent recognition of leadership determined through early arrival on Igbomina soil, there is nothing to suggest that he led any migrant group from Ife to take possession of Igbominaland and shared to later arrivals. Yoruba culture accepts that the first to arrive automatically assumes leadership of any group (*Araba in baba eniti aba laba ni baba*). The location of Ila-Orangun at the extreme edge of Igbominaland (not central), precludes the possibility that the Orangun was aware of the arrival and settlement of this other groups at various towns and locations.

Therefore while migration was responsible for the ultimate settlement of Igbomina in their present place of abode, it could not have been one single movement led by an individual.

### REFERENCES

- Adeyemi EA (1984). "Protest and Agitation in Igbomina 1932-1952". M.A. Dissertation, University of Ilorin, pp: 4-7.
- Adeyemi EA (1995). "Boundary issues in Igbominaland 1903 – 1989: A Historical Analysis". Ph. D. Thesis University of Ilorin, pp: 1-40
- Atanda JA (1973). *The New Oyo Empire; Indirect Rule and change in Western Nigeria*. London, Longman Press.
- Clark WA (1972). *Travels and Explorations in Yoruba land 1854 – 1958*. Ibadan University Press, p: 264.
- Clement HA (1965). *The story of the Ancient World from the Earliest time to the fall of Rome*. London George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd: 242.
- Dada POA (1985). *A brief History of Igbomina (Igbona)*. Ilorin, Matanmi Press, pp: 1-10.

- Eisenstadt SN (1953). "Analysis of Patterns of Migration and Absorption of Migrants". *Population Studies*, 7: 167-180.
- Encyclopedia Americana (1980). Cerolier International Edition (Danbury).pp: 9
- Falola T (1988). "Igbomina Chronicles' (Unpublished Essay), pp: 1-40.
- Herman-Hodge HB (1966). *Gazeger of Northern Nigeria*. London, Frank Cass, pp: 170-172
- Ibiloye EO (1994). "Ilorin Imperialism in Igbominaland 1830-1949". M.A. Thesis University of Ilorin, pp: 34-38.
- Johnson S (1921). *The history of the Yoruba*. Lagos (MS), pp: 126.
- Mangalam JJ (1968). *Human Migration: A Guide to Migration Literature in English 1955-1962*. Lexington Press.
- May JD (1860). "Journey in the Yoruba and Nupe Countries 1885". *J. Of the Royal Geog. Society*. 30: 212-223.
- Ojo GJA (1966). *Yoruba Culture; A geographical Analysis*. London Heinemann
- Oyeyipo INR (1978). "Migration in Igbominaland 1900-1977". M.A Thesis University of Birmingham, pp: 2-9.
- Talbot PA (1969). *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria Vol. 1*. London: Frank Cass.
- Udo RK (1970). *Geographical Regions of Nigeria*. London, Oxford University Press, pp: 100-109.
- Weinberge AA (1961). *Migration Belonging: A Study of Mental Health and Personal Adjustment in Israel*, The Hague.