

Theories and Concepts in Migration and Settlement Studies: The Case of the Coastal Yoruba

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Abstract: The study of the Coastal Yorubaland as a regional group is of recent phenomenon. The traditional history of the various subgroups such as the Awori, Ilaje and Ijebu waterside is replete in theories and concepts of migration. The study of these theories and concepts in the settlement studies of the groups will enhance the knowledge of the Yoruba of the coastal environment. This presentation focuses on the analysis of the theories and concepts of migration of the Yoruba of the Coastal Nigeria which has not been given adequate attention. The study relies on diligent collection and interpretation of oral, ethnographic, archival and secondary source materials. The study observed that the pull and push factor in the settlement of the various coastal Yoruba found expression in economic, political, social, religious and geographical factors. The pattern of migration was from less favourable environment to more favourable one leading to fission and fusion of groups. The religious factor, especially that of the Ifa oracle played a dominant role in the settlement of many groups while the Ife connection remains a binding force.

Key words: Migration, Yoruba, settlement, Coastal Yorubaland, traditional history, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The coastal area of the Yoruba lies between latitudes 6° and 6°30'N and longitude 2°3' and 6°E. It covers a wide area between Badagry local government area of Lagos state to the extreme West; Lekki lagoon and the Niger delta to the extreme East, Lagos island and its coastal settlements to the South and the clusters of Awori, Egba and Ijebu settlements to the North (Fage and Verity, 1978; Mabogunje, 2003). The coast line extends for >800 km from Badagry in the west to the Ilaje territories of Aiyetoro, Ugbo, Mahin and Igbokoda in the East. Available evidence indicates that this region was gradually occupied by various subgroup of the Yoruba before the British colonial conquest of Yorubaland (Ajetunmobi, 1989). The communities that evolved in this region >500 years ago continued to increase in number and population strength as a result of series of migrations from the Yoruba hinterland and West Africa sub-region.

The promising geographical location for unrestricted games, the security provided by the creeks, swamps, lagoons, islands, prosperity in trade, the effects of the Yoruba internecine wars, Dahomey raids and the Egba wars of the 19th century as well as the tendency for families to break up, partly accounted for migrations and evolution of the early settlements. Added to these were the effects of Atlantic slave trade and the expansionist

policy of Edo warriors in the 16 and 17th centuries AD. The various Yoruba sub-groups and communities had long been organized into villages, chiefdoms and kingdoms which were not completely isolated from one another or imperceptible.

The Ilaje, the Awori and the Ijebu waterside usually explain their socio-political and eco-cultural, connections in terms of affinity amongst individuals, communities and kingdoms. In geographical terms, the traditional Coastal Yoruba are found within the coastal region of the Atlantic ocean which is the most important of all oceans. For instance, many rivers flow into it and it receives half the drainage of the world.

The region is made up of network of creeks, lagoons, islands and swamps. Some of the settlements are surrounded by freshwater while others share boundaries with the seawater of the Atlantic ocean. The presence of sea water undoubtedly encouraged salt production in places like Lekki and Badagry. Generally, the geographical factors have influenced the nature of the ecology, habitat and patterns of migration. Fishing, salt production, mat weaving, basketry, coconut oil refinery, farming and trading were the major traditional pre-occupations of the people. The network of lagoons and rivers provided easy communication among people of different communities and other groups.

The influence of the environment was great on the nature of architectural designs and complexity of the

structures in the early settlements. The early Ilaje, Awori and Ijebu buildings were modest. The modesty was dictated not much by the climate but by the raw materials available such as sand, mud from the lagoons, palm fronds, bamboo poles, ribs of raffia palms, decayed vegetables and clay. The earliest type of houses were the timber framed structures which were constructed with mats, leaves, barks of trees, bamboo poles and creeping stem. The 19th century witnessed mass importation of foreign building materials into the region, some of which were used by the traditional rulers and the European settlers.

The Awori of Coastal Yorubaland: The Awori are a dialect speaking sub-group of the Yoruba who are found in large concentrations within the region of Lagos and Ogun states. They share common cultural values in varying degrees with other Yoruba and Edo groups. The legendary Ogunfunminire was their progenitor and his origin has been traced to secondary affinity to Ile-Ife, the cradle of Yoruba civilization and culture and undoubtedly class.

The name Awori is used for the people of Yoruba, Benin origin who speak Awori dialect of the Yoruba. Supporting this view, Fabuyi (1987) described the Awori as an organized set of people who formed a sub-group of the Yoruba and possess a distinctive speech which is recognizably a separate Yoruba dialect (Fabuyi, 1987). Furthermore, Agiri and Barnes pointed out that:

There are strong indications that the people now known as Awori represent a long and uneven movement of people from Ketu, Egbado, Oyo and no doubt, other origins who were forced by warfare and slave raids and this was occurring as early as the 14 and 15th centuries prior to and perhaps extending into the same period that saw Benin March Westwards

This position was further embellished by the colonial description of the Awori that racially, they appear to be a mixture of the Yoruba and Benin and their immigration into the region of Coastal Yorubaland coincided with the Benin conquest or rather absorption of Lagos and its adjacent villages and hamlets.

The Awori are distinguished by four main factors; the language which is a variation of Yoruba dialect, traditions of ancestral migrations from Ile-Ife, traditions among their rulers of common descent from Oduduwa, the eponymous hero of the Yoruba and traditions of consanguineous relationship resulting from the ancestry of various ruling classes and cultural heritage as well as diffusion through migrations and interactions. The Awori dialect remained

a uniform force among the various groups, an Awori identifies himself with another by greeting term *Kitigbe o?* (How are you?) with a familiar response *o gbe re* (it is fine).

The Ijebu of Coastal Yorubaland: Apart from the Awori, the other major pre-dynastic inhabitants are the Ijebu. The Ijebu are a dialect speaking sub-group of the Yoruba. They have traditions linking their origin to Ile-Ife, the cradle of Yoruba civilization. Some of the early settlements include Remo and Ijebu Ode from where many settlers migrated to Coastal Yorubaland such as Makun omi, Ikorodu, Epe, Ibeju and Lekki. The Ijebu are shrewd, hardworking and long distance traders. Their economic influence along the coast earned them the title *Eletu Ijebu*-Minister of Ijebu Affairs in Lagos long before the colonial conquest. The word *Obun*, an Ijebu word for market was readily adopted for *Ebun Eko* area in the region of Lagos island to show the influence of the group.

Apart from trading, fishing has been the major occupation of those along the lagoons and coastal area. Water gods and goddess are appeased for economic prosperity and security while travelling on water.

The Ilaje: Although, the Ilaje are found along the coast of West Africa, their traditional territory lies between latitude 6°1' and 6°30'N and longitude 4°5' and 6°E. The Ilaje constitute one of the Yoruba subgroups in the South Eastern part of Yorubaland. They constitute the bulk of the people in Ilaje and Ese Odo Local Government Areas of Ondo state. They could be divided into four major groups.

The Ilaje speak a dialect of the Yoruba language. The dialect serves as a unifying factor among various Ilaje groups of diverse origin. In terms of economy, the Ilaje are very restless and enterprising. For economic gains, they could travel for >800 km on water to make a living. They are used to shifting of settlement and creating >1 home. They are lovers of social justice. The most important ritualistic instrument for the maintenance of order and social justice is *Ayelala*. The deity is considered to have an uninterrupted extensive power in the traditional administration of social justice. The Ilaje today are found in Ijora, Ilaje, Badiya, Moroko Iwaya, Abaji, Ajegunle, Itasin near Ikorodu, Majidun and Owode. They are also found in former Badagry district of the colony province in places like Ojo, Nanti Moba, Apa, Irewe, Iyagbe, Kufe, Okonso, Akoko, Ogbomola and Topo. The traditional history of the Ilaje has a striking resemblance with that of the Awori and the Ijebu. Ilaje traditional histories are laced in Ife and Oduduwa connection. The Ilaje live a simple life and are coastal travelers. Their pursuit of

economic activities, especially fishing and trading made them to settle along the coast. Traditionally, they worship water gods and goddesses. This could be understood because their economy was tied to the waters (This is summary of over of almost 2 decades of study on the migration on various groups to control Yorubaland from the 15th-21st century by this writer).

There are other groups who are non-Yoruba such as the Egun (Ogu) in formal district of the colony province and others who are products of the 19th century resettlements in the region who have no other homes than Coastal Yorubaland. The various groups had been assimilated into the culture and values of the Yoruba of the coast in varying degrees.

The history of the various groups is replete with internally and externally induced continual and often profused migrations, some of which were set in motion by political impasse, quarrels over chieftaincy titles, flight from justice, lust for political power, diseases, over population, search for labour markets, ecological push, love of change or adventure, drought, famine as well as warning of real or imagined calamity by the oracle-Ifa (This is evidenced in the traditional history of origin and state formation among the Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani and other groups in Nigeria. Adediran Biodun *The origins of Nigerian Peoples in Olaniyan R(ed) Nigerian history and culture*, Longman in 1985). These factors in varying combinations accounted for various migrations towards the Coastal Yorubaland.

Theories of migration: Motion is an enduring character in human history and the history of the early settlements and founders of Coastal Yorubaland is replete with waves of human migration. The concept of human migration connotes that permanent change of residence by an individual or group excluding such movements as nomadic, migrant labor, commuting and tourism all of which are transitory in nature. In a broad sense, human migration is a relatively permanent movement of an individual or group over a significant distance.

The history of Coastal Yorubaland of Nigeria is in part, the history of migrations from interior Yorubaland and other parts of Nigeria as well as settlers from and other areas of the world. The migrations could be divided into three periods, first is the period before Benin invasions. This period commences from the earliest times down to the era of Yoruba migration to the coast, either directly or indirectly from secondary dispersal centers such as Oyo. This phase could be dated before 1500. The second phase of migration commenced with the era of Benin invasions which led to the emergence of Benin military bases and colonies as well as the establishment of

social-political institutions with impressive Benin imprints. This was later characterized by series of secondary migrations from former Benin colonies in Porto-Novo subsequent upon the arise of Agaja trudo of Dahomey in the 18th century. The last wave of migration started as a result of slave raiders (Cole, 1975), Yoruba civil war, colonial conquest and economy in the 19 and 20th century.

Available data show that the presence of the Ilaje, the Awori, the Ijebu and the Ogu and their development of coastal settlements have explanations in the sociological theories of migration. One important event that has shaped the history of the Coastal Yorubaland from prehistory time to the present day is migration of people of different ethnic and sub-ethnic backgrounds to the region. The migration of different groups and individuals took place at different times covering about 6 centuries. The first wave of significant migrations to the region recorded in tradition were those conducted by Ilaje, Awori, Ijebu, Edo and Ogu while those of the Ijo, Egba, Yewa (Egbado), Oyo, Ekiti, Igbomina, Tapa and a host. Others constitute the second layer of migrations and settlements.

Historical antecedent: Migration of people from one area to another has been a common phenomenon throughout man's history. Right from the Biblical and Quranic migration of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden to the first recorded exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, people, races and families had continuously migrated from their homes to establish new and permanent settlements in other places. Migration has been a systematic contributor to the evolution and development of settlements, kingdoms, states as well as urban centres. This assertion is openly true of the settlements in Coastal Yorubaland of Nigeria as elsewhere.

Indeed, most pre-colonial and predynastic groups and settlements easily credit their origins and phenomenon growth to the activities of immigrants within and outside their present domain and in some cases, outside the modern boundaries in Nigeria (Oloniola, 1976). The patterns of demographic movement were usually from areas considered to be politically unstable to the relatively peaceful ones from less economically vibrant areas to viable one from administratively disadvantage areas to the advantage ones. In a number of cases, immigrants out of their personal pre-dilections could aggregate themselves in certain quarters within the settlements thus, imposing migrant cultures on such areas. In other cases, the immigrants are settled within subquarters because of the state policy of their host government. Migrations had tremendously influenced the course of historical

development of pre-dynastic people of Coastal Yorubaland and had exerted substantial influence on the demographic patterns of the Ilaje, Awori, Ijebu and other non-Yoruba in the area.

Theories of migration in early Yoruba kingdom to which the Ilaje, the Awori and the Ijebu groups share relationship is directly linked with myth and legends which are lavishly laced in religion. For instance, Ile-Ife to which hardly any migratory claim among the Ilaje and the Awori would not share a direct or indirect type of consanguineous affinity is given to many theories of migration. The Yoruba political history showed that perhaps, the most important integration and state formation migration was the one associated with Oduduwa, the eponymous hero of the Yoruba in Ile-Ife. His migration to Ile-Ife led to formation of centralized political institutions and rapid socio-cultural development. Ile-Ife soon became the dispersal centre of the children of Oduduwa and other groups who founded many other Yoruba kingdoms north and south of Ile-Ife. Recorded data and oral traditions showed that most of the Ilaje, the Awori and the Ijebu settlements in the region owe their origins to waves and layers of migrations from Ile-Ife and Oyo Ile before the 18th century AD. According to tradition, the founder of Isheri, Ogunfunminire was an immigrant from Ile-Ife. Isheri soon became a secondary dispersal centre of some other Awori settlements in Coastal Yorubaland, especially those that claimed direct descent from Ile-Ife and Oduduwa.

In Mahin (Ilaje), tradition of migration indicates that Olowoyitufewa was the son of an Ooni, he was banished from Ile-Ife and given leave to make salt at Erunfan near Erunfa. Variants of this tradition relating to Ile-Ife and Oduduwa say Oronmakin, the first ruler of Ugbo and Ogiso, the first ruler of Benin city were descendants of Oduduwa and that they left Ile-Ife together. However, there are >1 source for series of migrations that culminated in the development of a stable society in Coastal Yorubaland of Nigeria.

An account recorded by C.I. Gavin relates that the Ilaje were pre-Oduduwa inhabitants of Ilaje. This account is corroborated by the Oriki (cognomen) of the Ilaje Ugbo, Ugbo Ogbomodu omo a t' orun wa, meaning Ugbo the children of those who descended from heaven. Ife was then ruled by Ajalorun who suddenly went blind. Ifa oracle was consulted and he was advised to get some sea water for medication. After much deliberation, it was Oronmakin, one of the sons of Ajalorun that accepted to fetch the sea water. This explains the first contact of the Ilaje with the coastal area of Yoruba.

Sources of migration: There are three major sources of migration that keep reoccurring in traditions. First are the migrations from Ile-Ife the orirun of the Yoruba, here tagged Ife connection.

Second are the migrations that are connected with Benin soldiers that finally settled in Coastal Yorubaland and assimilated into Yoruba-Awori subculture with significant political control of the area. Third are pockets of secondary migrations from Yorubaland and Africa sub region.

Ife migrations: The first set of migration from Ile-Ife recorded in tradition from the period of Oduduwa was the one associated with the dispersal of Oduduwa's children. Akinjogbin (1993) recorded:

When Oduduwa was old and blind, his children were called together and ordered to go and found their own kingdoms and each was given a royal symbol. During this period, Ile-Ife was hit by a prolonged drought which lasted for many years, causing famine and diseases. Finally, Agirilogbon, a babalawo of Oke-Itase in Ile-Ife, counseled emigrated (Akinjogbin, 1993)

According to tradition, the children went Northwards and Southwards. Those who went South Eastwards finally settled at Ado, Owo and Benin. Also, some of the migrants had a change of rulers in their new homes. The date of this emigration is still a subject of academic controversy. However, it is clear that it was not later than 11th century AD. It is also difficult to know how many kingdoms resulted from this exercise. As new kingdoms grew out of the old ones, descent from Oduduwa became the test of legitimacy among the old and new kingdoms. From this period of Oduduwa, migrations out of Ile-Ife became a permanent feature of the kingdom. Migrations also took place during the reign of Ooni Luwo who was a female ruler. Luwo was considered a disciplinarian and her rulership did not go down well with the people which led to migration out of Ile-Ife (Ajetunmobi, 1989). Also, the success of Lajamisan, a rich Ife bead trader to the Ooniship, created political crisis which saw some migrations. In addition, the deposition of Ogboru, a descendant of Lajamisan who was banished to Ife Odan for reigning too long but more probably for cruelty, led to emigration. Migration southwards continued till the end of the 19th century. These early southwards migrants were among the founders of Ife-Ilaje and Ife-Awori settlements in Coastal Yorubaland. Early migrations to the region was political and economic in nature. For instance, Ogunfunminire the founder of Isheri and most other migrants from Ile-Ife were hunters. It was in the course of hunting expedition that some of them finally journeyed to the coast. But the fact that some of the migrants were not alone but in groups, suggests political organization which could be explained in terms of inland internal political crises and population pressure. Before migrating to Isheri, Ogunfunminire consulted Ifa oracle which counseled

migration. One of the traditions suggested that Ogunfunminire and his friend Adeyemi Onikoyi left their homes on a hunting expedition and overstayed thereby absenting themselves from the funeral of their father. Their relations thinking them dead, put their junior brother on the throne and this annoyed the two powerful princes when they arrived. However, they were afraid of the great damage they might cause if they decided to fight hence, the Olofin took the calabash which was willed to him by his late father. The tradition continued that he followed the movement of the ritual pot placed on water until it sank and they settled in the region.

Another tradition pointed out that Adeyemi Onikoyi of Lagos was given in the will of their father, a crown of beads, Ifa Oracle Olokun deity, Awo Opa, Osugbo and the gods of his father Lakaba. On getting to Isheri, Adeyemi consulted Olokun the goddess of the ocean which counseled another migration for him and he moved until he got to Ikoyi. Researcher passed through Okepa, Moba and Ajiran, he finally named his settlement Ikoyi after Ikoyi Ile in Igbeti. It would appear that it was political disorder that led to the migration of these people from Oyo rather than Ile-Ife. What is clear is that not all migration to Coastal Yorubaland took off from Ile-Ife.

Benin connection: The influence of Benin pervades every sphere of life of the Yoruba of the coast. The name of some of their towns, folktales, rituals, dialects, music, regal goods and dances in varying degrees portray evidence of close interaction with Edo. Apart from the colonization of the coast by the interior Yoruba, the Benin invasions of the region were the most profound in shaping the socio-political, economic and culture history of the Yoruba settlement in the area. The military exploits of Benin kingdom in Coastal Yorubaland as an impregnable power started during the reign of Oba Ewuare in the 15th century. With formidable military arsenal, strong, well equipped and battle ready military, Benin became the terror and Lord of her neighbouring settlements. By the opening of the 16th century, a large section of Eastern Yorubaland was under Benin influence and Ilaje territory served as a passage to the far western coast in the area of modern Lagos. Thus, the areas between Lagos and Porto Novo became the focus of Benin, military exploit and by the close of the century, the region was firmly under the control of Benin. The decline and effective control of region made ambitious individuals and soldiers of Benin origin to declare their independence and found new village settlements made up of Benin and Awori Yoruba.

Apart from fission and fusion that characterized the history of the Ilaje, the Awori, the Ogu and the Ijebu

settlements in region, the theory of migration from Ile-Ife and West Africa sub-region, there are ample evidence to support the view that some Awori settlements were undoubtedly founded by the Bini. Ojo, for instance, was founded by a crown chief of Bini and now Aina Aseba. The Benin birth of the founder of Ijanikin is indicated by the Oba's mark of Alade and the fact that the towns fetish is Iroko, commonly worshipped by the Egun, suggests an influence from Dahomey now Republic of Benin. Isashi, Ilogbo Elegba, Iba and Otto Awori have traditional link. Also Ibeju was founded by Abeju a recruited hunter from the Benin Ile-Ife. Osolu, Irede, Imore, Ikare, Ilogbo, Eremi and indeed Eko are with significant Benin connections than would possibly be admitted in contemporary time. Asiwaju re-enforced this view by saying that Bini influence as military conqueror of coastal communities and was strong and covered a wider area of the region than is generally accepted.

In spite of the fact that most of these communities still affirm some form of relationship with Ile-Ife like other Yoruba settlements, literature gives impressive evidence to show that the early writers might be wrong in viewing the Bini connections as merely a product of military operation rather than kingship ties and natural process of migration and intermingling of ebi. Akinjogbin who in separate studies looked into ebi system and nature of affinal relationship among the Yoruba show evidences of kingship ties between Ile-Ife and Benin. Also, there are ample evidence in oral data and disjointed evidences in literature to the view that the nature of Benin relationship with coastal Yorubaland is more than largely political. Adding weight to this assertion is Avoseh's view that the founder of Ibeju named Abeju Agbeduwa was a migrant hunter from Benin and his migration was more economic than political. His followers also founded some other riverine communities in Lagos state.

In addition, Iba tradition of origin posit that the founders were hunting migrants from Benin who settled in some other communities before reaching the present day Iba. But why the rejection of Benin connexion? One of the possible explanations is that Benin era and factor in Awori-Ijebu settlements was initiated and sustained by force and when the imperial power of Benin collapsed the political influence of Benin or its factor went on a downward trend. The decline of Benin power contributed to the independence of settlements founded by Benin warriors or provincial governors. Thus, lust for political independence led to deliberate attempt to sever the traditional political relationship through diplomacy. This might have induced most of these communities towards finding favours from Ile-Ife to which other Awori and Ijebu settlements share direct relations.

Added to this, it would appear that the overwhelming population of later Yoruba migrants from the hinterlands with purely Yoruba cultural values that settled in some of these communities gradually weakened the Benin influence and gave the communities indelible Yoruba-Awori-Ijebu distinctive stamp. It is congestural but it may as well be true that in this process of culture conflict, Benin relationship or influence simply lost face and gradually became assimilated living behind the existence of artifacts and traditional respect as constant reminders of traditional Benin connection. In the 19th century for instance, Lagos stopped paying tribute to Benin and it was in the second half of the century that Lagos and the whole of Coastal Yorubaland was conquered by the British. Benin Kingdom also received colonial control by the close of the century.

Added to this, it is fashionable among the Yoruba to use connection with Ile-Ife, Oduduwa or Oyo to justify the claims to wear beaded crown with fringes. Consequently, attempt to gain favour from Ile-Ife and the need to unite with other Ilaje, Ijebu and Awori speaking groups in a rapidly changing political climate where unity is strength, made the focus of migratory patterns from Ile-Ife a necessity. Ile Ife and Oduduwa connection became an important tool in ethnic solidarity, winning sympathy and vote among the Yoruba in the 21st century.

Causes of coastal migrations of the Yoruba: The Ilaje, the Awori and Waterside Ijebu migrations to coastal Yorubaland were induced by political, economic, social and spiritual factors. These factors could be discussed under the sociological push (push factor: The factor is connected with unfavorable political, social, economic or spiritual climate within the region earlier inhabited, in a situation of such unfavourable climate of poor food production people might be forced out of their regions) and pull (pull factor: This factor is related to the special potentialities advantage or attraction a new region or area over another area or settlement or earlier inhabited area. Pull refers to a catalyst, activator, motivating factor or an inducement towards performing historically significant act) factors of migration. The history of push factor in the migrations of the Yoruba-Southwards, the Ilaje and the Awori to the region is of antiquity. Rather than succumb to hostile neighbours or insurmountable natural forces the early settlers chose to migrate from their usual homes to new areas. One of the recorded traditions showed that Oluwo-nla migrated from Benin after causing some damages, until he was recalled home by the Oba of Benin. The Port-Novu colonies founded by Benin warriors were threw asunder by hostile and more powerful aggressors hence, the people migrated to the region of Ologe lagoon

and sea shore sides and never to return to their original home that were threatened by Dahomey invasion and Agaja Trudo as to return home would be to risk their lives and properties and to voluntarily send themselves to servitude in the hands of the Egun and Aja. Thus, having been forcibly displaced from home, the new settlers were forced to seek an area which offered a natural protection and relatively peaceful. Undoubtedly, the existence of numerous creeks, swamps, lagoons, island and exposure to the forest zone and sea, offered them the needed protection in the area of insecurity. These migrations could be called forced or impelled migrations as the only logical choice opened to the migrants was to leave. This involuntary or induced migration is accounted for by the existence of many Ilaje and Awori village settlements some of which are now town settlements.

Also, voluntary movements of adventurous pioneers and dissident individuals through interaction with former homes led to chains of migration to the coast of the Yoruba. This was often the result of strong attractions to an area as partly exerted by letters and cell phones in recent times, signs and symbols or messages in the earlier period to friends and relatives back home. The economic advantage of the land occupied by the Awori of Lagos and later Ilaje settlers in terms of fishes, crabs, moluscs, coconuts, adequate rainfall and conducive temperature, accessibility through inland water ways became a pull factor in later migrations among the Ilaje and the Awori who are found in scattered communities along the coastal corridor of West Africa.

The Ilaje and the Awori country in general is made of varieties of sub-groups. Some of which have no direct migratory history with Ile-Ife and whose sentimental attachment to Oduduwa, Ilaje, Ijebu and Awori cultural values is a product of cultural adaptation and secondary affinity. The bulk of the Ilaje, Awori, Yewa and the Ijebu kingdoms along the coast of Nigeria are products of mixed breed as they considerably intermarried with the Egun, Ilaje, Egba, Brazillian, Sieraleoneans and other groups. Some of the Ilaje and Awori communities are products of many layers of migrations while biological relationship, need for political independence and prosperity in economic activities induced most of the migrations. In the early migrations, opportunities for game, the relative peace of the coastal region at a period when political antagonism and social disorder deserted the interior Yorubaland, the way out for the Ilaje, the Awori and other interior Yoruba that were looking for peace and security was to escape to communities along the coast. Also, the barrier Island for example, Lagos, Ido and Topo provided suitable and easy defensive sites for the early growth of settlements. The surrounding creeks and swamps of

Lagos, Ologe and badagry lagoons as well as sea shores offered natural protection for peace loving migrants and criminals escaping from justice. In the era of Trans-Atlantic slave trade, Coastal Yorubaland served as a viable depot for Ilaje, Egba, Yewa, Egun and Awori slave traders and raiders. The opening of Ondo road in the second half of the 19th century also increased the wave of migration. In the 20th century, the pull effect of the city life and the push effect of the rural life sustained migrations of not only the Awori but Egun, Ilaje, Ikale, Edo, Ibo, Hausa, Fulani, Egba, etc., to Coastal Yorubaland.

Migrations of the Ilaje, Awori and other groups to coastal Yorubaland produced a complex cultural value. For instance, when migrants of diverse cultural backgrounds are assimilated into a new society they also contribute to the dominant culture like Bini and the Awori-Yoruba in Lagos and Ogun states as well as Awori and Egun in Badagry as well as the Ilaje in Ilaje communities in the region of Lagos state. The degree of assimilation depended on the migrants ability to adjust and on the receiving society's willingness to accept new culture as well as duration of contact and the degree of socialization process.

The movement of the Ijo, Ikale, Ilaje, Bini, Awori, Egun, Oyo-Yoruba, Ijebu and Egba at different times to settle in the region of the coast produced cultural diffusion and partly accounted for a variant of Yoruba uniform culture among most Ilaje, Ijebu and Awori settlements in the region. For instance, institution of Obaship and palace organization, festivals and ritual practices are common among the Awori while Benin insignia or political materials feature among some Ilaje and Awori kingdoms. Also migrants from Ife, Benin or other Yoruba towns of the hinterland carried beaded crowns, white cap and keremesi as well as other paraphernalia of office to their new homes while others imported these materials after they have acquired political authority in their new abode.

It is difficult to date in absolute term when migration first began towards the region of Coastal Yorubaland. For instance, the Awori settlement in some communities constitute the final phase of series of settlements that were earlier made in the process of migration from the interior Iba people for instance, settled in other two places within the same geographical area before finally settling down in their present abode. Available evidences show that the earliest migrations might have been around the 15th century AD. when Ogunfuminire, the eponymous hero of the Awori first arrived at the Isheri Ojodu when Oromakin finally settled in Ilaje territory of modern Ondo state. It should be noted that centralized socio-political organization in Coastal Yorubaland started with the arrival

of the Ilaje, the Awori and later Ijebu sub group while the early movement of Ijo and Bini fishermen were predatory in nature. This political centralization was not totally devoid of Benin influence. The overall Ilaje, Awori and Ijebu cultures today is an amalgam of cultures. The heterogeneity of the origins of groups such as the Ilaje, Ikale, Ijo, Edo, Egba partly led to the erroneous idea of description of the coastal area of the Yoruba such as Lagos as no man's land.

The Ifa connection in migration: Ifa divination is common in traditional African society. Ile-Ife grew to become the most famous in Ifa education from where Yoruba princes and priests were trained in the early development of the society. Consultation with Ifa oracle is common in the traditions of migrations to Coastal Yorubaland. Traditions recalled that Ifa was consulted as to when to migrate, patterns of migration and where to eventually settle. This was recorded in the migration histories of the Ilaje, the Awori and other Coastal Yoruba settlers.

One of the issues that is not fully understood for evidence in history is the observation in most places where the oracle suggested or admonished the migrants to settle, according to tradition such places became prosperous. For instance among the Awori, the settlement of Ogunfunminire at Isheri and later Lagos turned to a land of milk and honey that of Ojo township which is one of the most economically developed in Lagos state started from humble beginning and with sacrifices in eight (ejo) a number suggested by the Ifa oracle the town has been prosperous ever since. The settlements of Oromakin-Olowoyitufewa and other groups in Ilaje territories which were suggested by Ifa oracle which are now prosperous could not be well explained historically by Ifa factor. But why had Ifa oracle not suggested Sahara desert for the various settlements of the Yoruba of the coast? While the efficacy of Ifa science and admonition requires further research what is certain is that people learnt from experiences overtime that to neglect Ifa admonition is to face negative consequences.

In relation to the following admonition of Ifa oracle, one of the Ifa corpuses affirms: Ruru ebo nig be ni, Ai ru ebo ki gbe ni, Obedience to offer sacrifices pays and Refusal to offer sacrifices does not pay. In spite of modernity, divination in various methods has remained among the Yoruba.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presence of the Yoruba in kingdoms, states, towns and villages in Coastal Yorubaland found expression not in creation but in migrations from other

parts of Yorubaland and West Africa sub-region from about 15th century AD onwards. The migrations took place at different times for multiple and diverse reasons and spread >500 years. Economic potentials of the region, relative peace, opportunity for political freedom and escape from justice ranked high among the pull and push factors in the migrations. The migrants were never known in their formal home(s) by the names they adopted in their new settlements. Their historical experiences as predicted by Ifa oracle in some cases influenced the names of their new settlements and political titles adopted. It must be expressed that many of the migrant groups settled for an unknown number of months and years in other places before reaching their final abode, leaving part of the party behind. This is why we have multiple family relatives among Yoruba sub-groups and communities. It has also been observed that immigrants introduced the values of the interior Yorubaland and Benin to their new homes along the coastal area. This explains why variants of Ife, Oyo/Yoruba political culture and social life and customs are found among the Coastal Yoruba. The nature of the environment and cultural diffusion from other areas as well as peculiar experiences had great influence on the traditional values of the Yoruba in the area. It is also clear from traditions that the whole of Coastal Yorubaland was not virtually empty of human habitation until the arrival of the Ilaje, Awori and Ijebu. The picture gleaned from evidence is that of scanty population without effective control of the regions or any development of stable settlement which the settlers of the 15th century undoubtedly achieved. The early inhabitants regarded partly as super human in traditions were either assimilated beyond cultural identity or driven away from the region to other areas. This explains why traditions have scanty information about them.

The early settlements in the region started as hunting/fishing hamlets which later developed into village communities. Some of the villages witnessed fusion and fission as a result of insecurity and need for power sharing and population control. Coastal Yorubaland of Nigeria, especially the region of Lagos state is regarded as Ilu Ogbon the land of wisdom and the melting point of cultures. Its often expressed that who ever lived in the region for some time and is not wise is not likely to be wise again. The other face of the region is that of an area inhabited by trick stars, fraudsters and dubious characters. The area of Lagos Eko, especially is viewed with awe and any one who is first coming to the area from other parts of Nigeria and West Africa sub-region would

have received guidance as to how to behave in Lagos. But one factor often not considered is that the region consistently witnessed influx of people of different characters from other areas. In the early migrations, some of the settlers took flight to the area to escape justice in their homes. Others were promised by the Ifa oracle of economic prosperity hence, on arrival, legal and illegal means were adopted to experience the fulfillment of promise of the oracle. Most of those touts and area boys in the region are indigenes of other areas who used different parts of Coastal Yorubaland as hideouts, using fictitious names and addresses.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, Coastal Yorubaland is a region that is interesting to live in. It is fast transforming to modern region. The regions educative in terms of historical experiences, it has ensured the diffusion of Christianity, Western education, culture and modernity to different parts of Nigeria. It has also brewed political leaders of the 20th century and contributed to decolonization and establishment of Democracy in Nigeria.

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