



The Dynamics of Transition of Rural Migrants to Urban Society: Case Study of Igbomina Migrant Community in Lagos

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ABSTRACT

Adaptation is the process of adjustment of an individual organism to environmental conditions while integration is the process of opening a group, community, place or organization to all members, regardless of race, religion gender or social class. The dynamics of the process of transition of Igbomina people from rural to urban society was gradual and spread over a long time. They initially established in town the socio-political institutions and behavioral patterns which were familiar to them to fulfill most of the needs, which they met in urban environment. Even in later migration, there were not many changes to the pattern of family life. Migrants retained their rural system of traditional values; the concept of the urban culture did not develop due to the well-established culture of circular migration. The range of relationships that ethnic groups maintained among one another within the frame work of contemporary migratory phenomena includes cases such as assimilation, pacific coexistence and animosity. It must be underlined however, that in spite of the integration process, the identity of Igbomina was not obliterated. The transition process of Igbomina into Lagos urban society could therefore be best described as acculturation rather than assimilation in that Igbomina culture in Lagos cannot be described as an extension of the northern Yoruba sub-culture from where they came to Lagos, it was rather a symbiotic relationship between the Yoruba, Hausa, Ibo etc. living together as neighbours.

Keywords: Dynamics, Transition, Integration, Migration, Assimilation

INTRODUCTION

A careful survey of the current demographic situation in Igbomina shows that a great proportion of its economically active population is settled outside the homeland, predominantly in the South-western parts of Nigeria primarily in search of economic fortune. Migration of Igbomina people to Lagos dated back to the last decade of the 19th century. However, prior to the establishment of colonial administration, evidence abound of traditional migration associated with origin of the people dating back to the 18th and early part of the 19th centuries. During those periods, population was constantly being redistributed through migration of small groups. Migration from kingdoms to a cephalous communities caused by disputes of office (Chieftaincy) seems to be common in Yorubaland then.

The imposition of Colonial rule from 1900 brought greater peace and security. Consequently, there was a considerable flow of migration, following the consolidation of the colonial presence. However, right up to 1920, migration was still exceptional and relatively slow. Between 1920 and 1945, it increased slowly, but from 1945 to 1985, the rate of increase accelerated rapidly for reasons having to do with socio-political and economic transformation of the country. The pre-independence and four of the post-independence National Development Plans all fall within this period when greater emphases were placed on urban development to the detriment of the rural area. Therefore, a shift of the neglected rural population in order to enjoy urban privileges was inevitable. Migration was the result.

The Igbomina were among the earliest migrant communities to settle in Lagos in the early part of the twentieth century. Majority of the males who migrated to Lagos between 1900 and 1920 had been circulatory migrants who were either unmarried or whose families had been left at home. From the 1920s, however, the entire Igbomina population in Lagos began to take on the characteristics of a settled community of sojourners rather than a community of circulatory migrants. Many were already doing well in their businesses. But the world economic depression of the early 1930's saw the economic gains of the early years go down the drain. However, as the recession years passed by, the prosperity that came along in the 1940s and 50s made a remarkable imprint on Igbomina as ownership of houses with corrugated iron sheets, became a status symbol found in most Igbomina villages. By this time there was great glamour and prestige associated with migration especially to Lagos. It was seen as rite-de-passage, to be a real man (enlightened) you have to have been to Lagos at least once. Nearly all of the earliest migrants were exporting their strength and not their skill and were going to work as labourers. Petty trading accounted for more than fifty per cent of the occupational group as they graduated from labourer work.

As the early days of migration passed by, a good many Igbomina migrants took permanent residence in Lagos. They were no longer returning home at the end of dry seasons. The peculiar characteristic of early migration, when the number of times visits were made to Lagos determined ones social status among the "civilised" people, became old fashioned. Gradually, a community of Igbomina settled migrants emerged at various locations on Lagos Island. Their places of early settlement were Ereko, Enu Owa, Ebute-ero, Obanikoro, Onala, Princess Street, Dosunmu, Idumagbo, all of which played host to them on arrival.

Early migrants lived a closely knitted life. The pattern of settlement was such that village community members lived very close to each other or sometimes lived in single room apartments. This not only ensured personal security for all, but also implies a direct transfer of the traditional socio-cultural life practised at home to the new environment. Such jointly

acquired apartment was often the Mecca of every new migrant arriving in Lagos from home. They came always to be welcomed into the warm embrace of their ready benefactors. Some came with virtually nothing other than the cloth they were wearing. Sometimes, dependence on old migrants started right from home, as the cost of transportation even to Lagos was often at the benefactors' expense, though this may have to be repaid later.

The pattern of settlement in Lagos made for easy transfer of traditional cultural norms from Igbomina to the new home on issues relating to family life and adjudication on minor disputes. The home's socio-political structures were adopted in solving social problems as they arose. Leadership evolved from among them based on an unwritten code of giving precedence to the earlier or first arrival with due regard to age. This no doubt proved very effective in curbing social vices as sanctions could easily be imposed on deviants.

FAMILY LIFE AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

Most Igbomina in Lagos had been brought up to live in their ethnic societies. They brought with them therefore, ideas concerning the ordering of social life and the behaviour expected of people occupying particular position. They tended to establish in town the socio-political institutions and behavioural patterns which were familiar to them. They looked to the socio-political system thus transplanted to fulfil most of the needs, which it met in the urban environment, as well as importance to the traditional social system, but it could not function in the town as did in the country side.¹ The lineage could not provide a principle of social organisation among a population of immigrants having few ties of kinship with one another.²

It is also important to note that traditional religious beliefs with all the taboos on the do's and don'ts, which had succeeded in the past in maintaining social stability by preventing vices, cannot be expected to maintain their holds in a technologically advanced society. Therefore, new institutions had to be created and the system must be adapted to meet the new demands. Often such adaptation may not be easily achieved. Attempt at adaptation may lead to fusion or to a total assimilation of the system to its environment and its consequent dissolution. Unless the social system retains its distinctive character, it can not be said that a successful adaptation was achieved.³

In traditional society, the old men claim to leadership was predicated on their authority as mediator between the living and the ancestors. With the decline of traditional life and religion in an urban environment, some basis had to be found for leadership role.

There was therefore, the need to devise political arrangements that could accommodate the specialised interest of the urban migrants. The arrangement was such that they had headmen (chosen by and from among the migrants) who represented their interest in local affairs. Such headmen, may be chosen or evolve, as earlier mentioned. They adjudicated in minor disputes.⁴ The socio-political arrangement by migrants at destination was such that it was impossible for the people to succeed to traditional chieftaincy title as Lagos social setting would not accommodate this. Leadership was therefore, often provided to each community of migrants by elderly people who resided permanently in Lagos and through their wisdom and deeds had earned the respect of fellow migrants. Sometime, the period of arrival in Lagos could serve as a determinant factor in selection to the position of leadership. The earliest migrants, who must have played host to a great many of their compatriots were often recognised as leaders without any formal process of appointment. The idea was derived from Yoruba general philosophy that:

**Araba ni Baba
Eniti aba laba ni Baba ⁵**

Literarily translated as:

**Araba is the father (leader)
Who ever arrived in a village first
is the father (leader).**

Early migrants resolved all disputes among friends and relation through due references to social groups and elders. There was no recourse to any higher level of authority for adjudication. This had to do with the few number of members of each village migrant's community that were in Lagos at this time.⁶ The simple mechanism for conflict resolution remained unchanged until the end of the Second World War and the acceleration of migration that brought greater number of people to Lagos. The increase in each migrant community's population, and the divergence in the socio-economic status that emerged as a result of relative success in businesses from the 1940's resulted in the evolution of a stratified organisational structure designed for conflict resolution. Minor disputes were resolved among friends and associates as it was in times past. Implacable ones were referred to elders of the community and the place of last resort for adjudication was the council of elders within the executive of the village associations.⁷

The element of respect is however, very paramount in the leadership process, since the migrant leaders had neither the legal nor the ritual means to support their authority, their authority was thus limited to providing assistance and resolving minor disputes among their village men.⁸ The authority of village community elders were however greatly feared and respected. No one would dare challenge the decisions of such elders. The high esteem in which elders were held and the respect for the collective decision of migrant communities is clearly illustrated by an old saying which goes thus:

Edunmare majẹ ki un de palọ Ọmọ Oro rojọ⁹

Translated thus: May the Almighty not let me resort to defending myself in the community of Oro people. This authority did not extend beyond members of the village community in Lagos, as there was no pan-Igbomina association in the early years of migration. Pan-Igbomina association came into existence in the 1940s and even then, its pre-occupation was more with effort to liberate Igbomina from Ilorin control at home rather than political involvement in the organisation or adjudication among Igbomina migrants resident in Lagos.¹⁰

Leaderships evolved among migrants, they were neither chosen nor elected and the hereditary chieftaincy system operational in traditional society was virtually absent as Lagos migrant community gradually developed its own unique subculture. The position of elders was, however, an aspect of traditional socio-political system that was adapted for modern usage. Elders can help out when a young migrant finds himself in dispute with his parents and other relatives at home. For example, after a few years; migrants frequently came under pressure from their parents to marry. The modern urban experience of an elder can be drawn upon to explain on favourable terms, why it would be inappropriate for a house boy or

apprentice in Lagos to do so.¹¹ In other words, after providing him with his first stopping place in town, a migrant's initial host subsequently became a valuable ally who can be turned to on a variety of occasions to negotiate town specific problems as these arose. This then was the first sets of inter personal relationships in which migrants were involved. These relationships can sometimes pose difficulties where young men built up a range of material and non-material debts to elders. But for the most part they were value didactic ties which were kept in good repair by regular visits well after migrants have left their host houses.¹²

Depending on the level of friendship and cordiality while residing with his host, migrant sometimes later played host to children or relation of their former host in order to establish a more permanent relationship between the two. It was such reciprocal assistance that kept Igbomina community in Lagos closely knitted which ensured that no individual was rendered destitute for lack of necessary assistance. This was probably responsible for the fact that no single Igbomina migrant was counted among beggars when Lagos Colony Government became alarmed at the rate of influx of beggars into Lagos. Government then started taking census of beggars from 1934.¹³ The modality through which new migrants arrived Lagos made for a closely knitted group structure. Those who migrated through the beneficence of an old migrant and who lived at the expense of such elders were bound to be subject to the authority of such people. Therefore, the control and discipline of those in a particular household was the prerogative of the head of such household. Discipline of erring individuals within the village group was consequently made easy. Sanction could be imposed, which included ostracising, and even when offences were of severe nature, especially those bordering on the integrity of the group, like stealing, offenders may be sent back home.¹⁴

It was a taboo in the early years for an Igbomina to be involved in stealing or other dishonest practices. They lived very simple life with a strong belief in hard work and perseverance. They lived a quiet and sometimes unattractive life under their masters. Some were so trusted that the entire businesses of the master were often entrusted to them. It is no surprise then that at the end of their services to some masters, some were rewarded with a parting gift that gave them a strong foothold and the required capital to start their own businesses.

Even in later migration, there was not much changes to the pattern of family life and conflict resolution mechanism. With increasing female migration, household unit was no doubt becoming relatively homogenous in composition. However the intermingling of new migrants who sometimes may not be a member of the host family ensured the heterogeneous composition of households up to the 1960s and 70s. The household pattern remained unchanged, and so was the modality for conflict resolution among migrants village groups. The only change was the lived far apart and in less crowded apartments it became easier for people not to live in strict conformity with the group norms.

As wealth also brought greater comfort and a good many old migrants became proud owners of tenement houses, the level of sophistication of Igbomina in Lagos rose along with the level of economic comfort in the 1970's. Therefore, the traditional control that home associations wielded over their members became sheer moral imperatives, with little force of authority. Individualism became a common feature of Igbomina social life in Lagos. This did not however affect communal effort towards the development of the home region. It is important to note that the greatest development efforts towards elevating the standard of living of the home community took place in the 1970s in Igbomina.

SOCIAL SETTING AND ADAPTATION IN LAGOS

Igbomina extended family organization facilitated adaptation to the exigencies of migration. The withdrawal of a high percentage of the men from their households has never threatened the ability of the population to survive and reproduce. Wives generally do not show sign of deprivation and mal-adjustment. The household structures left back at home were therefore, viable in terms of rural-urban relations and Igbomina system of kinship and marriage.

During the first phase of migration, that is the period ending in the 1920s, migrants retained their rural system of traditional values, coming only to earn money. It was only later that they acquired the second system of values, those of the modern town, which then became a motive for migration for the latter migrants. Continued cooperation, a complex set of reciprocal exchanges and high degree of mutual trust were the main characteristics of the early migrants.¹⁵ Generally, at the early stage of migration, the concept of a true urban culture did not develop due to the well established practice of circular migration by which urban migrants retained personal link with their rural base. But this pattern of contacts changed with the rise in the number of Igbomina who decided to stay more permanently and for a longer period in Lagos. One important feature of this category of migration, which started from the 1920s, was that most of them came to reside with their masters as apprentices, hawkers, houseboys and even canoe paddlers. This group had very little opportunity of exhibiting social habits independent of their masters and hosts. Canoe paddlers were often away from the home base, Lagos, for weeks, moving from one market to another, from Ejinrin, to Badagry, to Ikorudu and Epe. This group had no independent existence and could only interact sparingly with fellow Igbomina.

However as the group in self-employment like palm-wine tappers and petty traders grew in number, a subculture of Igbomina migrants started developing from the 1920s¹⁶ in Lagos, patterned after the cultural norms practiced in Igbomina. Trained for living in their tribal societies, Igbomina migrants brought with them ideas concerning the ordering of social life and the behaviour expected of the people occupying particular positions. They tended to establish in towns the social institutions and behavioural patterns which were familiar to them. They looked to the social system, thus transplanted, to fulfil most of the needs, which arose in the urban environment, as well as those new needs that were closely related to group culture.

The starting point of socialization for any new migrants was to find appropriate means of entering urban milieu. Elders who arranged or accommodate new migrants often handled this. It was the availability of such elders that usually facilitate migration to Lagos. Not only did new migrants receive free accommodation and food for a limited period of time, they could also turn to elders later for other forms of assistance.¹⁷

However, after becoming self employed, most migrants often freed themselves of dependence on their host by taking up joint tenement with some friends or urban brothers (i.e. town mates). This was predicated on the general assumption among migrants that fellow townsmen whilst abroad should establish harmonious and cordial relationship. It was through this type of relationship between urban brothers that the major obstacles to individual well being were met. This was appropriately described as personal networks. Migrants' social networks were relatively homogenous social units comprising people from the same Igbomina village. Members resided in the same tenement room which enabled them to effect

economies. Shared residence was very essential. Five to ten people may live in a single room to reduce cost and save money to expand existing business.

On a day-to-day basis, members were constantly involved in some degree of minor reciprocity. Most things were shared ranging from food; packets of cigarettes to clothing, house hold equipment and the like. The resilience of a network is fully tested by the recurrent incidence of unemployment or acceptance of new migrants to the group. When social group succeeded in handling successfully such incidence, using its internal resources, it contributed substantially to the continuity and solidarity of the social unit.

A strong element of self-interest underpinned the manner in which Igbomina migrants supported each other at times of crisis. People operated on the basis that the individual currently being supported would reciprocate in due course when others encountered similar problem. Migrants had three levels of support; the elder who had assisted him in the past and continued to do so in present, a wide circle of friends and his urban brothers with whom at all times insecurity and instability were usually jointly shared. Those varied social relationships were often drawn upon in different combinations in order to manage variety of problems.¹⁸

Collective purchases were made of consumer items for general use within the household network. Examples of these in particular are pieces of furniture and electrical goods. Income surpluses were also used for home visit coinciding with the ceremonies such as Christmas, *Ileya*, marriage and burial ceremonies.

Household networks sometimes constituted themselves into small clubs. A monthly contribution was often raised from members in order to purchase soft drink and palm wine or a few bottles of beer for consumption at weekly or monthly meetings, usually held on Saturday afternoon. In the evening, people also relaxed with palm-wine and Agidigbo in front of their residences. Naming or marriage ceremonies, even when held at the home region, (this was the usual practice up to the 1940s when women migration was uncommon) were often re-enacted in Lagos with entertainment in *Agidigbo*, *Sekere*, *Dundun*, *Sakara* or *IjoWoro*. The popular bandleaders often invited by the Igbomina up to the 1970s were Aliyu Samba (from Igbomole) and Aremu Dundun group. *Orin Opa* also featured prominently in the entertainment programme.

At every festival period like Christmas or *Ileya*, Igbomina migrants held ceremonies into which they invited wealthy members of their home community for donation especially after returning from home visit.¹⁹ The proceeds from such launching were often used to purchase food and uniform set of native dress (*aso ebi*) for use at festivals or ceremonies. Thus the unity of the group was in various ways being firmly represented to others with the stress on their oneness and continued cooperation.

Clubs were also used as a forum for sanctioning members whose actions have not appeared to be in the full spirit of urban brotherhood. Where there were suggestions that a hometown man was simply renegeing on his obligation for no good reason, such a person could be isolated to a point that he might be forced to return home. Social network therefore became a veritable tool through which migrants got integrated into urban society. However, if an ethnic social system is to survive transplantation into a new urban environment, it will have to be adapted to that environment without sacrificing its tribal identity. The two requirements of adaptation and integration are inter related.²⁰ The Igbomina did this in a number of ways. By membership of clubs and societies, trade unions and political parties and the profession of Islamic and Christian faiths which were shared with other tribes, the process

of integration of the people into urban life gradually took root.²¹ These factors operated to integrate the social life of migrants round non-tribal foci.²²

Fundamental change began to take place in the socio-cultural life of the people as schools, libraries, and recreational and other facilities for the cultural expression of urban life multiplied. They began to develop a distinct way of life. With increasing commercialisation in most facets of human interaction, the tradition of social cooperation and the network of rights and obligations that it entailed, began to be replaced by individualism. This accounts for the gradual disintegration of close kinship relationship among Igbomina migrants in the latter years of migration.

Although traditional assistance and cooperation among the people still continued to a limited extent, this can not be said to have attained the magnitude of what used to operate in the early years of the 20th century. Several factors were responsible for this. First was that Igbomina migrants were no longer a minority group specifically discriminated against for reasons of ethnic origin. Secondly, Igbomina population in Lagos had grown well enough that they had constituted a fair percentage of the city's population.²³ Thirdly, the level of their assimilation into urban culture in Lagos was such that one rarely can distinguish an Igbomina from their Ijebu neighbours, save for the dialect still spoken by a few die-hard traditionalists. The cultural identity, which use to distinguish them from other Yoruba sub-groups, were more or less gradually eroded. Lastly, the wealth that came along with success in their various fields of human endeavours presupposes that they no longer require special protection that cooperative effort would avail. Hence the gradual relapses into individualism.

Inter-marriage between Igbomina migrants and members of the host community and other Lagos migrants grew with greater degree of integration. Elaborate wedding and naming ceremonies, the hallmark of the Ijebu social life, became a common occurrence. Lagosian food (especially *gari*) and consumption pattern became part of Igbomina cultural expression.²⁴

The political organisation that evolved among the Igbomina migrants in Lagos was greatly influenced by the social organisation of the home region, as well as Lagos society. It is therefore, clear from every indication that migrants' cultural expression in Lagos was not an extension of the northern-Yoruba culture, but a product of a symbiotic relationship between Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. This built for them a cultural bridge, and in so doing convey them from one kind of social universe to another,²⁵ from the traditional Igbomina culture to a cosmopolitan cultural world of a modern society. The pressure of the new environment forced the migrants to free themselves from certain constraints attached to their original culture. This emancipation can be observed in their marriage customs (a system of betrothing children from birth to suitors), which demonstrate to what degree the very rigid Igbomina marriage system has undergone important changes. A close observation of the contemporary Igbomina marriage customs shows that parental influence had ceased to be paramount in bringing about marriage union.

This structural transformation, in addition to the acquisition of new social system (dialect, economic orientation techniques) and adaptation to a new value system, undoubtedly contributed to the integration of the Igbomina into Lagos society. It must be underlined however, that in spite of the integration process, the identity of the Igbomina was not obliterated. They still maintained a number of characteristics (separate neighbourhood, stronger cohesion within the community and Igbomina dialect).²⁶

ADAPTATION AND INTEGRATION INTO LAGOS SOCIETY

Adaptation is the process of adjustment of an individual organism to environmental conditions. It may occur by natural selection, resulting in improved survival and reproductive success, or involve physiological or behavioural changes that are not genetic.²⁷ Adaptation is adjustment to the environment by people and other living creatures including plants. The process is essential for survival and may be both biological and social.²⁸ The Igbomina having settled in an alien environment as it was, needed adaptation to adjust to the demands of the new home for proper integration into the host society.

Social integration is the process of opening a group, community, place or organization to all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender or social class. It is the process of becoming an accepted member of a group or community.²⁹ It is the incorporation of disparate ethnic or religious elements of the population into a unified society, providing equality of opportunity for all members of the society.³⁰ Integration unites individual human beings into more or less stable social structures.³¹ Lagos being an open society made integration an easy exercise for the Igbomina.

Integration may depend on the social origin of the migrants, which initially affects greatly how they were accepted by the host societies, and influence the different roles they came to play. The Igbomina came to Lagos from a rural environment and were regarded by Lagosian as “uncivilized” and “primitive”. Therefore, the hosts prejudice forced the people, who arrived to take up career as *alaaru* (porters), labourers and canoe paddlers, to stand aloof for a long time from the Lagos social setting. Therefore, initially they did not feel obliged to integrate into the “superior” culture of their host. The character of the different host communities, which either limit or encourage certain element of transformation among migrants, influenced integration.³²

The range of relationships that ethnic groups maintain among one another within the framework of contemporary migratory phenomena includes cases: such as assimilation, pacific coexistence and animosity. It is important to note that the nature of these relations does not depend principally on cultural factors. For example, an historical tradition of friendship or difference of culture, language or religion may not necessarily influence integration. The relation between the groups always depends essentially on their respective strategies, spontaneous or manipulated. These strategies are defined with reference to the economic and political problems of the modern society in which these groups are to be integrated. The strategy of the host society count as much as and sometimes even more than the aspirations of the migrants.³³

The characteristics of the host societies were often decisive in the type of transformation imposed on the migrants and the success of their integration. By the time Igbomina migrants started coming to Lagos early in the 20th century, the Lagos society they met was already well structured and stratified and quite advanced in western civilization. For example, by 1900 Lagos could boast of four African lawyers, seven African doctors, an African Bishop, roughly twenty African rectors and many more African teachers.³⁴ The elite grew steadily between 1880 and 1915 numbering fifty-four in 1880, eighty in 1891 and one hundred and seventeen in 1913. Its members worked as import-export merchants, colonial servants, doctors, lawyers, ministers, headmasters, newspaper editors and surveyors.³⁵ Although this was by no way typical of Lagos society, there is no doubt that the degree of exposure to western civilization

of a typical Lagosian could not possibly be equated with Igbomina migrants coming from the hinterland.

This was the society the Igbomina migrants from the hinterland, *ara oke*, were moving into in the early years of migration. It was obvious that the two groups, (the migrants and the hosts), had very little in common, at least socially, with relatively sophisticated host with whom they were to interact and possibly integrate. In general, this group of unskilled migrants were condemned to inferior status and were neither assimilated nor accepted on an equal footing because of the opposition within the host society.³⁶ They were alienated and marginalized. They lived in slums and later created their own neighbourhood.

A kind of love-hate syndrome, with the emphasis on the latter rather the former emerged. An *Ilaburu*³⁷ could be assaulted for touching a car.³⁸ They were regarded and treated not better than slaves. No matter how old an Igbomina apprentice was, he was often addressed and called *Omoekere* (small boy), an in-direct reference to the assumed level of intelligence and sophistication of the people.³⁹

Even with passage of time and the dramatic transformation of the socio-economic status of Igbomina migrants, as a result of success in business, Lagosians still have some distaste for the Igbomina. The indigenous people of Lagos might have liked and approved of the contributions to the economic development of Lagos made by this settler elements in their midst, they however still resent at the same time, the phenomena growth of Igbomina affluence and suspect that their guests were exploiting them, economically.⁴⁰ While the ordinary Lagos man may feel inwardly proud of the contributions of Igbomina traders to the development of business in Lagos and to lifting the face of the town by investing heavily in solid modern estates, he almost invariably resents the dominant role they played in business.

However, due to what looks like an inborn cultural and personal qualities (eagerness to work and moral rigour, which probably have contributed to their success in business) the Igbomina were able to adapt to Lagos socio-cultural life. Even when integration does not lead to assimilation and each group maintained its personality, the acquisition of a common lingua franca (Lagos dialect in this case) was universal.⁴¹

To achieve this, the migrants, mostly males, married into the host family. Inter-marriage has become very common between the Igbomina and Lagosians. Through this, they acquired new cultural and social values. They adopted certain customs regarding burial ceremonies, elaborate wedding and *aso ebi* (uniform dress). Although, the Igbomina were still linked to the original home culture through regular visitation, they were however, immersed within the local culture through their family environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Notwithstanding the seeming nominal role of this stranger elements, the role of Igbomina was never passive in this process of integration, even though they assimilated some social and cultural traits; they also contributed to the transformation of their adopted homes cultural life. For example, the dialectic variance in Lagos Yoruba like, “*Owo ni e je keni je gbado*” (this issue will eat (cost) money not corn) has assumed cultural dimension influencing people’s attitude to life. Igbomina food items such as *eko-eda* and *Iyan-ewu* has found their ways to the tables of some Lagos homes other than the Igbomina.⁴² Palm-wine, though not an exclusive product of the Igbomina, was greatly popularised and brought in abundance to

Lagos bars through Igbomina technological know-how. It has become popular liquor venerated by many in Lagos.

Notwithstanding the fact that this reciprocal acculturation phenomena largely contributed to the socio-cultural integration of the migrants into the host's sub-culture, it appears that certain structural and cultural affinities which existed between the Igbomina and Lagosian as belonging to the same Yoruba ethnic stocks, must have also contributed to the easy adaptation and consequent assimilation into the hosts society. The migrants were faced with community whose main values were of the same nature and thus compatible with those of their native land, notwithstanding the gap in the level of sophistication. The Igbomina and Lagosians' customs relating to marriage laws, rules relating to repudiation, the inheritance of property, religious social and judicial customs were not far from one another.

Assimilation here refers to the process of exchanging one culture for another.⁴³ Usually; the term applies to people who adjust to new surroundings by adopting the prevailing culture as their own. Igbomina migrants in this case coming as it were from a different sub-culture did relinquish some of their original culture to take up Lagos culture, after a considerable stay and interaction with Lagosians. Only rarely do individuals manage to become fully assimilated into a second culture. Usually, it is their children or grandchildren who get fully assimilated.⁴⁴ Therefore, for the first generation Igbomina migrants in Lagos; assimilation did not really take place. Most of them clinched tightly to their original culture in the spoken dialect, marriage and due respect for elders.⁴⁵ What took place in the early days of migration was rather accommodation. This was a situation where both the Igbomina and their hosts discovered they were unable to ignore some important cultural differences between them and therefore, resolved to emphasize common interest instead. The failure to assimilate, of course, was the cause of discrimination and regular conflicts between the Igbomina and Lagosian. This took the form of beating and name-calling like.⁴⁶ *Ara Oke, Ilaburu, bante ni waju iru lehin, Ara Oke Igilonso won etc.*

The second and third generations of migrants who were sometimes children of early migrants, born and bred in Lagos, were the category of migrants who were relatively assimilated into Lagos society and culture.⁴⁷ Those who from youth lived and played with Lagosians had better chance of assimilation than those who came as matured people to Lagos. Even with the current level of assimilation, Igbomina migrants today still constitute a definite social category (in which the rigidity of the original social stratification system has been significantly weakened), their ways of life have become standardized and have adapted to the local conditions. In this sense, although they have been assimilated since there are no fundamental cultural traits separating them, from Lagos culture, they still remain a distinct social group easily identifiable among others.

Assimilation in this case is such that the Igbomina culture in Lagos can no longer be described as an extension of the northern Yoruba sub-culture from where they migrated to Lagos. Rather, they are product of a symbiotic relationship between the Yoruba, Hausa, and Ibo etc. living together as neighbours in Lagos. Acculturation is a process of cultural change that occurs when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact resulting in subsequent changes in the original cultural pattern of either or both groups. Acculturation is rarely, if ever, unidirectional. There is always cultural diffusion. It would, therefore, be appropriate to say that the level of integration of Igbomina migrants into Lagos society amounted to acculturation not assimilation as the original cultural traits still survived the process.

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- [5] Chief Ojomu Ajasse-Ipo 4th August 2000. Chief Bakare Owulebaja (aged 80) was interviewed at Esie on 5th August 2000.
- [6] Ibid.
- [7] NAI, 09512 VOL. XII. Annual Report on the colony 1949. The organisational pattern was confirmed among Lagos migrants. They were bounded by no form of tribal discipline and owned allegiance to no native authority.
- [8] Alhaji Agbabiaka Yakubu (aged 90yrs) & Baba Adini Sule Alaga Ile Onikoyi Oro (aged 87) were interviewed at Oro 9th August 2000.
- [9] Fakeye, J. O. interview 21st August 2000. Also Alhaji Kareem Alogbo (aged 68) was interviewed at Esie on 10th August 2000 and December 2004.
- [10] Ibid.
- [11] Ibid.
- [12] NAI, COMCOL I- 797/1 Vol. I, Census of Beggars, NAI, COMCOL I 12/s. 12 1934-1937 Pp. 387 & 390, NAI, 1016, Vols. III & IV. Undesirables in Lagos Township and the suburbs, Repatriation of – 1937-52.
- [13] NAI, 248s/S.178. Oro Progressive Union in a letter dated 28th November 1953, informed the Administrator of the Colony of the inauguration of the union on 22nd November 1953. Membership was said to have opened to all indigenes of Oro with good behaviour, depicting the moralising undertone of the ethnic unions.
- [14] Ibid
- [15] Adrian, J.P. Choice, Class and Conflict: A Study of Southern Nigeria Factory Workers (Lagos, The Harvest Press) 1979 p. 35
- [16] Alhaji Owolewa Interviewed 15th August 2000.
- [17] Prof. Afolayan. Interviewed 30th August 2000.
- [18] Alhaji Owolewa Salman. Interviewed 15th August 2000.
- [19] Chief Joseph Oyinloye and Joseph Aransiola of Iludun Alhaji Owolewa of Omu-Aran, Alh. Karimu Famous interviewed 30th & 15th August 2000

- [20] Banton, M., Adaptation and Integration in the Social System of Temne Immigration in Freetown. *AFRICA: Journal of International Africa Institute* VOL. XXVI Jan. 1956 No 1 p. 354.
- [21] *Ibid.*
- [22] *Ibid.* p. 355.
- [23] Even when census data is available, it is often difficult to get accurate information on Igbomina population in Lagos at this time. They were often classified as Ilorin along with other Yoruba from the province such the Ibolu and Ekiti.
- [24] Interview conducted at Lagos and Igbominaland shows that many Igbomina migrants got married to Ijebus, including one of the principal informants in this research, Pa. Fakeye at Esie. The socio-cultural life exhibited during festivals, weddings and naming ceremonies bears close similarity to Lagos social life.
- [25] Osoba, S.O. "The Phenomenon of ..." p. 536.
- [26] Guennec-Coppens F., Social and Cultural Integration: A Case Study of the East Africa Hadrauss in *AFRICA* VOL. 59 No.2 1989 pp. 185-195.
- [27] Crytal, D. (ed.). *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia 4th Edition* (Cambridge University Press 2000)
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- [31] Lee, A.M. (ed) *Principles of Sociology*. (New York, Barnes & Noble 1969)
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- [33] Amin, S. *Modern Migration in West Africa...* p. 115
- [34] Mann K., Marriage choice Among Educated Africa Elites in Lagos Colony 1880-1915. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* VOL. 14, 1981, No 2, p. 203
- [35] *Ibid* p. 204
- [36] Amin, S.(ed): *Modern Migration...* Amin, S (ed); *Modern Migration in West Africa* (Studies presented and discussed at the 11th International Africa Seminar at Dakar, April 1972 (London, OUP 1974). p. 118
- [37] *Ilaburu* means an Ila person with his long tail. All Igbomina migrants in Lagos were called Ila in the early days of migration because of the early migration and predominance of Ila group in term of number.
- [38] Chief Ojomu Interviewed 4th August 2000 & Alhaji Suleiman Alarape of Ajasse Lagos based businessman interviewed in Lagos on 13th Sept' 2000.

- [39] Fakeye, J. O. Interview and Chief Bakare Owulebaja (aged 80) Lagos based businessman interviewed at Esie 21st August 2000.
- [40] Interview of Prof. Afolayan 30th August 2000 & Chief Gabriel Abikoye (aged 68) Lagos based businessman interviewed in Lagos 9th Sept' 2000.
- [41] Amin, S.(ed): *Modern Migration...* p. 115.
- [42] Fakeye, J.O. interviewed 21st August 2000.
- [43] Stark, R. *Sociology* (California, 1987) p. 39.
- [44] Ibid.
- [45] Pa. Noah Oyinloye Bankole of Omu-Aran & Prince Gabriel Aroyehun (aged 73) Lagos based businessman, interviewed 16th & 3rd Sept' 20000 respectively
- [46] Ibid.
- [47] Ibid.

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