Contributions of Immigrant-Settlers in the Development of Idah up to 1980

By

Idoko Idris Alhaji, PhD
Department of History and Diplomatic Studies
Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State
+2348068656143, +2348070561088
iidanidris58@gmail.com / alhajiidoko@yahoo.com

&

Ahmodu, Abu Momoh
Department of History and International Studies
Kogi State University, Anyigba, Kogi State.
08065969083
abumomoh80@gmail.com

Abstract

The history of immigrant-settlers in Idah is not adequately documented. This study therefore, focuses on the various immigrant-settlers, the evolution of their immigrations, their settlement patterns and their roles in the socio-political and economy development of Idah up to 1980. The work examines the history and the settlement patterns of Immigrants in Idah. It also assessed the impact of various immigrant groups in the economic, political and socio-cultural development of Idah town. This was with a view to understanding and appreciating the role immigrants played to the general development of Idah from the earliest period up to 1980. Using historical and multi-disciplinary approach, the study reveals that immigrants increased the population growth of Idah during this period under review. Immigrants through their involvements boosted the economic growth and development of Idah. The study also showed that the River Niger greatly influenced the coming of most immigrant groups into Idah. The result further revealed that the coming of immigrants led to the multi-lingual and multi-cultural nature of Idah town. The study concluded that immigrants played crucial roles in the enhancement of interaction, which engendered cross fertilization of cultures, ideas and innovations.

Introduction

Migration is an instinct aspect of human existence because human beings they say cannot live in isolation since no individual, group or community is self-sustaining hence, the need to interact to better the lots of the whole. Migration is an intrinsic aspect of human behavior. Throughout human evolution, the urge to move has been part of the characteristics of man's existence. The need to move from one location to another became imperative because of the craving need to interact, search for food and conducive environment in which to live. Thus, people come together to complement one another to enhance their socio-cultural, political and economic activities of the community they found themselves. Therefore, the study is conceived to examine the various immigrants groups and their contributions to the development of Idah up to 1980.

Idah, the traditional Headquarters of the ancient Igala Kingdom is largely agreed as the cradle of Igala nationality (Boston 1986:3; Idoko 2012:6). The area occupied a triangular tract of land located on the eastern side of the River Niger. This position brought to it so many economic influences and opportunities as it are with towns located along any great rivers in the world (Boston 1986:3). Though, there are other rivers which are smaller, these include Ocheche, Ofiayi and Idokoliko. On the northern side of Idah are Inachalo River and Aji-Egba in Ofukolo. These rivers provided fresh water and aquatic animal for the inhabitants of Idah nonetheless, there are not as navigable as the River Niger.

The people developed an ancient political relations and historical antecedents which brought them into close contact with their neighbours namely the Igbo and the Edo whom they have an aged long contacts and relationships, which cut across economic, social and political spheres. In fact, the geographical location of Idah along the River Niger also brought the people into contact with a wide range of peoples and a great variety of cultures, which include the Hausa, the Yoruba, the Kakanda, the Nupe, the Igbo, the Edo and the Jukun, to name the principal groups. However the common feature that binds them together is the River Niger. Also, it is important to note here that, the strategic position of Idah on the Niger has been a great significance on economic growth and historical importance to the people of Idah and its environs. To this end, the study will show the role River Niger played in the coming of immigrants into Idah.

Causes of Migration

There are two forms of migrations, the voluntary and the involuntary migrations. Voluntary migration as the name implies is a self-induced movement based on a number of factors generally regarded as the Pull factors. These Pull factors are the ones that make perceived new settlers to have the opportunity of acquiring land, marketing avenues,

employment, and propagation of religion among others. On the other hand, it can be a product of the Push factors inducing migration by such compelling reasons such as disease, bad weather, and government law, civil strife among other numerous factors (Ahokegh 2010:216-233). In fact, population movement occurred when the forces compelling the exodus movement may be stronger to the extent of relegating economic consideration to the back ground. For instance, the Afrikaners of South Africa who moved away from the area of jurisdiction of the British in the nineteenth century "great trek" did not do so mainly for economic reasons. They left because of love for their freedom, as they could no longer stand the British rule, which did not give them free hand to deal with the Bantu. Thus, families and their properties moved without roads to a new settlement (Odeh, 2002:1). Migration can be influenced by any of the Pull and Push factors. No doubt, it is observed elsewhere that rural-urban migration is caused by the desire to attain western education and escape the 'slave-like' nature of village life (Ake, 1981).

Migration as a matter of fact is part and parcel of human existence. However, the great moving force in respect to this phenomenon was colonialism. Colonialism had its economic interest as the fore most and this informed the way certain policies affecting the lives of people were formulated and implemented. Firstly, its basic economic interest was the production of raw materials such as cocoa, timber, groundnut, beni seed, soya beans and cotton among other cash crops needed by the European industries (Faluyi, 1986:3). To achieve this objective, the colonial policies encouraged migration of people who were capable of producing these crops to areas of soil fertility that lay uncultivated. The people who migrated in view of such colonial circumstance have remained there and are today experiencing the realities of being tagged settlers (Abdulkadir 2014:28).

Just as migration all over the world often had consequences on the community receiving, as well as those sending away immigrants, so the population movement from various places to another affected both settlements. This is because, customs, modes of worship, cult rituals, and the paraphernalia of offices as well as other cultural practices affected the new environments (Losi 1967:1). For instance, the use of red cap by the traditional chiefs in Idah and Igalaland as a whole shows Igbo influence. Similarly, the presence of northern influence among communities in the southern Nigeria is the evidence of the cultural diffusion arising from trade contact, religious penetration or conquest by the Muslims. These same traits are remarkable in places like Idah, Ankpa, Anyigba, Dekina and other place in Igalaland which were invaded by the Nupes and Hausas in the 19th century (Idoko and Aikoye 2021:).

It is important to state that apart from the cultural content or influence of migration, population movements can also serve as agents or instruments of change and transformation of the whole aspects of land, racial, ethnic and linguistic compositions of settlement (Clifford 1966:55; Idoko 2007:19). Migrations can also be described as a catalyst in the development process as well as an agent of change among the sending or receiving communities. What obtains in cases of international or intercontinental migrations is also true of local or internal migrations, such as the movements or migrations, which formed the basis of the settlement of modern Idah. But apart from internal migrations, Idah also received migrants from the sea, particularly from Britain. Indeed, Idah has been the homestead of migrant settlers since inception (Idoko 2007:19). On the whole, various immigrants in Idah heralded remarkable changes in the structure of Idah's economy, and its social implications have helped in building a multi-ethnic society. In fact, social interactions between the host communities and the immigrants have been relatively peaceful and have contributed meaningfully to the general development of Idah town and Igalaland in general.

Historical Evolution of Migrant-Settlers in Idah

Hausa Settlers in Angwa and Ega

The first Hausa settlers in Idah were those in *Angwa*-Ayegba. They came into Idah during the reign of Ayegba Idoko, around1500 A.D (Idoko and Aikoye 2021). *Angwa,* which means a 'place of abode' in Hausa Language, is located on the bank of Inachalo River. The area is bounded to the west on the route linking Idah/Ogbogbo/Odolu road. On the northern part are Ubi-Egbe and GRA, which connect to Idah/Ajaka/Anyigba road. To the north-eastern part are Okuta-Eleche and a*ja*-Kayama, and to the south-west are Ofukolo and Sabon-Gari respectively. The Ofukolo is also occupied by some of these Hausa group. Hence, it is an extension of Angwa across the river.

These sets of Hausa settlers were the Islamic scholars from Bebeji in the present Kano State. They came to Idah on the invitation of Attah Ayegba *oma*-Idoko during the Igala/Apa (Jukun) War through one Mallam Ahmodu, a merchant from Bebeji (Idoko and Aikoye 2021). This period marked a watershed for the Igala because the independence of the kingdom was paramount for the Attah. It is important to stress that several scholars have documented much on the relationship that existed between the Igala and the Jukun (Idoko and Aikoye 2021). However, what is important to us in this work was the role played by Attah Ayegba through the instrumentality of guerilla war strategy deployed by the Bebeji's mallams by poisoning the Inachalo River against the Jukun soldiers. In fact, because of the spiritual prowess of Bebeji's clerics, Igala did not lose any of her soldiers in the battle against the Jukun. The success could not have come without Ayegba paying the

supreme price by sacrificing one of his loyal nieces, Omodoko to the gods of the land (Boston 1986:1; Idoko 2019:144-145; Idoko and Aikoye 2021). Shortly after the battle of Inachalo River, the independence of Igala was proclaimed in 15th century (Boston 1986; Abdulkadir 2014; Ukwede 2003; Achile 2010; Achoba 2015; Idoko 2019). Undoubtedly, the major features of Inachalo River till date were: first fishes in it cannot be consumed by anybody; it remained a sacred place and source of social cohesion for the Igala; and lastly Jukuns are still scared of its spiritual potency hence, they do not drink from the river.

After the war, Attah Ayegba felt the need to retain the mallams in his new independent kingdom, which made him to allocate this portion of land close to Inachalo River and named it after himself, *Agwa*-Ayegba. The decision to retained the mallams in Idah were among other things: to forestall future attacks by any external aggressors, particularly the Jukun against his newly independent state of Igala; secondly to contribute to the socio-political development of Idah through their constant interface with God on behalf of the Attah; to improve on the economic fortunes of the Igala kingdom through farming and trade; and finally to increase the military strength of the kingdom (Idoko and Aikoye 2021). In appreciation of their contributions to the peace and harmony of Igalaland, titles such as *Agbochi* or *Agba-Ochochi* (true Muslim), *Ochala* (errand chief) and *Oyado,* (liaison officer) were given in their honours. *Orata-Attah* 'the Igala Chief Eunuch' was appointed as their *Oyegba* 'custodian' to interface and hold them in trust for the Attah (Mamudu 2007).

One major cultural activity of these people was their *Ogani* festival – an annual dramatization of hunting and warfare in Idah. This practice was regarded as a show of allegiance to the Attah, and basically to usher in raining season, which marked the commencement of farming activities in Igalaland (Maichi 2012: 89). The Angwa Hausa settlers are made of nine clans – Oweye, Ebutu, Oli-aja, Otete, Ohiado, Ochede, Utoko, Oma-Odoko, and Ukwutubichi. Men in these clans have their salutations, *aakono,* a word, which was derived from the word, Kano. The celebration of *Ogani* festival was also extended to their counterparts in Ankpa. In fact, rituals, practices and celebrations were similar to that of Bebeji in Kano State. Indeed, one of the major impacts of the *Ogani* festival is that rain must fall in Idah at the end of the program (Maichi 2012:90-91).

Another group of Hausa settlers in Idah were those in Ega. Though, Ega was refer to as a fish community, but with growing interest of Attah Ayegba, which was due to the increasing values of the River Niger, the Aboko Ocheje, the Agaidoko Attah, the Omogbaje Attah and the Ewo clans were relocated to the area in order to protect this most important asset of the Igala. These clans therefore, became the first settlers of this area around the 17th century (Idoko 2012:67). Undoubtedly, protecting this important natural investment, the

River Niger was keen to Attah hence, his reason for these strong representations for revenue generation – to build a strong economy, territorial expansion and political self-determination. No doubt, the location of Igala along the River Niger made her to be more strategic in the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria, especially during the colonial period (Idoko 2012:69).

In fact, the location of Ega, which is closed to the River Niger made it to become an important commercial hub for both indigenes and settlers during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. No doubt, the tremendous increased in trade by the Europeans also encouraged more influx of people into the area, particularly Hausa, Yourba, Nupe and Kakanda, among others. This development up to the end of the 19th century made Ega community a melting pot of cultures and traditions. In fact, by 1800, the early settlers have sharpened the essential characteristics of this community and Idah metropolis in general. Interestingly, Hausa settlers were among the first groups that settled with natives at Ega as far back as the 18th century (Idoko and Aikoye 2021).

The first Hausa man to have settled in Ega was one Ibrahim Bako from Kano. He migrated purposely for commercial reason around 1811 (Audu 2007; Ahmodu 2007; Idoko and Aikoye 2021). Bako's contact with the Idah predated this period because he had an established trade relation with natives before he decided to settle finally. In fact, the high level of insecurity in Hausa land, which was occasioned by Islamic Jihad between 1804 and 1824, and the nature of peace and cooperation he enjoyed from indigenous people each time he visited were among the factors that propelled him to built his house and relocated part of his family to Idah (Audu 2007; Ahmodu 2007; Idoko and Aikoye 2021). Undoubtedly, it was through Bako that other Hausa merchants began to find interests in settling permanently at Ega for their various economic activities. Indeed, the coming of Alhaji Bako and other Hausas into Ega marked another important epoch in the history of growth and development in Idah during the period under review. From the survey of this area, there is no place in Ega that Hausa was not found. In fact, the most popular and most populated street in Ega is named after Kano State, which shows their influence in the area. In this street, every items of trade in Hausa land such as beads, caps, perfumes, foodstuffs and clothing materials among others were commonly found. No doubt, Kano Street was regarded as the heartbeat of not just Ega, but Idah Town because of trading and other social activities, which continued both day and night.

As a result of the influx of Hausas into Ega, there was a need to extend south-west of Idah, which led to the opening up of new settlements, such as Ichekene, Ede-Alaba, Ede-Adejoh, Ubiga-efu-Ebior and Ubiga-aja-Achema. The expansion have, no doubt, boosted food

production and enhanced industrial capacity that further improved the socio-political development of Idah community. Thereafter, these new communities soon began to witness further boost hence, interests of some natives and other settlers, particularly Nupe and Kakanda to relocate in order to enhance their agricultural production in the area (Idoko and Aikoye, 2021). In fact, Ichekene and part of Ede-Alaba became the centre of rice, maize, yam, cassava, sweet potatoes and pepper productions in Idah. Indeed, the coming of Hausa settlers was a blessing to the economic growth and development of Idah and its environs. Apart from their economic contribution, they also had their impacts on political and social development of Idah and Igalaland in general.

Nupe Settlers in Angwa-Jama'a and Ega

Another group of Muslim scholars who settled in Idah during the pre-colonial period were those in Angwa-Jama led by Ekele Abakpa(Olema, 2007). Drisu Shaibu remarked as follows:

> Ekele Abakpa relocated from Angwa-Ayegba to the area because of his personal relationship with the Attah Ogala Akogwu. His mother was an Edo settler of Ofiji in the metropolitan city of Idah. Ekele occupied this area until the arrival of Momodu Ikagbo, a Nupe stock who immigrated from Agaye in present day Niger Sate during the reign of Idoko Adegbe. As tradition demands, the heir to the throne of Attah Igala is not expected to reside in Idah. This tradition made Idoko Adegbe to relocate to Agaye where he came in contact with Momodu Ikagbo. Following their relationships in Nupeland, Momodu Ikagbo prophesized to him that he will one day ascended to the throne of his forefathers within 19 months. The prophecy became manifest after about 18 months, and Idoko Adegbe was crown the 13th Attah of Igala (Olema, 2007).

On the completion of his coronation ceremonies, Idoko Adegbe asked Momodu Ikagbo to relocate to Idah in order to consolidate their relationship, the request that Ikagbo honoured without hesitation. As a Muslim cleric, Idoko Adegbe asked Ekele Abagba who was also from Nupeland to host his friend in Angwa-Jama because of its proximity to the palace. In the course of time, Momodu Ikagbo requested from his friend, the Attah to allocate a portion of land in order for him to establish his farm own settlement. Without hesitation, Attah Idoko Adegbe granted his friend's request and asked him to choose any part of Igalaland land to settle. Momodu Ikagbo immediately moved some miles out of Idah and settled in a community around Ugwolawo area, the community that he named after himself "Ikagbo" (Olema, 2007). In his new settlement, his family members and friends

from Agaye joined him. Later, some of his Igala friends also took interest to settle with him because of the fertile nature of the land that was considered better for the cultivation of agricultural products such as yam, cocoyam and water yam. In fact, Ikagbo was considered a hunting ground in Igalaland. It was considered the home of antelopes, grass cutters and alligator lizards among other animals (Abdulkadir, 2014). Within a short time, Ikagbo became expanded because of the activities of indigenous hunters.

When Ekele Abagba died, there was a need for another Imam in the Palace and Momodu Ikagbo was asked to succeed him. As an Imam, he invited more of his Koranic students from both Ikagbo and Agaye to join him in the discharge of his spiritual duty to the palace and the kingdom. Among those he invited were: Ameh Achetigba, Ndanusa and Ogala Ogaji to mention the principal heads. Also, during the reign of Attah Ameh Agah, Ameh Ogba, from Bebeji in Kano, who had long settled in Igeliwa in Ankpa later, joined them. In fact, he later became an Imam in Angw-Jama'a (Olema, 2007). This group equally joined their counterparts in Angwa Ayegba during the *Ogani* annual cultural festival. Undoubtedly, the coming of Nupe settlers increased the population growth of Idah and influenced socio-political and economic development of Igalaland. Apart from their spiritual contribution to the Igala Kingdom, they were great farmers and hunters. In this manner, they have contributed to the production capacity of Igalaland through the provision of food for local consumption and exchange. Interestingly, they introduced sweet potatoes to Igalaland in 17th century (Olema. 2007).

Another group of settlers were the Nupes in Ega. This group probably may have settled in Idah during the waves of Usman dan'Fodio Jihad around 1812 (Audu, Liman, Ahmodu & Haruna 2007). Like their brothers in Angwa-Jama, Nupes in Ega moved into Idah with the aid of the Niger River, and secondly, it was due to the long relationships that existed between them (Ahmodu, 2007). Importantly, many authors and oral tradition have agreed that the Etsu Nupe Dynasty was founded by Tsuede, an Igala prince (Ukwude, 2002 Achile 2010, Achoba, & Haruna, 2007). Amodu Haruna who posited that apart from the existing relationship through Tsuede, Igala and Nupe were trade partners as far back as the reign of Attah Ayegba Idoko (Ukwude, 2002). This trade contact was basically on exchange of slaves and horses as well as other items which include ivory, beads, animal skin and food stuffs.

It is important to note that, the strength of Attah and his trade representatives on the Niger made Igala one of major powers in Nigeria during the pre-colonial and colonial periods (Ndaka, 2007). During this period, River Niger was one of the major routes in Nigeria hence, any group that controls it controlled the economy of that zone. Therefore, taking

the power of Attah and his representatives into consideration made Nupe traders to further cement the relationship that existed between them and the Igala. This was not only for them to have constant access to the river as one of the major economic routes, but also to have direct access to their trading partners in Igboland and other groups down the river. This, they realised and began to take abode in Idah, particularly in Ega, the river bank (Ndaka, 2007). Of course, in Ega, they met their Hausa brothers from the North; they equally inter-married with the Igala to ensure good and cordial relations with the indigenous people. With these, they began to trade more on the Niger under the protection of the Attah.

Following their acceptability in Idah, and being one of the riverine groups in Nigeria, Igalaland began to experience more influx of Nupes in Idah to expand their business. In fact, due to their population outburst in Idah, Attah Igala decided to give some portions of his in Itobe, Gbobe, Lokoja and Shintaku to them under the controls of Igala Chiefs. Others also preceded upland along the River Benue to settle among the Bassa Kwomu and the Bassa Nke in Gboloko, Oguma and Sheria in the present day Bassa Local Government Area of Kogi State for farming and trade. The emergence of Nupe in Igalaland marked another turning point in the economic prosperity of the kingdom. Their participation in agriculture, trade and industrial production, no doubt, increased production capacity that supported local consumption and exchange. In fact, the growing population as a result of their influx also strengthened the kingdom, which further led to the expansion of other parts of Igala kingdom. For instance, Nupe controlled substantial numbers of the total population in Itobe, Shintaku and Gbobe communities (Ndaka, 2007). In these communities, Nupe language has remained one of the official languages due to intermarriages among other factors. Nupe culture, particularly the mode of conducting marriage has become one of the cultures in Igalaland. Most of the rituals in Nupe land have been what Igala accepted as parts of the Muslim marriage in Igalaland. Such rituals include public bathing of a new bride, and *bondekei*, 'family's show of acceptance', among other rituals remain parts of Muslim marriage rites in Igalaland.

Also, having representative in the Igala political institution was another impact they had in Igalaland. In 1986 Attah Aliyu Obaje officially recognised Nupe settlers as one of the strong members of the kingdom. This development followed the appointment of Amodu Ndaka, Etsu Nupe Idah as a member of Attah's Advisory Council. With this recognition, Etsu Nupe Idah became one of the advisers of the Attah on some important matters, particularly those that concern Nupe settlers in Idah and those in other parts of Igalaland. From this period, Etsu Nupe Idah became part of decision-makers in Igalaland political system. This initiative further boosted relationship that existed between the Nupe and the

host community towards achieving overall interest of the development of Idah and Igalaland in general (Ndaka, 2007).

The Yoruba Settlers in Ega

Another group of settlers in Idah were the Yorubas. The first Yoruba groups that settled in Idah were those from Oshogbo in the present day Osun State, South-Western Nigeria. They immigrated following frequent political unrest in Yoruba land (Oloyede, 2007). Other groups of Yoruba settlers were the Ijeshas from Ilesha also in the present Osun State and who followed their Oshogbo brothers for the purposes of trade and other interactions. And the last groups of Yoruba immigrants were those from Ilorin in the present Kwara State. Some date this contact to 19th century and others date it to 20th century. But the present *Onu-ami-Yaji*, Korojo Salami Oloyede dates it to 20th century, particularly during the reign of Attah Obaje Ocheje in 1928 (Oloyede, 2007). Oloyede also stated as follows:

> The first Yoruba settler in Idah was Mallam Raji Olawole, a Muslim scholar who came on the invitation of Attah Obaje Ocheje in 1927. His invitation was based on two grounds, first to pray for the land and secondly to assist sick persons with herbs, particular those suffering from leprosy, the major epidemics killing tens of people in Igalaland between 1920s and 1947. Following his arrival and subsequent settlement, other Yoruba groups decided to troop into Idah for trade activity, especially in Kola nuts and textile among other products. With the growing influx of more Yoruba in Idah, Raji Olawole was made the first *Onu-ami-Yaji* in 1931 (Oloyode, 2007).

Yoruba settled largely in Ega, particularly they dominated the entire population of *'Ile-Oshogbo'*, *'Ojugbogbo-Amiyaji'* and Carriage areas. In fact, this community like Kano Road has a Yoruba name. This shows the density of the population in the area compared to other ethnic conglomeration. Like Hausa and Nupe settlers, the immigration of Yoruba was also facilitated by the Niger River.

Since their immigration into Idah, Yoruba settlers have been contributing to the socio-economic and political development of Idah. Their contributions, especially in the area of health provision have received commendations from the indigenous people. Undoubtedly, Yoruba alternative health practitioners in Idah have done much in solving the health issue of Idah people, particularly children. In his words of appreciations to their contribution, Oloyede as stated as thus:

> Most times various ailments that could not be resolved in hospitals in Idah, Lokoja and Abuja were returned back to us, the Yoruba as last resorts. With the intervention of God most of our patients, no matter the degree of their ailments got their healings through the Yoruba traditional health practitioners in Idah (Oloyode, 2007).

Apart from health, significant numbers of Yoruba also participated in agricultural production as an added occupation in Idah. They were small farm holder farmers cultivating largely vegetables such as pepper, tomatoes and variety of edible green leaves considered immune booster or nutritional diets of Idah people. They were also in small and medium scale businesses and their major articles of trade include beads, kola nuts and totem items among other items used for obsequies ceremonies or to propitiate the gods. In fact, despite the involvement of few Igala women in this trade, significant numbers of Igala women traders depended largely on their Yoruba counterparts for their supplies of Yoruba articles of trade, which they got from Ilorin, Oshogbo and Ilesha to mention but few. Undoubtedly, Yoruba settlers have been relatively peaceful and had maintained good friendly relationship with the Igala. In fact, their involvement in the distribution of totem items has helped the indigenous people to maintained constant relationship between them and their death ancestors through constant sacrifices (Ahmodu, 2007).

Worthy of their roles in Idah was in the area of thrift society. Igala refer to it as *Egu* system and Yoruba called it *esusu.* The system had the widest recognition and acceptability among the Igala traditional economic system. William Bascom (Bascom, 1952) and Falola (Falola, 1993) has described this as "a fund to which a group of individuals make a fixed contribution of money at a fixed intervals, which the total amount contributed by the entire group is assigned to each of the members in rotation". This practice started from the pre-colonial Igala society and remained efficient till date. The Yoruba settlers did not only come to improve on the existing one, but brought a significant improvement for efficiency and better productivity for the Igala traders, which they achieved through trust, integrity and prudency. Indeed, the involvement of Yoruba settlers in this regard was significant as it aided economic growth and development of Igalaland during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods.

Kakanda Settlers in Ega

Another group of settlers in Idah were the Kakandas. The first Kakanda in Idah was Ndaji Muhammed who settled at Ega because of the nature of his craft and business. The group migrated from Lampai in present Niger State between 1948 and 1949 during the reign of Attah Ameh Oboni the Great (Muhammad & Kakanda, 2007). Unlike every other settlers,

Kakanda group came to Idah in search of greener pasture through the River Niger route. On their arrival at Idah, the people, particularly the Attah welcomed them because of their perceived importance to the kingdom, especially in the transport sector. It is however, important to note that, the major means of transportation was the sea rout, hence, the need to improve the sector through mass production of canoes to ease transportation of goods and people across the Niger. Apart from movement of people and goods, mass production of canoe also means increase in fishing activities in Igalaland since Igala was endowed with abundant rivers and streams. Equally important was the fact that their presence in Idah was the means of breaking monopoly of Niger-Delta's canoe builders who before this period controlled the business. Hence, the major reason for their acceptability by the Attah Ameh Oboni (Haruna, 2007).

In fact, Ndaji was overwhelmed by the show of love and acceptance from the Igala, which encouraged him to invite more of his craftsmen to join him in Idah town for greater efficiency and service delivery to his host community. Within a short time, Kakanda population increased tremendously due to grave desire for boats and other service therein. In fact, due to their modes of greetings and show of respects, Igala willingly gave out their daughters' hands in inter-marriage to the Kakanda. Undoubtedly, this enhanced the level of inter-group relations between Igala and the Kakanda, which further encouraged others to migrate to Idah. Apart from boat making, Kakanda were also involved in agriculture and trade. Like their counterparts, they were involved in the cultivation of staple foods such as rice, beans, corn, cassava, millet, guinea corn, and yam. They were also involved in fishing activities. In fact, they brought a significant improvement to the fishing industry of Igalaland. Also, trade formed part of their occupation in Idah. Many of them, particularly women later formed the larger population of fish trade in Igalaland (Idoko, 2007). Indeed, Kakanda women were regarded best when it came to fish smoking in Idah. They also traded significantly in grains and items of luxury.

As part of their occupations, Kakanda rendered services to the Igala. Since, they built canoes; they also transported traders and their goods from one location to another. No doubt, their contributions to the economic and socio-political development cannot be overemphasized. Undoubtedly, the importance of transportation to every economy remains crucial to its fast growth and Igala utilized the advantage of Kakanda canoe builders to grow its economic potential, particularly during the colonial period (Idoko, 2012).

The Edo Settlers in Ofiji

Iji means 'dried wood'. *Ofiji* therefore means "the people that settled under a dried tree". The Edo settlers came into Idah on the invitation of the Attah Ayegba around 15th century. They were invited principally for the production of iron instruments, particularly war weapons (Idoko, 2007). Attah Ayegba took the decision immediately he defeated the Akuka of Wukari in Idah/Jukun War of 1616 in order to build a strong and formidable army that repel any external aggression, especially the defeated Jukun brothers ((Ukwude, 2002 Achile 2010, Achoba, 2015 & Idoko, 2012). Due to this singular fact, the Edo settlers were accorded greater respect in the palace and attained highest position among the entire immigrant settlers in Idah during the pre-colonial period (Idoko, 2012).

Edo settlers were group of blacksmiths from Ogbogbodi, Ugbatalimi and Atayigo communities of the present Edo State. They specialized in the production of war weapons and agricultural implements as well as kitchen tools (Okwoli, 2012). They considered their occupation sacred, which made them to demand for an isolated area in Idah to practice their craft more efficiently. Though Attah Ayegba was not willing to allow them move out of the palace, but after a careful consideration, he decided to allocate a portion of land not too far from the palace for closer collaboration and easy monitoring. After settling down and knowing enormous task ahead of them, they went into the production of bowls and arrows. These they concentrated until they developed the war arsenals for the military might and hunting purpose of Igala kingdom. These materials were produced form stone and fashioned into different shapes and sizes as farm implements, which also improved agricultural output within and outside the kingdom.

In fact, because of the quality of their products, O. N. Njoku regarded Idah as one of the major producers of iron instrument in Nigeria during the pre-colonial period (Njoku, 2001). This recognition made Attah Ayegba to increase their status in Idah with a title, *Onu Ohiji* with a salutation *Ebije* (iron) to their leaders. Apart from this royal title, there were also included into the Attah Royal Courts and later member of the Attah Royal Council (Njoku, 2001). These royal recognition made them automatic member of the decision making of the kingdom, especially the decision that has to do with planning and execution of wars as well as the expansionist program of the Igala kingdom. In fact, other titles such as *Omachi Onu Ohiji* and *Ochala Onu Ohiji* were added to them by the Attah to further motivate them for more service delivery for the Igala. Within a short time Igala became one of the powerful kingdom along the River Niger because of its military might. Apart from weapons of war, they produced other iron tools for agricultural production and house utensils such as hoes, cutlasses and knives among other important instrument meant for local use and exchange (Okwoli, 2007 &. Idoko, 2012) No doubt, the activity of Edo

settlers in Idah positioned Idah to be one of the supplies of iron instruments in Nigeria. Apart from the war weapons and agricultural instruments, they were also involved in agricultural production. Edo settlers cultivated yam, maize, beans, cassava, beans, guinea corn, millet and melon. These products were produced for consumption and exchange.

The Igbo Settlers in Sabon-Gari

During the pre-colonial period, River Niger was one of the major factors that connected Igala and with their Igbo counterparts. They traded among themselves using the River Niger as a route. However, some Igbo groups from Nsukka, Aguleri and Umuleri up to Enugu used land route to entered Idah for various political, economic and social reasons. Authors, such as Abdulkadir, Ukwude, Achile and Achoba among others have also agreed that these communities were parts of the vassal states of the Igala kingdom during the pre-colonial period (Okwoli & Usman, 2007). Another factor that encouraged Igbo to have immigrated to Idah was as a result of the political development that took place during the colonial administration. At this point, Igala Division was divided into two – the Northern part (Ankpa and Dekina districts) was retained in the Northern Province and the Southern part (Idah Native Authority) was merged with Onitsha Province by the British colonial administration. This the British did to reduce the power of Attah Ogwuche Akpa (1911-1919) (Ukwude, 2002 Achile 2010, Achoba, & Idoko, 2019). Despite the aged long relationship that exist between Igala and the Igbo, the later development encouraged more Igbo to settle in Idah, particularly during the reign of Attah Atabor Ijomi (1919-1926). During his reign as the Attah, Idah-Nsukka road was opened by community efforts. In fact, with this construction of this important land rout in 1924, the economic and socio-political ties between Idah and Igboland was further improved hence, more influx of Igbo into Idah town (Okwoli & Usman, 2007).

From the early period of their settlements at Idah, many Igbo decided to settle in Ega. Though it was not comfortable for them due to some factors, but because of attitude of some northern settlers, which was a result of population outburst of the area. However, with the opening up of Idah-Nsukka rout, another community opened up, which the Hausas nicknamed as *Sabon-Gari,* 'a New Town' (Idoko, 2007:64). As a result of the development in road infrastructure, more Igbo traders, particularly the middlemen decided to build their residential houses in *Sabon-Gari*, which became a another commercial hub of Idah. Following this development, the indigenous people who later took interest in the nature of Igbo kind of trade began to relocate to *Sabon-Gari*. Hence, within a very short time *Sabon-Gari* became a melting pot of people cultures with convergence of different ethnic groups.

In addition to the contributions of Igbo and other ethnic groups, *Sabon-Gari* also received visitors from outside Nigeria. In fact, British government played a serious role in the development of *Sabon-Gari*. No doubt, the activities of the British transformed the area to be one of the most developed communities in Idah Town. During this period, more than half of the land in *Sabon-Gari* was acquired by the Igala Native Authority for future development of Idah, and parts of it were later handed over to various missions in Idah such as the Roman Catholic, Qua-Ibo Mission and Anglican Mission. Of course, *Sabon-Gari* became the educational centre of Idah, with the establishment of schools, Idah Club, Township Stadium, churches and hospitals among other infrastructures. With these institutions all located in this area, staff of the Igala Native Authority and teachers also took interests to erect their residential buildings in *Sabon-Gari* to enable them get closer to their offices and duty posts (Okwoli & Usman 2007).

By 1930, more Igbo traders and artisans took interest in relocating to Idah. This was due to various economic opportunities and access road from Igbo to Idah. Artisans and skilled individuals such as carpenters, bricklayers, mechanics, bicycle repairers, clock repairers and tailors among others also took their turn in these immigration exercises. This was made possible because of the enabling environment Idah was endowed with during this period under review. Also, Igbo blacksmiths joined their brothers in *Sabon-Gari* for the production of iron tools and implements for local uses and exchange.

No doubt, the coming of Igbo to Idah was another important watershed in the economic growth and development of Idah Town. The tailors, blacksmiths, bricklayers and mechanics among others improved the social lives of the indigenous people. Many Igala growing adults were recruited as apprentices of various arts and crafts introduced by Igbo settlers. Indeed, the act of sawing clothes with the use of sawing machines was one of the major milestones in the history of Idah. Also, construction of houses using blocks was another impact of Igbo settlers on Idah. Finally, the introduction of Igbo language was quite significant as it enhanced inter-group relationship between the Igbo and the Igala in Idah Town.

Conclusion

The influxes of migrant settlers have, no doubt, affected every facet of Idah lives being it political, socio-cultural and economic. In fact, immigrant settlers changed the course of history of the area to the extent that Igala history cannot say to be complete without the mentioning of the contributions of settlers. Indeed, Idah became one of the cosmopolitan cities in North/Central Nigeria as far back as the 16th century. Their contributions, which cut across socio-cultural, political and economy, have developed Igala potentials to

compete with other communities in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria and beyond. Undoubtedly, both the push and the pull factors encouraged immigrations into Idah. However, enabling environment, which was occasioned by its geography landscape, and hospitality of the indigenes played more role in the movement of these settlers to Idah. Ultimately, River Niger also played a more prominent role in the immigration of people from their places of birth to settle in Idah and other communities along it.

As it has affected most urban communities in Nigeria, the concomitant effects of immigration also have effect on Idah metropolis. Undoubtedly, settlers have contributed to enhancement of agriculture and trade, which boosted the economic activity of the area. The introduction of Islam and Koranic education, no doubt, improved literacy level among the people, which significantly enhanced interactions and social awareness as well as reduced immorality to certain degree in Idah. In fact, settler's cultures have been highly felt in the area of politics. The various groups came with their cultural backgrounds, which have influenced the Igala political structure. However, despite their positive impacts, the attendant consequences of over bloated population never go unnoticed. Crime rate went high, immorality among youths became widespread, and waste management became one of the major social problems confronting the Idah Local Government Area. In all, since their emergence in Idah, settlers have maintained peace and tranquility with their host community.

References

Abdulkadir, M. S. *An Economic History of Igalaland Central Nigeria, 1896-1939*. Zaria, A.B.U. Press, 2014.

Achile, J. B. *Igala People of the Niger-Benue Confluence of Nigeria*. Kaduna, Mustard Seed Publications, 2010.

Achoba F. "A History of the Igala People C1100-1900". PhD Thesis Department of History, University of Ibadan., 2015.

Ahmodu, G. I. (*Onu* Idokoliko Atta), 53, in his palace at Ega, Idah, 18/4/2007.

Ahokegh, A. F. "Migration in the Benue Basin and the Indigeneship/Settler Question" in *African Journal of economy and Society* Vol. 10, 1 and 2, 2010, pp. 216-233.

Ake C. *Political Economy of Africa*. London, Longmans, 1981.

Audu B., 83, farmer, Idah on May 30, 2007.

Bascom, W. R. "The Esusu, A Credit Institution of the Yoruba" in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute,* Vol. 82, 1952.

Boston, J. S. *The Igala Kingdom*. London, University Press, 1986.

Clifford, J. J. *Reading in the Sociology Migration*. London, Pergamon Press, 1966.

Falola T. "My Friend the Shylock, Money-Lenders and their Clients in Southwestern Nigeria" in *Journal of African History* Vol. 34, 1993, pp. 401-422.

Faluyi, E. K. "Migrants and the Social-Economic Development of Lagos from the Earliest Times to 1880". A paper presented at the Conference on the History of the people Lagos State, held at the University of Lagos, April 23 to 25 1986.

Idoko, A. O. 59 years old, Retired Civil Servant and a Politician, GRA Idah, 18/5/2012.

Idoko, I. A and Aikoye, B. A. "Reassessment of Hausa Cultural Identity and its Socio-Political and Economic Impact on Idah up to 2010" in *RIMA International Journal of Historical Studies (RIJHIS)* Vol. 5, 9, 2021, pp.

----------. "Igala Women in Trade and Politics, 1880-1960". PhD Dissertation, Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, 2019.

---------. "A History of Markets in Idah Community, 1500-1980". M.Phil. Dissertation, Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, 2012.

--------, "Women in the Pre-Colonial Economy of Igalaland" in *Anyigba Journal of Arts and Humanities* Vol. 12, 2012, pp. 127-141.

----------, "Immigrants and the Economy of Idah Up to Colonial Period". B. A. Project, Department of History and International Studies, Kogi State University, Anyigba, 2007.

Losi, J. B. *History of Lagos*. Lagos, Educational Press, 1967.

Mamudu J. (Orata Atta), 52, Teacher, in his Palace at Owoli-Apa, Idah, 14/4/2007.

Miachi, T. A. *The Incarnate Being Phenomenon in African Culture: Anthropological Perspectives on the Igala of North-Central Nigeria*. Ibadan, Kraft Books, 2012.

Muhammed, I. N. (*Onu* Kakanda), 81, Canoe Builder, Ega, 13/7/2007.

Ndaka, A. (*Onu* Nupe), 76 years old, Trader, at Ega on May 6, 2007.

Njoku, O. N. *Economic History of Nigeria, 19th – 21st Centuries.* Nsukka, Great Ap Express Publishers, 2001.

Ode I. "Issues in Migration Study" in *Society,* Vol. 1, 2002, p. 1.

Okwoli, P. E., 78, Historian and a Retired Teacher, Sabon-Gari, 18/4/2007.

Olema, D. S., 79, Farmer, at Idah, 30/5/2007.

Oloyede, K. S. (*Onu* Yoruba), 58 years old, Idah, (Trader), Ega, 18/7/2007.

Ukwude, J. N. *History of the Igala Kingdom, C 1534-1854: A Study of Political and Cultural Integration in the Niger Benue Confluence Area of Nigeria.* Kaduna, Arewa House, 2003.

Usman, Y. B., 61, Farmer, Sabon-Gari, 18/4/2007.