

# THE CITY STATE OF IBADAN

Texts and Contexts



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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Igbo in Ibadan: Migration, Integration and Challenges

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Ezebunwa E. Nwokocha

#### Introduction

The Igbo of southeastern Nigeria is the most migratory group in the country and can be found in all parts of the world. Although it is difficult to trace the origin of Igbo migration, the end of the Nigerian Civil War marked a new era in the massive Igbo-movement out of their homeland. Factors such as high fertility and corresponding population density, limited physical space, pervasive poverty and the quest for survival are linked to out-migration among the people. Using primary and secondary data, this paper examines the historical account of the migration of Igbo into Ibadan, and their socioeconomic, cultural and political activities as a way of understanding their level of integration in the city. It also highlights their contributions to the development of Ibadan, their peculiar challenges and the factors that sustain primordial linkages.

#### Background

The Igbo of Nigeria are known, among others, for their migratory prowess, and are found in all parts of Nigeria and beyond. The people are easily identifiable by their resilience and adaptability to situations. However, Olutayo<sup>1</sup> had pointed out that the quest for survival in an increasingly monetizing economy coupled with sparse land resources, is responsible for the high rate of migration among the Igbo. Limited availability of land in Igbo communities is largely a function of high population density driven by pronatalist ethos that is sustained by multiple socio-cultural

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<sup>1</sup> O. A. Olutayo, "The Igbo Entrepreneur in the Political Economy of Nigeria", *African Study Monographs*, 1999, 20(3): 147-174.

beliefs and practices. For instance, Isiugo-Abanihe and Nwokocha<sup>2</sup> revealed that the *ewu-ukwu* custom, which is celebrated in parts of Igboland to honour a woman after her tenth child is not only perceived as an index of accomplishment, but also as a motivator for prolific childbearing. Nwokocha<sup>3</sup> had identified male child preference, which is a variant of patriarchy, as a phenomenon that not only contributes disproportionately to high fertility, but also polygyny and by implication, large family size. Clearly, high population density is mainly responsible for the high migration experience in Igbo communities. Also, limited social and economic opportunities are strong motivating factors for Igbo migration.

As Nwolise<sup>4</sup> observed, since 1970, there is hardly any meaningful federal presence in Igbo states. This level of marginalization coupled with insecurity of lives and property, joblessness, hunger and starvation are sufficient justifications for permanent or semi-permanent geographic movement of the Igbo away from their homeland. The suffocating economic and political effects of the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War on the easterners, especially the Igbo, have also been pointed out. The east is an ecological and economical wasteland from which victims stream to other viable areas of Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> It was noted that even though the Igbo are known for their migratory tendencies, believing that travelling bestows more knowledge on an individual than old age, the tendency was amplified by the Nigerian Civil War and the attendant loss of sources of livelihood within the region.

Migrants of Igbo extraction are credited with more sustained primordial linkages than any other group in Nigeria; notwithstanding their level of acculturation at their respective destinations, they still maintain contact with home, although the regularity varies among individuals. For example, there are no Igbo located anywhere outside Nigeria as aborigines of other areas. This is unlike the

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<sup>2</sup> U.C. Isiugo- Abanihe and E.E. Nwokocha, "Prevalence and Consequences of Ewu-Ukwu Custom in Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria", *The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 2008; 6 (53): 70.

<sup>3</sup> E.E. Nwokocha, "Male Child Syndrome and the Agony of Motherhood among the Igbo of Nigeria", *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 2007a, 33(1): 219-234.

<sup>4</sup> O.B.C. Nwolise, "Why Nigeria's Greatness Is Being Delayed: Ndigbo, Nigeria's Political Economy and the 2007 Presidency Issue", A paper presented at the 2003 Igbo day celebration in Ibadan, Nigeria; 2004.

<sup>5</sup> J. Uwalaka, *The Struggle for an Inclusive Nigeria: Igbo To Be or Not to Be? – A Treatise on Igbo Political Personality and Survival in Nigeria*. (Enugu: SNAAP Press, 2003).

situation where there are millions of Hausa in Niger, Chad, Senegal, Mali, etc., and Yoruba in Benin Republic. However, there are millions of Igbo sons and daughters found in different parts of the world.

Rather, in the spirit of *onye agbala nwa nne ya*, which literally means *do not abandon your brother/sister*, the Igbo form "town union" associations (TUAs) at their destinations to cater for one another. As Onwuka<sup>6</sup> observed, perhaps more than any other ethnic group, the Igbo contributed to intensifying rural-urban migration and emigration beyond the borders of Nigeria. The benefits of belonging to such associations range from emotional and psychological support for members in times of difficulty, financial aid, settling disputes among individuals and subgroups, to serving as an avenue for social interaction and exchange of ideas.<sup>7</sup> Honey and Okafor<sup>8</sup> had further pointed out the relevance of hometown associations, when they noted:

... serve as instruments for coping with a changing environment . . . they also provide means of surviving amidst the vicissitudes of life at a time of great flux and uncertainty . . . they allow people to maintain their traditions. In addition, they can become centres of innovation, especially for modernization of the hometown. They do this by assuring that the town has the instruments of modernity – among them are schools and medical facilities, as well as the kinds of infrastructure that are available to people elsewhere.

Thus, Igbo town unions, in addition, undertake an overview function relating to informal supervision of activities not only of members, but also other relevant individuals and groups. The direct consequence of such subtle supervisory activity is that it largely constrains the Igbo within prescribed norms and values. In a way, it discourages frivolous behaviours, especially among young people, many of whom ordinarily would have been persuaded to take advantage of the anonymity that inheres in urban centres to partake in crime. Criminological and urban studies have

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<sup>6</sup> R.I. Onwuka, "The Political Economy of the Igbo", Papers presented at the 1989 Ahiajoku Lecture Colloquium, 1989, p. 7-17.

<sup>7</sup> C.A. Onwumechili, "Igbo Enwe Eze?", 2000 *Ahiajoku Lecture*. Owerri: Imo State Ministry of Information and Culture, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> R. Honey and S.I. Okafor, "Territorial Conflict in Jurisdictional Transformation" in R. Honey and S.I. Okafor, editors, *Hometown Associations: Indigenous Knowledge and Development in Nigeria* (London: Intermediate Technology Pub., 1998).



identified a connection between urban environment and deviant behaviours.<sup>9</sup> Due to the perceived importance of such home associations, it was noted that it is almost compulsory for the Igbo in diaspora; it serves as the foremost agent of orientation on urban life for new migrants. Thus, town unions strive to help the people maintain a balance between traditional values and diversity, and the concomitant relativism in urban centres across Nigeria and beyond. Indeed, attributes such as self-reliance, courage, perseverance, hard work, goal setting, accountability and innovativeness among the Igbo have been highlighted.<sup>10</sup>

Theoretically, migration and integration among the Igbo can be explained through the functionalist perspective. The theory examines the role that parts play in sustaining the whole. In this case, how the migration of the Igbo out of Igboland contributes positively to stabilizing these migrants on one hand, and the maintenance of society on the other.<sup>11</sup> Clearly, emigration to other locations due to limited physical space, relative to population size and the scorching economic environment make these migrations functional. In the short-run, out-migration balances out the high fertility regime among the Igbo, while in the long run remittances, both material and otherwise, are used for the development of Igbo communities. Consequently, Igbo marginalization, though well established in the literature,<sup>12</sup> recourse to self-help development strategy (SDS) has accounted for bridging the infrastructural gap between Igbo communities and those in other major ethnic locations in Nigeria.

The dysfunctional aspects of migration among the Igbo include those related to enculturation of the migrants into the prevailing norms and values at their

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<sup>9</sup> A.I. Opara, *Criminology and Penology*. (Owerri: Cel-Bez and Co, 1998); S. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control: A Sociological History*, 2nd edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Onwumechili, 2000; C.C. Nwachukwu, "Labour and Employment in the Traditional Igbo Society", Paper presented at the 1989 Ahiajoku Lecture Colloquium, 1989; 1-6.

<sup>11</sup> M. Haralambos, M. Holborn and R. Heald, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, 6th edition, (London: Collins, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> O.B.C. Nwolise and C.P. Olebunne, "Ndigbo: the Dwarfing of a Giant and Consequences on Nigeria, Africa, Blacks in the Diaspora and Humanity", 2010; J. Uwalaka, "The Struggle for an Inclusive Nigeria: Igbo To Be or Not To Be? – A treatise on Igbo Political Personality and Survival in Nigeria" (Enugu: SNAAP Press, 2003); C.C. Nwachukwu, "Labour and Employment in the Traditional Igbo Society", Paper presented at the 1989 Ahiajoku Lecture Colloquium, 1989, p. 1-6.

destinations, to the extent that traditional symbols and sentiments are largely abandoned. Another major consequence of out-migration is that of insecurity of lives and properties of the Igbo in the face of ethnic and/or religious disturbances. As Uwalaka<sup>13</sup> had noted, for whatever reason, the Igbo people have been made targets of internal terrorism and cleansing which characterize them as endangered species. Internal terrorism against the Igbo has been reported in Kano, Kaduna and Plateau states, among others. Adopting social science research techniques, the present study specifically examines the Igbo in Ibadan in respect to in-migration, adaptation, challenges and contributions to the socioeconomic, cultural and political life of the city, known for its very large size.

### **Materials and methods**

Data collection for the study involved both secondary and primary sources. While secondary information was generated through archival materials and extant literature, primary data were elicited through the triangulation of in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and unobtrusive observation. Eleven IDIs were conducted among a cross-section of the Igbo people residing in the city. A total of six male and five female were interviewed to reflect gender balance. The inclusion criteria were for the intended respondents to have resided in Ibadan for at least ten years and a willingness to participate in the study. Given the historical dimension of some of the issues, it was expedient to engage relatively knowledgeable Igbo people in the IDIs. That way, rare, as well as serendipitous insights were generated. In addition, two Yoruba respondents were interviewed for the purposes of comparability. Thus, a total of thirteen IDIs were conducted.

The selection of FGD participants was not based on any specific criterion. This was necessitated by the need to involve Igbo people of different ages, occupations and other categories the discussion. In all, seven FGD sessions were conducted with groups such as adolescents, male traders, market women, academics, civil servants, opinion leaders and unemployed youths. Each discussion group comprised homogeneous participants in line with rules guiding the conduct of FGDs.<sup>14</sup>

Non-participant observation was one of the methods adopted for the

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<sup>13</sup> Uwalaka, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> U.C. Isiugo-Abanihe and O. Obono, "The Use of Focus Group Discussion in Nigerian Social Research" in U.C. Isiugo-Abanihe, A.N. Isamah and J.O. Adesina, editors, *Current and Perspectives in Sociology*, (Lagos: Malthouse, 2002).

study.<sup>15</sup> The influence of beliefs, values, customs, arts and the resulting practices — all subsumed in culture as a complex whole — on people's behaviours, need not be underestimated and can be deeply appreciated by observing them uninhibitedly. Different engagements of the Igbo in Ibadan such as socioeconomic activities, greeting patterns, modes of dressing for major events and family values, among others, were observed.

Ethical considerations were emphasized throughout the fieldwork. The consent of both the respondents and participants was sought prior to their participation in the study. In addition, their confidentiality was guaranteed to the extent that information can never be traced to these participants. With respect to the principle of beneficence, the advantages accruable to these respondents for participation in the study were also fully communicated to these participants.

Data analysis involved the use of ethnographic summaries and content analysis. The procedure began with the translation and transcription of tape recordings of both IDIs and FGDs. These were followed by the examination and, later, thematic isolation of various responses that threw light into the study objectives. By adopting this method, responses from group discussions and in-depth interviews were imported into presentation and discussion on the merit of their applicability to relevant issues.

## **Results and discussion**

Literature on the Igbo people in Ibadan is scanty; relying mainly on primary sources of information on their migration, integration and challenges, thus became expedient both for the possibility of generating serendipitous data and empathy on the situation. Results of the study are presented schematically to cover major aspects. Data from the three primary sources are presented jointly in examining some important activities among the Ibadan-based Igbo.

### **On migration**

We stated earlier that migration is a persistent phenomenon among the Igbo. This section however focuses specifically on patterns of migration among the Igbo in Ibadan. Responses indicate several patterns, some of which varied by periods. According to a 72-year old Igbo trader:

In our days, most of us travelled straight to Ibadan from various villages in the east to undertake apprenticeship for different trades...

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<sup>15</sup> E.E. Nwokocha, "Maternal Crises and the Role of African Men: The case of a Nigerian Community" *African Population Studies* 2007b, 22(1):39-62.

we were really focussed and were not involved in frequent change of city of residence... these days what we find is that some of our young people first get to Lagos and only come to reside in Ibadan when they are unable to cope in the megacity... this generation is characterized by people who want quick money. When the money does not come forth quickly some of them continue their movement to places like Osogbo, Shagamu, Ogbomoso among others just after few years of business activities in Ibadan ... there have been instances where these people still returned to Ibadan to begin life anew (IDI).

This clearly indicates generational differences in the migration attitude and behaviour between the old and young Igbo residents in Ibadan. Two patterns are easily identifiable from the above response. First, from a rural community to Lagos and/or Ibadan, and second, an urban community to Ibadan and other urban centres. The attraction that Lagos holds for intended migrants and the delusion and powerlessness that the city may eventually conjure for these migrants have already been noted by Obono<sup>16</sup> and Nwokocho.<sup>17</sup> Younger Igbo traverse places in search of greener pastures in order to cope with challenging and changing times. As one of them noted, *anaghi ano ofu ebe ekiri nmanwu*, meaning literally that ideally one does not watch a masquerade only from a spot. The implication is that the spectator is not only safer moving about as the masquerade hovers for its prey, but also has a better view of the masquerade in its several activities. The respondent, in further buttressing the point, stated:

...times have changed and we need to step up activities. Our fathers did not have as much responsibility as we do today. There is pressure to buy a car, look good, and live in a decent apartment among others... so we cannot afford to waste our time in a particular place when you are not sure it is your destined location. You must go to places to

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<sup>16</sup> O. Obono, "A Lagos Thing: Rules and Realities in the Nigerian Megacity" *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 2007; 8(2): 32-37.

<sup>17</sup> E.E. Nwokocho, "Engaging the Burden of Rural-Urban Migration in a Non-Regulatory System: The Case of Nigeria", A paper presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> Berlin Roundtables on Migration into Cities, October 25-27, Imgard coninx stiftung, Berlin Germany, 2007c; E.E. Nwokocho, "Lagos and Lagosians: Deconstructing the Contradictions of a Megacity", A paper submitted for the Berlin Roundtables on Transnationalities, Identities and Governance, Imgard Coninx Stiftung, Berlin, Germany, 2008.

discover destiny and potential. Because of the attitude of our parents, some of them are quite poor, while it took others donkey years to break through financially. Hustling is not bad provided it is undertaken within the purview of legitimacy.

While we agree that poverty among some parents may be linked to indolence and inability to adjust sufficiently to prevailing socioeconomic currents, it is difficult to establish a relationship between affluence/financial breakthrough and frequent change of place of residence. We would rather argue that foresight and prudence in understanding the economic environment and efficient management of resources are more critical than the issue of location. In addition, the view that more responsibilities are undertaken in the contemporary times than in the earlier times is largely invalid for one main reason. In all ages, taste, fashion, technology and motivations are drivers of social pressure and corresponding individual responsibility. As such, expectations and responsibilities in human epochs have always tallied with relevant epochal ideals and sentiments. To buttress this, in earlier times, fertility levels were high and parents did not have to worry about the education of their children. The primary concern was achieving a large family size; illiteracy was a norm.

In contemporary society, fertility levels have dropped and will likely continue to drop since the cost of training children is astronomically high and thus, a source of pressure on parents and guardians.

Another pattern of migration among the Igbo in Ibadan that respondents readily identify, relates to the number of family and/or household members that migrate in the short or long run. Virtually all the respondents stated that for unmarried migrants, spatial relocation is a simple individual activity. For married migrants, however, such change of residence is preceded by a sequence of decision-making processes. According to most FGD participants, married migrants usually relocate to Ibadan with their family members, as accommodation is easier to find there than in Lagos. While this seems to be the case, few IDI respondents noted that in some situations, migrants came with some family members and not others and, that way, maintain strong links with their place of origin. For others, migrating alone or with few family members is a strategy for not putting all one's eggs in one basket. An IDI respondent further stated:

a wise person, ordinarily, should first move into a location to fully understand the environment before inviting his/her family over; it would be most terrible for an entire family to get stranded in an urban

centre like Ibadan, where it may be difficult to find somebody that may be willing to accept the responsibility of catering for, what I will refer to as, a crowd.

Nwokocho<sup>18</sup> observed that the extended family ethos among Nigerians, as is also the case for most other Africans, explains the seemingly mandatory African hospitality, although grudges may develop towards the gate crashing migrants from the friends and relations who accommodate them. Such magnanimity may be difficult to maintain when help-seekers stretch family and household resources beyond acceptable limits.

### **Socioeconomic activities of the Igbo in Ibadan**

The Igbo in Ibadan are involved in a catalogue of socioeconomic activities. In terms of affiliations, respondents noted that most individuals belong to TUAs which exist at three levels. Virtually all the IDI respondents and FGD participants agreed that such affiliations are essential both as an avenue of social interaction and emotional support in times of crises. One of the participants stated:

Usually a full-fledged Igboman or daughter is expected to join his/her community association in Ibadan and attend meetings monthly... activities of members are guided by a constitution/bye law. Hosting of meetings is normally on the basis of individual membership; due to the rotation of hosting-responsibility, members readily become acquainted with the places of residence of others. The second level of association involves the coming together of Igbo from a local government area (LGA) in southeast Nigeria to form a union... belonging to this larger group requires that an individual be a member of his/her community association; most times the meetings take place every second Sunday of the month... hosting is undertaken by communities rather than individuals due to the size of membership. The third level is almost as large as a senatorial district and meetings take place every third Sunday of each month.

For an individual that belongs to the three associations, meeting days provide an opportunity for social interaction and review of development efforts. In addition, such unions reinforce participants' cultural norms, values, beliefs and practices. Apart from the membership of TUAs, respondents noted that some of the Igbo in

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<sup>18</sup> E.E. Nwokocho, 2007c.

Ibadan also belong to social groups such as neighbourhood associations and market unions.

With regard to economic activities, the respondents/participants generally agreed that the Igbo in Ibadan partake in virtually all forms of businesses and occupations. However, trading was identified as the major activity among the people, which an FGD participant linked with heredity:

All over Nigeria and beyond, the Igbo are known for their ingenuity in trading which I attribute to natural endowment... that is why our people (referring to the Igbo) thrive in business and can turn the most difficult trading terrain into a goldmine... does it mean that people of other ethnicity that falter in seemingly booming economic environments are mentally incapacitated?. The answer is no; rather Igbo are divinely gifted to excel in trading more than other Nigerians.

Although an IDI respondent of Yoruba extraction corroborated the above *divine-endowment thesis*, it is argued here that trading is purely a learned skill and a group's distinctive excellence in it may be nothing more than the outcome of intergenerational socialization that emphasizes insight, courage, prudence and diligence. If it were divine, all persons of Igbo ethnic-nationality would automatically thrive in trading no matter the circumstance. Some members of the Yoruba, Hausa and other Nigerian tribes have also excelled in trading even in areas where the Igbo have failed. In terms of education among the Igbo in Ibadan, respondents reported wide intergenerational differences, with the younger generation achieving higher educational levels than the older generation. This trend was further explained by an IDI respondent:

Most aged Igbo in Ibadan had primary or secondary school certificates as the highest educational qualification and ended up as traders or blue-collar workers in establishments including the University of Ibadan... realizing the importance of tertiary school education in defining status, ranking and placement of individuals, most parents/guardians struggle to train their wards in higher institutions.

As a result, the number of students of Igbo descent in an institution like the University of Ibadan is relatively large, which may explain the formation and sustenance of community and/or state-based Igbo students' associations (ISAs) in the institution. As some FGD participants pointed out, most of the ISAs liaise with TUAs on cross-cutting issues. The religious life of the Igbo in Ibadan is a reflection of what obtains elsewhere, an overwhelming majority of them are Christians and more particularly practice Catholicism.

### **Cultural engagements**

Although far from their Eastern homeland, the Igbo in Ibadan still engage in cultural activities pertaining to marriage, family life and mode of dressing, among others. Like their counterparts back home, most of the Igbo in Ibadan delay marriages. It takes some time for young male traders, who usually go through a period of apprenticeship, to accumulate the wealth necessary to defray the cost of elaborate marriage ceremonies or to cater for a wife who may be barred from participating in serious economic activities. Respondents agreed that it is better to marry late than engage in early marriage, which may be characterized by poverty and tension. However, the immediate implication of late marriage among men is that marriage among females is also delayed. This impinges on length of fecundity and attainment of menopause before achieving preferred fertility and family size. For those that finally indicate readiness to get married, participants noted that two options are available — traditional marriage rites that take place either in Ibadan or Igboland. One of the group discussants pointed out:

Ordinarily, marriage is contracted in a prospective wife's homeland with kinsmen and women in attendance... what we see these days is that, for convenience, some parents prefer that the ceremony takes place in Ibadan and people back home are informed later ... my experience is that most times kinspeople never get to know about it from these parents.

As a result, the ceremony that used to serve as a farewell event during which the newly weds received important advice from family and community elders has been replaced by new traditions. Respondents noted that some parents, for fear of being sanctioned by the village members back home, insist that the usually elaborate event takes place in Igboland. As an interviewee stated, the sanctions may range from ostracism to fines, among others. Another pattern identified by respondents is the increasing rate of inter-ethnic marriages between the Igbo and people from other cultural groups, especially the Yorubas, unlike what obtained in the past when strong emphasis was laid on endogamy.

The study found that most young Igbo in Ibadan are multilingual. In fact, some of these young people are more acquainted with the Yoruba language than the Igbo language. Others speak Yoruba and English languages only. The interest in the Yoruba language may be explained by early exposure to it and the large number of Yoruba speakers that young Igbo come in contact with, especially in the course of primary and secondary school education. Findings also revealed that a large number



of the Igbo in the city socialize freely with the Yorubas and have adopted some Yoruba values. For instance, it is common to see the Igbo eat *amala*, *ewedu*, *gbegiri* and *iyam*, which are mainly Yoruba foods.

In addition, respondents indicate that while most aged people still maintain the greeting posture that the Igbo are known for, which includes a younger male shaking an elder with two hands while standing and the female turning their backs for patting by men, most younger Igbo males in Ibadan, just like the Yoruba, bow to greet elders while their female counterparts genuflect with both knees. In terms of dressing, older Igbo males still subscribe to the attire that the Igbo are known for, particularly worn during special ceremonies such as weddings, naming ceremonies/christening, TUA meetings and others. On the contrary, a large number of Igbo youths in Ibadan are not particular about traditional attires, but prefer the western-type of dressing. As a result, it is difficult to determine these young people's ethnic identity merely by their dressing, unlike what obtained in the past.

### **The Igbo and politics in Ibadan**

Respondents discussed the Igbo and politics in Ibadan from two perspectives. First, from the angle of general involvement in the wider Ibadan politics; second, with specific respect to politics among the Igbo. Participants in the study noted that in the broader sense, the Igbo in Ibadan, like other Nigerians partake in the electoral process mainly as voters or indirectly as advisers to office holders. They hardly contested elections in the city even for the least political positions for fear of failure.

On politics among the Igbo, the study found that until a few decades ago, the idea of politics outside TUAs was inconceivable. Recently, however, the notion of a united front in Igbo leadership has gradually crept in and become both contentious and dangerous. Some of the respondents noted that it was a surprise that the main actors equated their prospective positions with *Eze/Igwe* or the equivalent of *Oba* among the Yorubas or *Emir* among the Hausas. The struggle for this non-existing position has left the Igbo in Ibadan more divided than can be imagined. Data reveal that two notable factions struggled fiercely to woo TUAs for support — the situation became so messy that the Oyo State government had to intervene. One of the IDI respondents simply characterized the situation as unfortunate especially considering the fact that notable Igbo intellectuals were involved in the turbulence. She stated further:

The assumption that someone could become *Eze* (king) outside Igboland is laughable and childish... it is pitiable that some Igbo

intellectuals in Ibadan went as far as getting conferred with chieftaincy titles by the so-called *Ezès* without domain. Was it not funny that back home, the people that paraded themselves as *Ezès* paid glowing tributes to recognized traditional rulers? . . . for right thinking people, those individuals were jobless and wanted cheap popularity.

The study revealed that the contradiction presented by such an attempt at arrogant recreation of the political culture and history of the Igbo attracted the attention of traditional rulers in Igboland, who quickly disbanded and condemned such anti-normative positions and corresponding unacceptable nomenclatures, not only in Oyo State, but also throughout Nigeria. Results indicate that the position of *Onye ndu* (leader) in towns outside Igboland was unanimously endorsed by these traditional rulers. However, in the spirit of *let us not lose it all*, the struggle for the latter position and supremacy continues between the two camps.

#### **Ibadan-based Igbo and linkages with families in the southeast**

In an era of improved communication technology, exemplified mainly by mobile phones and the internet, interactions have been made much easier. However, linkages as used in this paper connote more of the physical presence of an Ibadan-based Igbo or group in Igboland and/or financial or material remittances to distant or close relatives. Some of the respondents pointed out the importance of having a house/building back home as a strong factor for travelling during major festivals. An aged male IDI respondent elucidates further:

An Igbo man that does not have a house at home is regarded as irresponsible by family members and kin-group... as somebody with a chicken-brain (*ofogorì*) and a spendthrift notwithstanding the occupational status of the individual. In order not to be so labelled, Igbo especially those in the Diaspora (living in urban centres and abroad) struggle to erect structures even if it means not fully utilizing them.

Clearly, such traditions exert socioeconomic pressure on the Igbo. As a result, many young men opt for businesses rather than acquire tertiary education. Business is perceived as a quicker means of getting rich and owning big houses. How far some of these business men and women have been able to achieve such dreams is debatable, for as it is known, most magnificent structures either in urban or rural centres in Igboland are owned by individuals with some level of tertiary school education. The data further revealed that other factors that motivate the Igbo in the Diaspora to travel home during festivals such as Christmas, Easter, New Yam, among others. Indeed, these ceremonies apart from re-uniting families, relatives

and friends, are also avenues for initiating new projects and searching for life partners. The findings also showed that the Igbo outside Nigeria are particularly encouraged to participate in these festivals at home to keep abreast of developments and challenges.

It was also revealed that although the Igbo in Ibadan look forward to travelling during these major ceremonies, economic hardship is a major disincentive to embarking on such journeys. Respondents added that, recently, the fear of being kidnapped became a strong factor in discouraging the people from travelling back home. This development meant that people of low socioeconomic status had better chances of not being kidnapped in the south-eastern parts of the country, unlike their affluent counterparts who could be targets. Some participants noted that some Igbo in Ibadan never bothered about travelling home for unidentifiable reasons. This category of individuals could afford to go back occasionally, but are unwilling to do so even prior to the widespread kidnapping in Igboland.

#### **Major challenges faced by the Igbo in Ibadan**

The challenges faced by the Igbo in Ibadan are also common to other Nigerians outside their traditional homes. This paper argues that ethnic-based discrimination is pervasive and is a defining attitude in relationship building in Nigeria, with over 380 ethnic groups.<sup>19</sup> The respondents identified discrimination as one of the major challenges that the Igbo in Ibadan face when it comes to employment opportunities. Further, those that have struggled to be employed are still discriminated against in the work place. The study revealed that to safeguard their jobs, these Igbo put in extra efforts to keep their jobs. The advantage is that in the course of such rigour, the victimized gradually masters the work process and becomes an expert such that the protected eventually consult them for mentoring and learning of skills.

Another major challenge relates to the difficulty of renting an apartment from some Yoruba landlords. Respondents stated that some of these landlords, as a matter of policy, would not take the Igbo as tenants. An Igbo interviewee, who himself is a landlord explains:

Some of us that now have houses in Ibadan were forced to do so as a result of the high level of discrimination and rejection that we faced in the hands of Yoruba landlords. Some of them give definite instructions to their agents not to have us accommodated for reasons

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<sup>19</sup> O. Otite, "Nigerian Peoples and their Cultures" in B.J. Matthew-Daniel, A.B. Mamman, S.W. Petters, J.O. Oyebanji, editors, *Nigeria: A People United, A Future Assured*, Federal Ministry of Information, Abuja, 2000.

that I do not know... in instances where some of these landlords rent apartments to Igbo, they still make life uncomfortable for them... so there is unbearable pressure for the Igbo in Ibadan to put up their own structures.

In a way, such rejection becomes a blessing in disguise for the Igbo whose circumstances compel them to own their own houses. Perhaps without this discriminatory attitude, the number of the Igbo that own houses in Ibadan would not be as high as it is today. Undoubtedly, this has indirectly contributed to the physical expansion of Ibadan, reputed to be the largest city in West Africa. One of the IDI respondents, however, observed that most Igbo put up simple structures in Ibadan so that they could easily dispose of on retirement from either the private or public sector.

### **Conclusion**

Results of this study have shown that it is difficult to pinpoint the beginning of the migration of the Igbo into Ibadan to a particular point in time. A combination of factors such as scarcity of land among a densely-populated people and the quest to partake in trade among others is linked to the motivation to migrate to urban centres including Ibadan. While these factors explained out-migration into Nigerian cities and beyond, the socioeconomic, physical and psychological effects of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war on the Igbo amplified the zeal to struggle for survival outside the Igboland, mainly because they did not have faith in the reintegration, reconstruction and rehabilitation (RRR) proclaimed by the then military government.

Coming to Ibadan was envisaged as a first step towards overcoming powerlessness and frustration. While this has proved true for some of these migrants, others have continued in their penury. This suggests that relocation is not sufficient in itself to overcome poverty, but rather insight, diligence and prudence. For this and other reasons, TUAs not only have the responsibility of guiding its members against frivolous behaviour, but also financially aiding those that are disadvantaged. Although the discrimination against the Igbo in the public sphere disheartens them, such discrimination is not the case in the private sector where, due to ingenuity in trading, the Igbo dominate the Ibadan-business landscape. Indeed, these economic power differentials and their attendant weaknesses and strengths serve as push factors respectively for an intending employee (a Yoruba, an Igbo, etc.) in deciding the most appropriate employment path to follow.

This paper reveals that while older Igbo in Ibadan have hardly adopted the Yoruba culture, except the few that were born and bred in the city, the younger are

both *Yorubanized* and/or westernized; an attitude that readily manifests in their proficiency in the Yoruba and the English languages at the expense of the Igbo language. It is observed that exogamous marriage between the Igbo and the Yorubas or other cultural groups is one of the ways of curbing the effects of ethnicity in Nigeria. This should be encouraged.

While healthy political rivalry is advocated, especially within TUAs, this paper condemns, in strongest terms, getting involved in dangerous politicking for a position such as *Eze-Igbo* in Ibadan. It is argued that it is sensible to prioritize more visible linkages with family and relatives in the southeast than engage in a venture that demobilizes efforts at unity and development.

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