Migrants and the Socio-Economic Development of Lagos
From the Earliest Times to 1880

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Lagos was founded by the Awori about the sixteenth century as a small fishing community. It progressively became an important commercial centre on the West African coast as a result of waves of migration and because of the tremendous increase in its trade with Europeans in the past five centuries. The influx of people to the town was so high that by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Lagos had become a melting pot of cultures. By 1880, the early settlers had shaped the essential characteristics of the Lagos Metropolis which were only modified by further influx of people from the various parts of Nigeria in the twentieth century. This explains why 1880 has been chosen as the terminal date for this study.

Migration of people from one area to another has been a common phenomenon throughout man’s history. Through the ages, races, peoples and families have continuously migrated from their homes to establish new settlements. Migration has substantially influenced the course of history, as well as civilization and has affected tremendously demographic patterns the world over. Some of the movements were internal, from one part of an empire or country to another, while others were across territorial boundaries such as those created by refugee problem, arising from famine, drought or war. Perhaps, the migrations which have exercised the greatest influence, and have had the greatest implication on human history are those across the sea. The “forced migration” caused by the slave trade is one of the most notable examples of such forms of migrations.

Displacement of people is not peculiar to West Africa, nor is it a recent event in the African continent. Most of the population movements resulting in state formation among various communities, were mostly from regions far removed from the areas where the people presently occupy. Some of the most documented of these forms of movements in Africa, include those of the Luo in East Africa\(^2\) and the Galla (who had invaded and occupied the Ethiopian Plateau from what is now Somali in the sixteenth century)\(^3\). Others are the migration of the Bantu, the Nilotes, and the Hausa who spread all over West Africa.\(^4\)

A number of factors usually give rise to migrations: political, social and economic. Movement may also be induced by ecological push which is mainly as a result of man’s inability to cope with his natural environment\(^5\), or caused by his search for means of survival. It may also be due to the need for specific types of labour in another environment.\(^6\)

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Wars, drought, famine, political upheavals or population pressure, equally induce migration. At times, the search for new markets, health reasons, love of change (or adventure) also causes movement of people from one area to another. In modern West Africa, the pull effect of the city life, and the push of the dull rural life are among the major factors for migrations. Sociologists often emphasise the search for labour as the major factor inducing migrations into a society that is already well structured and organised; where the migrants would be prepared to accept even minimal jobs in order to escape from their former rural settlements.

Migration theories are mainly concerned with modern migrations. But before the advent of Europeans, there had been mass movement of ethnic groups from one part of Africa to another. The reasons for the movements could be partly explained by the same conditions which have induced contemporary migrations. However, some of these movements were induced by factors which went beyond the search for means of livelihood. Some of the migrations were voluntary, while others were forced. At times, population movements occurred in which the force compelling the exodus may be so strong as to relegate economic considerations into the background. 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 the love of their freedom, as they could no longer stand the British rule, which did not allow them to have a free hand in dealing with the Bantu. Thus, families and their goods moved away into unknown territories without roads.

Just as migrations all over the world have often had consequences for the communities receiving, as well as those sending away the immigrants, so the population movement from various places into Lagos affected both the cultural and the socio-economic life of the settlement. This is because of customs, modes of worship, cult rituals and the paraphernalia of office as well as other cultures which were carried by the different communities from their original homes to their new environment. For instance, the use of white caps by the traditional chiefs in Lagos shows Benin influence. Similarly, the presence of northern influence among the communities of Southern Nigeria is the evidence of the cultural diffusion arising from trade contact, religious penetrations or conquests by Muslims. This same trait is remarkably striking in places like Ikare, Auchi, Arigidi and other Akoko towns which were invaded by the Nupe in the nineteenth century.

Apart from the cultural content or influence of migrations, 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 settlements. Migration can therefore be described as a catalyst in the developmental process as well as an agent of change among the sending or receiving community. What obtains in cases of international or inter-continental migrations is also true of local or internal migrations, such as the movements or migrations which formed the basis of the settlement of modern Lagos. But apart from internal migrations, Lagos also received migrants from across the sea,
particularly from Brazil and Sierra Leone. Indeed, Lagos has been the homestead of migrants since the inception of the settlement. The different migrants contributed in various ways to make Lagos a cosmopolitan city on the West African Coast before 1880. The purpose of this essay is to examine the inputs of the different migrants to the socio-economic development of Lagos up to 1880.

**Migrations as Instruments of Development**

Lagos as previously noted, has experienced waves of migrations since it was founded by the Awori at Isheri some centuries ago. Apart from the Awori, others migrants to Lagos within the present Nigerian territorial boundary were the Edo (Bini), the Ijebu, and the Egba. In the nineteenth century, the freed slaves from Brazil and those from Sierra Leone, (the Saros), came to Lagos following the abolition of the slave trade.

The first group of people believed to have moved to Lagos were the Awori. They were believed to have been led by Olofin, a Yoruba prince from Ile-Ife. The Awori were made up of farmers, hunters and fishermen, who came in canoes through the Ogun River, and settled at Isheri. They abandoned the place for Ebute Metta, and later moved to Ido and finally, to the present Lagos Island. The reason for the movement was partly economic and partly security-related. While they wanted cultivable land, they were also determined to escape the instability, which characterised the socio-economic life in the interior following a prolonged period of warfare.

The Awori are Yoruba sub-group who speak a dialect, which can be easily distinguished from other Yoruba dialects. No major study has been done on the Awori dialect, nor has any reason been given for describing the dialect as a slurred form of Yoruba. It is likely that the movement of people into Lagos and the contact with the Aja speaking groups may have greatly affected their dialect, and its variation from Oyo or other more intelligible Yoruba dialects. Today, the Awori have become mixed up with other groups who migrated to the Island and its neighbouring districts. It is probable that the dialect may have changed from its original form gradually over time. However, some traits of its originality are retained. Apart from the Awori of Isale Eko, they could also be found in other parts of South Western Nigeria, particularly in Otta, Ado-Odo, Ijanikin, Igbesa, Isheri and Badagri. Oral evidence collected in these places show that all the Awori are closely related. The close relationship would appear to have influenced the settlement of other Awori groups besides those at Isale-Eko, and their proximity to Lagos, particularly those in Egbado (Yewa) who were located in such an area where they could have easy access to their kith and kin in Lagos.

**Migration and Settlement of the various Groups**

The arrival of the Awori is of great importance in the growth of Lagos. Although it is believed that there were some pre-existing settlers in Lagos before the coming of the Awori, it was the Awori that initiated the first phase of the founding and the settlement of modern Lagos.
Apart from populating the area, the Awori started the physical development of the island and its environs such as Ido, Ijora, and Ebute Metta. As the population increased, there was the great need for farmland in order to sustain the settlement. Some of the Awori migrated to Ebute Metta, others probably moved to north-east of Lagos to farm in an effort to increase the supply of food. Thus, while the first group of migrants at Isheri may have provided for the needs of their immediate families, the increase in population may have induced the settlement to look for other sources to supplement the available food for the settlement.

It seems that as the Awori moved from Isheri and settled close to Ido, and to the island, they gradually abandoned their fishing tents, and established permanent homes, from where they crossed to the island to farm. As carriers of Yoruba culture, the Awori brought to the island not only farming and ritual-related cultural practices of the Yoruba, they also developed trade gradually, by attracting commerce of neighbouring communities. This was made possible because Lagos was on the inland lagoon routes.\(^{18}\)

The Ijebu probably came in waves or in trickles since the early days of the settlement. Their easy movement to Lagos was facilitated by their nearness to the settlement. Ijebu can be approached from the lagoon through River Ona, and therefore movement to Lagos through the lagoon was relatively easy, apart from the fact that Isheri could also be reached from Ijebu through land routes. Being an inland community, the Ijebu became an added source of food supply to Lagos, since the land in Lagos could not support extensive farming. The strained relationship between the Benin and Portuguese traders with Ijebu did not interrupt the trade through the Lagos lagoon.\(^{19}\) The Ijebu elements in Lagos may have acted as agents or traders in Ijebu cloths with the Europeans. In a way, therefore, the arrival of the Ijebu enhanced commercial activities and promoted, to some extent, division of labour. The Ijebu waterside may have adopted fishing, but it would appear that the Ijebu were generally more prominent in agriculture and manufacturing activities. Their contact with Lagos provided a marketing outlet for Ijebu products along the coast. As John Adams noted, "they (the Ijebu) are a very industrious people and manufacture for sale an immense number of guinea cloth, besides, raising cattle, sheep, poultry, corn and calavancies"\(^{21}\). With Ejirin, Ikorodu, and Ikosi, developed as market places in response to the commercial development of Lagos, the Ijebu became the major source of food supply to these other settlements.\(^{21}\) Indeed, the development of Obun Eko market was due to the trading activities of the Ijebu and their growing importance in the economy of Lagos.\(^{22}\)

As one of the earliest migrants, and because of their proximity to Lagos and to the coast in general, the Ijebu became middlemen, controlling the supply of European goods, particularly ammunition, between Lagos and the people in the hinterland. The Ijebu ensured that they maintained the control of major trade routes from the interior to the coast until the last quarter of the nineteenth century.\(^{23}\) Apart from their commercial influence on Lagos, the Ijebu had also enhanced the cultural development of the settlement. While such cultural
activities as the Egungun masquerades, the Gelede, the Alabata, the Alagbada and Erudi may be said to be indigenous to other Awori; the Eyo festivity which is one of the most famous socio-cultural events in Lagos today, appears to have been brought to Lagos from Ijebu. Right from the time of the arrival of the first Ijebu man, who probably acted as a herbal consultant to the Oba of Lagos, Ijebu elements had continuously moved to Lagos in waves. The socio-cultural and economic input of the Ijebu to the development were so great that apart from creating separate quarter or the Ijebu at Ebute-Ero, a first rank chieftaincy title was also created for them. This is the Eletu Ijebu title which belongs to the Akarigbereg, dated back to the reign of Oba Akinsemoyin who realised the increasing role of the Ijebu in the development of Lagos. The fact that Eletu Ijebu title belongs to the Akarigbereg (the land-owning aristocracy) is a demonstration of the importance of the Ijebu community in Lagos. The long standing association between Lagos and Ijebu fostered great friendship and understanding among the people of the two Yoruba communities in such a way that when Oba Kosoko of Lagos was in exile in Epe during his dynastic struggle with Oba Akintoye, in the nineteenth century, he did not only receive active support from the Awujale (ruler of Ijebu-Ode), but virtually paralysed the trade on the Lagos Port. All these clearly show the importance of the Ijebu factor in the development of Lagos.

While the Ijebu made significant contributions to the commercial and cultural development of Lagos, the Ijo probably made an impact in the area of fishing, and water transportation. No one can say precisely when the Ijo (Izon) started to appear in Lagos. But they were already trading with the Ijebu Waterside people (Makun Omi) at about the eighteenth century. The Izon were also believed to have established trade contact with Ijebu Ode and some of its vassal communities by the seventeenth century. The proximity of Makun to Lagos and the easy accessibility provided by the lagoon fostered contact between Lagos and the Izon. There is no agreement on the nature of Izon contact with Lagos. While some believed that the Izon like others, migrated to Lagos and even settled there, others claim that the Izon merely traded with Lagos. Those who subscribe to the first view, assert that the Izon were the first to settle in Lagos before the arrival of the Ilaje. Since the Ilaje and Izon were riverine peoples, it is not impossible to confuse the two. It is even claimed that the Ojora family of Lagos is related in one way or the other to the Izon.

There is no doubt that the Izon traded with people west of the River Niger. Oral tradition off the Niger Delta shows that trade had passed west-wards to Warri and beyond the Benin River to connect the routes to the lagoon ports of Ijebu country and most probably Lagos. The Izon of the Niger Delta were predominantly a fishing community, but at times they engaged in piracy on the lagoon. Apart from fishing, they were also famous for salt-making either from sea water through evaporation by boiling, or by using white mangrove. On the Izon as producers of salt, Professor Alagoa noted: "As with canoes, salt was evidently made in small quantities at many places on the lower Niger Delta.
Several Itsekiri communities also made a variety of salt ... but some places were established as centres of the industry."

Perhaps the Izon made their greatest contribution to Lagos in the development and improvement of water transportation. As long-distance traders, their contact with Lagos brought tremendous improvement as they introduced their skills in canoe-building to the Ilaje and later to the people of Lagos. The arrival of the Izon in Lagos introduced new and more durable types of canoes to the community. Before the arrival of the Izon, the Obigi canoes were in use for transport and for fishing. These were made from the Arere tree which was not strong enough for commercial activities or for large-scale fishing and trading activities. With the arrival of the Izon, the Obigi canoes gradually disappeared, giving way to the use of bigger ones. The Izon canoes were not only faster, but could carry more passengers. The canoe-building families in Lagos probably learnt the art from the Izon because it does not appear that the people of Lagos built their own canoes at the early stages of the development of the settlement. According to Niger Delta sources, "the Izon sold big canoes and Iselle (CAMWOOD) to a 'distant place' to the West, called by them Ukuroama or Iko (Eko i.e Lagos)". There is no doubt therefore, that the advent of the Izon, whether as migrants or traders brought some improvement in water transportation, commercial fishing, salt-making and enhanced economic activities of Lagos in general.

While the Ijebu and the Izon migrated to Lagos in small groups, the Bini came with an invading army. The military occupation probably took place in the second half of the sixteenth century and continued until the end of the century. There are diverse views on Bini presence in Lagos. A source has it that Lagos was founded by the Bini people. According to Egharevba, "some of the towns and villages failed to pay their yearly tributes to him, Oba (Orhogbua) so he marched against them soon after his ascension with a large army. He made a camp (Eko) on Lagos Island, and from there attacked his enemies for many years."

Another source said that Oba Orhogbua landed on the Island on his journey to Benin from Portugal and remained there on hearing a rumour that his eldest son had been installed as the Oba in his place. Benin tradition tends to say that it was the same Oba Orhogbua who left behind in Lagos, a military camp under three generals. It is often stressed that Eko is a Benin word meaning war camp and therefore Lagos was a Bini-creation, as they were the first to settle on the Island.

On the contrary, it is claimed that Eko is probably a corruption of Oko, a Yoruba word meaning farm. According to J.B. Wood, "the use of the place as a farm led to its receiving the name Oko or Eko, the farm by which it is commonly called today." Both Jones and Egharevba relied on Wood, by affirming that Eko was founded by Bini people. From the available evidence so far, it would appear that the Island was already well established as a thriving farm land, cultivated by the Yoruba descendants of Aromire before the Bini sited the Island at about the middle of the sixteenth century. When the Bini arrived, they never occupied an empty land, and indeed, fought for the possession of the island. Joshua
Ulsheimer's description of the island as a military camp, surrounded by strong fence, occupied solely by soldiers commanded by four generals, tends to suggest that the civilians on the Island had been forced to flee as a result of incessant assault by the soldiers, leaving the settlement virtually deserted. If the Island was found unoccupied when the Bini arrived, there would have been no need erecting a strong fence or fortress around the settlement. Before the Bini invasion of the Lagos Island, they had established trade contact with the Ijebu, but the dispute between Benin and the Portuguese disrupted the commerce. The Bini occupation of the Lagos Island might probably be an attempt to revive the trade through the Lagos channel. Although, the Bini occupied Lagos at about the middle of the sixteenth century, and installed Asipa as the Oba, it would appear that peace was never restored until the reign of Oba Akinsemoyin, the fourth in the line of Benin rulers in Lagos. One can speculate therefore that the Bini were unable to establish an effective rule over Lagos, nor were they able to restore peace in the area, until the reign of Oba Akinsemoyin, because early attacks by Benin were unsuccessful, even though Benin had imposed its own candidate on the settlement.

The reign of Oba Akinsemoyin, therefore, represented a new phase in the history of Lagos. It probably marked the acceptance of Benin suzerainty and the normalisation of relations between Benin and Lagos. This view tends to agree with Robin Law's position that the local dynasty of Oba had not been established in Lagos at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Of greater importance to the development of Lagos was the economic activities of Oba Akinsemoyin which transformed Lagos into a thriving commercial centre along the West African coast. He was believed to have invited the Portuguese slave traders into Lagos and promoted an active trade in slaves. He was also believed to have built the palace Iga-Iduganran with titles presented to him by the King of Portugal. The arrival of the Portuguese witnessed the influx of European merchants into Lagos and launched Lagos as a centre of slave commerce along the coast.

The Bini presence in Lagos represented a colonial phase which affected Lagos in many ways. Although one is not very clear about the mode of administration and the status of the Lagos chieftaincy before the Benin invasion, the Bini people effected a change in its political organisation, and established the Kingship of the settlement. The occupation of Lagos by the Benin soldiers also resulted in substantial increase in population which in turn would have created demands for both local and European goods. Seventeenth-century sources show that there was "sea-borne trade from the Lagos area to the west, the traders from the supplying Yoruba Oyo or Ijebu cloth to Allada in return for salt which was resold in the interior." Due to the increase in the commerce of Lagos, the settlement gained greater access to fire arms and thereby enjoyed appreciable level of economic prosperity which enhanced her political power along the West African coast.

The political stability, coupled with the economic prosperity of the Lagos port, did not only enhances the popularity of Oba Akinsemoyin, it also turned Lagos from a small fishing enclave into a military power. Such was the growing
power of Lagos at the end of the seventeenth century that even strong neighbours such as Dahomey had to secure the support of Lagos before embarking on military attacks on other states. For instance, in the 1770s, Dahomey bribed Lagos to remain neutral in its planned invasion of Badagry. The Lagos-Bini relation was a mixed fortune. The occupation brought deprivations because of many years of struggle by the Benin soldiers to establish a stronghold on the Island. However, the contact with Bini would appear to have opened up Lagos to European trade. Indeed, Lagos was geographically well placed for harnessing the trade of the Bight of Benin, being the only opening into the hinterland for a considerable distance along the coast. She also tapped the resources of the hinterland for the European traders at the coast.

Other communities like Ekiti, Ijesa, and Egba also came to Lagos to trade or for permanent settlement. But the Egba moved to Lagos in large numbers in the nineteenth century. The exact time the Egba elements started moving to Lagos in the nineteenth century is not known. But the expulsion of the different Egba groups from the Egba Forest may have forced some of the people to come to settle in Lagos. The date of the movement of this group could be put at about the 1820s and 1830s. In fact, before the first group of the Egba migrants were expelled from Lagos, they already had their quarter on the island. It is interesting to note that the word Agudugba was a corruption of Agodo Egba, meaning the Egba quarter.

The arrival of the Egba in Abeokuta and the emergence of the city in 1830 encouraged the contact between Lagos and Abeokuta, through the Ogun River. It would appear that trade and commerce provided the opportunity for the migration of the Egba into Lagos. The Egba were important for the supply of foodstuffs and palm produce to Lagos. Such was the cordial relations between Lagos and Abeokuta that both entered into treaty of friendship during the reign of Oba Adele I. When the Saro arrived in Abeokuta in the 1840s and 1850s they exploited the existing contact between Lagos and the Egba for their economic advantage by acting as middlemen between the Egba at home and the European merchants in Lagos. However, the arrogance of the Saro returnees and their control of key positions in Lagos generated the hostility of the indigenous Lagosians against these migrants, hence their expulsion from Lagos in 1855.

The crisis of confidence between Egba authorities and the officials in Lagos led to the Ifole war of 1867. As the Egba were afraid and determined to preserve their culture, they reacted against the presence of the Europeans and what they stood for in their midst. Initially, their attack was directed against the missionaries both Europeans and Africans, as the Sierra Leonians were blamed for the British abuse of trust which Egba chiefs had reposed in them. Consequently, the missionaries as well as the Saro were forced to flee Abeokuta for Lagos. Such was the exodus that the new migrants created socio-economic problem for the Lagos government. In a way, the persecution of the Egba Saro and the Missionaries during the Ifole crisis could be seen as an expression of hostility of the Egba against the British and the Western culture which they were trying to propagate. While the Egba who migrated to Lagos comprised both the indigenous people and
the Saro elements, the later constituted the majority, and had greater impact on the socio-economic development of Lagos.

The Saro were the liberated Africans or the ex-African slaves who were brought to Sierra Leone following the abolition of the slave trade, and through the activities of the British naval squadron along the West African coast. The migration of the Sierra Leonians to Nigeria was partly motivated by commercial interest. But some of them had the desire to evangelise their homeland. The Saro first arrived in Badagry from where they established links with Abeokuta. They later moved from Abeokuta to Lagos where they hoped to make a successful living. Thus, the return of these ex-slaves from Sierra Leone was partly to extend their already successful enterprise, or seek better trading opportunities, and partly to share with their kith and kin the light of the Christian gospel with its attendant advantages. But a substantial number of the returnees came to Lagos for fear that some of them might be recruited as indentured labour for the Caribbeans.

The Saro left a lasting impact on Lagos. They played active part in the propagation of Christianity and Western education. Most of the Egba people settled in Ebute-Metta, some on farms in Yaba, while some also established themselves at Olowogbowo. The Egba people concerned who were expelled from Abeokuta in 1867, came to establish churches at Ebute-Metta. It is important to stress that the oldest churches on the mainland were founded or established by the Egba - Saro migrants in the nineteenth century. They came to strengthen the Aroloya Church in Lagos, although Biobaku claims that the church was in fact founded by them. Perhaps, their role in respect of the founding of the Aroloya Church has been exaggerated. It is certain that the arrival of the Egba enhanced the growth of the church. For instance, the vicar of the Aroloya Church the Rev. Nathaniel Johnson had this to say about the Egba Saros. "The single benefit of the uprising (in Abeokuta) had been the strengthening by the influx of the Christian refugees of the congregation which was then under Rev. Valentine Faulkner".

The Sierra Leonians made their greatest mark in the commercial development of Lagos. Because of their success in commerce, they came to dominate its socio-economic life and even the interior in the second half of the nineteenth century. Their dominance in commerce was due to their connection with the local people in the interior. Although they lacked the capital or credit to carry out big business, they enjoyed steady flow of produce even when the roads were closed, because they went directly to the source of supply or work through their family ties. With their involvement in the commerce of the hinterland, they became relatively prosperous as to distinguish themselves in the fields of education, medicine, law and politics.

As pioneers and harbingers of Western education, they held key positions in all aspects of Lagos life. They served in the Legislative Council, and were Judges, medical doctors and legal practitioners. Indeed, the first crop of the Lagos elite were migrants from Abeokuta. More importantly, they were the propagators of European culture and civilization in Lagos. As in Abeokuta, the Saro did not only see themselves as models that others should follow, they professed to articulate the European culture by trying to emulate the white man's mode of
clothing and other aspects of his social life, as a way of distinguishing themselves from the indigenous rustics. Perhaps one of the most permanent influences of the Egba Saro on Lagos was the profusion of English names. The Sierra Leonians and their descendants who became successful in various fields of human endeavour include J. S. Leigh, J.P.L. Davies, L. A. Cole the Rt. Rev. Isaac Oluwole, H. Jackson, Moses Coker Johnson, Blaize and Herbert Pearse. In spite of their active role in nationalism, and despite the fact that many nationalists renounced their English or foreign names, the Sierra Leonian descendants took pride in these names, and have retained them till today. However, the practice was by no means limited to the Saros. The descendants of the Brazilians also still bear names which demonstrate their Brazilian cultural connections. Such names as Fernandez, Campos, Concalves. Da Rocha, Salvador, da Silva, Cardoso, are reminiscences of this cultural assimilation. Whereas the Sierra Leonians came for commercial purposes and for evangelisation of their homeland, the migration of the Brazilians was due partly to the love of their fatherland by some of the freed slaves while some were forced out for their involvement in the Black Revolt of 1835 in Bahia. When the Brazilians arrived, they settled in the marshy terrain of Lagos being the area allocated to them. They settled behind Oke Faji at Popo Aguda where they faithfully adopted Roman Catholicism, the dominant religion of their place of sojourn in South America. While the Saro took interest in commerce, especially petty trading, the Brazilians had acquired some technical skills before they returned to West Africa. Thus, the Brazilians brought with them martians, craftsmen and technicians. The governor of Lagos Alfred Molony was quick to appreciate their importance to the people of Lagos. In an address to the Brazilian migrants in 1887, he said: "what is erroneously called the Brazilian portion of this capital is composed of merchants, traders, mechanics, seamen, farmers and labourers. The Brazilians also took keen interest in farming and the government was well disposed to their arrival in Lagos. For example, Henry Fowler of Lagos said of the Brazilians: "it is desirable to encourage natives especially of semi-civilized class such as the Brazilian Emancipates to settle on the Island in the neighbourhood of Lagos as they are good farmers. Indeed, the Brazilians could be found in any area of human endeavour, tailoring, carpentry, bricklaying, mansory and others, and lost no time in utilising their professional potentials for the development of Lagos.

The field where they clearly distinguished themselves and became most dominant was in architecture which became the model for public, private and religious structures in Lagos in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Brazilian architecture was characterised by mouldings and floral designs. The houses were generally bright in colour with window grills, dormers, attic paces and generally ornate in shape and well decorated. The Brazilian architecture was popularised by people like Senhor Juan Baptist da Costs who built the famous Shita-Bey Mosque, Borges da Silva who constructed the Holy Cathedral Church, Senior Balthazar des Reis who distinguished himself as a cabinet maker. While the Brazilians made an indelible impact on the architectural development of Lagos, they also brought some innovations in agriculture particularly in the...
cultivation and processing of cassava. The importance of the Brazilians in agriculture could be seen in the interest shown by the British authorities in securing the services of the immigrants when J. J. Glover the governor of Lagos remarked: "The soil of the virgin forest is the rich stiff red clay. There can be no doubt that it is destined to be peopled and cultivated by returning emancipated slaves from Brazil".61

The influx of the migrants numbering about 8,000 into Lagos by 1881 must have caused the problem of food scarcity in the settlement and therefore created the need for the supply of more food in quantity and variety to supplement the food of the rapidly growing city. The advent of the Brazilians probably popularised the cultivation and production of cassava in Lagos. Cassava had been known in Lagos before the nineteenth century, as the crop had been cultivated on the Island of Fernando Po, and Warri at about the end of the seventeenth century. Cassava probably infiltrated into Lagos through this source because of the proximity of the two areas. But one cannot rule out the possibility of the migrant Brazilians bringing some of the stems of cassava along with them to the West African coast as well, as it was probably not known in many parts of Yorubaland by the middle of the nineteenth century.62

But while a large number of people migrated to Lagos, its land was not fertile enough to support extensive agriculture. Fortunately, the soil of Lagos and its environs around Ebute-Metta could support the cultivation of cassava as the crop could thrive on extremely poor or arid soil.63 Apart from the fact that it could be produced within a short period, it is the highest yielding plant of the vegetable family. Since it has the ability to grow on the poorest soil it was not only a substitute for yam, it made it a competitor to the crop along the West African coast.64 Brazil is a great producer of cassava and still the highest producer, producing half of the world output of the root crop.65 The returnees were definitely more familiar with cassava and probably preferred it to yam. It is therefore logical that they would have tried to cultivate cassava as a means of solving the problem of food shortage for the migrants.

Cassava came to the West African coast during the period of the slave trade, but it does not appear that the people adopted the crop, because West Africa had been blessed with more nourishing food crops in great abundance. Secondly, the processing of cassava was too cumbersome and therefore the people were not familiar with the knowledge of processing gari and its allied products. With the arrival of the Brazilians who knew how to process cassava, an impetus was given to the production of cassava, by bringing poor land around Ebute-Metta under cultivation for the production of the crop. Such was the popularity of cassava in Lagos in the nineteenth century that it was reported that men were found everywhere attending to farms while women were chiefly employed at home making gari out of cassava.66 Commenting on the popularity of cassava in Lagos, Mrs. Foote said: "the natives live almost entirely on cassada (cassava) which is made into thick gravel. I use often to see our servants all seated round huge bowls of the stuff on the ground, each dipping in his spoon in his turn and apparently never tired day after day on the same fare".67 Unfortunately, Mrs. Foote did not
say whether the maids were among those who have just migrated from Brazil. To her any Negro whether the returnees or those born in Lagos or Yorubaland was an indigene. Cassava may have been popular among the migrants, but it is doubtful if it received wide acceptance among the local population, as gari and other cassava products remained largely unpopular among the Yoruba until the 1950s. There is no doubt that the arrival of the Brazilians ushered in a new era of positive development in Lagos as could be seen from their architectural, socio-cultural, technical and agricultural imparts.

In all, many communities migrated to Lagos before 1880 for different reasons, but economic factor appears to be a compelling force for the movement to the settlement. Its accessibility from the sea and from the hinterland was the main pull to all and sundry. The commercial opportunities offered by the island perhaps, dictated the invasion of the area by the Edo (Bini) and because the place was suitable for launching military attacks on neighbouring territories. The migration of different groups to Lagos had by the nineteenth century produced a synthetic culture which infiltrated into the interior and became a model of socialisation and social development. The movement of people into Lagos did not only affect its political institutions and shape its mode of life, it affected the occupation of its people. Above all, migration became a veritable agent of change and development in the settlement of Lagos before 1880.
Notes And References
1. This is a revised version of a paper titled "Migrations and the Development of Lagos to 1880" presented at the Conference on the History of the Peoples of Lagos State held at the University of Lagos between 23rd and 25th April 1986. My deep appreciation goes to all who commented on the earlier draft.
10. The Great Trek has attracted the attention of many scholars of South African History. But this section draws from W. E. F. Ward, Emergent Africa, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1967, pp. 30 - 31, to illustrate the point being stressed on factors which could induce migration.
11. There is no consensus on the date Lagos was established. In 1982, the Lagos State Civilian Government under governor Lateef Jakande (1979-83) celebrated 350 years of Obaship in Lagos and 500 years of the settlement. If this date can be relied upon, one can suggest that the Awori probably started to migrate to Isheri in waves at about the last quarter of the 15th century. This period perhaps coincided with the Portuguese early visit to the Benin Kingdom. For this view see A.F.C. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans 1485 - 1897, London, 1969. For other views see Robin Law, "Trade and Politics behind the Slave Coast: The Lagoon Traffic and the Rise of Lagos 1500 - 1800", JAH Vol. 14, No. 3, (1983) pp. 321 - 348. See also R. S. Smith; The Kingdoms of the Yoruba, Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1976, pp. 103 - 109.
comprehensive analysis of the early settlement has been made in chap. 3 by B. A. Agiri and Sandra Barnes, pp. 18 - 30.


15. This has been observed by Funso Akere in his contribution to the History of the Peoples of Lagos State, chap. 11, pp. 164-19.

16. Daryll Forde, The Yoruba - Speaking Peoples of South - Western Nigeria, International African Institute, p. 65. Interview conducted in the towns and villages mentioned confirmed the predominance of the Awori group.

17. For this view, see A. Adefuye and others, History of the Peoples of Lagos, pp. 28 - 29.


24. A note on inter-group relations between Lagos and her neighbours was done in a paper titled "Reflection on Inter-group Relations between Lagos and her neighbours before 1900" Paper presented at the Conference on the History of the Peoples of Lagos State held at the University of Lagos Conference Centre from April 23rd - 26th, 1986. The emphasis has been on cultural contacts.


27. G. O. Ogunremi, "Makun Omi" (Ijebu Waterside), a Convergence of Economic Activities in the Nineteenth Century, A Paper presented at the University of Lagos, History Department Seminar, 6. See also B. O. Okuntola; "The Importance of Water Transportation in Lagos Economy in the Pre-Colonial Period", M. A. Project, Department of History, University of Lagos, 1984, pp. 52 - 54.

28. I benefited from the research experience of Mr. Dimeji Ajikobi of the Department of African and Asian Studies (University of Lagos) on this view.


30. Lloyd "Osifekunde of Ijebu" p. 320.

31. Alagoa; 'Long Distance Trade'... p. 326.

32. Ibid, p. 327. See also B. O. Okuntola, "The Importance of Water Transportation",
pp. 50 - 52.


38. Law, 'Trade and Politics, p. 29. See also Agiri and Sandra Barnes, "Lagos Before 1603", in Adefuye and others (ed.), History of the Peoples of Lagos, pp. 18 - 21.


41. Ibid., p. 343.

42. Ibid., p. 337.


44. H. B. Harunah, "Lagos - Abeokuta Relations in the 19th Century", in Adefuye and others (eds.), History of the Peoples of Lagos State, pp. 196 - 200.


47. Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, 83 - 84.


50. Biobaku, The Egba and Their Neighbours, p. 84.


52. Ibid., p. 166.

53. Titilola Euba, "Dress and Status in 19th Century Lagos", in Ade Adefuye and others (eds.) History of the Peoples of Lagos State, p. 148.


56. Ibid., p. 532.

57. Ibid., p. 533.

58. Ibid.

59. Some of these architectural edifices of the Brazilians can be found in Pierre Verger's illustrations on pp. 31 - 37. Although many of the Brazilian
structures had given way to modern buildings based on European and American models, some remaining had been left to deteriorate, however, the relics can still be found along Tokunboh Street in Lagos. But many of the buildings in Queen's Street, Yaba, were modelled on the Sierra Leonian pattern. It is, therefore, not an exaggeration when Professor Gbadamosi of the History Department, University of Lagos, on his return to Lagos exclaimed, that the migrants virtually uprooted Brazilian Houses to Lagos, because of the striking similarities between the structures here and those in the Brazilian capital. See T. G. O. Gbadamosi, "The Contributions of Sierra Leonian and Brazilian Muslim Refugees to Nigerian History and Development", Paper presented at History Department Seminar, December 14, 1988.

60. B. A Agiri, "Architecture as a source of History", in History of Peoples of Lagos State, pp. 348 - 349.

61. Pierre Verger, Trade Relations … p. 552.

62. For example, it does not appear that W. H. Clark saw cassava anywhere throughout the Yoruba country during his extensive tour of the area between 1854 - 1858, as he did not list it among the principal crops of Yorubaland at the time. See J. A. Atanda (ed.), W. H. Clarke's Travels and Explorations in Yorubaland 1854 - 1858, Unibadan Press, 1967, pp. 260 - 2263.


68. Ibid.