

SECTION 3: Theory and History of Art

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Migration and the Yorùbá Myth of Origin

Abstract: There are two popular Yorùbá myth of origin. There is the tale of Obatala and Oduduwa in the tussle to create the earth - commonly referred to as the myth of creation. And there is the other tale involving a great migration from “mecca” to Ile Ifè. Through a scaled down recreation experiment, this study examined the possibility that the Yorùbá migration myth is in fact a plausible explanation for the establishment of the Yorùbá in their present location.

Keywords: Migration, Myth, Yoruba, Origin

Introduction

Generally scholars are agreed that most of the current inhabitants of the African continent are a product of several layers of ancient migration. Numerous suppositions have been put forward to pinpoint when these migrations occurred. While linguists, art historians, and anthropologists continue in their efforts to recreate and interpret the origin and culture of these ancient civilisations, archaeological discoveries continue to assist with items that help in the reconstruction of the past. In addition to archaeological finds, most scholars have had to depend strongly on oral traditions. The very nature of oral tradition however makes it difficult and unreliable in most cases because of its susceptibility to corruption. It is not uncommon to find several versions of an account as one moves from one location to the other. These adjustments are sometimes deliberate with the intent to perpetuate an idea in favour of one group or the other. In

other cases, the changes are innocent as the story is passed on from person to person. In spite of their fabulous nature, myths still carry a central message that present useful information to researchers willing to employ them as data. With this backdrop, the study wishes to review the Yorùbá migration myth of origin to see if the central information can be used as meaningful data for studies into the early beginnings of the tribe. The central question of this study is - Is the migration myth of origin a feasible account worthy of consideration in the study of the origin of the Yorùbá? A finding such as this may further enliven research into the early origins of the Yorùbá. For this study, both primary and secondary data was used in the process of research analysis. Secondary data in form of published literature was accessed through a combination of online and library resources materials. The focus was on oral history and the use of oral traditions in African historiography. Primary data in form of oral

traditions of the Yorùbá was also used as a guide for the study's arguments. Further to this and central to this study was the data generated from the scaled down recreation of the Yorùbá migration. Using geographical data of the topography of the supposed migration corridor of the great Yorùbá migration, this study re-enacted a mock migration putting several variables into consideration. The variables include, demographics, psychographics, age and gender character of the migrating party. Data generated from this recreation was key to the deductions and argument made in this study.

Background on ancient Migration; Biblical view and other notes

The origin of the peoples of the earth has remained a fascinating subject for many areas of study. One of the most popular and remarkable source of reference remain the Christian Bible. In Genesis chapter 10, verses 1 – 32, it states that the earth was repopulated after the great primordial flood by the descendants of the three sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth and their wives. This statement however brings to fore the question of the various 'colours' of the human race. Tim Osterholm postulates that Bible records suggest that Noah's family was racially mixed with biological potential for variation [1].

Osterholm further elaborates on the possible grouping of people as descended from each of Noah's sons. He posits that the descendants of Shem are today referred to as the Semitic-speaking peoples who are concentrated in the Middle East and northern Africa. Jews and Arabs trace their lineage to Shem. The descendants of Japheth migrated from the Middle East into Europe and parts of Central Asia. Greeks, Romans, Spanish,

Celts and other related peoples trace their lineage to Japheth. The descendants of Ham appear to be the most widely distributed on the earth. The name Ham translates literally as *dark, burnt or hot*. He was the father of Cush, Mizraim, Phut and Canaan. Ham's descendants settled in Africa, Asia, Australia, South Pacific and the Americas. They include the Egyptians, Ethiopians, Phoenicians, and other related peoples. Cush which literally means *black* is said to be the ancestor of Africans, Australian aborigines and most dark skinned peoples. Mizraim is believed to be the ancestor of the Egyptians while Libyans, Tunisians, Sudanese and most light-skinned African peoples trace their ancestry to Phut. Canaan is believed to be the ancestor of Mongols, Asians, Orientals, and other related peoples.

Akin Magbogunje discussing the peoples of West Africa mentions that early Arab geographers documented the migration of peoples towards West Africa as the 'south – westward continuation from the east, of the dispersal of people after the great biblical flood.' Magbogunje citing Wahb ibn Munabeh, who wrote in 738 CE, asserted that the descendants of Kush, who was the son of Ham and the grandson of Noah, include the people of the Sudan. Citing yet another Arab geographer El Masudi whose record in 947 CE corroborates the biblical records of the descendants of Noah and their dispersal across the globe, Mabogunje quotes:

“When the descendants of Noah spread across the earth, the sons of Kush, the sons of Canaan, travelled towards the west and crossed the Nile. There they were separated. Some of them, the Nubians and the Beja and the Zanj, turned to the rightward,

between the east and the west;
but others, very numerous,
marched towards the setting
sun.” [2, 1-32]

In addition, genetic anthropologists working on ancient human migration claim that through genetic testing, they might be able to trace the migration path of the nations of the world. They have discovered that as much as our DNA associates us with the rest of the human race, its formation also makes each individual a unique person different from everyone else. Further, there are some parts of DNA that remain unaltered as they pass on from one generation to the next. One of such is the Y chromosome which can only be passed on from father to son. The other is the mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) is passed only from mother to child. This feature enables science to trace the paternal lineages as far back as possible.

Remarkably, these unique features are also subject to occasional mutations that are referred to as ‘genetic markers’. When such a mutation occurs in any locality or region it is inheritable and eventually all descendants from that region would carry that ‘genetic marker’. Therefore, when a group breaks up and a party migrates, scientists may be able to trace the origin of such a group to their original home and ancestors. This implies that each marker contained in a person’s DNA represents a migration path of that person’s ancestors. For example, roughly seventy percent of English men, ninety five percent of Spanish men, and ninety five percent of Irish men have a distinctive Y-chromosome mutation known as M173. The DNA analysis and distribution of people with this mutation, indicates that they moved north out of Spain into England and Ireland at the end of the last ice age [3].

In Africa, as with other peoples of the earth, the prehistoric man was a hunter-gatherer who lived off the abundance in his environment roaming from place to place. Man began to gain greater control of his environment with the introduction of agriculture and the domestication of animals. In time, moving away from gathering to raising crops, man evolved a sedentary existence and this in turn led to a significant population increase [4, 13 – 26]. Moreover, not everyone was to be involved in farming; people naturally skilled in other areas began to specialise in other things such as crafts, priesthood, cloth weaving, trade, even administration - this catered for other aspects of community life [5, 1 -18].

With the advent of agriculture and metallurgy came community life and social order, what scholars have referred to as the ‘mini-states’ [6, 196 – 263]. All nations began with the coming together of various—most times similar—groups of people holding the same interests such as protecting their district from raiders and attacks. Such mini-states might not necessarily have rulers with concentrated authority, though the elderly or family heads among them may serve as overseers. Such a communal structure is believed to have existed among the Igbo of eastern Nigeria. In another arrangement, they may have an individual, usually a prominent family head that would stand and/or speak for the whole group as ruler. Where a community was successful, it attracted others to it and eventually such settlements expand and its population swell. Its centralised authority becomes a powerful and attractive position such that the tussle of successions may lead to war and dispersal of aggrieved parties.

In West Africa, a common feature in most oral narrative is the claim to have come from the ‘North East’ or just ‘East’, which

some posit to be Egypt or Mecca. Funlola Olojege quoting Bryant A. T. points out that 'all African races of whatever description seem to have originated from the north eastern corner of the continent' [7, 113]. Olojege also citing Talbot asserts that some authorities believe that in the Stone Age, Negro people may have lived in northern Africa [8, 15]. Olubunmi (2007) on his part claims that the first wave of migration into the place now called Nigeria was at around 2500BC. In his book *The Rise and Fall of The Yorùbá Race 10000 BC – 1960AD*, he states that the Yorùbá have existed in the current location for about 12000 years, though he fails to show how he arrived at this conclusion [9, 3]. Erim warns that in using migration traditions for the reconstruction of tribal past, one must be aware of his dealing with diverse forms of actions of humans in the past therefore the historian should aim at isolating and capturing aspects of the account that present patterns useful to their enquiry. The researcher must exercise the highest level of objectivity and to avoid untestable and unproven assumptions that do little for the course of knowledge [10, 78].

It is understandable why some may question the use of oral tradition as source of primary data owing to cases of unverifiable accounts. This study however believes that oral tradition as data hold some promise if properly appropriated. Scholars before now have studied the viability of the use of oral accounts as data for historical research. They include Alagoa in his 1966 paper on oral tradition and the history of eastern Nigeria [11, 6 -10]. Vansina in the 1960 paper on oral history of the Bakuba people [12, 45 – 53] and the 1979 work of Andah and Okpoko on oral traditions and West African cultural history [13, 201 – 224]. Their use of oral data in historical and archaeological research

indicates the practicability of the methodology. In fact Gundu and Igirgi (1993) states unequivocally that in most parts of Africa, oral traditions are in the center of historiographical system [14, 85]. In agreement with them, Akporobaro (2001) argues that the forms of African oral literature constitute the most authentic expression of African creative intelligence and world-view and that they are a central to the transmission of cultural traditions [15, 41]. Alagoa (1978) will surmise the above ideology when he states we can no longer doubt the primacy of oral tradition in the study of the history of the so-called pre-colonial period of the African past for we cannot discuss African history without placing oral tradition in the centre of it. And our acceptance of oral tradition as a valid and viable historical resource cannot be conditional or partial [16, 12].

Causes and Effects of Migration in Africa

Migration is an integral part of human existence. People migrate for various reasons but mainly for self-preservation, socio-economics (such as war, slavery, disputes and seeking greener pastures), demographic (over population) and sometimes religion. Environmental factors also play a prominent role in migration. Several African narratives of origin/migration record at least one of these factors. Most famous of these migrations are the Bantu and the Kirsra migrations which must have involved a large mass of people.

The claims that these exoduses began from the north eastern regions of Africa is probable as scientist claim that the sahara has not always been a dry and arid land as it is now. The environmental changes in the sahara began 2500 BCE and its population

gradually dispersed into central and western Africa [17, 2 – 9]. When these narratives of origin are recounted, they give the impression that the migration of peoples into western Africa was done en masse at a particular time, but this is unlikely because the Sahara did not desiccate spontaneously, but rather over hundreds of years. Therefore the dispersal of people was a gradual process that occurred over the years. Similarly, the rapid increase in population in farming communities would have precipitated several disputes over land and other resources thus motivating some groups to move further inland. Groups seeking to expand or flee from aggressive neighbours preferred to go where the grass was richer and temperatures are more agreeable. Nomadic life flourished in the savannah landscapes of Africa, this precipitated sporadic migrations south-westwards.

Yorùbá Myths of Origin

The Yorùbá people have several myths of how they came to be where they are today. On one hand, there are the popular myths of creation featuring gods and divine spirits. The common version of the Yorùbá myth of creation goes thus:

Olodumare (the Almighty creator) sent Obatala to create the earth; Obatala was given a cock, a handful of soil in a snail shell and a chain to descend to the earth. On his way, Obatala stopped to refresh himself with palm wine, he got drunk and fell asleep. When Obatala did not return, Olodumare sent Oduduwa to seek his whereabouts. Oduduwa found Obatala drunk and asleep; Oduduwa then took all the paraphernalia of Obatala's assignment descended to earth on the chain. He found the earth covered with water so he poured out the soil in the snail shell and it formed land, then he put the cock unto the patch of land to spread the soil. The place

was called Ile Ife. (Some versions say he used a chameleon also to feel the firmness of the land after the cock had finished spreading the soil). Obatala woke up and found that Oduduwa had accomplished the task in his stead; he became angry. Olodumare then re-assigned Obatala to create human beings. Oduduwa then had several sons who established the different Yorùbá kingdoms.

Parallel to the creation myths is the tale of migration from the 'East' which this paper is more concerned with. The migration myth also has variances depending on which Yorùbá community is narrating the tale. In spite of the variations all the stories feature a common character; Oduduwa the acclaimed progenitor of the Yorùbá nation. The most popular account records that Oduduwa was a warrior and son of Lamurudu, a one-time king in Mecca – may not be present day Mecca. Lamurudu had three sons, Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yorùbá, Kukawa and Gogobiri, who were ancestors of two tribes in the Hausa country.

Oduduwa the crown prince, reverted into idolatry during his father's reign, and planned to change the city into a pagan state, he even converted a great mosque in the city into an idol temple. This action sparked a series of uprising that eventually led to the slaying of Lamurudu and the expulsion of his sons. It is said that Oduduwa travelled with his followers from Mecca for ninety days. After wandering for a while, he finally arrived at the place now called Ife where he met Agboniregun also called Setilu the founder of *ifa* worship and eventually established the Ife Empire.

The origin of the Yorùbá kingdom is tied directly to the arrival of Oduduwa who established a political order that made Ife the central spiritual and political headquarters of the region at that time. This accounts of migration of Oduduwa from the 'East',

though not without its own problems is considered more plausible in the study of the genesis of the Yorùbá. The earlier account of Obatala and Oduduwa is deemed by many to be too fantastic to have any real scientific value. While this study will not belabour the facts, it is worthwhile to mention that the account does give some ethnographical insights that may serve as viable data in the analysis of the Yorùbá beginnings.

Scholars have made several attempts to rationalise this story of Yorùbá origin and to subject it to scrutiny. One of the major clogs to accepting the migration tale is the famous ninety-day walk from “Mecca” to Ife. It is said that Oduduwa alongside his lieutenants trekked for ninety days from “Mecca” and arrived in Ife. Scholars generally snob the idea and think it highly improbable to trek, crossing from one continent to another in just ninety days. So that as much as historians would like to consider this account as an option to work with, the ninety days journey has remained a barrier.

Of all the myths of origin, this researcher finds the migration of Oduduwa most probable. In rationalising the ninety day trip, scholars of Yorùbá history have proposed that ‘East’ may not mean Mecca - the holy land of the Muslims, and Mecca may not be where it is today. To verify if there had been interactions between the north and the southern regions of West Africa, one may again turn to oral traditions of migrations. Legend has it that there was a great migration from the east to the west across the Sudan called the Kisra migration in six hundred CE [18, 144 – 147]. It is believed that a great mass of people entered the Nigerian region via Lake Chad, they stayed in Bornu for a while, but had to move on—probably because of advancing

Muslims—they moved through Adamawa, south of Bornu and continued westward into the Hausa region and they spread out southwards and further westwards conquering and enthroning themselves as rulers over the land owners of the region. A number of ethnic groups and city states within and outside the borders of Nigeria (for instance - Republic of Benin) have been associated with Kisra, such as Borgu, Hausa, Yorùbá, Nupe, Jukun.

It has been suggested that the migrant group of Oduduwa and Kisra may be one and the same. Jeffreys cites C. K. Meek stating that a manuscript in the possession of one Alkali of Fika suggests a connection between Kano and Kororofa, by stating that ‘it was the remnants of the people of Lamerudu that founded Kano and Kororofa’ [18, 87 – 92]. According to Yorùbá narrative Lamurudu is the father Oduduwa. The oral narrative of the Hausa people of Northern Nigerian sometimes include Yorùbá as part of their sister-states hereby giving credence to the claim. The founding sister sates are —Daura, Kano, Rano, Gobir, Kastina, and Biram, Zamfara, Yauri, Gwari, Nupe, Jukun (Kororofa) and the Yorùbá. Working with the presumption that these two groups are the same, it shows that there would be considerable influence from these migrants haven seized power from the locals. As foreigners and through their migration journey, they must have been exposed to other material cultures and would have been receptive to the idea of objects of brass/bronze objects.

Further, Jeffreys makes a very important point discussing the legendary Kisra migration as it relates to casting methods particularly among the Yorùbá in Nigeria. He points out that the technique of *cire perdue* was consistent as a method used

to manufacture cuprous objects all through the migratory path of the Kisra. [19, 90] Though most of the West African tribes that claim to have migrated from the east usually lay claims to Mecca, Yemen or Egypt, Jeffreys chose to work with Egypt as the home of the Kisra migrants. The technique of *cire perdue* was already well established in Egypt by sixteen hundred BCE. However it is reasonable to believe that the technology of brass casting must have spread to most, if not all the neighbouring city states around Egypt such as Nubia, Arabia and Yemen. Jeffreys further notes that groups such as the Hausa, Bura, Nupe, Jukun, Igala, the Bamum metal workers of the French Cameroons and the Yorùbá are all associated with the route of the Kisra migration. This further strengthens the East to West migration hypothesis. Apart from their art, the study of the cultural, social and political practices of these groups show such uniformity that may only be derived from a common source for instance semi-divine kingship, ancestral worship, and the narratives of migration from the east.

The Ninety Day Migration – The Experiment, Interpretation of Findings and Implications

To test if the ninety day claim is practicable and by extension if we are to take the accounts of the Oduduwa migration seriously, this study embarked on a scaled down recreation of the migration. With basic ratio calculation, this researcher scaled down the estimated distance travelled by the migrants and factored in the possible challenges of mass movement over a defined terrain. This researcher believes that the outcome may lend credence to the theory of Oduduwa migration and put it the in perspective. This becomes imperative if it is

to be considered as an option for the study of the origin of the Yorùbá people. While a perfect recreation was not entirely possible on a small scale, efforts were made to properly represent the possible tempo and character of the migration. Issues such as demographics, psychographics, age and gender distribution of the migrating party was duly factored in. The recreation experiment had a group of 12 people made up of 4 grown males, 5 females and 3 children of ages 6, 9 and 10. Every member of the group carried an amount of luggage symptomatic of ancient travellers.

In this field experiment to see the possibility of the ninety days claim, the following are steps were taken:

- 2000m (2km) was measured in a predetermined path with attention to afore mentioned geographical details.
- With the use of a stopwatch, the researcher (himself a member of the group of 12) timed the group's walk from point A (starting point) to point B (ending point) at strolling pace.
- The above exercise was repeated three times in three different locations on different days with diverse terrain and the mean of the time was calculated.

The mean of the exercise was sixteen minutes. This means that at strolling pace, it took the group about sixteen minutes to cover a distance of two thousand metres. With this data, this study then calculated the distance that may be covered when a body continues at a strolling pace of about eight minutes per thousand meters for ninety days. The result was approximately 16,200 Km. The distance

from Mecca to Ife in crow's fly is approximately 4089Km. The implication of this figure is that it is not impossible for a body travelling at the above stated pace to cover the distance between 'Ifè' and 'Mecca' in the time stated in the myth of origin. Whether or not this feat was actually performed within the stated time frame is a subject for further inquiry. What this researcher has set out to find out is if the Oduduwa myth should be given any consideration on the basis of practicability.

Clearly, it is not probable to keep walking in continuum for a period of ninety days. The migrants will stop several times during the day to wash, eat, worship and rest; they may even stay in a place where essentials like water and food abound for weeks at a time. The rate of movement during migration is determined by various factors: Terrain, number of migrants, demographics, state of health of the party, disease and weather to mention a few. In the case of Oduduwa, his group fled from unrest and there is the possibility that they were chased. This directly influences their rate of travel especially for the first few days. Assuming that they were pursued the first few days, the following days will see a very slow travel pace as those carrying supplies, horse or camels (if any), and women will be exhausted, some might have been wounded and possibly there may be cases of ill-health and maybe death. The terrain will also play a role in their rate of travel as they would probably have had to cross a water body into the Nubian region.

Putting all these factors to play, their travel rate will be significantly slower than the above calculated. A typical migratory group like the nomads usually have slow travel pace. They wake up early to move their cattle for about four hours until the sun

is high, they then rest in the shades and water their flock. They continue on their journey in the cool of the evening for another three to four hours, until its dark. Because the Oduduwa group were travelling purposefully (i.e. to find a place to reside and if needed fight to get residence), their travel time per day may have been about seven hours, factoring in the above-mentioned elements. Considering all afore mentioned challenges for long distance movement on foot, the following figures may be true of the Oduduwa movement: Travelling for an average of seven hours a day, they would cover approximately 4,725 Kilometres in ninety days.

Based on the result of the experiment, this researcher believes that the myth is worth considering. Though these figures are hypothetical, they suggest that it is in fact possible to travel from present day Mecca to Ife within the period of time. Therefore, it is conceivable that Oduduwa and his followers trekked to the Yorùbá country within ninety days from the Nubian region. Evidently, this experiment shows that there may be some substance of reality in the Oduduwa myth of migration especially in the wake of documented evidences such as the accounts recorded by Captain Clapperton from Sultan Bello of Sokoto in 1820 CE of the Yorùbá passing through the Hausa country.

Historically, we accept that an individual by the name of Oduduwa usurped the throne at Ife and his reign brought glory and fortune to the Yorùbá kingdom. However the notion that the Yorùbá themselves migrated from Mecca with Oduduwa's group is not accurate. The migration tale highlights that Oduduwa and his group met a proto group at Ife. People have lived in the current Yorùbá area for centuries before the emergence of the Yorùbá dynasty. The Nok

civilization dating back to ca. 400 BC proves this. Nok presents a well-developed pottery and sculptural arts corpus that suggest to us that they have lived in their current location for about two millennia. This is not to say that they originated from this particular location, rather, the migration that brought them to the location is clearly not the Oduduwa migration which is now so curiously tag as the 'Story of the origin of the Yorùbá'. According to the various postulations about how the earth became populated, it may be deduced that the Yorùbá as well as other ethnic groups who populate this southern region migrated from the northern region of Africa in the earliest centuries before documented history. Amaury P. Talbot states that the first settlers in this southern province got here at about the second millennium BCE. These were probably the Edo and Ewe, followed later by the Ibo and then the Yorùbá. Then a great mass of Chadic-speaking Sudanic tribes followed and these inhabit the middle-belt and the northern region of Nigeria. [20, 178 – 201]

Ade Obayemi gives insight to what the pre-dynastic Yorùbá country may have been like. He states that Ife and the other Yorùbá speaking communities were not stateless societies rather they had a form of authority where the office of headship existed. The title of headship is usually had a prefix, examples are Olu-, Oba-, Ele-, Ala – (meaning Master or Lord or King). Sometimes the prefix is attached or combined with the name of the community Alawe of Ilawe, Alayere of Ayere or Elere of Ere. [21, 207] Evidence show that people have lived in the central Yorùbá region as far back as sixth century CE. This evidence was provided by dating the terracotta art works found in Orun Oba Ado in Ife. [22, 33] It is reasonable to believe

that for the inhabitants of a region to display such artistic dexterity they must have been comfortably settled in their abode earlier and longer than what archaeological dating suggests.

Another factor worthy of mention here is trade. Trade routes are in some ways a confirmation of possible ancient migrations as it connects the 'east' to the South Sudanic areas. The oldest of route in the trans-Sahara network is the eastern route. It links Tripoli, Egypt, Fezzan, Tibesti, Kavar, Bilma and the Lake Chad region. While it may be presumptuous to assume that this route may very well have been the migration route which brought the legion of settlers into the West African region, it is rather tempting to link it to such movements – particularly those of post 10th century CE. The major commodities on this route were slaves and salt. Eventually a western route connecting Morocco, Taghaza, Walata, Old Ghana, Mali, Jenne and Timbuktu and a central route connecting Tunisia, Air or Agades and the Hausa country were developed. These additional routes enhance the trade even further. Trade is also a common factor in migration.

Trade is one of the most important factor underlining cultural changes and diffusion of technology to various parts of the globe. William McNeill asserts that before one thousand CE very few people were involved in long distance trading. Still, it was this handful of persons that carried knowledge and skills across great distances and barriers, causing the spread of civilisation onto new grounds. [23, 8] When these travelling traders encounter potentially valuable resources in their travels, they are able to acquire such resources and transfer to their homeland. These traders moved back and forth between regions of great civilisations

and other regions of low skills, by so doing they tended to spread their knowledge and skills uniformly, limited only by the social and/or political organisations of various host communities. This spread of knowledge, technology and culture is evident in the analogous social and political structures of developed metropolitan states that sprang into existence at even great distances.

It has been discussed by scholars that the trans-Saharan trade existed for centuries before the documented records of Islamic scholars. However the volume of the trade was not really significant until about the fourth century CE when the camel is believed to have been introduced to North Africa and this made crossing the desert easier and transportation of goods increased significantly. After the Arabs conquered North Africa, there was a general southwards migration of Berber and Arab merchants who eventually reached the city states of West Africa. The discovery of gold in the sub-Saharan became the major attraction for Islamic caravans and this resulted in the expansion of the network of the trade routes linking the whole of West Africa touching the major city states and the smaller but thriving communities as well, though indirectly. Generally, the Islamic caravans traded slaves, salt, metals such as tin, iron bars, wire, silver, zinc, cloth and brocade, dried figs and dates, cowries, horses, firearms and armour, glass beads, paper, but most prominent were copper and brass used for making decorative and utilitarian objects. In exchange for these commodities the West Africans bartered with slaves, gold, kola nuts, honey, hide, and grain.

Archaeological evidences also buttress the diffusion of cultural practices westwards from the east. The practice of potsherd pavements is distributed across Africa show a

general north /northeast to southwards orientation in age. The earliest known potsherds in West Africa found in Daima, also in the north eastern region of Nigeria dated to six hundred and fifty CE. It may be reasoned that this innovation spread from this area to other places in West Africa like Ife where its potsherds dated between twelfth to fifteenth century CE under the only female *Ooni* 'luwo gbaguda. Clearly, there is some correlation between these two because the paving in both locations are the same herring-bone or zigzag patterns. The utilitarian and aesthetic ideology were also the same [24, 50]. Cuprous alloy objects produced with the lost wax technique were also discovered in Daima and these objects dated between 600 BCE to 1000 CE [25, 81]. Daima also showed signs of imports of materials especially in the form of bronze and copper and the skill for working them being added to the traditional culture, this further solidifies the fact of a north-south diffusion and influence of culture. [26, 20 - 31] There were also beads made of exotic materials like glass, carnelian and quartz. All these elements predate those of Ife and any other part of West Africa at that. Therefore, going by migration myths one may safely presume that these elements of material culture filtered westwards into the other regions of sub-Saharan Africa.

Conclusion

This study concludes that it is technically possible for migrants to travel from 'Mecca' to Ifè in ninety days as suggested by the Yorùbá migration narrative. However, this study is not convinced that the Oduduwa group migrated from where is now known as Mecca to Ifè in one straight journey. It is more probable that the

Oduduwa group stopped at several locations as transient visitors to different communities along their route. They eventually reached the Igala-Nupe-Benue axis and settled for a protracted period of time from where they learnt local language and absorbed cultural practices and formed a community which interacted with the locals both commercially and socially. They eventually moved further southwards crossing the River Niger into the Yorùbá Nation. In line with related traditions of the Yorùbá myth, one can safely posit that the group may have camped at the outskirts of the Yorùbá nation (Ifè) trading and interacting with the Yorùbá people for some time before eventually taking over the royal office. The line of Oduduwa is believed to have produced the striated (Facial marks) kings and they ruled Ifè intermittently until

they were finally ousted by the proto aborigine – the line of Obalufon. Studies have shown that the culture of body scarification entered into Ifè through the colonisers, it eventually became fashionable to wear facial and body marks in Ifè. The practise later gained grounds in other parts of the Yorùbá nations such as Oyo – though only after the initial ‘Ifè style’ striation had been greatly contracted.

For the study of the early beginnings of the Yorùbá people, it will be an omission if not outright error to continue to neglect the possibility of the migration myth. As this study has shown that the underlining ideology projected by the myth of origin is indeed feasible and very likely to be true.

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