IBADAN AND THE STRANGERS

Ibadan, or fully (Ilu) Eba-Odan (the city at the edge of the savannah), the capital of the present day Oyo state has come to be major homeland of a large percentage of Oyo people. Ibadan city was established in 1829. Available information shows that Ibadan became what it is today as a result of influx of various groups who migrated for interethnic war reasons, settled and regarded Ibadan as their new home country. The city attracted many wondering refugees from other towns and cities and made Ibadan their home. In other words, the political organization of the city encouraged migrants to settle within the city. Settlers were attracted to the city because of its custom and traditions that did not forbid strangers from mixing with indigenes for socio-political and economic interaction. Besides, Ibadan had an open-door policy of accepting new comers especially those who dared hard work, looking for economic opportunities.

The categories of people apart from Yoruba settlers in the city include: The Ebira, Igbo, Hausa, Nupe, just to mention a few. Many of these migrants especially the non-yoruba group who settled in Ibadan worked as labourers, domestic servants, traders, farmers as well as apprentices.

The group under study is the Ebira. Information gathered revealed that the first set of Ebira immigrants were muslims who came to Ibadan for the purpose of farming. The second set of Ebira immigrants were educated persons who came for employment opportunities while the third set came for trading purpose.

The group was ethnically segregated from other groups living in the city. Follwing Oyetade( ), mokola area was set aside for the Nupe and Ebira and other immigrants from the northern part of Nigeria. This dates between 1925 to 1930, the Nupe claimed that they were granted permission to develop it by the Olubadan Aleshinloye, who came to throne in 1930.

Now, this area has been totally surrounded by a larger group of Yoruba speakers. However, there is still sizeable number of Ebira native speakers. Recent finding shows that some of them have migrated to places like Apata, Odo-Ona, and Molete. However, they gather together every second Sunday of the month at mokola for their societal meeting.

The cordiality between Ibadan and Ebira eventually assisted them to be acclimatized and embraced the Ibadan family system and culture. The few successful Ebira were able to engage in other businesses without conflicting with town’s people. In the process, they gained the confidence of their host to the extent that some of the Ebira sons and daughters benefited from educational enterprise and integrated themselves into the community by either inter-marriage with the indigenes or attraction. Some of them even bear Yoruba names. The majority of the school age children school in Ibadan, while the parents earn their living as farmers, traders and civil servants, facilitating a high degree of ethnic mixing such that nearly all members of the settlement are multilingual.

The Ebira people had a market at Adeoyo where farm products such as yam, ewedu, local rice, oil, etc, were sold. We are not sure if the market still exists. They also have a central mosque at Mokola. In terms of local administration, they are all under the supreme authority of their leader in person of His royal Highness Abdulamidi Aliyu Balogun, the Ohinoyi Anebira. He dispenses judgement at his palace in mokola. The paper focuses on Ebira who are bilinguals in Ebira, their mother tongue and Yoruba, their second language.