

## CHAPTER 5 TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN OF NIGERIAN PEOPLES

### Objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

- state the traditions of origin of Nigerian Peoples.
- identify traditional links of certain groups of Nigerian peoples in the process of migration.

### Introduction

The chapter will discuss, to a large extent, different factors, processes and stages that led to the emergence of nation, states and empires now situated in the area called Nigeria. We shall focus on the following groups of Nigerian peoples: Kanuri (Kanem Borno) Empire, Hausa City – States, the Jukun kingdom or Kwararafa, the Nupe Kingdom, Yoruba kingdom, the Igala kingdom, the Edo empire of Benin, the village Democratic Republics in Igboland, and the Niger Delta People comprising Ijo, Efik and Ibibio societies.

### 5.1 Kanuri People (Kanem – Borno Empire) Tradition of Origin

#### (a) The Soa-Zaghawa Migrations

The origin of the Kanuri people has remained a controversial issue to historians. Many scholars of Kanuri history, such as Professor Trumingham, believe that at about 1000AD, the region around Lake Chad was occupied by a group of uncoordinated Negro people. With time a group of people called the Soa migrated to the Lake Chad region from the Nile Valley. The Soa migrants, according to oral sources, were believed to have conquered the Negro inhabitants of the area after which they built up a remarkable civilization characterized by divine kingship.

At the same period, while the Soa tribe and their civilization were flourishing in Kanem, another group of migrants called the Zaghawa entered into the Lake Chad area. The Zaghawa were driven out from the Sahara by two major factors (i) the increasing dryness of the Sahara region; (ii) pressure arising from disturbances taking place around North Africa. The Zaghawa migrants were believed to have conquered the Soa tribes as a result of their possession of iron weaponry. Some historians argue that the Soa-Zaghawa clash led to the birth of a distinct Kanuri ethnic group at about 800AD as well as the enthronement of a Zaghawa-led dynasty called the Saifawa dynasty.

#### (b) Saif Ibn Dhi Ya Zan conquest

Another version of the origin of the Kanuri people was published by Professor Abdullah Smith. Professor Abdullah Smith traced the origin of Kanuri people and the Saifawa dynasty to a great Arab adventurer called Saif Ibn Dhi Yazan. Ibn Dhi Yazan was said to have conquered the

Magumi tribes who lived North, East of the Lake Chad region. With time, Ibn Dhi Yazan and Magumi subjects conquered other ethnic groups around the Lake Chad region such as; the Soa, Bulala and Tebu tribes. This conquest of the people of the Lake Chad region; by Ibn Dhi Yazan and the Magumi, gave rise to a distinct tribe called the Kanuri as well as the Saifawa dynasty that provided leadership in both Karem and Borno under the title of Mai. The Saifawa dynasty or Maidom started at about the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century with Mai Umme Julmi reigning as the first Mai of the Kanuri empire.

## **Conclusion**

Historians have faulted both Trimingham and Abdullah Smith's views about the origin of the Kanuri people. For instance, some historians argue that it is difficult to speculate a situation whereby the Soa tribe were completely absorbed by the Zaghawa immigrants in the racial struggle.

Similarly, some historians argue that Ibn Dhi Yazan's political and cultural conquest of both the Magumi and other tribes in the Lake Chad region appear too orderly to command belief.

However, what one can easily deduce from the tradition of origin of the Kanuri people is that, Kanuri as a distinct race in Nigeria came about as a direct result of admixture of many races in the Chadic region and that within this amalgam of micro-races or ethnic nationalities, the Saifawa ethnic nation appeared very outstanding. Due to her possession of knowledge of iron weaponry and which ultimately conferred on her i.e. the Zaghawa tribes the political leadership in Kanem.

## **5.2 The Tradition of Origin of the Hausa States: The Bayajidda Legend**

The origin of the Hausa as a people has been uncertain. Like many West African ethnic groups, their tradition of origin has been an admixture of romantic guesses, myths and conjectures. The Hausa's believe that their original founding father was a man called Abu-Yazid or Bayajidda. He was the son of a Baghdad king named Abdulahim. According to the Bayajidda legend, Bayajidda was a white-skinned wanderer who fled Baghdad for Kanem (Borno) where the king of Kanem gave him his daughter, Magira Daud, in marriage but deprived him of his followers. Yazid, feeling very insecure in the Borno King's court (palace), fled Westwards leaving his Kanemese wife at Biram-la Gobes where he got the service of a blacksmith to make a sword for him. He used the sword made for him by the Gaya blacksmith to enter a town called Dauranama. During this period, the town of Daura was facing a serious crisis as a mysterious snake called 'Sarki' would not allow the people of Daura to draw water from the only well that served as a source of water. It was only on Fridays that the people could draw water from the well. Bayajidda, being a courageous man, killed the snake with his sword. In appreciation of his gesture and act of bravery, the Dauranama married him and made him settle at Daura. In addition, the Dauranama, gave Bayajidda a concubine.

The Dauranama bore a son called Bawo for Bayajidda while Bayajidda's concubine had a son called Kabogari.

Bawo had a wife who bore him three sets of twin children namely; Kano-Rano, Kastina – Zazzau (Zaria), Gobir Daura. These six children added to Yazid's son from the Kanemese wife called

“Biram” which made up the seven legitimate Hausa States or Kingdoms called Hausa Bakwai’. Yazid’s son, gotten from his concubine: that is Kabogari, also had seven children who in turn were said to be founders of the seven illegitimate Hausa States or ‘Banza Bakwai’ or ‘Banza Hausa’. These States or Kingdoms are Kebbi, Zamfara, Gwari, Jukun (Kwararafa), Yoruba (Ilorin), Nupe and Yauri.

The Bayajidda legend also recorded important assignments or duties given to the legitimate sons of Bawo. For instance, Gobir (the youngest) was a war leader, Daura and Katsina were chief slave dealers, Kano and Rano were chiefs of Indigo (textile industries) while Biran (the oldest) was not given any specific duty because, as a socio-political entity, she was terribly poor and small in size.

## **Conclusion**

To Hausa historians, the Bayajidda legend is of doubtful historical significance. Although legends tend to conceal (hide or contain) historical truth, an interpretative analysis of the Bayajidda legend seeks to clarify the following burning issues:

1. The fact that blacksmiths of Gaya made a sword for Bayajidda indicates that the original settlers of Hausa land are skilled in the art of iron-making.
2. The fact that the descendants of Bayajidda, ruler of Daura founded the seven original Hausa city-states, suggests that Daura is the ancestral or spiritual home of the Hausas.
3. The marriage act between the queen of Daura and Bayajidda led to a constitutional change of power from matrilineal to patrilineal succession whereby subsequent rulers of Hausa states came from the male descendants of the Bayajidda legend.
4. The fact that the so called “Banza states” adopted the customs and language of the ‘Bakwai’ states might have led to their being labelled as ‘illegitimate’ Hausa.
5. The legend particularly seems to be in conflict with some traditions found in Gobir which denies any kinship relationship with Bawo.

## **5.3 The Tradition of Origin of Nupe/Idah Kingdom**

The traditions of origin of the Nupe kingdom are many and varied. The establishment of the Nupe kingdom is one of the most important events associated with the Igala kingdom. Equally, the most important personality in the Nupe tradition of origin was Tsoede or Edegi.

A Nupe oral account stated that Nupe was a tributary state to the Igala kingdom. The Atta of Igala usually sent one of his princes on annual trips to Nupe to collect tributes. During one of these trips, the prince married one of the daughters of the chief of Nku and had a child called Tsoede. Tsoede received magical gifts in the form of a chain, a distinctive ring from his father, and later became the Atta of Igala. The tradition also recorded that when Tsoede was sent to Idah, (the headquarters of the Igala kingdom), he was recognized by his father as a result of his possession of the magical gifts earlier mentioned. The Atta’s unrivalled love for Tsoede made him to confer the leadership of Nupe on Tsoede.

Tsoede left Idah with various symbols of authority, a bronze canoe, bronze ceremonial trumpets and heavy iron chains, feders (the symbol of judicial authority), as well as with twelve slaves. After receiving all these gifts from his father, the Atta of Igala, he re-migrated back to Nupe as a king and established his headquarters at a town called Nupeku. It looks like it was from here that he launched an attack, conquered and amalgamated the twelve free existing confederacies in Beni Nupe. This victory conferred on Tsoede the enviable position of the first Etsu of the Nupe Kingdom.

## Conclusion

Nupe's tradition of origin revolves around the heroic feats of Tsoede who united the riverine Nupe called the Kede (kyedye) group of clans with mainland Nupe who were referred to as Beni confederacy. This comprised twelve towns or villages of Tafia, Bida, Doko, Esa, Nupeku, Eda, Towagi, Egbe, Ewu, Yesa, Gaba and Panjuru. In short, Tsoede established an independent Nupe Kingdom that was free from Igala supremacy.

### 5.4 Tradition of Origin of the Igala Kingdom

It has not been easy to reconcile and reconstruct the early history of the Igala state. Thus, the evolution of an Igala State depended on different personalities. The numerous legends that seek to explain the origin of Igala are as follows:

#### The Ebele Juonu and Apa (Jukun) legend

- (i) **The Abutu Eje Legend:** This legend is of the view that the original founder of Igala land was a mysterious being called Abutu Eje who was said to have been nurtured and reared by a leopard called Eje.
- (ii) **The Agenapoge Legend:** This legend states that Igala was founded by a mysterious being from heaven, called Agenapoge, who had magical powers.
- (iii) **The Yoruba Linguistic Connection:** Linguistic evidence based on Glotto chronology suggests that Igala land and the famed Yoruba people share similar ancestral origin or cultural traits. Linguists recorded that the cultural traits of both Yoruba and Igala separated from one another and assumed distinct forms or dimensions at about 2000 years ago. The claim of common ancestral descent was rooted in the linguistic report that both tribal groups spoke a common language before their languages became distinct. Historians, linguists and cultural anthropologists alike believe that Igala's distinctiveness or identity as a group of people started when they adopted the Igala language.
- (iv) **The Ebele Juonu Legend:** This popular legend is of the view that the Igala people sprang up from the Igbo stock. Igala oral history recorded that an Igbo adventurer, called Achadu, possessed sterling qualities which won the admiration of the then queen of Atta (the king of Igala) who later married Achadu. Thus, the marriage act between Achadu and the queen of Igala land made Achadu to become the customary and ritual husband of the queen. This

marriage act also brought about a constitutional change of leadership from matrilineal (maternal) to patrilineal (paternal) succession whereby Achadu's descendants now assumed overwhelming traditional leadership of Igala's traditional kingmakers who were referred to as Igala Mela.

- (v) **The Apa (Jukun) Connection:** The Jukun Connection states that Igala land was previously a tributary state of Apa (Jukun) tribe. Igala's oral history reveals that a migrant called Ayagba was the real founder of the Igala kingdom. Oral records show that Ayagba with the cooperation of Edegi, an itinerant muslim preacher, rejected the tribute paying status of Igala land by raising a formidable (strong) military force that defeated a Jukun military expedition. This victory of Ayagba – Edegi military Alliance gave rise to an independent Igala kingdom. This victory gave Ayagba the authority to preside over the Igala – Mela.

## Conclusion

Historians are very skeptical about the Abutu Eje legend due to its magical and superstitious nature. The Agenapoje legend also appears too orderly to command belief. The Apa-Jukun connection states that Ayagba sacrificed his beautiful daughter – Inikpe, a pre-condition given by the Muslim preacher Edegi, who performed a ritual that helped Igala warriors to defeat Jukun's military expedition. However, this cannot be supported by archaeological evidences. Perhaps, the Yoruba linguistic connection and the Ebelejuonu legend appear to be the most acceptable oral accounts as far as the Igala ancestral origin is concerned.

## 5.5 The Tradition of Origin of the Jukun Kingdom

Like other ethnic groups in Nigeria, the origin of the Jukun kingdom is not well-known. However, historians have given different oral accounts about the origin of the Jukun people. These accounts are outlined below.

- (i) **Jukun-Yemen Connection (Oriental origin):** According to oral accounts, the people of Jukun migrated with the Kanuri stock from Yemen. It was recorded that the earliest inhabitants of the Jukun Region travelled via Wadai to Birni Ngarzargamu, the former capital of Borno, where they settled temporarily before they moved towards the Benue Region. Other factors that influenced the settlement of the Jukun at their present homeland were as a result of series of land disputes with the Igalas as well as the pressure of population in the Chad region. Jukun's oral historians affirm that about 250AD, the Kwona, a sub group of Jukun, had already established themselves near the Gongola River.

Another case of oriental origin about the Jukun was the tradition that states that the Jukun people migrated to their present habitat (dwelling place) from Yemen – East of Mecca. The Jukun migrants who were led by a man called Agadu, fled Mecca towards the Benue region in order to escape jihadic wars that were launched against Pagan societies by Prophet Mohammed.

- (ii) **Jukun-Hausa Connection:** African historians who are not favourably disposed to the oriental origin of the Jukun people support a strong tradition that associates the Jukun or Kwararafa people to ‘Banza Bakwai’ – the seven illegitimate states of the Bayajidda legend in Hausaland. A prominent Jukun oral historian called J. M. Fremantle argued that kwararafa was one of the seven illegitimate sons of Bayajidda.

## Conclusion

Notably, at the present state of our knowledge of Jukun history, it has been difficult to substantiate the migration of the Jukun people from Yemen with archaeological evidences or sites. Therefore, it becomes more plausible to support the Jukun – Hausa connection which strongly indicate that Jukun belongs to the ‘Banza Bakwai’ group of Hausa people. However, whether the Jukun people were referred to as ‘Banza Hausa’ because of the diffusion of Hausa cultural values into the Jukun region or as a result of Jukun’s cultural conquest by the Hausa, it is still a matter for scholars in Jukun history to resolve through more indepth research.

## 5.6 Tradition of Origin of the Yoruba Kingdom

The Yoruba people have two main traditions of origin, namely; the Ile-Ife connection and the Oriental connection. These two traditions affirm the famed Oduduwa myth in Yoruba history and these are as enumerated below:

- (i) **The Ile-Ife connection:** The Ile-Ife aspect of the Oduduwa myth seem to be propagated by members of the internalist school who were mainly Afrocentric and nationalist historians. This legend stated that in the beginning, the whole world was covered with water. Olorun or Olodumare (the supreme God), let his son, Oduduwa, down a chain carrying a handful of sand, a cockerel and a palmnut. When Oduduwa mysteriously landed on earth, Olodumare directed him to scatter the sand over the water after which the cockerel marched on it and solidified it to become land. Oduduwa planted a palmnut on this land which grew into a palm tree. The sixteen branches of this palm tree represented the sixteen crowned heads of Yoruba land.
- (ii) **Near-Eastern connection or the oriental origin:** This second tradition of origin was espoused by the externalist school of thought. A foremost protagonist of this school of thought, Samuel Johnson through his book ‘The History of the Yoruba’ narrated that Oduduwa was an Eastern Prince who was forced out of his kingdom due to his resentment or hatred of the Islamic religion. Oduduwa wandered about from the Near-East and later arrived at Ile-Ife where he conquered the indigenous inhabitants. Oduduwa was said to have had seven children, who became the ancestral founding fathers of Benin and the six crowned rulers of Yorubaland, namely the Olowu of Owu, the Onisabe of Sabe, the Olupopo of Popo, the Oranyan of Ila, the Alaketu of Ketu and the Alafin of Oyo.

## Conclusion

The Ile-Ife aspect of the Oduduwa myth appears too orderly to command belief due to too many superstitious beliefs and magical ideas associated with it. However, this tradition of origin seems to suggest that the Yoruba descended from Oduduwa whose area of primary settlement was at Ile-Ife.

The near-Eastern connection is still a continuation of the 'Hamitic myth'. However, the Oduduwa factor, whose activities paved the way for the ancestral rulers of Yoruba kingdoms, like; Owu, Sabe, Popo, Ila, Ketu and Oyo, gives some measure of credibility to this tradition.

Another aspect of its relevance is the legendary origin of the Old Oyo Empire which is a continuation of the Yoruba myth. Many Yoruba oral historians claim that when the Oduduwa party settled at the forest region of Ile-Ife, there were pockets of members of the Oduduwa party who attempted to go back to the near East at about 1388 and 1431. This group, led by Oranyan or Oranmiyan, set out on a revengeful mission to the Near-East over the unjust expulsion of their father Oduduwa. Yoruba oral history revealed that Oranmiyan's party missed their way and ended up founding a very powerful kingdom called the Old Oyo Empire.

## 5.7 Tradition of Origin of the Edo Empire of Benin

The tradition of origin of the Edo-speaking people of Benin has sparked off a lot of controversy. However, scholars of Edo history have originated two separate traditions that seek to explain, not only the origin of Edo people but also the origin of the Edo kingdom. These traditions of origin are highlighted below.

- (i) **The Osanubua legend:** This legend asserts that Benin Kingdom was founded by the youngest son of the Benin high god known as Osanubua. He was said to have sent his children down to earth from heaven. Among these children sent down were men who later became the first king of Ife and other Yoruba kingdoms while his youngest son founded the Ogiso dynasty and also became the first king of Benin Kingdom.
- (ii) **The Egyptian connection:** This tradition traces the descent of Benin to Egypt. It states that the Edo people came about as a result of waves of migration from Egypt. In the course of their migratory activities, the Edo people stayed briefly in the Sudan from where they headed Southwards to their present homeland after a brief stop at Ile-Ife. Oral sources also revealed that when they reached their present homeland, they met some local inhabitants whom they subdued and ultimately established a dynasty called the Ogisos dynasty.

The first Ogiso king was Obagodo and the last king among the Ogiso dynasty was Owodo. Owodo's regime was replaced with a non-hereditary Republican type of government which was kicked off with Oba Evian. He was enthroned as the protector of the kingdom. The reign of Oba Evian was shortened and terminated because he wanted to establish his own dynasty by nominating his son, Ogiamwe, as his successor. The political crisis associated with the nomination of Ogiamwe forced Benin people to invite Oranmiyan, an Ife prince, to rule over the kingdom.

Oranmiyan, the youngest son of Oduduwa, was said to have settled at a place called Usama which served as his seat of government. Benin's oral history recorded that Oranmiyan found the task



of ruling the Edo a difficult one because he could not understand the Edo culture. In his frustration, he described the Benin kingdom as Ile-Ibinu (a land of vexation). Oranmiyan came to the conclusion that only a prince of Edo extraction could govern the Edo people. Oranmiyan therefore married the daughter of a Bini chief called Erinwinde, who later bore a son called Eweka. Eweka was crowned Oba Eweka I at about 1300 AD and thus became the first king of the Eweka or Ife dynasty in Benin, which has ruled Benin till the present time.

## **Conclusion**

Some derivable conclusions about the Edo tradition of origin can be grouped into two. Firstly, one can say that the legendary origin of the Benin kingdom which suggests that the Eweka dynasty was a product of the Yoruba conquest party. This might be an indication of some aspects of cultural borrowings between the Yoruba and the Bini people. Secondly, the Benin legend, and infact the Oranmiyan/Eweka dynastic connections, must have been conveniently designed to establish a strong relationship between the Benin dynasty to the prestigious royal line of Oduduwa. He was said to have created the world at Ile-Ife.

## **5.8 Tradition of Origin of the Igbo Ethnic Group**

Different views have been advanced by various schools of thought about the origin of the Igbo race. The externalist school of thought has argued that the Igbo stock migrated from the Middle East, thereby making a case for its Oriental origin. The internalist school of thought rejected the case of Oriental (near Eastern) origin and rather postulated that the Igbo people possibly originated from the African continent. The views of both externalists and internalists are outlined below.

### **A. The Externalist School of Thought**

This school of thought summed up their views as follows:

- (i) **The Hebrew or Jewish tradition:** G.T. Basden, M.D.W. Jefferys and Robin Horton etc., traced the origin of the Igbo stock to the Jewish world due to the existence of certain cultural traits that were peculiar to both the Jews and the Igbo race. Such include the practice of circumcision, similarities in language as well as similarities in religious and ritual symbols.
- (ii) **The Egyptian tradition:** M.D.W Jeffery trace the descent of the Igbo race to Egypt due to some prevailing cultural relationships that existed between the Igbo and the Egyptian people particularly in the spheres of socio-political and religious practices.
- (iii) **The Jukun mirage:** The ‘Jukun mirage’ according to Professor Ekechi was a deliberate attempt to link the Igbo to the Jukun people of the Niger-Benue confluence due to similarities in religious rituals. The Jukun religion according to European hamitic historians were akin to the Ancient Egyptian religion

### **B. The Internalist School of Thought**



This school of thought was championed by Igbo historians or scholars like: K.O. Dike, A.E. Afigbo and F.K. Ekechi, etc. The internalists approached the tradition of origin of Igbo people from two major perspectives, namely;

- (i) **Timbuktu and Khartoum connection:** Many Igbo historians have used archaeological finds to support the view that the Negro race first existed around the North-Western part of Timbuktu and Khartoum. Archaeological findings in Timbuktu and Khartoum confirm the remains of the earliest settlers of the Igbo race.

Linguists, through the use of Glottochronology, have proved that majority of the ethnic groups that make up the Negro stock linguistically belong to the Kwa-sub group of Niger Congo group of languages. Linguists, Ethno-linguists believe that the generic language group, previously defined or grouped together as kwa-sub group of languages, assumed individual linguistic or language patterns to become Yoruba, Edo, Idoma, and Igbo at about six thousand years ago. If the views of the linguists are correct, the identity of the Igbo people as a distinct ethnic or tribal group started six thousand years ago.

Archaeologists and Ethno-historians also believe that there were series of migrations amongst different Igbo communities which started from the core-centres of Igbo settlement, namely: Awka-Nri-Orlu complex. This development led to the formation of new Igbo communities such as Nsukka-Udi highlands, Oratta, Ikwerre Etche, Asa and Ndoki clans, Ngwa group of clans, Ohafia-Arochukwu clans, as well as, the Item and Abiriba clans, etc.

- (ii) **Tradition of Origin of villages or communities in Igboland:** Some Igbo scholars argue that in spite of the primary of Eze Eri of Nri as the ancestral founding father of the entire Igbo stock, many Igbo communities are inclined to have much reverence for their direct ancestral founding fathers. For instance, the people of Owerre Nchi Ise claim their origin from a legendary hero called Ekwema (Ekwem) Arugo, who was said to have migrated from Oratta, four miles from Owerri Town. Also, the Onitsha people in Anambra state, claim their descent from the famed Eze Chima who according to oral accounts, migrated from the Edo kingdom of Benin. Also, the Ikeduru people claim their descent from one Duru.

The implication of the heroization of these ancestral founding fathers of Igbo villages vividly demonstrate that communities in Igboland were derived locally and not from the Middle East.

## Conclusion

A critical analysis of the externalist and internalist schools of thought, as regards the Igbo tradition of origin, can help us to derive the following conclusive statements. The externalist school are still inclined to the 'hamitic' myth which propagates the racist view that the process of State formation in Africa was influenced by the Hamites who were related to the Europeans. Also, the views of the internalists about the origin of the Negro race, of which the Igbo form a part, is that the distinct identity of the Igbo language stems from the generic kwa-sub group of the Niger-Congo group of

languages. Also, the origin of Nri-Akwa-Orlu core-centres of Igbo settlement, appears more believable because these claims are backed up by both archaeological and linguistic evidences.

## 5.9 Tradition of Origin of the Niger-Delta People of Nigeria

### **The Ijo tribe or the Ijo ethnic group**

The Ijo people originated from the Central Delta. The primary inhabitants settled at Ogobiri, Ikibiri, Oporomas in the Central Delta, while towns like Ke and Oboloma (Nembe) were centres of secondary migration. Oral sources suggest that the inhabitants of the Eastern Delta migrated from the Central Delta area before they occupied their present homeland. For instance, the tradition of Nembe speak of waves of migration from Warri, the capital of the Itsekiri kingdom. Those of Elem Kalabari and Bonny claim migration from the central part of the Eastern Delta which led to the founding of Eastern Delta States.

### **Conclusion**

The Ijo tradition of origin suggests that there were no external influences as regards the peopling of the Ijo region. The only remarkable development was that Ijo migrants from the Central Delta migrated from a primary settlement that was characterized by a fresh water Delta environment, to a secondary settlement of a salt water swamp environment. The implication of the Ijo migratory activities was an occupational change from full-scale farming economy to a fishing and salt-making economy.

### **Tradition of Origin of the Efik State of Calabar**

The Ibibio, collectively known as the Efik, have a series of oral accounts that seek to explain the tradition of origin of the Efik people. These oral sources are outlined below.

- (i) **The Ibibio tradition:** Scholars of Ibibio history posit that the Efik people originated from the Ibibio stock. They are of the opinion that the Efik people were those Ibibio of the mainland region who were driven out after being defeated in a series of tribal wars. In the process of their migration, the Efik settled at Uruan from where they moved towards Creek town which had Ibibio settlers. Efik oral history recorded that when the Efik people reached Creek Town, they defeated and absorbed the original Ibibio settlers but were unable to absorb the Qua people. These were the original owners of Creek Town before the Ibibio people made their debut. The Efik recognised the Qua landlords to whom they paid rents.
- (ii) **The Middle Eastern tradition:** Efik oral history also traces the origin of the Efik people to both Egypt and Palestine from where they migrated to their present homeland. This tradition alleged that the Middle Eastern Efiks, who were predominantly orthodox Christians, refused to accept the Islamic religion imposed on them by the Arabs in Egypt. The pressure of religious persecution forced the Efik people to migrate into Nigerian territories through the Trans-Saharan trade route. On entering Nigeria, they crossed the Benue River and settled at Ibom and Arochukwu, all in Igbo country.

The Efik quickly left Ibom and Arochukwu due to their inability to patronise the African Traditional Religion and consequently settled at Uruan. At Uruan, they quarreled with the Efik due to certain tenets of their indigenous religion that encouraged the smearing (marking) of animal blood on doorposts. Internal squabbles between the Efiks and the host Ibibio people forced the Efik out of Uruan and they finally settled at Creek Town.

- (iii) The third account claims that the Efik people came about as a result of a marriage act between an Igboman and an Ibibio woman.

## **Conclusion**

An interpretative analysis of the Efik tradition of origin suggests that the Efik were migrants and as such were not original inhabitants of the area in which they now live. The Efik tradition of origin also demonstrates an age-long relationship between them, i.e. the Efik and the Ibibio, even before the advent of modern Nigeria. Both ethnic nationalities belong to the sub-family group of the Benue – Congo languages. Finally, the Efik people had substantial culture contacts with the Igbo race. For instance, both the Igbo and the Efik consulted the Ibinu – Ikpabi oracle, the Ekpe Society existed both in Igboland and Efik land. Both Igbo and Efik members of the Ekpe Secret Cult used the secrets Nsibidi pictorial Writing.

## **Tradition of Origin of a Typical Itsekiri Kingdom**

The tradition of origin of the Itsekiri kingdom tends to be associated with Iginuwa migration from Benin (Edo) during the reign of Oba Olua which dates back to 1473. The story is that Olua's prince and heir-apparent, Iginuwa, became so unpopular in Benin as a result of the wicked advice he was giving his father – Oba Olua. These pieces of advice were rooted in oppression rather than welfare. The people of Benin, out of desperation, resolved that Iginuwa should be prevented from succeeding his father. This resolution made Iginuwa to embark on a forced exile with seventy sons of his father's chiefs. This historic migration gave birth to the Itsekiri kingdom.

The account also claimed that Iginuwa's migrant group met some mythical beings called 'UMALE'. While most of the 'UMALE' fled on the arrival of Iginuwa's party, others stayed behind and accepted Iginuwa's leadership. Tradition recounted that 'Itsekiri' was one of the names of those mythical beings who was so hospitable to Iginuwa that he chose to name the new kingdom after him.

## **Conclusion**

The tradition of origin of 'Itsekiri' kingdom could be traced to series of cultural intercourse that existed among Benin, Ijo, Ibibio and Yoruba tribes. The advent of Itsekiri kingdom witnessed the emergence of a society that was purely Edo while it adopted language patterns that were similar to the Yoruba language. The Itsekiri kingdom developed in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

## Summary

- The Kanuri stock is a direct result of an admixture of many races in the lake Chad region, namely, Soa, Zaghawa and the Tebu Tribes.
- The Bayajidda legend shows that Hausaland comprises Hausa Bakwai states – Kano, Rano, Katsena, Zaria, Gobir, Daura and Biram as well as Bamza Bakwai states, Kebbi, Zamfara, Gwari, Jukun, Yoruba (Ilorin), Nupe and Yauri who were direct descendents of Bayajidda.
- The origin of Nupe kingdom revolves around the heroic feats of Tsoede who united riverine Nupe with the Beni confederacy.
- Igala land and Jukun's tradition of origin revolves around intergroup relations between Igbo land and Hausa land respectively.
- The Yoruba people descended from Oduduwa whose area of primary settlement was Ile-Ife.
- The Oranmiyan/Eweka dynastic connection in Benin tradition was designed to forge a strong relationship between Benin dynasty and the royal line of Oduduwa.
- The village democratic Republics in Igbo land's tradition of origin can be traced to Nri Civilization and Khartoum due to archaeological and linguistic evidences.
- Both Ijo, Efik, Ibibio and Itsekiri societies in spite of their divergent traditions of origins had substantial culture contacts with the Yoruba, Igbo and Edo tribes.

## Revision Questions

### Objectives

1. The tribal group that established the Saifawa dynasty in Kanem in the 11<sup>th</sup> century was the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. Kanuri
  - B. Soa
  - C. Zaghawa
  - D. Tebu
2. The Bayajidda legend refers to the rise of states among the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. Nupe
  - B. Hausa
  - C. Jukun
  - D. Igala
3. \_\_\_\_\_ was responsible for the establishment of the Nupe kingdom.
  - A. Bayajidda
  - B. Ayagba
  - C. Oduduwa
  - D. Tsoede
4. The Igbo adventurer who influenced the establishment of the Igala kingdom is \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Eri
  - B. Duru
  - C. Achadu
  - D. Eze Chima
5. Which of the following Hausa city states are grouped as 'Banza Bakwai'?
- A. Gobir
  - B. Daura
  - C. Kano
  - D. Jukun
6. The Ife prince whose marriage with the daughter of Beni chief's daughter gave rise to the Eweka dynasty in Benin was called \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. Owodo
  - B. Iginuwa
  - C. Obagodo
  - D. Oranmiyan
7. \_\_\_\_\_ was the ancestral founding father of the Igbo stock.
- A. Oduduwa
  - B. Bayajidda
  - C. Eri
  - D. Eze
8. The most important secret cult in Efik land was \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. Obong
  - B. Ibang
  - C. Ekpe
  - D. Okpan
9. Which of the following statement is correct:
- A. The Ijo, Efik and Itsekiri were fisherman and nothing else
  - B. The Ijo, Efik and Itsekiri did not participate in any trade with the Europeans
  - C. The Ijo, Efik and Itsekiri were Delta peoples.
  - D. The Ijo, Efik and Itsekiri did not fight any wars.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ was responsible for the founding of the Itsekiri kingdom.
- A. Oranmiyan
  - B. Umade
  - C. Iginuwa
  - D. Olua

### **Essay Questions**

1. What circumstances led to the enthronement of the Saifawa dynasty in Kanuri land?
2. Why is Bayayidda important in the oral history of Hausaland?
3. “Nupe’s tradition of origin revolves around the heroic feats of Tsoede”. Discuss.
4. Why is Oduduwa regarded as the ancestral founding father of the Yoruba people?
5. Write concise notes on any one of the following traditions of origin of Nigerian societies:  
(i) The Eri legend    (ii) The Agenopoge legend    (iii) The Osanubua legend  
(iv) Tradition of origin of Niger Delta peoples