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Migration and the Yorūbā Identities: A Historical Survey of the Yorūbā Ancestral Home through the Prism of the Revealed Books from 1000 - 1900 CE

A.O. Hashimi*

Abstract

The idea of the universal history, tracing the origin of people is a subject of intense debate and argumentation among scholars, because migration and replication of original settlements and kingdoms are common phenomenon in African history. This study intends to discuss the Yorūbā original homesteads and how they were dispersed in the course of history through migrations to other parts of the world. Therefore, the study adopts analytical research method, consulting many works which are helpful to know the earlier efforts made on the subject. Of all the sources available for understanding the Yorūbā history, the most prominent sources of information in this study are Revealed Books and selected Arabic works of the famous Muslim historians such as Ibn Hisham (d. 834), Ibn Samānī (d.1166), Ibn Khaldūn (d.1406), al-Qalqashandī (d.1418) and Muḥammad Bello (d.1837). Findings of the study showed that the majority of the Yorūbā people came from the Middle East to Ile-Ife in company of Oduduwa. However, the study argues that not all the Yorūbā are children of Oduduwa, because there were pre- Oduduwa people in the Yorūbā land and their descendants are among the Yorūbā people today. The study concludes by offering recommendation that scholars of religions, history and allied disciplines should advance their frontier of researches and this present study will provide basis, while governments should give financial supports to the study of genealogy.

Keywords: Yorūbā Identities, Migration, Ancestral home, Middle East, Revealed Books

* Department Of Religious Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria, hashimiabdganiy62@gmail.com.

Introduction of the Study

The quest for understanding the past and the idea of the universal history, tracing the origin of people is quite fascinating. Its significance and complexity command the attention and intellectual resources of scholars from diverse backgrounds. This age of revolution is marked by a proliferation of intellectual, spiritual and ethical questions. Therefore, this study focuses on the origin of the Yorübā. The far-reaching focus of the study is to know the real origin of the Yorübā people.

Our objective in this study is to put into perspective the history of the origin of the Yorübā people. Through all ages, Allah in His mercy has revealed Books from time to time to the chosen prophets (A.S). They were chosen by Allah to be the bearers of His messages, irrespective of their social placement, material possession and worldly status. There were many holy books and booklets revealed by Allah to the prophets as some of the names of the recipients of the revealed books are mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān. Suffice are the followings as illustrative examples. Thus four major revealed books were sent to the greatest prophets. (*‘Ulūww- lī‘Azīm*). The *Tawrāt ash-Sharīf* (Old Testament) was given to prophet Mūsā (A.S), *Zabūr ash- Sharīf*; the original Psalms was given to Prophet Dāwūd, *‘Injīl ash-Sharīf* (Latin Evangelium /New Testament) was given to Prophet ‘Īsā, and Qur’ān *li –Karīm* was given to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W).

In this study, analytical research method was adopted and relevant-related literature was taken into account which balances the objectives and necessity of the study. Reliance is placed on the Revealed Books, and also works of the celebrated Muslim historians such as Ibn Samānī (d.1166), Ibn Khaldūn (d.1406), Qalqashandī (1418) and Muḥammad Bello (d.1837). The contributions of historians, the linguists, the historiographers and the allied disciplines such as archaeological, ethnographical and anthropological scholars have led to important information and discoveries about the Yorübā people. It is important to note that the works of linguists were consulted, where the distinctive characteristics of the study were established in examining the diffusion and genetic resemblances of Arabic and Yorübā languages which were projected in the study. It is arguable that the Yorübā’s

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ecology and geography attracted migrations and settlements, entrepreneurs, and harbingers of political change and religious ideologies into the Yorūbā land.

The study concludes by offering many possibilities for understanding the Yorūbā origin and illustrates the relationships between the Africans and the people of the other parts of the world.

Literature Review

A sizeable number of studies have been carried out on the question of the Yorūbā people, hence, the subject of the Yorūbā origin has received academic attention from scholars of different disciplines and a kind of intellectual division of labour has taken place. The bodies of literature reviewed in this study were derived from archaeological and historical ethnographic research, the revealed books; the Holy Qur'ān, the Bible, *Ḥadīth* and the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W), *Tārīkh* forms of Arabic literature. The contributions of archaeologists are demonstrated by documentation of a continuing culture and approximate times of cultural innovations. In Islamic tradition, importance is attached to historical enquiry especially in the study of the origins of families and peoples. The study of genealogies was developed in Islam into a separate science '*Ilm-Ansāb*, (science of genealogy) with Arabic expression '*aṣl*' (origin). The genealogists ('*ulāma' al-ansāb*') attempted and provided a notion that the culture and the historical role of a people are somehow determined by their ancestry. Of all the sources available on the origin of Yorūbā people; the Revealed Books, archaeology, historical ethnography, oral historical accounts, and written sources are relevant for the study. This body of traditions represents the view of the past unanimously accepted by the adherents of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, there is little doubt that this view is known to the Yorūbā people. In this regard, the oldest account about mankind is found in the Old Testament (*Tawrāh*). Complimentary the *Tawrāh* (Old Testament) is the Holy Qur'ān in which individuals and events of ancient times are discussed in detail. In addition, Muslim historians drew widely from the extra-Qur'ānic traditions about the Middle East which are provided by the *Ḥadīth* and *Sīrah* and *Maghāzī* forms of Arabic literature. One of such basic ideas is that of great flood and the

ethnic grouping of humanity known in historical times. The result is the re-peopling of the world after the flood.

In our modest attempt to trace the origin and source of mankind the revealed books are the primary sources to obtain information. In this regard Allah declares that: “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nation and tribes, that you may know each order.”¹

Ibn as-Samānī notes that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) encourages the study of genealogy.

Know your genealogies which establish your kinship relations, for there is no closeness of kinship if the genealogies are disrupted even though there is an apparent proximity. And kinship is not distant if the genealogies show connection, even remote’.² He adds that ‘Knowledge of genealogies is one of the greatest benefits which God has bestowed on His worshippers; because the ramifications of ansab are one of the means of facilitating agreement on the separation of tribes and clans.’³

Consequence to the Islamic sources, a great volume of works had been incorporated in the works of the leading Muslim historians. A clear and eloquent exposition of this idea of origin is presented in the *Muqāddīmāh* of *Ibn Khaldūn* (d. 1406). It reads thus:

When *genealogists* noted differences between these nations their distinguishing marks and characteristics they considered them to be due to their (different) descents. they declared all the black inhabitants of the south to be descendant of Ham.... they declared all or most of the temperate nations who inhabit the central regions, who possess religious

¹ Al-Qur’ān 49:13.

² As-Samaani. He was ‘Abd al-karimibn Muhammad as-Sam’ani (1113-1166), stemmed from Marw in Khursasan. He was a biographer lived in a latter ‘Abbasid period. He received his education from his father and from his two uncles and latter supplemented his knowledge by extensive travel. He was the author of *Al-ansab*, As-Samaani, Abd al- Karim b. Muhammad *Al-ansāb fī sinā’at ‘lī Arābī* (Beiru:Dar- as Sadir,1962).

³ Ibn Samaani, *Al-ansāb fī sina’āt ‘lī Arāb*,179.

⁴ Ibn Khaldun ‘Abdur Rahman, (1332-1408). He was Abu Zayd ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun was born in Tunis and died in Cairo. His life was spent in almost perpetual turmoil. He was a notable scholar and famous judge. He wrote many works, but his magnum opus is *Muqāddīmāh*. Ibn Khaldun, ‘Abdur Rahman bin Muhammad. The *Muqāddīmāh Rosenthal’s* translation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

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groups and religious laws as well as political leadership and as royal authority, to be descendants of Sham.⁴

According to Abdullahi Smith “The story of the flood is presented in the Old Testament, and the story of flood is also narrated in the Cuneiform writings of ancient Iraq, Anatolia and Palestine.”⁵ Evidence of widespread flooding in the Tigris-Euphrates valley has been recorded from archaeological excavations in Southern Iraq and dated back to the beginning of the third millennium B.C. There is confirmatory evidence in the Revealed Books that there was a flood. In the Abrahamic religious tradition, the issue of flood and the re-peopling of the world after the subsidence of the flood is associated with Prophet Nuh (Noah) and his descendants. In this regard, *the Tawrāh* (Old Testament) gives the following account: “These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their Nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after flood... These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.”⁶

According to Abdullahi Smith, al-Ya‘qūbī (d.C.900A.D), a famous Muslim historian elaborates further:

...Noah divided the land among His sons. He gave to Shem (Sham), The centre of the earth, and the holy sanctuary and its surroundings, and the Yemen, and Hadaramwt, as far as Oman, as far as Bahrayn, and as far as Alaji and Yabrin, and al-Daww and al-Dahna. And to Ham the lands of the West and Coasts (of

⁵ Abdullahi Smith Professor ‘Abdullahi spent his life from 1955-1984 in promoting in various ways the study of African history. He was in the Department of History, before coming to Zaria to establish the Department of History Ahmad Bello University in 1962. He was a director of Arewa House, a centre for Historical Research and Documentation, at Kaduna between 1971 and 1979. His publications and writings include several path breaking monographs and essays like “The Legend of the Seifuwa: A Study in the Origins of a Tradition of Origin” in *Studies in the history of Pre-Colonial Borno* eds. Bala Usman and Nur AlKali (Nigeria: Northern Nigeria Publishing Company, 1983), 24.

⁶ Genesis 6:8; 9:18; 10:32

East Africa). And Japhet (*Yafīth*) son of Noah settled between the east and the West.’’⁷

Glimpses from Abrahamic traditions disclose that it was from these three sons of Noah (Nuh) that the peoples of the world descended.⁸ The idea of the historical personage of Prophet Nuha (Noah) provided basis for Yorūbā concept of descent people; the Yorūbā expressions “*Omoluwabi*” the descent people *Omo-tī-Nuh – bi*. This idea is still cherished in Yorūbā land till today. From the foregoing, the question that arises is where in the genealogical tree of Nuh the Yorūbā and the Arabs are fitted or belonged to? Therefore, it is on the basis of this wider belief that the culture of the Yorūbā is argued whether it came from the Middle East or it is of West African origin.

The first school of thought, the Ile-Ife tradition claims that the ancestors of the Yorūbā were said to be *Obatala, Oduduwa, Obawinrin* and *Obameri* etc. Samuel Johnson who was a pioneer historian in the field of Yorūbā origin states in his work that “the Yorūbās (sic) came originally from the East there cannot be the slightest doubt, as their habits, manners and customs, etc all go to prove.”⁹ Olumide Lucas in his work agrees with the view of Samuel Johnson that the Yorūbā originated from the Egypt. Biobaku also argues that the Yorūbā came from Egypt or near- East. Abdullahi Smith in his work submits that the Yorūbā culture is a Middle Eastern origin. More importantly, Muhammad Sultan Bello, a political successor of Uthman b. Fudi asserts in his work that the Yorūbā were descendants of Ya’rub b. Khatan in Arabia.¹⁰

⁷ Genesis 10:32

⁸ Abdullahi Smith, "The Legend of the Seifuwa," 25.

⁹ Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorūbās: From the Earliest times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (London: Routledge, 1921), 13. Samuel Johnson was a member of Alafin households in the Yorūbā land, Nigeria. He used his closeness to the palace and collected information and wrote the Yorūbā History. His work was first published in London 1921.

¹⁰ J. Lucas Olamide, *The Religion of the Yorūbā*. (Lagos: C.M.S, 1948), 80- 81, S. O. Biobaku, *The Origin of the Yorūbā* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1956), 20 – 21; Abdullahi Smith “The Legend of the Seifuwa,” 16; Muhammad Bello, *Infāq Masūr fī Bilaād at Taqrār* (Cairo: Dārū’lī fīkr, 1964), 48.

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On the other hand, scholars such as Adetugbo, Ade Obayemi, Akinjogbin and Atanda are the advocates of the West African origin of the Yorūbā and their contributions to the knowledge of the Yorūbā origin are well known. They argued that Yorūbā and the Edo-Speaking peoples and their neighbours were before 1600 around the Niger-Benue confluence area and this is the most likely place of the origin of the Yorūbā and other linguistically related peoples like the Edo, Igala, Odoma etc. In the same breath Adetugbo rejects a migration theory (from Egypt or Mecca) in the light of linguistic theory. Sequel to the above, this present study covers the existing gap by using the revealed books and works of outstanding scholars of Arabic to know the origin of the Yorūbā race.

Research Methodology

The study adopts the analytical research method. This involves exegetical and sociological aspects. The exegetical aspect is in relation with the elucidation and analytical appropriation of the idea of historiography found in the scriptures. On the other hand, the sociological dimension focuses on human relations within the Yorūbā tribe and Nigerian society at large. It is worthy of note that relevant accessible materials; published and unpublished books, documents, manuscripts, monographs, journals, periodicals, etc. were consulted and used in this study.

Discussion

It is a fact of history that the Arabs had two separate lines of origin from one common ancestor; Sam b. Nuh (Noah).¹¹ The Arabs of the North are from ‘Adnan b. ‘Ududu the descendant of Ism‘aīl (Ishmael) son of Ibrāhīm (Abraham) while the Arabs of the south were descendants of *Yar’ub b. Qaḥṭān* (Joktan), the son of Abir (Eber). It was from *Qaḥṭān* (Yogtan/Joktan) that Sabaeans and Himyarite’s emerged. Those who produced several

¹¹ Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), xiii.

large and powerful tribes, they settled in the North and central Arabia and lived before the rise of Islam.¹²

Ibn Khaldūn provides useful information about this in his words, “some genealogists regarded Berbers in Africa as descendants of Yaksān son of Ibrahim, of the line of Abīr, descendants of Shem son of Noah, others regarded them as descendants of Nu ‘man, son of Himyār (of Arab), son of Saba of the line of Qahtān son of Abīr’.”¹³ A variation of this view regards the Berbers as the descendant of the Arabs of Ghassan, (South Arabs domiciled in Syria and Iraq). All these theories regarded the Berbers as being originally of the same stock as the Arabs, and as having migrated from either Syria or Yamen to settle in Africa. But another group of theories regarded them as descendants of Ham (non-Arab) through his son Cana‘ān or through another son, Mizraim. While the third group saw the Berbers as mainly of the non-Arab stock except of the two groups, the Kotamā and the Sanhājā who were regarded to be Ḥimyār in origin. Whatever these differing views of the origin of the Berbers might have been, the Berbers of Africa had undoubtedly come under the influence of the Arabs of Ḥimyār in the ancient times. The traditions of Somali tribes affirm that Arabs of Himyār settled among them before the rise of Islām. Al-Mas‘ūdī, a Muslim historian reports a tradition that the ancestors of the rulers of Maris and Maqurra in the Nile valley were Arabs of Ḥimyār,¹⁴ and that the Sabaeans were the first Arab race that stepped in the threshold of civilization.¹⁵ The last migrations of the Arabs into Africa that took place in the full light of history were the introduction of Islam in the seventh Century. This was started with migration of Muslims to Abyssinia in 615 C.E, followed by ‘Amr b. ‘Aaṣ in 639 C.E and ‘Uqbah b. Nāṣr and many Arabs later embarked on series of military expedition and preaching tours in African Continent.

¹² Philips K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs. From the Earliest Times to the Present* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981),164-165.

¹³ Abdullahi Smith “The Legend of the Seifuwa,” 29.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Hitti, *History of The Arabs*, 30

Yorūbā Identity and Middle East Theory

Yorūbā land is located between latitudes 6⁰ and 9⁰ North and longitudes 2⁰3⁰ and 6⁰ 3⁰ East, it covers an estimated area of about 181,300 square kilometres.¹⁶ The Yorūbā people constitute one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. They are mostly found in Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti and Lagos States, and a substantial part of Kwara State. A considerable number of Yorūbā people are also found in the south eastern part of the Republic of Benin (Former Dahomey). According to the royal house at Ile Ife, Oduduwa was the eponymous ancestor of Yorūbā people who came from the Middle East; Mecca, Nubia or Yemen. However, in the recent past, according to the royal house at Ijebu-Ode, the Ijebu stock of Yorūbā people came from Wadai in the central Sudan, and their first ruler was known as Olu-Iwa of Wadai.¹⁷ Yorūbā towns and cities developed through nucleation processes, the contiguous independent villages coalesced into nucleated settlements and became an urban centre under one recognizable monarch. As Agbaje Williams has noted:

Ile-Ife developed as an amalgamation of thirteen or more village communities into an urban between the ninth and eleventh Century. The development of urbanism in Ile-Ife was concomitant with the arrival of Oduduwa the harbinger of the new political structure.¹⁸

The antiquity of many Yorūbā traditions of Middle East origin is well known in the historical documents. What can be done is to examine the existing theories in the light of available facts. Biobaku lets credence to the origin of Yorūbā, states:

¹⁷ Alayande, A. Emmanuel, *The Ijebu of Yorūbā land 1850-1950 Politics, Economy and Society* (Ibadan : Heinemann Educational Books, 1992), 29.

¹⁸ Babatunde Agbaje-Williams, Babatunde Agbaje-Williams is a research fellow of Archaeology and Anthropology in the Institute of African studies, University of Ibadan. He conducted Archaeological field research at major pre-colonial urban centres in the Yorubaland. He has published extensively on the archaeology and cultural history of Yorubaland, and cultural *Yorūbā Urbanism: The Archaeology and Historical Ethnography of Ile- Ife and Old Oyo'' Pre-Colonial Nigeria. Essays in Honour of Toyin Falola*(Eritrea: Africa Ed. Akinwunmi Ogundiran World Press, 2005), 217.

‘... the Yorūbā must have migrated to their present homes from a region. Where they came under ancient Egyptian Etruscan, and Jewish influences. This original home must have been in the near-East and that the all-Black Kingdom or Meroe in the Sudan must have played an important role in the Transmissions of Egyptian influence to the Yorūbā. The modern Yorūbā themselves usually confused the near-east with Arabia and owing to the prestige of Islam, locate their origin in Mecca. The probable place is Upper Egypt rather than Yemen’’¹⁹

However, Muhammad Bello in his magnum opus makes remarkable statement on the origin of the Yorūbā people, the passage is full of interest and merits presentation:

The inhabitant of this province (Yarūbā), it is supposed, originated from the remnant of the children of Canaan, who were of the tribe of Nimrod. The cause of their establishment in the West of Africa was, as it is related, in consequence of their being driven by Yarūbā son of Khatān out of Arabia to the Western Coast between Egypt and Abyssinia. From that spot, they advanced into the interior of Africa till they reached Yarūbā where they fixed their residence. On their way they left a tribe of their own people. Thus it is supposed that all tribes of the Sudan who inhabit the mountains are originated from them, as also are the inhabitants of Yaory’.²⁰

It is worthy of note that Oyo tradition confirms that the Yorūbā people are from Middle East.²¹ In this respect Samuel Johnson, Olumide Lucas and Saburi Biobaku devoted attention to the subject of Yorūbā origin of Middle East postulation. Johnson, an authority of Yorūbā history, emphatically says: “That the Yorūbā came originally from the East there cannot be the slightest doubt, as their habits, manners and customs, etc. all goes to prove.”²²

¹⁹ Saburi, O. Biobaku, *The Origin of the Yorūbā*. (Lagos: Government Printer, 1956), 20 – 26.

²⁰ Muhammad Bello, *Infāq Masūr fī Bilaād at Taqrār* (Cairo: *Dārū’lī fīkr*, 1964), 48. Muhammad Bello 1780-1837) was a political successor of ‘Uthman b. Fudi, the founder of Sokoto Caliphate, he succeeded his father in 1817 after the demise of his father. Muhammad Bello was a scholar, an army commander and an administrator per excellence. He wrote more than hundred works, but his magnum opus is *Infāq Maysūr* which is referred to in this study.

²¹ Johnson, *History of the Yorūbās*, 5.

²² *Ibid.*, 7.

Yorūbā Identity and Arguments Against Middle East Theories

A rejection of migration theory of Yorūbā origin from Middle East is based on linguistic evidence. The Yorūbā language is classified by linguists among the Kwa group of the Niger-Congo or Niger-Kordofanian family of languages. It is argued that the speakers of the Kwa group of languages, must have for long inhabited the area which centred around the Niger/Congo river systems. Adetugbo in his illuminating argument declares:

The history of known cases of language differentiation makes it improbable that the time-depth in the differentiation of Edo from Yorūbā would be less than 3,000 years. And when one thinks of Yorūbā as one out of about eight languages within the Kwa family, one also has to reckon with greater time-depth to account for the divergence among these far-flung languages.²³

In the same breath Adetugbo argues against Middle East Theory:

A rejection of the migration theory (from Mecca or Egypt) is probable in the light of linguistic evidence. It is perhaps unlikely that the shared linguistic features among these languages were acquired outside (tropical) Africa, especially when these resemblances include the designations for tropical flora and animals. The time depth in the differentiations of the languages too would compel us to posit contact among the peoples for upwards of 3,000 years.²⁴

Akinjogbin in his view declares that:

Yorūbā language, separated as a distinct group from the Kwa group about three or four thousand years ago i.e. (2000 or 1000 B.C. and that the Yorūbā had been inhabiting the nucleus of their present homeland probably before C. 1000B.C.²⁵

²³ Adetugbo Abiodun *The Yorūbā Language In Yorūbā History' in S.O. Biobaku, Ed., Sources of Yorūbā History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 182.

²⁴ Adetugbo, *The Yorūbā Language*, 182.

²⁵ I. A. Akinjogbin, "The Concept of Origin in Yorūbā History: The Ife Example," History Department Seminar, University of Ife Paper, March, 1980, 3.

Adjudged from the foregoing, migratory theory of the Yorūbā origin from the Middle East was rejected by Adetugbo, Ade Obayemi, Akinjogbin and Atanda etc., in the light of linguistic evidences deduced from their well-reasoned arguments. It is now on us to reconcile these seemingly antagonistic hypotheses.

Migration and Desiccation of Sahara

The period that archaeologists generally refer to as Middle Stone Age (MSA) otherwise called the pre-historic era witnessed series of migrations. These migrations were occasioned by a number of factors. The need for food which led to hunting and gathering in the Paleolithic and the Mesolithic eras otherwise called the Early Stone Age (ESA) and Middle Stone Age (MSA). The Early Stone Age has been dated back to ca. 2 million years BP.²⁶ The development of Agriculture in the Neolithic era (Late Stone Age), led to search for fertile land. The domestication of animals in Neolithic era which made people moved with their animals in search of grass gave birth to pastoralism. The desiccation of the Sahara some 5000 years ago could be seen as an additional and immediate cause of southward movement of population.²⁷ The period of Late Stone Age (LSA), was a major turning points in the history of African people. The period witnessed intense and dramatic migrations of people mostly from the North to the South due to changes in ecological conditions. These series of migrations were instigated by the increasing desiccation of the Sahara to the Southward migrations and onwards into the savanna.²⁸ The outcome of these migrations was the introduction of animals; cattle, goats, sheep and camels into the region. Camels were brought by the Arabs into North Africa and to Savannah region. The Arabs were

²⁶ Raphael Alabi is a Lecturer in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Ibadan. He specializes in environmental archaeology and early human settlements in West Africa. He has conducted geoarchaeological field work in coastal Nigeria, and also conducted research on Late Stone Age settlements in the rain forest belt of Nigeria. A. A. Raphael, "Late stone technologies and Agricultural Beginnings," *Pre-Colonial Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Toyin Falola*. ed. Akinwunmi Ogundiran (Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2005), 26.

²⁷ Elugbe Ben, *The Scramble for Nigeria. A Linguistic Perspective*. (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1992), 5.

²⁸ Raphael, "Late stone Technologies and Agricultural Beginnings, 87-88.

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famous with their use of the singly-humped camels which were probably confined to Arabia where it is part of the native fauna. Abdullahi Smith submits that:

Arabs were famous with their use of the singly-humped camels which were probably confined to Arabia where it is part of the native fauna. The Arabs and their camels went together and were indeed inseparable. Consequences to the ancient inspiration of the Arabs from the camels, the animals were introduced into Africa through their present in Africa with their camels; where African peoples living in the desert conditions acquired the use of Camels.²⁹

Assessments of the Various Hypotheses on Yorūbā Origin

The various ideas discussed above are classified into protagonists and antagonists of Middle East Theories. The protagonists draw our attention to common similarities between the Middle Eastern people and the Yorūbā apparent cultural traits, factual marks, inward and outward migrations between the Arabian land and African continent and reciprocal influences on the both sides, such as language influences and the direction of themes of words exchanged. On the other hand, the antagonists argue against the Middle East theories on the basis of linguistics, that Yorūbā people belonged to kwa group of the Niger-Congo or Niger-Kordofanian family of languages. Its speakers like the speakers of other languages of the Kwa group of languages such as Edo, Igbo, Ewe etc., must have for long inhabited the area which centre can be fact that all the languages that have genetic resemblances must have descended from a common proto-language, a common parentage as it were, and of which each emerged as a distinct language.³⁰ Adetugbo in his illuminating argument states that:

It means that the hundred million or more people in West, East and central Africa and who today speak about 600 hundred different languages might have been at an earlier pre-historic period closer than they now are. That is the different

²⁹ Abdullahi Smith, "The Legend of the Seifuwa," 37-38.

³⁰ Atanda, "The Origin of the Yoruba People And The Rise of Odududuwa" in The Collected Works of Atanda J.A. ed. Toyin Falola (Austin-Texas: Pan-African University Press, 2017), 82.

languages spoken might have been, at this period, mutually intelligible dialects with varying degrees of divergence from one another. If this were the case, the pre-history of these peoples and their origins must belong together. It will therefore be futile to isolate one of 600 or so groups and for posit it an origin without reference to the history of other groups.³¹

What can be deduced from Adetugbo and other scholars' lines of arguments is that all the speakers of Kwa languages must have also migrated to their present locales from somewhere outside West Africa.

Analytical Arguments

A critical examination of all languages shows that they emerged from the same parentage before the diffusion and the migrations from original homeland. More importantly, kwa group of the Niger-Congo or Niger-Kordofanian family languages are original from Middle East they were diffused and migrated through series of migratory waves. Welmers in his linguistic explanatory notes says: 'The Niger-Congo may have been somewhere in the upper Nile valley.' 'From such a homeland, a westward migration may have begun well over 5000 years ago... At that time, the present Sahara was capable of sustaining a substantial population and was presumably the homeland of the Nilo-Saharan.'³² Heine, on the same line of arguments, asserts that:

'Niger-Congo people might have occupied larger parts of the Sahara. He agrees with the theory of postulated migration from the general direction of the Sahara and the presence of the Kordofanian peoples in the Sudan. Therefore, in the absence of any claim that Niger-Congo peoples migrated in That direction makes it likely that before the West African homeland, the Niger-Congo peoples were farther north east towards the Central Nile valley.'³³

³¹Adetugbo, "The Yorūbā Language In Yorūbā History," 174.

³² Welmers, "Niger-Congo Mande," 119-120.

³³ B. Heine, "Some Linguistic Observations on the History of Africa," *Sprache and Geschichte in Africa*. 1 (1979): 37-54.

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The implication is that whatever the ethno-linguistic relationship the Yorūbā language has with Kwa Sub group of Niger-Congo language family, its separation with Nilo-Saharan and Afro-asiatic language families took place so long ago. There exists between Arabic and Yorūbā languages diffusion and genetic resemblances.

Conclusion

We have attempted in this study to give account of the genealogy of Mankind and the necessity of migrations, the consequences of agricultural, technological, and economic transformations and the complex political systems that developed in the Middle East. Therefore the study concludes as follows:

1. Language evidence suggests that relations between Yorūbā and Arabs from ancient time were deep and this has led to cultural exchanges in political and cultural life.
2. A number of Arabic loaned words and names are found in the Yorūbā vocabularies. There exist between Arabic and Yorūbā languages diffusion and genetic resemblances.
3. It is equally important to note that the word Yorūbā is stemmed from Arabic ‘*Ya’rūbā*’ this is derived from the name of ancestor of southern Arabs known in history as *Ya’rūbā b. Khatān*.
4. There are other several Arabic words that permeated Yorūbā language. The word *Adura* (prayer) is from Arabic ‘*Adu’ā*’. *Anfani* in the Yorūbā word is derived from Arabic *A-nāf*’ (Benefit), *Aniyan* (intension) in the Yorūbā word is derived from *A-nīyyāh* in Arabic. etc.
5. It is noted in the body of this study that linguistic evidence as established by the antagonists of Middle East theories is not sufficient to reject Middle East as original home of Yorūbā.
6. It is also worthy of note that not all the Yorūbā are the descendants of Oduduwa, because there are descendants of the people of pre-Oduduwa Ile-Ife in Yorūbā land today.

Recommendation

The idea of universal history about the origin of people prompted the ideas of this study. Therefore, in the light of the foregoing the study recommends that:

1. Scholars of religions, history and allied disciplines should work in tandem and give their students effective training and assignments in the science of genealogy.
2. It is also recommended that further research be carried out, and this present study will serve as basis.
3. Furthermore, in keeping with social realities of our society and relevance of our cultural heritage, governments of home countries should allocate fund for the study of history.
4. In all Muslim countries in the world there are many valuable works written in Arabic that awaiting translation into local and mothers' languages, therefore governments should assist scholars in the works of translation.

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