

*Full Length Research*

## **Ilisan Remo Ogun State Nigeria and Igbo Migration, 1959-2016**

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Ilisan Remo is a town in Remo land of Ogun State. There are different versions of the tradition of origin of the Remo people, most of those stories are linked to Ijebu-Ode and Ile-Ife. Since 1959, Ilisan Remo has witnessed a gradual migration Igbo and Ibibio people who migrated and eventually settled in Ilisan Remo. Among these settlers, the Igbo are more in number and have lived cordially with their Youruba host. The Igbo have contributed to the economic development of Ilisan. Conflicts are amicably resolved and no record of any major confrontation between the settlers and their host. Culture is not left out in their interaction as inter-marriages have occurred between the two groups. This paper examines issues on Igbo migration to Ilisan Remo, Ogun State since 1959, the causes of this migration and their contribution to the development of the community. In order to have a clearer understanding of the subject matter, the paper has been segmented into sub-headings, clearly stating the content analysis of the study. The objective of this paper is to carefully examine Igbo migration to Ilisan Remo and the reasons for this migration. Careful assessment of these facts reveals that the Igbo settlers have developed the vegetable business and are happy settling in Ilisan Remo. This study has used secondary and primary sources. It has suggested that the government at different levels should support the Igbo farmers in their farming business.

**Key Words:** Igbo, Migration, Development and Culture

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### **INTRODUCTION**

*Ilisan Remo* is a *Remo* community in Ogun state Nigeria. There are different versions of their traditions of origin but popular tradition of origin says the *Remo* migrated from *Iremo* quarters in *Ile-Ife* to settle in groups each with its *Oba* in the Western part of *Ijebu* province. Before 1959 this community was relatively known to the *Igbo*, but with the establishment of the Adventist College of West Africa (ACWA) in 1959 by the Seventh day

Adventist church with the aim of training missionaries for the church and educating men for Nigeria, *Ilisan* gradually became popular among Seventh day Adventist church members all over Nigeria and across West Africa.

Most of the early students admitted into this seminary were married, therefore the institution built married students quarters to accommodate such students and their families. In a bid to raise money for the training of

their husbands and to support their families, such married students wives engaged in farming. The institution allocated land to such interested women and later the women began to acquire land in the community to augment their land requirements. These women planted different crops in their farms but focused more on *ugu* (pumpkin), this they planted in a commercial quantity and sold in Lagos. The quest for education, job and farming attracted so many *Igbo* to *Ilisan Remo*. Few of these people returned back to the East while others remained in *Ilisan*. This paper discusses *Igbo* migration to *Ilisan Remo* beginning from 1959 to 2016, it examines the causes of this migration and its impact on the host community.

### A Brief History of Ilisan Remo

*Ilisan Remo* is located in Ikenne local Government Area of Ogun State. Remo is the Western part of *Ijebu* land also known as *Ijebu Remo*. *Sagamu*, the capital of Remo was established in 1872, when thirteen towns decided to amalgamate for security reasons.<sup>1</sup> There was no united Remo kingdom headed by a single ruler before the coming of the British. Remo land was occupied by a number of independent political entities each with its own traditional ruler. Some of the Remo polities might have been more prominent than the others because of their strategic location on important trade routes but there was no Remo Kingdom over which a single potentate ruled in the pre-colonial era. It only existed as a geographical expression.<sup>2</sup> This means that it may be misleading to talk of the origin of a single Remo Kingdom. Each town has an account of where and how it came to be at its present location. It is so complex that even within a town, sections or groups have different traditions of origin. For example, in the Remo town of *Ikenne*, a group that claimed to have come from *Ijebu*, the *Onafowokan* family has their *oriki* as “*omo a fidipote mole...*”. *Afidipote* is a ruling house in *Ijebu Ode*, so they probably have something in common.<sup>3</sup> Yet within the same *Ikenne*, a section claimed to have paid homage to or accepted the authority of the *Akarigbo of Ofin*.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, some Remo towns such as *Ofin*, *Epe*, *Ilara* and *Ode* claimed direct descent from *Ile-Ife*, others such as *Ilisan*, *Irolu*, *Ogere* said on their way from *Ile-Ife* they stayed for awhile in *Ijebu-Ode* before proceeding to Remo land. On the other hand, *Iperu*, *Ikenne* and *Ipara* while claiming direct descent from *Ile-Ife* accepted the over lordship of the *Awujale*.<sup>5</sup> These two latter groups continued to demonstrate allegiance to the *Awujale* even into the colonial period. These traditions of origin played significant role in the relations between *Ijebu* and Remo towns.

However, the popular tradition of origin says the Remo migrated from *Iremo* quarters in *Ile-Ife* to settle in groups

each with its Oba in the Western part of *Ijebu* province.<sup>6</sup> Tradition claims that the settlement were thirty-three in number and included *Ofin*, *Makun* and *Ikenne*, *Ilisan*, *Irolu*, *Akaka*, *Ode-Remo* and others. Of these Remo villages, eight migrated in circa 1000 B. C under the *Akarigbo* from *Ile-Ife* while the remaining such as *Iperu*, *Ogere*, *Isara* and *Makun* migrated under the leadership of the *Awujale*. According to this tradition it was not until 1872 that *Ofin*, the seat of the *Akarigbo* became the capital of *Sagamu*.<sup>7</sup> *Sagamu* included the following quarters: *Ijagba*, *Makun*, *Soyindo*, *Epe*, *Oko*, *Batoro*, *Latawa*, *Ijoku*, *Ofin* and others.

Related to the above tradition is the one that says that the Remo first settled at *Ijebu-Ode* and that they were given land by the *Awujale*. From *Ijebu-Ode*, these Remo towns dispersed to establish new settlements either on the order of the *Awujale* or on account of some other circumstances.<sup>8</sup> The *Awujale* subsequently exercised authority on the Remo towns. These Remo towns include *Iperu*, *Ogere*, *Isara* and *Makun*.

According to another tradition of origin it was the *Awujale* who dispatched the *Akarigbo* to settle at *Ofin* in *Sagamu*.<sup>9</sup> It says that during the journey that took *Obanta* from *Ile-Ife* to *Ijebu* land, he fought and killed *Olu-Igbo* who was the king of a village named *Igbo*. *Obanta* took *Aka*, the pregnant wife of *Olu-Igbo* and made her to carry the head of her late husband until they reached *Ijebu-Ode* where she delivered a male child. The child was named *Akarigbo* meaning “*Aka* carried the head of *Igbo*”. According to this tradition, this child eventually became the eponymous ancestor of all subsequent *Akarigbo* because when he became of age, *Awujale* dispatched him to found *Ofin* in *Sagamu* by which time the *Makun* people had already settled in Remo. *Olubomehin O. O.*, faulted this tradition of origin arguing that this tradition looks more like a myth and myths are not necessarily history. *Aka* must have been so courageous to have carried the head of her deceased husband (perhaps for weeks or months) before giving birth to a son. The practical impossibility of carrying an unembalmed corpse casts aspersion on the authenticity of this tradition.<sup>10</sup>

A variant of this account which is popular in *Ijebu-Ode* says that *Olofin Ogbolu* left *Ile-Ife* and proceeded to establish the town of *Odogbolu*.<sup>11</sup> Here the first *Akarigbo* was born by one of the wives of the *Olofin*. Later “the *Akarigbo* offended his father and was banished to Remo where he met the *Alara* and *Elepe*”.<sup>12</sup> He subsequently settled in Remo land. These last two traditions of origin cannot be substantiated by the ancient and recent history of Remo.

Considering these traditions of origin, one can come to some conclusions that there was no single common Remo tradition of origin. This is because there was no single Remo kingdom from the beginning. However, all the Remo towns accepted the traditions which linked them either directly or indirectly to *Ile-Ife*. Even the Remo

towns which claimed to have come from Ijebu-Ode still traced their original home to *Ile-Ife*. Indeed, there is evidence in support of the centrality of *Ife* in *Remo* traditions of origin. For example, even in contemporary time there exist special links between *Ile-Ife* and *Ijebu-Remo*.<sup>13</sup> There is a similarity in the language of the *Ijebu-Remo* people and the inhabitants of the *Iremo* quarters of *Ile-Ife*. All these possibly reinforce the *Remo*'s claim to an *Ile-Ife* ancestry.<sup>14</sup>

### Igbo Migration to Iisan Remo

The *Ijebu* were known during the pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial periods to have carved out good opportunities for themselves outside *Ijebu* land, they were aggressive business men and displayed a unique disposition for economic acquisition. Their geographical advantages include their location close to the Atlantic which put other Yoruba groups at their mercy during this period and their early contact with the Europeans made them have so much value for money. These resulted to a good opportunity for capital formation. They served as middle men and were less interested in farming than other Yoruba communities. But the *Remo* were more devoted farmers.<sup>15</sup>

The movement of the *Remo* people from one particular area to a vacant area or to an existing area sometimes or most times in agreement with the earlier settlers usually led to the emergence of settlements.<sup>16</sup> From the beginning of the twentieth century, the traces of Igbo communities had been established in *Sagamu* a *Remo* community. *Sagamu* people then referred to the Igbo as "Ibo or Yibo".<sup>17</sup> They believed that anybody from the Eastern part of Nigeria was Igbo. This perception lingered on for many years. The early Igbo migrants in *Sagamu* were men. These men were seasonal workers like their Hausa counterparts who assisted the local farmers in their farms as labourers. They lived within *Sagamu*. Some of the Igbo were palm wine tappers. They also helped in harvesting the palm trees for the production of palm oil. Unlike the Hausa, the Igbo did not migrate in group but singly and at any period of the year. More Igbo were attracted to *Sagamu* when *Sabo* was created and became a transit point for drivers from other parts of Nigeria. Hotels, brothels, bear parlors and other businesses were established by the Igbo.<sup>18</sup> *Iisan Remo* during the same period was not as attractive as *Sagamu* but this changed with the establishment of the Adventist seminary of West Africa in *Iisan* in 1959.

Agricultural potentials of the states in the Southern part of Nigeria are much more as they are thickly wooded.<sup>19</sup> From the dawn of their history, the primary basis of the economic development of the Yoruba people was agriculture. This was a logical development from several factors including the geographical location of their

country. The area is located in the tropics where rainfall and soil fertility are adequate for the growth of a number of subsistence and cash crops. But the fertility of the soil alone without adequate labour force could not bring about a meaningful economy.<sup>20</sup>

*Iisan Remo* is not known for the possession of any solid mineral but fertile land is an important natural resource that has attracted people to the town particularly the Igbo. But the story of this town changed on September 17, 1959, when the Seventh day Adventist Church worldwide established the Adventist College of West Africa (ACWA) to cater for the needs of the church in training church leaders for the West African sub-region.<sup>21</sup> This institution became the cradle of the Seventh day Adventist higher education in Nigeria. This institution which began in 1959 as Adventist College of West Africa later changed its name to Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA) and eventually became one of Nigeria's first private Universities in 1999. This institution later in 1999 took her name after D. C. Babcock, the first Seventh day Adventist missionary from the United States of America that began his missionary work in Western Nigeria in 1914.<sup>22</sup>

The institution ACWA began in 1959 with seven young men for ministerial education. The first students were Joel Awoniyi, Benjamin Oferen, Daniel Magaji, David Izima, James Okwandu, Isaac Nwobia and Luke Anosike.<sup>23</sup> The composition of this institution showed that it had students from all over Nigeria and West Africa. The institution made adequate plan to recruit, support, train and employ those who opted for ministerial education. The students were to study either theology or religion with a minor in other available fields such as English Language, Biology, Health Science, History and Business Administration.<sup>24</sup> As a result of its affiliation with Andrews University, United States, ASWA graduates gained recognition and were allowed to join graduates of Nigerian Universities in the National Youth Service programme. This privilege continued until 1981 when it was replaced with letters of exemption for its graduates, while the degree still remained recognized. This boosted the desire of Adventist youth to receive ministerial education. As a result of this, graduates were turned out every year from the seminary and these graduates who returned to their respective fields became mouth piece and agents of further recruitment for the seminary.

The relevance of the institution's certificate attracted many youths both members and non-members of the church to *Iisan Remo*. The establishment of this institution in 1959 in *Iisan Remo* had a great impact on the life and people of the town. As a result of the interest generated by the activities of these young graduates from this institution across West Africa and in their respective fields, people from different regions in Nigeria came to *Iisan Remo* either in search of job or admission into the seminary. Among these groups, the *Igbo* were more in

number.

Before the establishment of ACWA in 1959, Lazarus Chinyere believes that some *Igbo* had already migrated to *Remo* land. Such *Igbo* maintained their *Igbo* names and language (in some cases adulterated) but claimed *Yoruba* origin. According to him such individuals through their grandparents acquired or bought large expanses of unoccupied land in *Remo* land.<sup>25</sup> Assessing the migration and contribution of the *Igbo* to *Ilisan Remo*, Emma Njoku who was transferred in 1965 from Seventh day Adventist College, *Ihie*, *Isiala Ngwa* in the present day Abia State to ACWA as a carpenter posits that some married women who came to the institution with their husbands started the commercial *ugu* (pumpkin) planting in *Ilisan Remo* in 1966. This was done in order to support their husband in school and provide for their families.<sup>26</sup> The three women that started *ugu* planting in *Ilisan Remo* are: Mrs. Ugwuka (*Igbo*), Mrs. Ihioma (*Igbo*) and Mrs. Nkwa (*Ibibio*). With the outbreak of the Nigeria-Biafra war in 1967, they returned home (Eastern Nigeria) in July of that year, with their husbands and children. At the end of the war in 1970, these women returned back to *Ilisan Remo* and continued with their farming activities. Apart from these three women no other person including indigenes were planting *ugu* in *Ilisan Remo*. At the end of the war in 1970, Mrs. Emma Njoku joined these three women in this business.

This thriving business became attractive to other *Igbo* women in ACWA and in the South East. After the civil war, more *Igbo* women gradually moved from the South East to *Ilisan Remo* either in search of job or to join the farming business. Farming and education became forces that pulled so many *Igbo* to *Ilisan Remo*. During this period the *Yoruba* (*Ilisan Remo* people) gave their land free to these farmers irrespective of the size of the land. At the end of the year, the farmers individually took maize, any other farm produce or gin to the *Baba* (Elderly *Yoruba* man) that gave them the land in appreciation. In the 1980's when *Ilisan* people began to sell farm land, a plot of land was only sold for five naira or ten naira. This was not compulsory as some indigenes still gave their land free to the farmers.<sup>27</sup>

Between 1970 and 1980, a bundle of *ugu*, weighed between 300 kg to 350kg but farmers began to reduce such bundles as from 1990. From 1975 to early 1990's, *molue* trucks (Mercedes Benz lorry) moved from house to house to carry farmers and their vegetable. The business was so organized that a union was formed by the farmers after the civil war that helped in organizing the business. There was restriction on non-members but intending members were made to register with money before they were allowed to carry their vegetable to Lagos. The vegetable of those who did not register but were carried to Lagos market were cease.<sup>28</sup>

There were different market groups led by different market leaders. Initially there were three groups namely:

Mrs. Ugwuka's group and Mrs. Ihioma's group (*Ottor* market leaders), Mrs. Mark's and Mrs. E. Njoku's group (cemetery market after *Ajgunle* in Lagos) and later Mrs. Ochingwa's group (*Ajgunle* market leader) joined also in the 1970's. People from 1970 were given the number of times and days to carry vegetable to Lagos. When the *ugu* or vegetable matures it was harvested, and taken to Lagos by the women (farmers). In Lagos as mentioned, there were different locations or markets where the *ugu* was sold, they include *Ajgunle*, *Mushin*, *Oyingbo* (established in 1970), *Ottor* or *Iddo* (white sand) also established in 1970. *Ugu* was only sold to *Igbo* women in Lagos such women will buy and resell either in Lagos or outside Lagos. Between 1967 and late 1980, there were no touts in Lagos markets. Touting by the *Yoruba* youths began in these vegetable markets in the 1990's.<sup>29</sup> An attempt by the *Yoruba* youths (touts) in the 1980's to extort money from these vegetable traders led to relocation of the traders to *Oyingbo* from *Ottor* market.

At the end of the civil war in 1970, one bundle of *ugu* or vegetable was sold in Lagos for five naira or ten naira and twenty naira during scarcity. Farmers paid twenty naira for a full load of pick-up van to Lagos. In 2016 and 2017, ten pieces or a bag of vegetable, an equivalent of 250 kg costs two thousand to transport to Lagos. Initially, only women were involved in this business until the 1990's when men began to join. Planting every year began early in March and ended early in May.<sup>30</sup>

As a result of the availability of virgin, fertile and free land (forest), agriculture became attractive to more women, men, students and non-students who came from various parts of Eastern Nigeria particularly *Ngwa* land. They enjoyed the financial benefits of agriculture and *ugu* planting. As from the late 1970's, more *Igbo* gradually moved to *Ilisan Remo* either in search of admission, job in ACWA or to join *ugu* planting. These new *Igbo* farmers lived with those that brought them from the East to *Ilisan*. On arrival from the East, one may need to work for the person that brought him or her for a period of time before starting his or her own independent farm. In some cases some worked for their master and also owned their own farm. However, one does not need to have money to start the farming business as *Ilisan* (*Yoruba*) farmers who later joined the *ugu* planting willingly sold their vegetable farm on credit to these newcomers.<sup>31</sup> Some of the farm lands given or sold to the *Igbo* by the *Yoruba* in the 1990's most times contained left over cassava and cocoyam, bitter cola, cola nut trees and other economic trees that sustained these *Igbo* farmers until they began to harvest their own crops. Lazarus Chinyere said he brought six people from the East (*Igbo* land) that worked for him in his farms in the 1990's, that later established their own farms. These individuals lived with him in his house for some years.<sup>32</sup>

From 1966 to 1990, the *Igbo* paid little or nothing for accommodation.<sup>33</sup> According to Chinyere Lazarus, *Ilisan*

*Remo* people were very receptive and friendly, they received *Igbo* and non-*Igbo* visitors, gave them land free where they planted vegetable, accommodated them either free or collected little rent as low as five naira per room in the 1980's. Before then indigenes that collected rent collected almost nothing.<sup>34</sup> They even gave their ancestral lands to some *Igbo* men to manage for them.<sup>35</sup> From 1970 to 1990 as earlier mentioned, a bundle of *ugu* (pumpkin leaf) weighed higher than what it is today. This quantity was later reduced to what they now call pieces. During the same period, one person was allowed to carry five bags (10 bundles), small vehicles carried 10 bags while big ones carried 25 bags. In the evening the transporters went round and collected their fare.<sup>36</sup>

*Ilisan* indigenes also provided herbs for *Igbo* farmers for the treatment of different ailments even in the farm (*Abule*). They were happy with *Igbo* settlers and exhibited no bad feelings against them. They only hated or sent away those that were involved in dubious activities such as stealing, dishonesty and diabolism. Most of those suspected of these bad practices either relocated to *Ikorodu* in Lagos or returned to the East.<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that the Yoruba farmers were not allowed to carry vegetable to Lagos, therefore they were forced to sell their vegetable to the *Igbo* farmers.<sup>38</sup>

In the migration of the *Igbo* to *Ilisan Remo*, Alice Nwaeji, posits that some *Igbo* migrated to *Ilisan* in search of greener pastures.<sup>39</sup> Some of them were *ugu* (pumpkin) seed traders who bought the seed from *Ngwa* (in Abia State), Portharcourt (in Rivers State), *Itu*, *Ikot Ekpene*, *Uyo*, *Ikom* (in *Akwa Ibom*), *Calabar* and wherever the seed could be found in Eastern Nigeria. This was a viable business to those who engaged in it. However some of these traders later settled in *Ilisan* and became farmers. They settled according to their area of origin or where their people settled. Most of the *Igbo* settlers came from *Obingwa* and few from *Osisioma Ngwa*, *Isiala Ngwa* and *Umuahia* all in Abia State. Few farmers came from *Owerri* in Imo State.<sup>40</sup> It is important to note that *Igbo* farmers in *Ilisan* also participated in *ugu* (pumpkin) seed business, such farmers from 1966 to early 2000 returned to the East in the year and bought *ugu* seeds. During such trips, these farmers came back to *Ilisan* with other *Igbo* men and women who they either introduced or used in their farming business.<sup>41</sup>

In *Ikenne Remo* the local government headquarters, there are few *Igbo* settlers who initially settled in *Ilisan* but later moved to *Ikenne*. However, *Ikenne* is where many *Ibibio* indigenes reside. According to Nwaeji Alice, *Ibibio* people are found more in *Ikenne* the home town of Chief Obafemi Awolowo because it is believed that Mrs. Awolowo brought the *Ibibio* to *Ikenne* before the Nigeria Biafra war in 1967 in order to pay them back for saving the life of her husband.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, most of these settlers settled where they have majority of their people, where they can interact freely with their people and

where the person that brought them is living. Majority of *Igbo* farmers are found in *Ilisan Remo* while their *Ibibio* counterparts live mainly in *Ikenne*. However, *Ikenne* and *Ilisan* do the *ugu* (vegetable) business together.<sup>43</sup>

Apart from *Ilisan Remo* and *Ikenne*, other communities that supply *ugu* to Lagos include: *Ijebu Igbo*, *Ijebu Ode*, *Sango Otta*, *Agege*, *Orile* in Lagos and *Ikorodu* also in Lagos. All these farmers and traders are *Igbo* and *Ibibio* as non-*Igbo* are not allowed by the *Igbo* to either sell or buy directly from the farmers in Lagos.<sup>44</sup> According to Lazrus Chinyere, the *Igbo* have been in-charge of *ugu* business since 1966. This is so because it is believed that *ugu* is a major vegetable for the *Igbo* people. They are also in-charge of sliced *ugu* sold to Republic of Benin, Ghanaian, European and American traders etc. The sliced one was sold to Delta, Edo and Calabar women involved in international trade.<sup>45</sup>

The Giant Farmers Association (Motto: No food for a lazy man) was an umbrella body that united farmers from *Ikorodu*, *Orile*, *Ikenne* and *Ilisan*. Mrs. Ugwuka (Mama Ekele), Mrs Efuribe, Mrs Ochingwa and Mrs. Mathias Ihioma were at one time leaders of this association. However this association had different branches and leaders. *Ilisan* branch was known as United Farmers Union. Members of this union were given identity card which they used whenever they went to Lagos to sell as a form of identification by the checkers. People without identity card were not allowed to sell in Lagos. These associations since the beginning of 2017 are no longer active.<sup>46</sup> The business was well organized that when vehicles arrived Lagos, they lined up according to the way they arrived and the checkers went through them to ascertain the identity of the farmers and the quantity they brought to the market.<sup>47</sup>

*Ilisan* indigenes who joined *ugu* planting as earlier mentioned sold their vegetable farms to the *Igbo* settlers in *Ilisan* on credit, on the agreement that the *Igbo* farmer will sell the crops and pay them. This arrangement remained until late 1990 when *Igbo* farmers had a meeting and stopped buying vegetable farms from the *Yoruba*. This consequently forced the *Yoruba* (*Ilisan* people) out of vegetable farming business as they no longer plant *ugu*. This enabled *Igbo* farmers to be in control of the vegetable business in *Ilisan* and Lagos. At the selling points in Lagos, *Igbo* vegetable farmers from *Agege*, *Ikorodu*, *Ilisan* and *Ikenne* (*Ibibio*) sold their vegetable here to *Igbo* traders from Lagos, Republic of Benin, Ghana and non-*Igbo* traders that exported it to the United States, Europe and beyond to be sold in African shops in those countries. Vegetable that was sold overseas, went through the international airport in Lagos.<sup>48</sup>

The presence of touts in *Ottor* (White Sand) market from late 1980's, affected business in that market. These touts collected levies from the traders, sometimes, they confiscated and sold the vegetable themselves and

returned whatever amount they wished to the farmers. As a result of this these traders moved to *Oyingbo* also in Lagos. Here they created so many zones owned by established Igbo women farmers (the “god mothers” of the business). Such zones included: free zone, *Ahia* Sunday, *Mama Monday* and others outside *Oyingbo*, there are up to twenty zones in all. Owners of these zones were collecting money as market leaders until mid-2000 when touts took over the collection of such monies and have remained in-charge till today. The market leaders owned these zones and introduced new farmers to such zones. Before a new farmer or trader joined the vegetable business somebody must introduce the new trader to the market, such a person is required to pay the person that introduced her and also pay the touts.<sup>49</sup>

Before 1980, only Igbo men and women were used as labourers in the farms. Such Igbo labourers came from *Umuahia*, *Owerri* and *Ngwa*. But from 1980, Hausa labourers became visible and prominent in farming activities in *Ilisan*. In the 1990's Hausa labourers were paid three hundred naira per day.<sup>50</sup> Today 95% of the labour force is Hausa. The Igbo use labourers to enable them meet up with the demand of the market.<sup>51</sup>

In 1986, when Lazrus Chinyere came to *Ilisan Remo* in search of job in the Adventist Seminary of West Africa, the farm manager in ASWA Mr. Ukpong (an *Ibibio*) was allocating plots of land to student's pastor's wives and workers to use as farm inside the school environment. Such women farmers included Mrs. Amanze, Mrs. Dike, Mrs. Eti, women from Cameroun, Ghana, Sierra Leon and other interested individuals. During this period the institution encouraged people to farm in order to reduce the forest within the school environment. A plot of land in school then was sold for ten naira while in the community it was rented by the *Alojo* (visitor) for five naira, ten naira or free (with a bottle of hot drink). In these plots of land, people planted *ugu* (pumpkin), maize and cassava. Cassava was sold in *Ilisan* market, maize was either sold in *Ilisan* or Lagos. In the 1980's, there was no restriction on the use of land. No *Ilisan Remo* youth had right to allocate land to any farmer, if such happens, the Elders will put palm frond (*omu*) on the land and will only remove it when the farmer buys a bottle of hot drink for the *Baba* in-charge of the family/land.<sup>52</sup>

From 1966 to late 1970's farmers were not applying fertilizer to their crops, but by early 1980 they began to use fertilizer. The local government at Ikenne (farm house) provided fertilizers for the farmers at a subsidized price. In the 1980's and 1990's, a bag of fertilizer was sold for ten naira and there was no manipulation, farmers queued and got bags of fertilizers as they required. Farmers preferred or used only NPK fertilizer and 15-15 fertilizer in their farms. Today, a bag of fertilizer is sold for ten thousand naira. Transport to Lagos in 1992 for a pick-up van was four handed naira and the *Yoruba* were in-charge of transportation. Prominent *Yoruba* transporters

during this period included *Baba Bedford*, *Taju* and *Fumilowo*. These transporters used Mercedes Benz 911 Lorry, Pick-up van (*pompom*) and Bedford Lorry (*Bolekaja*) to carry *ugu* to Lagos. From 1970 to 1990 the farmers loaded a minimum of ten vehicles per day during peak period but reduced to four or five during scarcity. These vehicles left *Ilisan* between 11:00 pm and 12:00 mid-night for Lagos and arrived 1:00 am or 2:00 am and completed their transaction before 6:00 am. The transporters only collected their money when they returned from Lagos. From 1990 to 2016 the number of vehicles increased to fifteen per day and six during scarcity.<sup>53</sup>

In order to sustain a regular supply of *ugu* to Lagos irrespective of the season, *Igbo* farmers began dry season farming. In this case vegetable is planted near the river for proper and easy irrigation by the farmers. For *Ilisan* farmers, bush clearing begins in September while planting starts on October 15 and ends in December. *Ikorodu* farmers begin bush clearing in October while actual planting starts on November 15 and planting ends in January. New harvest (vegetable) from *Ilisan* is brought to the market on January 1. *Ikorodu* starts supplying in February. Dry season in *Ilisan* ends between February and March. Between May and June, vegetable planted during the rainy season appear in the market. But activities of the newcomers from the East have affected some of the regulations guiding *ugu* planting.<sup>54</sup>

In 2014, some Ogun State government officials visited *Ilisan Remo* and interviewed the farmers. As a result of their interaction with the farmers, they gave them six pumping machines for dry season farming and promised to give them six more machines later. The farmers were required to buy the accessories such as pipes (one roll of pipe equals one hundred yards). They also promised the farmers loan from the government and official identity card. This proposal from the government was sabotaged by some *Igbo* farmers who went behind to negotiate a different arrangement with the government officials. Therefore Ogun State government abandoned this arrangement with the *Igbo* farmers.<sup>55</sup>

These *Igbo* farmers have benefited so much from this business. Those that started this business and those that joined later have been able to train their children in Europe, America, Babcock University, other Universities and high institutions in and outside Nigeria. This trend has continued till date. They have also built houses in and outside *Ilisan* and bought motto bikes, cars, buses and vans. In 2014 and 2015, one bundle of *ugu* cost between five thousand and six thousand. The quests for job in ACWA, ASWA, Babcock University and greener pasture through farming have contributed so much to the migration of the *Igbo* to *Ilisan Remo*.<sup>56</sup>

The major crop production operation in *Ilisan Remo* like in other Nigerian communities include land clearing, tilling, sowing, weeding, harvesting and transporting.

Beginning from land clearing to harvesting, traditional hand tools are the principal farm equipment.<sup>57</sup> Machetes or cutlasses are tools used mostly for land clearing.<sup>58</sup> The principal hand-operated tillage implement is the hoe. This is used for digging, planting and weeding and these Igbo farmers over the years have depended on these traditional implements.<sup>59</sup>

### Contribution of the Igbo to the Development of Ilisan Remo

Since 1959 when ACWA was established till date there has been continues migration of *Igbo* people to *Ilisan Remo* and as a result of the migration and settlement of the *Igbo* in *Ilisan Remo*, today over seventy per cent of houses owned by the local people have *Igbo* tenants in them. This has encouraged the indigenes to build more houses and this has become a source of regular income to the indigenes who receive house rents from these settlers.

In the town today, new areas have developed through the effort of these *Igbo* settlers who buy land from these indigenes and build their own houses. In *Ilisan Remo* there is an area called the *Igbo* quarters behind *Ilisan Remo* new market controlled by Elder Rowland Anyatonwu an *Igbo* man (*Ngwa*) from Abia State popularly called *Bale*. He is in charge of sale of land and affairs of the area So many other *Igbo* have also built houses in other parts of *Ilisan Remo* outside the *Igbo* quarters. This has brought enormous economic and physical development to the community. The indigenes through the sale of land have generated income. Regular farming activities have opened up heavily forested areas in the community. These *Igbo* settlers also live in the midst of the local people and so many of them now speak the *Yoruba* language while some of their *Yoruba* counterparts also speak *Igbo* language and this has enhanced co-existence and interaction.<sup>60</sup>

Due to the role played by *Yoruba* vehicle owners in transporting *Igbo* farmers and their vegetable to Lagos, it became a source of income for the vehicle owners. As earlier pointed out, these vehicle owners had regular (daily) goods to take to Lagos. Many of them as a result of the demand for vehicles bought more vehicles for the business. Some *Ilisan Remo* indigenes also bought bicycles and rented such bicycles to these *Igbo* farmers who used them go to the farm and *Ikenne* farm house.<sup>61</sup>

As a result of migration of the *Igbo* to *Ilisan Remo*, they have contributed enormously to the economic and physical development of the town. Apart from the vegetable farmers, there are also *Igbo* traders, transporters, auto and motto cycle spare parts dealers, commercial motto cycle rider and artisans in *Ilisan Remo*. Few *Igbo* made effort to harvest palm trees in *Ilisan Remo* but this did not yield much result as very few

people were interested in this and the palm fruits are not high yield species. These groups of people have contributed to the development of the town. The activities of these *Igbo* in the area of agriculture has brought economic prominence to *Ilisan Remo* as it is today known for its role in the cultivation of *ugu* in Ogun state. Other crops produced by these farmers include garden egg, water melon, cassava, paw-paw and other types of vegetables. *Igbo* farmers have extended their farming activities to other communities around *Ilisan Remo* such as *Iperu*, *Ogere*, *Ilara*, *Irolu*, *Akaka*, *Ogere*, *Odogbolu*, *Ayepe* etc The *Yoruba* are also farmers but plant other crops while some engage in cola nut business and the sell of other products.<sup>62</sup>

With the presence of the *Igbo* and other ethnic nationalities in *Ilisan Remo* there are ethnic churches in the community among the Seventh day Adventist church members, there is a *Yoruba* Seventh day Adventist church, an *Igbo* Seventh day Adventist church, an *Ibibio/Efik* Seventh day Adventist church and an *Hausa* Seventh day Adventist church. Among the non-Seventh day Adventists there are other churches like the Apostolic Christian church. Most of these ethnic based churches use their native language in conducting their services.

### Challenges faced by these farmers

In spite of the economic benefits of *ugu* planting, these farmers are facing some challenges and this section examines these challenges. One key problem among these farmers/traders is betrayal. Before now some *Igbo* farmers betrayed their fellow farmers because when they felt that a fellow farmer's portion of land was more fertile than his own portion, some of them went to the land owner to take over such a portion. Again some of the farmers made their *ugu* bundle bigger than that of others to enable them sell faster in Lagos. A clear example was the 2014 incident when some farmers betrayed others in the hands of the Ogun State government officials.<sup>63</sup>

Sometimes farm boundaries caused disagreement among some *Igbo* farmers but such disputes were resolved by the same farmers involved in it. Such issues were not allowed to escalate into serious disputes. Stealing of pumpkin seeds (*ugu* seeds) and the vegetable leaf gradually crept in among the farmers. But this was quickly dealt with by the *Ilisan* community who killed some of those criminals while some relocated to *Ikorodu* in Lagos or the South East.<sup>64</sup>

On few occasions the farmers had been involved in motor accident, some of the farmers have also lost their lives through such incidents. However, such incidents rarely occur. Sometimes the farmers were rubbed of their valuables on their way to Lagos. Sabotage and disagreement among the farmers led to the collapse of their union in 2017. For example sometime in the past

couples were given the quantity of bags of *ugu* to plant but some people abused this policy. Some planted for themselves and also planted for their children. Although they used the union and the task force that visited and inspected people's farms to control it. Those that planted more than required had their *ugu* seeds removed from the ground. That was in when the constitution was active and assisted in regulating the activities of the farmers until 2017. Sometimes when these farmers were given the number of times that they will carry their vegetable to Lagos, maybe twice and one has to take only ten pieces, some farmers tried to take more through other farmers who had less or no vegetable to carry to Lagos.<sup>65</sup>

The union eventually collapsed at the beginning of 2017 due to power tussle and disagreement among the members. This has affected the regulations guiding these farmers and their profit margin as there is no regulation presently on the number of pieces a farmer can take to Lagos. Even with the non-existence of the union, non-registered members are presently not allowed to carry *ugu* to Lagos.<sup>66</sup>

### Relations between the Igbo and Yoruba

The Yoruba engagement in any economic activity has a wider objective in view than merely to create wealth or to make money.<sup>67</sup> The Yoruba welcomed the Igbo in *Ilisan Remo* and this has facilitated a cordial and harmonious relationship among the two groups. Because of the friendly relationship the Igbo settlers do not entertain fear of going to the forest to farm. There has never been an incidence of abduction, killing, attack in the farm or along the road to the farm.<sup>68</sup> The Igbo over the years have lived cordially with the Yoruba, this does not mean that there are no infractions and conflicts between the *Yoruba* and *Igbo* but such situations are amicably resolved by the people involved, friends, the elders from both communities or the *Oba*.

Today in *Ilisan Remo* one will find some *Yoruba* people who married *Igbo* women and *Igbo* men that married *Yoruba* women. Inter-marriages now take place between these groups and this has fostered unity among them. Most *Igbo* settlers and those born and brought up in *Ilisan Remo* now speak *Yoruba* language fluently such individuals mix freely with the people. Because of the population of the *Igbo* in *Ilisan Remo*, some of them conduct their *Igbo* traditional marriage in *Ilisan Remo* instead of returning back to the East as the *Igbo* custom demands. They now see *Ilisan* as their home. Religion particularly Christianity has helped in cementing the relationship between the *Igbo* and *Ilisan Remo* indigenes. Both have contributed in the building and development of churches in *Ilisan Remo*.

### CONCLUSION

The establishment of ACWA in 1959 in a *Remo* community of *Ilisan*, led to the migration of *Igbo* people who came to school, work in the institution or farm in *Ilisan Remo*. Student's wives in their bid to support their husband financially and provide for their families began farming business in *Ilisan*. They turned the forests in the community into farm lands. Their success in agriculture encouraged other *Igbo* women, workers in (ACWA) and attracted more from the East to join in the farming business. Since 1966, that *ugu* planting began in *Ilisan Remo*, it has become a big enterprise that it has attracted *Igbo* people to settle in *Ilisan Remo*. *Ugu* planting in *Ilisan Remo* has contributed to the economic and physical development of the town. The relationship between the settlers and the indigenes has remained cordial, intermarriages have occurred between them and the *Igbo* are fully recognized and integrated into *Ilisan Remo* community. In *Ilisan* presently, there are *Igbo* farmers, artisans, commercial motto cycle riders, builders and traders and these people have also contributed to the economic and physical development the town.

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