

**KINGSHIP AND POWER POLITICS IN AKOKOLAND, 1900-1999**

**By**

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## ABSTRACT

Kingship and power dynamics remain significant in governance discourse in Africa. Existing studies on kingship generally have portrayed the institution as a subordinate agent in colonial administration and modern power dynamics in Nigeria, including Akokoland. Although the dynamics of kingship and power relations in Nigeria have received a degree of scholarly interest, less attention has been paid to them in Akokoland. This study was, therefore, designed to examine kingship and power politics in Akokoland, with a view to determining the pattern of leadership tussles, complexity of governance and its challenges between 1900, the formal commencement of colonial rule in Akokoland and 1999, when the Government White Paper on the Justice S.F Adeloje Commission of Inquiry on Chieftaincy Matters in Ondo State report was released.

The historical approach was adopted. Primary and secondary sources were utilised. The primary sources derived mainly from the Commission of Inquiry Reports on chieftaincy matters obtained from the library of the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters, Ondo State. Other primary sources included Annual Reports and Intelligence Report files as well as private and official files obtained from the National Archives, Ibadan and Kaduna. In-depth interviews were conducted with 60 purposively selected informants based on their knowledge of the history of kingship and power politics in Akokoland: 17 kings, 20 chiefs, three princes, one palace staff, eight academics and 11 elders aged between 40 and 90 years. Secondary sources included books, journal articles, monographs, national dailies, dissertations, theses and materials from the internet. Data were subjected to historical analysis.

British colonialists deployed power politics as a divisive tool in Akokoland between 1900 and 1960. This development altered the political structure, subverted the power and authority of traditional rulers and created conflicts within the traditional authorities by subjecting the area to the lordship of Kabba (1900 – 1919) and Owo (1919 – 1935). The kings and chiefs consistently resisted the lordship of external powers over them. This resistance led to the creation of a separate system of Native Administration between 1935 and 1948. Two Native Administrations were created in Akokoland during this period because of the rivalry between Ikare-Akoko and Oka-Akoko. Between 1948 and 1960, the Akoko Federation Council was established, marking the last phase of colonial rule in Akokoland. From 1960 to 1999, kings and chiefs in Akokoland employed power politics to take full control of their royal jurisdiction by tactically and strategically invoking necessary sanctions, building formidable contacts with the ruling elite and exploring legal channels to check excesses and threats to their powers. The civilian and military regimes during this period enacted policies such as the 1976 Local Government Reforms, Land Use Decree of 1978, chieftaincy declarations and the setting up of scripted Commissions of Inquiry to further relegate the kingship institution. However, it survived their onslaught as a mediatory power between the people and government.

The use of power politics by kings and chiefs in Akokoland was largely occasioned by the quest for survival and relevance in the political space from 1900 to 1999.

**Keywords:** Kingship institution in Akokoland, Power politics in Yorubaland, British colonisation in Nigeria

**Word count:** 500

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to Princess Aderinsola Omoyiwola, Oluwadarasimi, Oluwajomiloju, Oluwatobiloba and Oluwademilade and the memory of late Professor O.B Olaoba of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

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Sunday Abraham OGUNODE

April, 2021

## **CERTIFICATION**

I certify that this work was carried out by Sunday Abraham OGUNODE in the Department of History, University of Ibadan, Nigeria under my supervision.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	-	Appeal Court
AD	-	Anno Domini
AG	-	Action Group
AAUA	-	Adekunle Ajasin University Akungba
B.A.	-	Bachelor of Arts
Ca.	-	Circa
CSO	-	Colonial Secretary Office
Div	-	Division
Dr.	-	Doctor (as used by an Academic Ph.D. holder)
D.O	-	District Officer
ed.	-	Editor
H.R.M	-	His Royal Majesty
H.E.B	-	Heinemann Educational Books
M.A	-	Master of Arts
M.Sc.	-	Master of Science
N.A.I	-	National Archives, Ibadan
N.A.K	-	National Archives, Kaduna
NAP	-	Native Authority Proclamation
n.d	-	no date
n.g	-	not given
NNDP	-	Nigeria National Democratic Party
n.p	-	no page

OAU	-	Obafemi Awolowo University
Ph.D	-	Doctor of Philosophy
PRO	-	Public Relations Officer
SAP	-	Structural Adjustment Programme

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the study

Like all other human institutions, the traditional institution is dynamic. In dateless times, the institution emerged because of man's need for it ...<sup>1</sup>

Some of what have come to be identified as cultural assets and peculiarities of the Yoruba peoples constitute important roots of relationship among the Yoruba kingdoms. These cultural peculiarities include Yoruba religion and chieftaincy titles.<sup>2</sup>

Like in other traditional societies in the world over, kingship or traditional political institution which occupies an important place in the socio-cultural history of the Yoruba people, constitutes important roots of bonding and co-existence among the Yoruba kingdoms, especially in the pre-colonial times. Prior to the introduction of colonial rule to Africa and indeed, Nigeria, kingship and other indigenous political institutions provided organised form of political administration with uniquely developed democratic principles and guidelines. Traditional communities were able to survive different stages of evolution and development due to the enduring and cohesive nature of the pre-colonial African political system. The socio-political disturbances and changes in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries greatly impacted the kingship and chieftaincy institutions in most parts of Yorubaland. At the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, new foci of power rivaling the powers of the kings and other traditional rulers emerged. The attractive economic colouration and patronage given to kingship, the kings and other traditional rulers since the colonial period has helped to galvanise more people into showing interest in royal power politics. The point of emphasis here is that, due to some failures after 1900, for example: (economic patronage/colorations, rivalries and power play), there emerged in Yorubaland traditionally recognized ruling houses and those that emerged due to legal pronouncements. This development has greatly altered the traditions

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<sup>1</sup>A.L. Najeem, 1989. "The Position of the Chiefs" in B.Y. Usman ed., *Nigeria since Independence: The First Twenty Five Years*, Volume I, The Society, Ibadan, H.E.B. p.69.

<sup>2</sup>G.O.I. Olomola, 1977. "Pre-Colonial Patterns of Inter-State Relations in Eastern Yorubaland".Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, p.95.

and the political history of many indigenous communities. Emerging from this is a complex power play among traditionally recognised ruling houses and those that evolved due to legal pronouncements and the eventual recognition by the government of the day. For example, Section 2 of the Chiefs Law of Ondo State<sup>3</sup> states that: “chief means person whose chieftaincy title is associated with a native community and includes a minor and a recognised chief.” Recognised chiefs are now the traditional *obas* within the contemplation of the law.<sup>4</sup> Recognised chiefs are now the kings under a law that has no recourse to traditions of divine or sacred kingship which was rooted in the *ebi*<sup>5</sup> (this concept represents a larger family tie that comprise direct blood relation and extended family members who may not necessarily share direct blood link but belong to the same family tree) and *ajobi*<sup>6</sup> (ties built on relationship by blood). The two concepts are the root word of *alajobi* (the connecting compound expression used to describe large family groups related by blood) family ties. Indeed, kings in the Yoruba pristine culture, were persons of great personification and held in high esteem among those ruled. The blue blood, which is the true mark of royalty, was not for everyone as far as the *ebi* framework and *ajobi* concept of society (ties built on relationship by blood) are concerned. In fact, Akinjogbin explained that the uniqueness of the *ebi* social system was its ability to bring together all the blue-blood members of the royalty in an *ebi* commonwealth. This was a political arrangement which, according to Akinjogbin, is peculiar to itself.<sup>7</sup>

Before 1900, the kings were revered as divine beings and second-in-command to the gods (*alase ikeji Orisa*) and were, as a matter of tradition, forbidden to be seen outside. They were meant to live in seclusion. The tradition of seclusion did not, however, forbid them from active involvement in the defense of their kingdoms and conquered areas. Indeed, pre-colonial Yoruba kings were great warriors with great mastery of the art of war and democratic leadership. By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this unique socio-political arrangement was reduced as a result of the Yoruba civil wars. The ravaging 19<sup>th</sup> century Yoruba civil wars

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<sup>3</sup> See Gboyega Kusamotu, 1994. *Chieftaincy and the Law*, Ikirun: Gboyega Publisher, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> See “Ogun State and Oyo State Chiefs Laws, 1978, Section 2; Obas and Chiefs Law of Lagos State, 1981.”

<sup>5</sup> Details on *Ebi* concept can be found in I.A. Akinjogbin, “The Ebi System Reconsidered”, a seminar paper delivered in the Department of History, University of Ife on 10<sup>th</sup> of January, 1979. p.2. See also I.A. Akinjogbin, 2002. *Milestones and Concepts in Yoruba History and Culture A Key to Understanding Yoruba History*. Ibadan: Olu-Akin Publishers

<sup>6</sup> Details on *Ajobi* and *Ajogbe* concepts can be found in Akinsola Akiwowo, 1980. “Ajobi and Ajogbe: Variations on The Theme of Sociation”, *An Inaugural Lecture* delivered at the University of Ife. Inaugural Lecture Series 46, p.15.

<sup>7</sup> I.A. Akinjogbin, 1979. “The Ebi System Reconsidered”, a seminar paper delivered in the Department of History, University of Ife on 10<sup>th</sup> of January. p.21. See also I.A. Akinjogbin, 2002. *Milestones and Concepts in Yoruba History and Culture A Key to Understanding Yoruba History* (Ibadan: Olu-Akin Publishers). pp. 117-119.

seriously affected the powers of the kings as rulers of their respective kingdoms and other territorial interests. The emerging class of powerful and ambitious traditional military aristocrats in the course of the wars created an arena of conflicting interests and strong manifestation of serious power politics. Consequently, by the end of the wars in 1893, the kings were exposed to many dangers, chief among which was the imposition of strangers (those not related by blood) to the *ebi* and *ajobi* family bond. This was the beginning of non-royal blood individuals or groups, ambitiously fighting to become members of the royal lineage, hence the breakdown of the *alajobi*. This is what Akiwowo called “variations on the theme of sociation”.<sup>8</sup> The breakdown of *alajobi* as a result of intrusion of foreign elements led to the emergence of its variation: the *alajogbe* (which was more of forced relationship with no blood ties). These factors disrupted the sacredness and purity of the *alajobi* (family bond) and delimited the powers of the Yoruba kings. Indeed, the disruptions caused by the Yoruba civil wars and other socio-political disturbances contributed to the realignment of forces, kingship intrigues and strained power relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The establishment of colonial rule in Yorubaland was also a factor that reduced the sacredness and purity of the *alajobi* and the traditional Yoruba political structure by the impact of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Yoruba civil wars which further weakened the already troubled traditional political institutions and also gave strength to the previously planted seed of socio-political discontents among the hitherto united towns and cities in Yorubaland. It was this state of irreconcilable differences among the various Yoruba communities, coupled with other factors that helped the colonialists to establish colonial rule in many parts of Yorubaland. Colonial administration and its many harsh policies did more harm than good with regard to kingship and other institutions in Yorubaland. In fact, more non-blue blood individuals who were in the ‘good books’ of the colonial government and desired to be part of the royal ruling houses were adequately compensated with royalty during the colonial years. This trend of imposition of non-blue blood individuals also continued even after the attainment of independence. The difficult phases that kingship have undergone since colonial rule notwithstanding, the study presented discussions on how kingship institution and its custodians have continued to serve as viable source of cultural validation and societal cohesion in the Nigeria political space and beyond.

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<sup>8</sup>Akinsola Akiwowo 1980. “Ajobi and Ajogbe: Variation on the Theme of Sociation”. An Inaugural lecture delivered at the University of Ife, University of Ife Press, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Series 46.

The word *oba* means king or ruler. It is also common for the *oba* of the various Yoruba domains to have their own special titles. The *oba* in the various kingdoms in Akokoland are styled His Majesty, His Royal Highness (with the collective Yoruba kingly greeting of *kabiyesi*) performing executive, legislative and judicial functions in their kingdoms as allowed by traditions and government policies. African kingship and chieftaincy have often been subject to misunderstanding and misrepresentation by non-African scholars due to lack of proper knowledge about its nature and dynamics. The truth remains that, these non-African scholars were finding escape route to deliberately label the well-structured and properly managed Africa traditional political institutions as nonexistent or lacking all the trappings of the supposed sophisticated monarchical system in Europe and other Western countries in the period under review. This has led to the emergence of demeaning stereotype which has been variously used to describe African kingship often as bloody tyranny and despotism, conservative, reinforcing tribal rather than national affiliations and having collusion with colonial governments.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, African traditional rulers in the pre-colonial period ruled and were strongly in charge of their areas of jurisdiction as they derived their powers and legitimacy from traditions long rooted, recognised and revered by the people. They also had powers to assign social roles and even bestow titles on their subjects. This meant that the traditional rulers were the true representatives of their people in all ramifications. This underscores their relevance in the development of areas under their jurisdiction and beyond. Government and its agencies must, therefore, come to appreciate the need to solicit the support of the traditional institutions, especially the kings who are well respected and honoured by their subordinates and subjects for inclusive implementation of policies and schemes to those at the grass roots.

David has argued that “those who no longer ascribe to king their traditional place and potency as symbols of tradition and history are bound to seem an unnecessary and expensive luxury. Buttressing his view, he submitted that it may well be held that, modern government is too complex a system to be left in the hands of hereditary monarchs whose claim to rule is based on ascription rather than achievement. No doubt, most men will continue to create symbols in order to represent the inarticulate values they cherish.”<sup>10</sup> This position is to the effect that, kingship institution has ceased to perform its symbolic roles due to the increased

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<sup>9</sup>E. Adrian B. Van Rouveroy-Van Nieuwaal, ed. 1987. “Chiefs and African States: Some Introductory Notes and an Extensive Bibliography on African Chieftaincy.” *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, 25 & 26 Special Issue on Chieftaincy and the State in Africa:3.

<sup>10</sup>David L. Sills (ed.) 1968. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol.8. p.389

size and complexity of modern administrative organization and the destruction of the old interpersonal bonds of loyalty and dependence which linked the rulers of small polities with their subjects. This development has contributed to the dwindling relevance of the kingship institution in contemporary times. Perhaps, the most important factor that has made kingship to continuously come under heavy but an unfair criticism is the rejection of traditional expressive values in favour of modern instrumental ones. This is what has been dubbed *olaju* in the Yoruba concept of enlightenment and development.”<sup>11</sup> This concept has a bearing on why scholars of the past refused to stick to what obtained in the pre-colonial era, but felt comfortable with colonial divisive tactics. The wrong understanding of the concept of *olaju* has caused great damages to many components of our finest cultures and traditions. The kingship institution has not been spared as it has continuously been misconceived as chieftaincy institution which was nothing more than colonial subjugation of our rich indigenous socio-political institutions by the colonialists who were not ready to equate African kings with the queen of England in all ramifications.

Contemporary kings, who many people considered to have lost their powers as rulers, are widely conceived as figure heads whose survival is largely based on the goodwill received from the government of the day. In this regard, the kings are retained for sentimental rather than for practical reasons. This is why kingship is often regarded by many as an anachronism. But this is not so. It is an institution that has not only helped us to retain and define our Africanness, but also one that plays significant roles in the sustenance of our culture and society. Kingdoms and empires seem to vanish, but kings and emperors have remained with us. This explains the inherent resilient nature of the traditional political institution which has helped it to survive till date despite the various choking forces that were brought upon it. Radical historians and other intellectual regicides view the traditional rulers as risible relics of a feudal past that is better forgotten. This rigid position according to Okajare was due to the perceived roles they played as instrument of colonial manipulative and armtwisting politics of divide and rule.<sup>12</sup> In contemporary times, traditional rulers in Nigeria have continued to struggle for relevance in the scheme of things. On several

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<sup>11</sup> Peel, J.D.Y. 1978. ‘Olaju: A Yorba Concept of Development’. *Journal of Development Studies*, 14:2, 139 - 185. This journal article gave explicit description of the Yoruba concept of development to the effect that, most valuable aspects of the people’s culture, customs and traditions have been lost to modern values.

<sup>12</sup>S.T. Okajare, 47, a lecturer in the Department of History. He was interviewed in his office at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. 5/5/2015. His view was also corroborated during an interview session with High Chief Onibalusi Akinyemi, 87, farmer, the *Oluparu* of Ogbagi-Akoko and Third in Command to the *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko. GM/44, Ayetoro Streets, Ogbagi-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. 15/4/2016



occasions, they have availed themselves the opportunity to ‘call governments to order’ in their attempt to relegate the institution of monarchy to the background.<sup>13</sup>

The Akoko discussed in this study is a sub-ethnic division of the Yoruba-speaking people (the Akoko-Yoruba)<sup>14</sup> and a collection of communities located in the northeastern part of Yorubaland. In the pre-colonial era, Akoko heterogeneous communities’ political geography was indicative of a unique picture of human settlement. The whole area was a galaxy of heterogeneous political unit, each maintaining and sustaining its internal political autonomy and sovereignty. Akoko-Yoruba communities have no tradition of a single centralised political organization.<sup>15</sup> What existed were mini-states, which were never incorporated into any large, over-arching single kingdom. This resulted largely from geographical dissection of the whole area whereby the towns/villages were naturally demarcated from one another. It follows, therefore, that Akokoland is peopled by groups of individuals who for centuries had migrated to an area, which had come to represent a meeting ground for diverse peoples and cultural traits. With about forty towns/villages, the Akoko area of north-eastern Yorubaland also has its heterogeneity demonstrated in the people’s linguistic culture, as most of the dialects are mutually unintelligible. The heterogeneity of the different Akoko-Yoruba communities notwithstanding, a high level of cohesion existed among them through trade, festivals and other communal channels of bonding. Akoko-Yoruba and Akokoland will be used interchangeably throughout this study. The political system of Akokoland before the advent of colonial rule was a mix grill of religious beliefs/practices and indigenous administration. Prior to the imposition of colonial (British) rule in Akokoland, the towns and villages were under the control of the traditional rulers, but the high status accorded the kings became low under British rule. In 1900, the British administrators were received as the liberators of the people of Akoko-Yoruba area from the imperial rule of the Etsu Nupe.<sup>16</sup> The conquest of Nupe with the assistance of British

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<sup>13</sup> Arifalo, S.O. & Okajare, S.T. 2005. “Changing Role of Traditional Rulers and the Challenges of Governance in Contemporary Nigeria: Yorubaland in Historical Perspective.” AAU, Akungba-Akoko Department of History Monograph Series, Series No. 03.002, Akure: Mobay Nigeria Enterprises. p.1.

<sup>14</sup> Okajare, S.T. 2012. “The Akoko-Yoruba and Their Neighbours, 1800-1960: A Study in Inter-Group Relations”, A PhD thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.

<sup>15</sup> National Archives, Ibadan. Intelligence Annual Report, Owo Division, Ondo Province, 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1930. p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Akomolafe, Cornelius. O. 1976, “Akoko under British Rule, 1900 – 1935”, M.Phil. Thesis, University of Ife. pp. 37 & 56. For details of the Nupe imperial adventure in northeastern Yorubaland see: Balogun, S.A. 1973. ["Succession Tradition in Gwandu History, 1817-1918". Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria.7 \(1\): pp. 17-33. ISSN 0018-2540.JSTOR 41856982.](#) Jimoh, M.O. 2017. ["Gwandu Emirate: The Domain of Abdullahi](#)

constabulary was seen as a period that would offer in peace and tranquility; instead, the British introduced indirect rule to replace Nupe hegemony in Akoko-Yoruba area of northeastern Yorubaland. However, indirect rule was a system of administration based on using the existing legitimate chiefs in the region. But colonial administration altered the traditional structure of the political system and it affected the society.

Kingship though an ancient institution with its evolutionary dynamism and history, became pronounced in Akokoland in the early 1900s with the official presentation of instrument of office by the colonial officials. This was the period that ushered in the monetisation of the kingship institution as the traditional rulers became salaried agents of the colonialists. There was, therefore, a gradual but steady shift of the people's traditional responsibility of providing for the needs of their rulers and the immediate consequence of this was broken mutual relationship and trust between the rulers and the ruled. Beyond this, more people in the ruling lineage and non-titled persons became interested in aspiring for royalty leadership as they believed that the position of the kings and chiefs have become economically viable and status boosting. This period also marked the introduction of centralised political arrangement in Akokoland that was alien to the hitherto existing communities which had enjoyed virtual independence and self-governance under their various leaders. In the area of external political domination, Akokoland between 1900 and 1935 came under the forced external hegemonic control of Kabba and Owo. This period, far above other considerations, marked an important watershed in the political history of communities in Akoko-Yoruba as the traditional rulers were able to unite to fight a common enemy. Though it took a long period, the traditional rulers in Akokoland were able to secure their own separate Native Administration in the last two phases of colonial rule between 1935 and 1948 and from 1948 to 1960. 1960 to 1999 witnessed the practical adoption of power politics by the traditional rulers in Akokoland as elsewhere in Yorubaland to stay relevant in the scheme of things in the context of modern system of governance. Akokoland, therefore, forms the basis of our discussion on the resilience of kingship and other traditional forms of political systems in Nigeria despite the daunting challenges. Little wonder, therefore, that given the relevance

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[Fodiyo, Since 1805". \*Journal of Pan African Studies\*.10 \(3\): pp. 386–390.](#) Balogun, S.A. 1970. *Gwandu Emirates in the Nineteenth Century with Special Reference to Political Relations, 1817-1903*. OCLC [38630457](#). Hopen, C. Edward (2018-09-03). *The Pastoral Fulbe Family in Gwandu*. Routledge. ISBN [978-0-429-95044-5](#), Tukur, Mahmud Modibbo (2016-08-15). *British Colonisation of Northern Nigeria, 1897-1914: A Reinterpretation of Colonial Sources*. Amalion Publishing. ISBN [978-2-35926-048-9](#).

of the institution, the contestation for the office and power tussle among the *obas* with regards to leadership status was usually intense in Yorubaland including Akokoland.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

Existing studies<sup>17</sup> on Akoko-Yoruba communities, northeastern Yorubaland have focused largely on migration, evolution of settlements, intergroup relations, socio-economic activities as well as general discussion on kingship and other traditional political institutions. The studies on kingship and chieftaincy in Akokoland have put into perspective the evolution of the kingship institution with emphasis on the negative impact of kingship wrangling and disputes, chieftaincy disputes, the political subjugation it has undergone in the hands of military aristocrats, the Nupe overlords, the colonial officials and its continue dwindling powers and relevance in modern political space. The studies, however, did not lay deeper scholarly emphasis on the dynamics of kingship, contest for leadership and power relations among kings, traditional chiefs and other stakeholders in Akokoland. In this context, however, with regard to its resilience and continued relevance, scholars have not painstakingly examined the inherent relevance of kingship in modern governance as it relates to Akokoland. It is this gap in knowledge that this study has filled.

## 1.3 Objectives of the study

The study examined the contest for leadership and the dynamics of power relations among kings, traditional chiefs, managers of modern governance and other stakeholders within Akoko-Yoruba area from 1900 to 1999. Specifically, the study:

- (i.) analysed the pattern of leadership tussle and power relations among kings in Akokoland

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<sup>17</sup>Akeredolu, J.L. 1986. *Introduction of Christianity into Akoko*.Owo: Temidire Press; Adegbulu, F. 2004. Akoko-Yoruba and Akoko-Edo: An Exploration of Relations between Two Akoko Communities in the Pre-colonial Era. *AAUA: African Review Studies*. 3. 1.185-2002; Okajare, S.T. 2012. The Akoko-Yoruba and their Neighbours, 1800-1960: A Study in Inter-group Relations. Ph.D, Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria; Okajare, S. T. 2008.Traditions of Origin, Migration and Settlement Patterns among Akoko Communities in North-eastern Yorubaland. Eds. Alao, A.A. and Babawale, T. *Culture and Society in Nigeria: Traditions, Gender Relations and Political Economy*, Lagos: Concept Publications; Akomolafe, C.O. 1976. "Akoko under British Rule, 1900-1935". M.Phil. Dissertation, Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University); Ogundana, J.B. 2003.Ikare.Oguntomisin G.O. Ed. 2003.*Yoruba Towns and Cities Volume One*, Ibadan: Bookshelf Resource Ltd. 20-31; Ogundana, J.B. 2003. Oke-Agbe. Ed. Oguntomisin, G.O. *Yoruba Towns and Cities...* 60-76. Olukoju, A.O. 2003.Oka. Ed. Oguntomisin, G.O. *Yoruba Towns and Cities...* 77-88. S.A. Ogunode 2012. "From Kingdoms to Kingdom: A Historical Appraisal of the Chieftaincy Institution in Okaland Southwest of Nigeria". *European Scientific Journal*.8. 23. 22-37; O. Faboyede 2013. The Akoko Elite, 1900 – 1960. A Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. Nigeria; Adeyeri, J.O. 2015. "British Rule and the Transformation of Akokoland, 1897 – 1960". A Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

- (ii.) discussed the dynamics and complexity of power politics and its impact on kingship and chieftaincy in Akoko-Yoruba area of northeastern Yorubaland in the colonial and postcolonial periods
- (iii.) examined the continued relevance of the kingship institution in the face of daunting challenges during the period of study.

#### **1.4 Significance and Justification of the study**

Notwithstanding the dwindling status of the powers and relevance of the traditional rulers, this study has discussed from a historian's perspective, kingship and power politics in Nigeria and indeed in Akokoland between 1900 and 1999. That is why it is discussed in this work how the kings and other traditional rulers can participate effectively in governance with less involvement in partisan politics as they are expected to be the father of all. Undoubtedly, a study of kingship in the Akoko-Yoruba area of northeastern Yorubaland, 1900-1999, has opened a new vista for future researches on the socio-political milieu of the people. Consequently, this study contributes to the chunk of existing body of literature on kingship and other traditional political institutions, particularly in Akoko-Yoruba communities and Nigeria in general. Given the acrimonious nature of the kingship and chieftaincy institutions in various Nigerian communities, this study served as a ready item of reminder and illumination on the sacredness and the traditional rich virtues that gave rise to its formation and more importantly elaborated on the efficacy of the institutions as reliable tools for enduring social cohesion and communal harmony, which are strong stimulants for enhanced nation-building prospects and development of the society.

#### **1.5 Scope of the study**

The emergence of traditional military aristocracy was one of the phenomenal developments in nineteenth century Yorubaland.<sup>18</sup> Consequent on this development, the traditional constitutional set up which had the *Oba* (king) at its head<sup>19</sup> underwent radical changes. These radical changes which were informed by the radical developments which accompanied the rise of military aristocracy greatly impaired the image of the kings<sup>20</sup> in Yorubaland. Indeed, by the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Yoruba monarchical

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<sup>18</sup> For details see J.F. Ajayi, 1965. "Professional Warriors in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Yoruba Politics" *Tarikh* vol. 1 No. 1. T. Falola and D. Oguntomisin, 1984, *The Military in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Yoruba Politics*, Ife University Press.

<sup>19</sup> Biodun Adediran, 1987. "Kiriji, The Yoruba and Their Kings, 1878-1886" *ODU*, New Series No. 32, July.

<sup>20</sup> S.A. Akintoye, 1967. 'Ife's Sad Century' *Nigeria Magazine* No. 104, pp. 34-39; and Biodun Adediran, 1984. "From Constitutional Troubles to Civil War in Sabe: Internal Crises in a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Yoruba Community" *Africana Marburgensia*, Vol. XVII, No. 2.

institution was virtually an anachronism. This was to the effect that, a situation had arisen where new foci of power and authority rivaling the traditional ones had been created.<sup>21</sup> The climax of the event that finally confirmed the degree of impairment of the revered status of the *oba* and the kingship institution happened at the signing of the 1886 Peace Treaty which was facilitated by Charles Philips. Failure on the part of the kings to sign the peace treaty without due consultation with the military chiefs proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the kings no longer have the final say. This background informed the reason for taking off this study from 1900 which is the beginning of another century after the century of warfare in Yorubaland (Akokoland inclusive) which adversely impacted the kingship institution. In terms of the period covered, since it is generally acknowledged that periodisation is indispensable to historical understanding, this study focuses on the period between the years 1900 and 1999. This is to help situate the kingship institution in proper historical perspective with focus on the kingship in the Akoko-Yoruba communities. Although the origin of most Akoko communities and their political institutions date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, 1900 has been chosen as the starting year to help appraise the impact of external influence and vested interests on the kingship in Akokoland since the year marked the end of Nupe imperialism and the official commencement of colonial rule in the study area.

The protracting nature of chieftaincy matters as it concerns the question of paramountcy, prescribed and consenting authorities, proliferation of chieftaincy titles and the right to wear crown have always been an issue of grave concern in many African communities. In fact, leadership crises and often too complex power politics have cost government fortunes in trying to find solution. Due to its sensitive nature, the efforts of government more often than not yield temporary result. Leadership tussle and power politics among Ondo State kings and other traditional rulers got to its high point in 1997, which led to the inauguration of a Four-man Commission of Inquiry on Chieftaincy Matters on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, 1997 under the chairmanship of Retired Justice S.F. Adeloje.<sup>22</sup> The Commission was among other things mandated to carry out detailed investigation into disputed chieftaincy declarations referred to it and make suitable recommendations. The Commission completed its onerous task in less than two years and submitted its much awaited report. After due consideration of the Commission's report, the Government White Paper on it was released in

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<sup>21</sup>Wale Oyemakinde, 1978."The Impact of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Warfare on Yoruba Traditional Chieftaincy" *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria (JHSN)*, Vol. 9 No. 2.pp.21-34.

<sup>22</sup> Ondo State of Nigeria, March, 1999. White Paper on Part One of the Report of Justice Adeloje Commission on Chieftaincy Matters in Ondo State. pp.1-9.

March, 1999. This development lent credence to the recognition of the indispensability of the kingship and other traditional political institutions as agents of stability and development in any society where they are found. No wonder, governments have continuously made efforts at proffering lasting solution to leadership tussle and other related issues with regards to kingship and chieftaincy declarations in Ondo State and Nigeria. Historically, the year 1999 is better underscored as the year that marked an important watershed in the political history of Ondo State with regards to direct government intervention in solving the over seven decades of chieftaincy crises. It, therefore, lends credence to the fact that, the terminal period of the study has been carefully picked to attempt a discussion of the crucial stages kingship in Akokoland has undergone for a critical period of ninety-nine years. This period has no doubt reshaped the vital aspects of Akoko-Yoruba history. This underscores the fact that, kingship in Akokoland went through many crucial stages of changes and continuity from 1900 to 1999. Choosing 1999 as the terminal date of this study is, therefore, not only apt, but historically significant. Yet, it was the year in which the fourth republic took off.

Discussions on kingship institution and power politics were focused on many towns in Akoko-Yoruba, northeastern Yorubaand. The towns visited for data collection spread across the four local government areas of Akokoland. Emphasis was, however, given to towns such as Arigidi-Akoko, Oba-Akoko, Oka-Akoko, Isua-Akoko, Akungba-Akoko, Epimi-Akoko, Supare-Akoko, Ipesi-Akoko, Ikare-Akoko, Ogbagi-Akoko, Ajowa-Akoko, Erusu-Akoko and Okeagbe-Akoko. These communities were chosen because of the historical antecedence of kingship institution in them. And more importantly, the communities were areas where the kings were involved in power politics for leadership status and relevance. Aside the above listed towns, other Akoko towns were visited for corroboration of data collected.

## **1.6 Methodology**

The historical approach was adopted. Primary and secondary sources were utilised. The reconstruction of Akoko Yoruba communities' history demands that all forms of available sources are cautiously consulted and professionally employed for analysis. This is to allow for proper appreciation of the dialogue that existed between the past and the present and how they have been interpreted and represented. This is more so because, like all other sub-ethnic divisions of the Yoruba, Akoko people had no indigenous writing technique. But, a lot of their history had been preserved mainly in oral traditions until the 20<sup>th</sup> century when

Western literacy and writing began.<sup>23</sup> The primary sources derived mainly from the Commission of Inquiry Reports on chieftaincy matters obtained from the library of the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters, Ondo State. Other primary sources included Annual Reports and Intelligence Report files as well as private and official files obtained from the National Archives, Ibadan and Kaduna. In-depth interviews were conducted with 60 purposively selected informants based on their knowledge of the history of kingship and power politics in Akokoland: 17 kings, 20 chiefs, three princes, one palace staff, eight academics and 11 elders aged between 40 and 90 years. This is because oral traditions pass through a chain of transmission in the course of which they probably risk a restructuring and acquire unnecessary details, embellishment and distortions. Therefore, the process of the transmission is as crucial as the end-product. Alagoa argues that, “both the historian and the informant are important in the proper identification, appreciation and use of oral traditions.”<sup>24</sup> Primary written sources consulted included private papers of local historians and other custodians of Akoko Yoruba communities’ history and culture and the records of their traditional councils. Secondary sources included books, journal articles, monographs, national dailies, dissertations, theses and materials from the internet. Data were subjected to historical analysis.

## **1.7 Conceptual clarifications/definition of terms**

Conceptual clarification is central to any research work not only because it aids the research analysis, but also because it provides contextual explanations to words/concepts used in the study.<sup>25</sup> Due to this fact, the following concepts and terms used in this research are briefly appraised thus:

### **1.7.1 Chieftaincy**

Chieftaincy represents an indigenous institution of the chiefs (*ijoye*). Fly whisk (*irukere*) is usually the symbol of identification and authority. It should be noted that kingship institution was erroneously merged with chieftaincy in the colonial period to debase its cultural significance by the colonialists who were weary of the likelihood of having to

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<sup>23</sup>Okajare, Solomon Tai 2012. “The Akoko-Yoruba and Their Neighbours, 1800-1960: A Study in Inter-Group Relations”, A PhD thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. p.28.

<sup>24</sup>E.J. Alagoa, 1987. “Introduction” *Tarikh (Oral Historical Traditions in Africa)*, vol. 8.p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>Amusa Saheed B. 2011. “A History of HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Nigeria, 1981-2007.” An MPhil Thesis, Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.P.43.

equate the Nigeria kings with the Queen of England in both power and relevance.<sup>26</sup> Regrettably, African scholars and even reputable historians have over the years, continued to make the same error of discussing African traditional political institutions within the purview of chieftaincy without any justification.

### 1.7.2 Kingship

It is used in this study as one of the traditional or indigenous system of governance in which the *oba*/king is the religious and ritual head with executive, judicial and legislative powers.<sup>27</sup> Before the establishment of colonial rule, the kings derived their powers from the people's traditions and customs. The custodian of this institution will be referred to as the traditional ruler (*oba*) or king within the context of their functionality and location in the society. P.C Lloyd has described the kingship authority as sacred and divine.

### 1.7.3 King/*Oba*

Given the elastic nature of this concept among the Yoruba people, both the male and female can ascend the kingship position, although this varies from one community to the other. Where the institution of regency is practiced and upheld in line with traditional norms and customs, a female may be chosen as *Adele* (king-in-waiting- or regent). Without exception, the female regent enjoys all the paraphernalia of office as allowed by the extant provisions of such community or town traditions and customs. In contrary, a king in the context of this work is referred to as the male sovereign (especially one whose position is hereditary) of an independent state. Such a state is called a kingdom. To put it more aptly, a king is the "ruler or the most supreme or paramount sovereign in any kingdom, town or city that is recognised by his people as their spiritual leader and symbol of tradition."<sup>28</sup> King in this study is the ruler with whom ritual and religious functions are explicitly associated.<sup>29</sup> The insignia of the *Oba* clearly explains the gap between him and the chief. The popular Yoruba saying that: *ade ori la fi mo oba, irukere la fi mo ijoye* (simply translated as: the king is identified by the crown, while the chief is known by the fly whisk). Interestingly, the

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<sup>26</sup>O.B. Olaoba buttresses this view during an interview session in his office at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria. 57+, 4/5/2015.

<sup>27</sup>George M. Bob-Miller 2009. "Chieftaincy, Diaspora, and Development: The Institution of Nksuohene in Ghana, *Oxford Journals of Social Sciences, African Affairs* Volume 108, Issue 433:541.

<sup>28</sup>S.O. Arifalo and S.T Okajare, "The Changing Role of Traditional Rulers and the Challenges of Governance in Contemporary Nigeria: Yoruba in Historical Perspective" Series Edition in R.A Olaniyan ed. 2002. *AAU Akungba-Akoko*. Department of History and International Studies Monograph Series. Series No. 03. 002. Akure: Mobay Nigeria Enterprise. p.6.

<sup>29</sup>David L. Sills (ed.) 1968. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Volume 8. p.386



horsetail which is just one of the traditional items of royal paraphernalia,<sup>30</sup> lends credence to the fact that, the chief's authority emanates from the king as the consenting authority.

#### 1.7.4 Governance

Another relevant conceptual mechanism is 'governance'. Renate Mayntz *et al* define governance as "institutionalised social coordination mechanisms used to produce and implement collectively binding rules, or to provide collective goods."<sup>31</sup> This definition goes for both the traditional political system and modern governance in regard to their functionality and policy implementation. The word is, however, used in this work to refer to the modern system of government that was introduced to Nigeria during and after the colonial enterprise. It will include the various methods adopted by the colonialists, the civilian and military political institution and structures, which evolved and developed by reason of the doctrine of necessity in Nigeria. It will sometime be used as modern governance in this work.

#### 1.7.5 Power politics

It was used in this work to represent the complexity of power play and the dynamics of power relations among Akoko kings and other traditional rulers within the period of the study. The complex dynamics associated with the office and powers of the kings was aptly explained using the violent histories of many ancient kingdoms in Africa. The examples of Zulu, Benin, Yoruba and Buganda have been cited to reflect on the how the kings were able to use power politics to survive the frequent attacks and challenges posed by ambitious royal relatives, expanding clans, power seeking city dwellers and disenchanted subjects.<sup>32</sup> This is the aspect of royal power politics that this study represents. Power politics also played out while dealing with succession related issues. History is replete with records of kings having the privilege of ruling for a very long time on the thrones of their fathers. No matter how endearing the kings were to their subjects, their death was usually greeted with serious succession power politics which had most often than not caused serious divisions among royal families. The division becomes more serious where the succession arrangement was not

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<sup>30</sup>ZdenkaVolavka 1981. "Insignia of the Divine Authority" *African Arts*, Vol. 14. No.3

<sup>31</sup>Mayntz R, *Uber Governance: Institutionen Und Prozesse Politischer Regelung*. Campus, Frankfurt, 2009. Cited in Afolayan Gbenga Emmanuel "Making Sense of Traditional Rulers and Development Administration in Post-Colonial Nigeria", unpublished conference paper presented at the *International Conference on African Monarchies, Development and the Future*. Institute for Benin Studies, Benin City, Nigeria, July 9-10, 2014. p.3.

<sup>32</sup>Kings and Kingship: <http://geography.name/kings-and-kingship> Accessed on 14/5/2017. See also: Oyeweso, S. and Adesina, O.C. 2021. Oyo: History, Tradition and Royalty: Essays in Honour of His Imperial Majesty the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba (Dr.) Lamidi Olayowola Adeyemi III. pp. 20-35.

rotational among the different royal families. To this end, kings have evolved different methods of dealing with the question of succession which also presents complex power politics among the different royal and sometimes non-blue blood families laying claims to the throne. The naming and introduction of potential heirs by the reigning king to the king makers and other stakeholders, the declaration of no heir and the use of dependent royal allies in extreme cases, are some of the methods used by kings to manage the conflict(s) that most times characterise the struggle for succession among royal princes and their relatives.<sup>33</sup> Where issues of succession becomes protracted with the possibility of degenerating into some sort of serious conflicts, government often intervenes by instituting Commission of Inquiry to ascertain the issues involved and advise on how to stabilise and resolve the question of succession and other related problems regarding chieftaincy declarations. The success or otherwise of the concerned royal families depends largely on how well each was able to validate claims to royalty through verifiable royal histories and supporting documents. The different Commissions of Inquiries that were established within the period of the study reveals that successive governments have only tried to reduce the conflicts associated the question of succession due to the complex power politics that is often involved and the failure of government to implement recommendations equitably.

It is in the context of the above discussions that this study employed power politics to represent the various strategies employed by the Akoko Yoruba kings to hold on to power between 1900 and 1999. The colonialists during their years of political and economic dominance in Akoko-Yoruba communities used the instrument of power politics to install and dethrone at will any king considered not cooperating with the colonial administration and its policies. The cases of *Olukare* Ajaguna and Momoh in Ikare and the *Asin* and *Olubaka* in Okaland come handy. Essentially, power politics is the complex but necessary strategies used by Akoko-Yoruba kings in their various domain of royal jurisdiction to contain the challenges and threats to their powers and thrones. Moises Naim has excellently argued that: “power is easier to get, harder to use and easier to lose.”<sup>34</sup> He also appraised how challenges posed by smaller entities have increased the degree of vulnerability of traditional custodians of power of all forms. The threats from smaller entities within the context of this study came

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<sup>33</sup>Kings and Kingship: <http://geography.name/kings-and-kingship> Accessed on 14/5/2017. See also: Oyeweso, S. and Adesina, O.C. 2021. Oyo: History, Tradition and Royalty: Essays in Honour of His Imperial Majesty the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba (Dr.) Lamidi Olayowola Adeyemi III. pp. 20-35.

<sup>34</sup>Lili Loofbourow, “The End of Power by Moises Naim Review – A Study in Mass Alienation” <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/15/the-end-of-power-moses-naim-review> Accessed 06/10/2016 @ 9:45pm

from competing royal sons, ambitious relatives, chiefs, and non-blue members but strongly connected royal power seekers. How the kings confronted these challenges and still stay relevant in the scheme of things is what the current study explained using power politics.

## 1.8 Literature review

A lot has been written on Akoko-Yoruba communities by scholars and writers of different affiliations and callings. This does not, however, remove the fact that there is paucity of literature directly related to the focus of this study. Having said this, some scholarly works have been carefully selected for review within the content and interpretation of this study. There is no gainsaying that the Yoruba as a group has been well and severally researched upon by scholars of diverse persuasions. Asiwaju rightly observes this much when he states that:

There is perhaps no other single African people who have quite commanded as much attention of scholars of all disciplines as the Yoruba...<sup>35</sup>

Credence has been lent to the above Asiwaju's view in a collaborative piece by Arifalo and Ogen titled: "The Yoruba in History up to 1987", which asserts that: "the Yoruba are one of the most researched ethnic groups in the world. They added that by 1976, the available literature on the Yoruba despite many omissions numbered 3,488 titles",<sup>36</sup> and that this vast amount of work is quite substantial and unrivalled in sub-Saharan Africa".<sup>37</sup> Notwithstanding the acclaimed comprehensive compilation on diverse aspects of Yoruba history, there are some unfilled gaps that make the existing literature quite unsatisfactory to the most demanding of scholars and readers. This is to the effect that history is an unending dialogue, with emphasis on the concept of continuity. The point must be made here that while the central or other parts of Yorubaland has received penetrating scholarly attention, the northern and northeastern parts of Yorubaland are yet to receive same. The point must be made that the available primary and secondary literature on the study area are not only few, but have also not validly present discussions on the need to fathom ways of

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<sup>35</sup>A.I. Asiwaju, 1983. "The Dynamics of Yoruba Studies" in G.O. Olusanya (ed.) *Studies in Yoruba History and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor S.O. Biobaku*, Ibadan University Press Limited. p.26.

<sup>36</sup>S.O. Arifalo and O. Ogen 2003. *The Yoruba in History up to 1987*, Lagos: First Academic Publisher. p.1. They rely on details available in Toyin Falola, *Yoruba Gurus: Indigenous Production of Knowledge in Africa*, Treton: African World Press, p.15. Cited in Okajare, Solomon Tai 2012. "The Akoko-Yoruba and Their Neighbours, 1800-1960: A Study in Inter-Group Relations", A PhD thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. p.7.

<sup>37</sup>S.O. Arifalo and O. Ogen 2003. *The Yoruba in History up to 1987*, Lagos: First Academic Publisher. p.1.

ensuring the continued relevance of the kingship institution in Akokoland. Existing works on the Akoko traditional political institutions have been concerned with discussions on the dwindling importance of the traditional political institutions, kingship and chieftaincy disputes, call for the relegation of the traditional institutions as a result of partisanship, which results from the quest to stay relevant in the scheme of things or making case for constitutional roles for the traditional rulers. The authors, however, did not necessarily discuss how the kingship institution can co-exist with the modern system of governance, while still retaining its traditional relevance and cultural significance as the custodian of the peoples' heritage and history. The present study fills these gaps as much as possible, particularly in Akoko. Some relevant works which are available in prints and which are useful reference materials for the qualitative completion of this thesis are reviewed below. The available literatures for review are calibrated into sub-themes to allow for proper placement of discussions in historical perspective.

### **1.8.1 Historical Antecedence of Kingship Institution in Yorubaland**

A recent book titled “Oyo: History, Tradition and Royalty: Essays in Honour of His Imperial Majesty the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba (Dr.) Lamidi Olayowola Adeyemi III”<sup>38</sup> edited by Oyeweso, S. and Adesina, O.C. is directly relevant to major concepts of this research. The book scholarly presents and analyses the sources of Oyo’s strength, mystique and charisma. The role and depth of Oyo’s influence in nurturing a Yoruba identity and consciousness among the Yoruba people was equally underscored in the book by seasoned scholars of international repute. The book which has three sections discussed themes as varied as ‘the ideology and epistemology of kingship’, the Yoruba – Atlantic thunder god Sango, the patron deity of Oyo and ‘what constitutes the *Alaafin*’s legacy in the history of Yorubaland from archaeological perspective. The three scholars that contributed the papers for the three sections though argued from different perspectives agreed that the kingship institution has continued to show resilience despite the various stages of mutations it has undergone. Indeed, the argument for ‘kingship studies’ and the conversion of the kingship legacy into heritage and use it for the improvement of the present and future of humanity fits well into the thrust of this study. The book is therefore, significant to the understanding of the dynamics of leadership tussles, power dynamics and relations among kings and other traditional rulers in the period of the study.

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<sup>38</sup>Oyeweso, S. and Adesina, O.C. 2021. “Oyo: History, Tradition and Royalty: Essays in Honour of His Imperial Majesty the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba (Dr.) Lamidi Olayowola Adeyemi III”. pp. 1-191.

Robert F. Thompson's "The Sign of the Divine King: Yoruba Bead-Embroidered Crowns with Veil and Bird Decorations"<sup>39</sup> presents a rich discussion on the uniqueness of the Yoruba kings and their royal insignia. The author discussed the status of the Yoruba kings in the period before colonial rule. The traditional symbolism of each royal item was well discussed. While detailing the traditional significance of rituals of the kings, their divine status in the pre-colonial period, it becomes easier to draw a comparison between the status of the kings and the kingship institution in their pristine state and the contemporary time. Indeed, it was made clear that the kings have indeed lost a large chunk of their powers and authority in the modern political equation. The content of this scholarly article is relevant to this study.

Afolayan's "Kingdoms of the Yoruba: Socio-political Development Before 1800",<sup>40</sup> reveals the uniqueness that featured in the evolutionary history of kingship institutions in Yorubaland before 1800. Admitting that the Yoruba socio-political history was characterised by the existence of several kingdoms, the author discusses these kingdoms in turn, and links each of them with Ile-Ife, which in extant Yoruba tradition is recognised as the source of origin (*orirun*). The kingdoms covered include Owu, Oyo, Ijesa, Ekiti (discussed as a country with some kingdoms), Igbomina, Owo, Ondo, O-kun Yoruba, Ijebu, Egba, Egbado and Awori, among others.<sup>41</sup> Afolayan gives an incisive account of the process through which each of the states/kingdoms emerged and consolidated its power. The author further strengthens the well-known fact that in spite of the differences both in size and complexity among Yoruba kingdoms, their basic socio-political system followed a similar pattern with occasional local variations arising from local peculiarities. He gives a copious description of the socio-political system. This will definitely be relevant to the present effort. However, the author did not discuss any Akoko kingdom as it were. Evidence abounds to suggest that some Akoko kingdoms like Oka and Ikare had been fairly well established by 1800. The only mention of Akoko is in the first paragraph where the author states that, "...These kingdoms

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<sup>39</sup>Thompson, R.F. 1970. "The Sign of the Divine King: An Essay on Yoruba Bead-Embroidered Crowns with Veil and Bird Decorations". *African Arts*, Vol. 3. No. 3, pp. 8-17. See also A.I. Asiwaju 1976. "Political Motivation and Oral Historical Traditions in Africa: The Case of Yoruba Crowns, 1900-1960". *Africa*, vol. 46, pp.113-127

<sup>40</sup>F. Afolayan, "Kingdoms of the Yoruba: Socio-Political Development before 1800" in D. Ogunremi and B. Adediran (eds.), *Culture and Society*....

<sup>41</sup>F. Afolayan, "Kingdoms of the Yoruba: Socio-Political Development before 1800" in D. Ogunremi and B. Adediran (ed.), *Culture and Society*....pp.14-26.

varied in size from the miniature states of Akoko to the extensive mega states of which Oyo empire was the most famous.”<sup>42</sup>

Chapter six of N.A. Fadipe’s “The Sociology of the Yoruba” has also exclusively benefited this work in no small way. The text observes that kingship among the autonomous towns in Yorubaland revolved around well-developed institution of monarchy and that the only alternative to the monarchical system is that which the chief magistrate called the *baale*, a word which probably means the father who owns the land. It would appear, however, that the territory under a *baale* is not a sovereign state, but a dependency or constituent unit of a state.<sup>43</sup> It further observed that monarchies in Yorubaland follow four models in regard to elaboration and organization of personnel. The various units of the Oyo-Yoruba take the court and government of the *Alafin* of Oyo as their model. The Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti and Ondo people model the constitution of their personnel on the lines of Ife. The various sub-divisions of the Ijebu people have constituted their court and government after the model of Ijebu-Ode. The fourth type is the monarchical system of the Egba group, which is very simple in regard to personnel of the court. In respect of the part played by the *Ogboni* secret society in its government, it resembles simpler forms of the political units of Ijebuland, for example, the Remo.<sup>44</sup>

Again, the work elucidated the all-important role played and the enormous power possessed by the king-*oba* in the Yoruba traditional political arrangements. It, however, observed that, a Yoruba king was not necessarily larger than life in all ramifications as his functions, management of the kingdom and policy implementation were consequent on the cooperation he receives from his council of advising chiefs and the quality of relationship maintained with the people. The work essentially summarises the function of the king and advisers to include legislative, judicial and executive.<sup>45</sup> The role of political associations such as the *Ogboni* secret society, the age group, and women’s political association in the pre-colonial political institution of Yorubaland was also discussed. The work has, therefore, revealed that contrary to the Eurocentric view which has erroneously labeled Africa as not having an organised socio-political institution before the coming of the colonialists, the Yoruba example in south-west Nigeria has made nonsense of this erroneous claim. It is on the

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<sup>42</sup>F. Afolayan, “Kingdoms of the Yoruba: Socio-Political Development before 1800” in D. Ogunremi and B. Adediran (ed.), *Culture and Society*....p.14.

<sup>43</sup>N.A., Fadipe 1970. “The Sociology of the Yoruba”, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. pp.198-242.

<sup>44</sup>N.A. Fadipe, 1970. “The Sociology of the Yoruba”, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p.199.

<sup>45</sup>N.A. Fadipe, 1970. “The Sociology of the Yoruba”, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p.208.

strength of this that this work also tries to further reiterate the continued relevance of kingship and the need to build a non-partisan synergy between it and modern governance institutions and structures.

In order to understand the constitutional aspects of Yoruba kingship, this study has also relied on the useful pieces of information made available in the work of Lloyd; “Sacred Kingship and Government among the Yoruba.”<sup>46</sup> Though Akokoland was not mentioned at any time in the paper, it has been able to provide very rich historical information of the well-organized trade-political institution, which was indigenously evolved and managed among the Oke Ewi people of Ado in present day Ekiti State. Apart from the internal democracy that existed in the kingship of the people, it was also revealed that they evolved a sophisticated town government which formed the basis for inclusive organisation even before the advent of modern governance. The picture painted by Lloyd of the kingship system in Ado is the same everywhere in pre-colonial Yorubaland, except with little variations due to some historical and geographical peculiarities as is the case in Akokoland.

### **1.8.2 General Yoruba History**

*The History of the Yorubas*<sup>47</sup> by Reverend Samuel Johnson comprehensively chronicles vital aspects of Yoruba history, thus offering general and contextual background information for the present study. The book discussed the Yoruba as a people, their land, belief system, dress codes, festivals, economy, aesthetics, social organisations and entertainment, political organisation, process of state formation, and inter-state relations. The book is highly invaluable. All these details are useful information about aspects of Yoruba history. Yet, there is notable lacuna in the work as no satisfactory mention is made of major Akoko communities that developed fairly well within the period covered by the author. In addition, Johnson alluded to the claim that the *Alaafin* administered Yorubaland from Oyo, which displaced Ile-Ife as the capital following the founding of old Oyo and the reigns of Oranyan (Oranmiyan) and Ajaka. This implied that Oyo established imperialistic hegemony over the entire Yorubaland; a notion which was successfully sold to the colonial authorities in Lagos during the 1850s and after. In short, Johnson’s work makes no considerable mention of the Akoko-Ekiti or Akoko-Owo axis of Yorubaland, and largely constitutes an account of

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<sup>46</sup>Lloyd P.C 1960. “Sacred Kingship and Government among the Yoruba”. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. xxx, No.3, July. pp. 221-237.

<sup>47</sup>S. Johnson 2001. *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, Lagos: C.S.S. Bookshop Ltd.

Oyo history, presented sweepingly as the larger Yoruba history. However, in spite of these obvious inadequacies, the book is of huge importance to the study of Yoruba history, and of course the present inquiry since the political history of Akokoland cannot be discussed in isolation of the larger Yoruba macro political milieu. Consequently, the work opens a vista for further inquiry, a part of which the present study is.

In his paper titled, “Dynamics of Yoruba Studies”<sup>48</sup>, Asiwaju offers a rather stimulating account of the geographical base, extent and spread of the Yoruba country. While averring that it is difficult to define the Yoruba culture area, he goes further to identify some “broadly conceived criteria of common language, traditions of origin of the traditional ruling class, socio-political institutions and organisational patterns, religions, morals and the geographical contiguity of the land occupied by the different groups”<sup>49</sup>, as having engendered what he calls “a good measure of agreement among scholars, which may be presumed about the definition of the core”.<sup>50</sup> The core in Nigeria covers states of present day Southwestern Nigeria, Ilorin and Kabba regions of Kwara and Kogi States respectively. Asiwaju also emphasises that “geography has had considerable influence on history” and that the variety in culture as indexed by variations in dialects and the socio-political institutions, can be partly explained by “similar variations in the environment with parts located in the Savannah grassland, the dry (deciduous) forest, the rain forests, the riverine and coastal areas”.<sup>51</sup> He goes further to note the factor of exposure to different cultural influences, which is best illustrated in what he captions as “zonalisation (of Yorubaland) into the eastern, western and northern parts of the culture area....”<sup>52</sup> Incidentally, the geographical scope of the present study is in the northern tip of the eastern part of Yorubaland as noted above. However, Asiwaju’s account takes note of only Ekiti, Ondo and Owo as the sub-groups in eastern Yorubaland,<sup>53</sup> with an utter neglect of Akoko. This neglect will be corrected and properly situated in the present inquiry. But in spite

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<sup>48</sup> A.I. Asiwaju, “The Dynamics of Yoruba Studies” in G.O. Olusanya (ed.) 1983. *Studies in Yoruba History and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor S.O. Biobaku*, Ibadan University Press Limited. p.28.

<sup>49</sup> A.I. Asiwaju, “The Dynamics of Yoruba Studies” in G.O. Olusanya (ed.) 1983. *Studies in Yoruba History and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor S.O. Biobaku*, Ibadan University Press Limited. p.28.

<sup>50</sup> The Yoruba are also found in the People’s Republic of Benin (formerly Dahomey), some parts of Togo, Brazil and Cuba in southern America. Those in these locations are known as the Yoruba in the Diaspora. See I. A. Akinjogbin’s 1967. “Towards an Historical Geography of Yoruba Civilization” in Proceedings of the Conference on Yoruba Civilization, held at the University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 26-31, July. pp.19-34.

<sup>51</sup> A.I. Asiwaju, “The Dynamics of Yoruba Studies” in G.O. Olusanya (ed.) 1983. *Studies in Yoruba History and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor S.O. Biobaku*, Ibadan University Press Limited. p.28.

<sup>52</sup> A.I. Asiwaju, “The Dynamics of Yoruba Studies” in G.O. Olusanya ed. 1983. *Studies in Yoruba History and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor S.O. Biobaku*, Ibadan University Press Limited. p.28.

<sup>53</sup> A.I. Asiwaju, “The Dynamics of Yoruba Studies” in G.O. Olusanya ed. 1983. *Studies in Yoruba History and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor S.O. Biobaku*, Ibadan University Press Limited. p.28.



of the afore-noted flaw, the work is considerably useful to the present study, particularly as it discusses the Yoruba contact with the external world up to c. 1800, their further integration within the wider world in the nineteenth century, and the institutional agencies that facilitated the study of Yoruba civilization, society and culture.

Olomola's work titled, "How Realistic are the Historical Claims of Affinity among the Yoruba"? also discusses in copious terms, the claim of affinity among the Yoruba. He identifies some sources of affinity to include acclaimed common origin of most of the Yoruba kingdoms, particularly centering on Oduduwa; conjugal ties among members of the ruling houses as well as the common people, migrations, conquests often resulting from economic and political considerations.<sup>54</sup> He adds that:

The history of the various Yoruba states and kingdoms is replete with continual, often profuse internal migrations... Unsuccessful aspirants for political offices usually bemoaned their losses and were in many cases followed into exile by large followings of partisans... In many cases, the leaders were incorporated into the existing political arrangement of their new homes, in some cases displacing the pre-existing political officer in the local hierarchical set up.<sup>55</sup>

He further explained that:

Examples are legion and this has accounted for the prevalence of component sections of many Yoruba towns and villages consisting of numerous lineages with distinct chieftaincy titles, ritual practice, cognomens and conventional rules and practices.... Ado Ekiti ... consists of the Odoba and his lineage from Oge in Akoko...<sup>56</sup>

Olomola submitted that claims of close relations among the Yoruba "have histories to back them up, and that these affinal claims cut across the states and communities as well as a wide spectrum of the rank and file". This is quite apt of most of the Akoko communities. He adds further that, of course, the claims are made good and appear strongly entrenched in many instances of interaction and have formed the basis of the much-quoted cultural

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<sup>54</sup>I. Olomola, "How Realistic are the Historical Claims of Affinity among the Yoruba?", in Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Seminar Series, 1978-1979, pp. 26-58.

<sup>55</sup>I. Olomola, "How Realistic are the Historical Claims of Affinity among the Yoruba?", in Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Seminar Series, 1978-1979, pp. 26-58.

<sup>56</sup>I. Olomola, "How Realistic are the Historical Claims of Affinity among the Yoruba?", in Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Seminar Series, 1978-1979, pp.43-44.

homogeneity among the Yoruba in spite of the existence of variations in beliefs and practices...<sup>57</sup>

Though this present study is not concerned with a discussion of the inter-group relations that existed among the various Yoruba communities (Akoko inclusive), the work has been able to reveal that while the various Yoruba communities evolved their peculiar socio-political institutions, they did not, however, live in isolation. It goes to say that the Yoruba people had always related among themselves as a commonwealth irrespective of their historical and geographical variations and dynamics. The work is, therefore, relevant to the present study as it will help guide discussions that relate to some of the Akoko communities' pre-colonial socio-political dynamics.

Aminu and Kolawole's book, *Akokoland: History and Distinguished People*,<sup>58</sup> is yet another source that can offer useful information on some aspects of Akoko history. Relying heavily on intelligence reports and oral traditions, the two authors give a rather concise chronicle about Akoko people, their origin, and process of migration and settlement patterns. The history of Akoko in the colonial era also engages their attention. In short, the book provides useful information about Akoko and its people; and opens up a vista for further studies on Akoko. But, the authors are not academic historians, and their book is not subjected to the crucible of rigorous interpretation and analysis. It appears to be a piece meant to fan the embers of patriotism in the people and wake them up for service to their societies.

D.O. Kolawole's book titled, *A History of Oka*,<sup>59</sup> has been able to explore some important issues of historical relevance in Okaland (one of the major communities in Akokoland) with a sense of detail and patriotism. The direct relevance of this work is no doubt huge. The work, however, failed to back up some very strong historical claims with the necessary sources for easy corroboration. After a careful reading of this work, the author has only been able to present a patriotic history of one of the major towns in the study area without actually anchoring his arguments on the acceptable historical methodologies of facts analysis, interpretation and careful presentation.

*Erusu: The Histories of our Times* by Bola Akinwumi is one document that cannot be put aside in an attempt to understanding the proper workings of the different communities

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<sup>57</sup>I. Olomola, "How Realistic are the Historical Claims of Affinity among the Yoruba?", in Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Seminar Series, 1978-1979, pp.50-51

<sup>58</sup>F. Aminu and W. Kolawole 1997. *Akokoland: History and Distinguished People*, Ibadan: Lizab Nigeria Ltd. pp.1-46 mainly centres on Akoko's early history.

<sup>59</sup>D.O. Kolawole 2009. *A History of Oka*, Ibadan: Demman Consultancy & Printers.

that make up Akokoland. This book of seventy-eight pages has been able to shed some light on the socio-political, economic and historical dynamics that collectively contributed to the emergence of Erusu in the pre-colonial times. Interestingly, although the author is not a practicing professional historian and though he wrote from a patriotic point of view, he has been able to appreciate the use of archival materials and oral sources which are veritable sources of historical reconstruction. It is, however, important to observe that the author did not critically deploy his sources, but he has, however, been able to reveal some of the features of indigenous political institutions in one of the communities that make up the research focus, which is equally useful to the present study.<sup>60</sup> While identifying the limitations which is understandable given the author's own point of view, whatever the shortcomings of the work might be, it has at least convey some useful pieces of information which can be relied on for further discussion on the major theme of this thesis.

*The Military in Nineteenth Century Yoruba Politics*, a six chapter book edited by Toyin Falola and Dare Oguntomisin is a very useful scholarly work to this study. The book observed that the Yoruba have never come under one single political authority. It goes to aver that each of the various kingdoms founded by different groups of the Yoruba seems to have developed independently under its own ruling aristocracy on which it depended for its social, economic and political organisations.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, the government of one Yoruba kingdom was, to some extent, structurally different from the other. Structural difference was not particularly noticeable in town governments; but as the towns developed into kingdoms with subordinate territories and central governments with varying degree of complexities were evolved by different groups of the Yoruba, structural differences or patterns of government became more manifest. The role of women in Yoruba politics was also appraised. The work equally discussed the events that brought the military (warlords of the prolonged warfare of the nineteenth century) into playing dominant roles in the politics of Yorubaland. It concludes that the problem of insecurity to life and property that prevailed in Yorubaland in the nineteenth century was mainly responsible for the emergence of military administration in some Yoruba towns in particular and, in general, the dominant role played in politics by war-chiefs in Yorubaland at this period.<sup>62</sup> Although the features of the different forms of

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<sup>60</sup>Bola Akinwumi 2009 "Erusu: The Histories of our Times". pp. 1-78. ISBN: 978-978491612-7.

<sup>61</sup>Toyin Falola and Dare Oguntomisin (eds.) 1984. "The Military in Nineteenth Century Yoruba Politics", Oyo: Anchor print & Packaging Co.

<sup>62</sup>Toyin Falola and Dare Oguntomisin eds. 1984. "The Military in Nineteenth Century Yoruba Politics". Oyo: Anchorprint & Packaging Co. p.118. See also Wale Oyemakinde 1978. "The Impact of Nineteenth Century

government evolved by the military differed largely from the traditional Yoruba pattern of government, the fact that can be garnered from the emergence was that they were contingent political arrangements designed to meet the demands of the period. Even though the work made a passing reference to Akoko Yoruba communities, it has nevertheless helped to provide in-depth knowledge on the dynamics of the general Yoruba political institution in the nineteenth century, which is directly relevant to this work.

### 1.8.3 Impact of Colonial Rule on Kingship Institution in Akokoland and Beyond

In their “British Conquest and Administration of Yorubaland”<sup>63</sup>, Oyeweso and Oshin offer a comprehensive insight into the events that served as prelude to colonial subjugation of Yorubaland. They particularly mentioned the advent of British traders and Christian missionaries, the 1851 bombardment and 1861 annexation of Lagos, the Ijebu expedition, and the subjugation of Ibadan, Ijesa and Ekiti districts of Yorubaland. The authors emphasised that the high-handed manner of handling some local warlords across Yorubaland, particularly in the closing years of the Yoruba inter-state wars, by the colonial agents was to have a predictable impact of making the traditional rulers acquiesce to colonial threat with much relative ease. Hitherto, these warlords had been highly revered in Yorubaland. For example, the British arrested and imprisoned Aduloju and Fabunmi (of Ekiti) and Ogedengbe (of Ijesa)<sup>64</sup>- an event many of their followers and admirers found loathsome. But, the authors did not tell us of the Akoko situation under colonial rule.<sup>65</sup> This work would have been more relevant to this study had it evidently shown that Akoko remained as part of the Northern Protectorate up to January 1, 1914. The work will, however, help to understand the workings of colonial rule in Yorubaland since an aspect of this present study is devoted to a discussion of the place of the chieftaincy institution in Akokoland under colonial rule.

A.O. Olukoju’s chapter titled, “Colonial Taxation and its Socio- Economic Impact in Akokoland, 1900-1930”<sup>66</sup> is also worthy of review given its direct relevance to the present study. In the paper, the author was able to show that the Akoko traditional chiefs were not

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Warfare on Yoruba Traditional Chieftaincy” *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, (JHSN) VOL.9 No 2. June.

<sup>63</sup>S. Oyeweso and O. Oshin, “British Conquest and Administration...”, p. 44.

<sup>64</sup>While they state that rulers of Akoko as elsewhere in Yorubaland acquiesced because of the imprisonment of certain hitherto feared warlords, they did not show how Akoko was governed in the colonial years. See S. Oyeweso and O. Oshin, “British Conquest and Administration...” pp.44-50.

<sup>65</sup>S. Oyeweso and O. Oshin, “British Conquest and Administration...”, pp. 44-50.

<sup>66</sup>Ayodeji Olukoju, Z.O. Apata & Olayemi Akinmumi (eds.), 2003. *Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone*, (Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication).

passive and docile in their resentment against the imposition of a foreign taxation system on them and their subjects alike. In fact, this arbitrary taxation system had adverse effect on the institution of chieftaincy in Akokoland in the period under review.

The colonial experience of Nigeria between 1900 and 1960 had a landmark impact on kingship institutions in Nigeria. Some essays in the book titled: *The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria* reflected on the various aspects of colonial influence and legacies on kingship institutions in Nigeria. For instance, while Adetunji Ogunyemi examines the place of political pluralism in chieftaincy disputes in Akoko area of Ondo State from a historical perspective (this Ogunyemi's essay is of direct relevance to the study area of this work); the article, however, erred by misconstruing chieftaincy for kingship as captured in his discussion, Nurudeen Abubakar interrogated the impact of colonial rule on the chieftaincy institution in Northern Nigeria with emphasis on Kano during the reign of *Emir* Abbass (1903-1919). The last essay in this category was an expository analysis of the "Child of the Leopard Skin" Royal Succession Principle among the Wimbun of Central Nigeria written by Talla Ngarka Sunday.<sup>67</sup>

Olusanya Faboyede's *Indigenous Political System in the Pre-Colonial Akokoland: A Re-Appraisal during Colonial Rule*,<sup>68</sup> has carefully presented a succinct analytical discussion on the geography, peopling and the institution of monarchy and the role of the traditional rulers in pre-colonial Akoko society. It also assessed the place of indigenous political system during the colonial enterprise. Importantly, the paper has filled an important gap in the socio-cultural history of the Akoko communities and it is essentially useful in producing scholarly illumination on the great influence of colonial rule on the indigenous political system of the people of Akokoland. The paper, therefore, finds out that by adopting the indirect rule, British government helped to transform the indigenous political system and culture into modern politics. The electoral system of appointment was formally introduced and entrenched into the local system of administration. Both the traditional rulers and educated *elite* were excluded from active and direct participation in the art of governance, which was against the tenet of culture of the people of Akokoland as an egalitarian society. In view of the above, the author submitted that colonial rule was a blessing in disguise on the indigenous political structure, at

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<sup>67</sup>Tunde Babawale, Akin Alao & Bimbo Adesoji (eds.) 2010. "The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria", Lagos: Concept Publications. Published for: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) p.xiii.

<sup>68</sup>Olusanya Faboyede 2013. "Indigenous Political System in the Pre-Colonial Akokoland: A Re-Appraisal during Colonial Rule", *Turkish Journal of Politics* Vol. 4 No. 1, pp.97-109.

least British colonialists realised that their colonial imperialism could not have survived without the inclusion of the traditional rulers. It was, therefore, agreed by the paper that noticeable alteration and adjustment took place in the traditional political system of Akokoland during colonial rule, by breaking the socio-cultural heritage.<sup>69</sup> It is these changes that are critically assessed in this study.

In the same book, Idowu Olawale Farawe continued the debate when he took a cursory look at the ways by which colonial rule affected the selection process of traditional rulers in Ogun and Lagos States, with particular emphasis on the *Odemo* and *Akran* royal stools of Isara-Remo and Badagry respectively. Chapter twenty-seven of the book was unique, as the contribution was made by a prominent traditional ruler in Oyo State, HRH *Oba* Timothy Oyebanji, the *Ona-Onibode* of Igboholand on the role of *Oba Ona-Onibode* in the socio-economic and political transformation of Igboho. The fate and experiences of the traditional institutions under military rule in Nigeria between 1966 and 1999 received the attention of E. C. Emordi and O.M. Osiki as Adebayo Ayodele's intervention paper on the National Archives as a source of information to historians and chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria stands in a class of its own.<sup>70</sup>

Akomolafe's thesis titled, "Akoko under British Rule, 1900-1935"<sup>71</sup>, contains useful information on accounts of origin, migration and state formation process as well as the emergent culture and civilisation of the Akoko people. It also explains Akoko-Owo relations. The main kernel of discourse in this thesis is the establishment and operation of colonial rule in Akoko up to 1935. The present study shall benefit immensely from the thesis as it offers some data that can give a lead to further information.

The chapters seven and eight of a book titled: *Yoruba Town and Cities*<sup>72</sup> were also reviewed. The seventh chapter titled: 'Oke Agbe' observed that Oke-Agbe has a few peculiarities, which mark it differently from towns around. The four sections that make up the community: Afa, Oge, Aje and Ido speak four different though mutually intelligible dialects. The author argued that an analysis of these dialects reveals that there are dialectical affinities

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<sup>69</sup>Olusanya Faboyede 2013. "Indigenous Political System in the Pre-Colonial Akokoland: A Re-Appraisal during Colonial Rule", *Turkish Journal of Politics* Vol. 4 No. 1.p.107.

<sup>70</sup>Tunde Babawale, Akin Alao & Bimbo Adesoji eds. 2010. *The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria*, Lagos: Concept Publication. Published for: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) p.xiv.

<sup>71</sup>C.O. Akomolafe 1976. "Akoko under British Rule, 1900-1935", M.Phil. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife. Akomolafe's account on Akoko-Owo relations can be gleaned in pp. 123- 155.

<sup>72</sup> G.O. Ogunotomisin (ed.) 2003. *Yoruba Towns and Cities*, Ibadan: Bookshelf Resources Ltd. pp.60 – 88.

between the neighbours of Oke-Agbe and each of the four sections of the community. The paper argues that each of the four Oke-Agbe communities migrated at different times in their history from their original *apole* (homestead) to their present locations due to fight over titles, desire for new land, as a result of local wars and the need for better farmlands or security. The author observed that Afa, one of the four communities was involved in series of devastating invasions and wars which almost consumed it in the period under review. Unlike Afa, the paper argued that natural fortification and the presence of well-coordinated military contingent enhanced the military prowess of Oge quarter and this seriously contributed to its survival. While negating the claim origin tie to Ile-Ife, the paper observed that the most valid tradition of origin link is that which connects Aje with Iyoke. It was however concluded that, the Ado-Ekiti later migrants led by Oloniyo forced their lordship on Aje, a development that has till date led to the establishment of the *Ewi* of Aje title. The *Ewi* is the paramount ruler of Aje quarter in Oke-Agbe till date. Ido was labeled as the most controversial of all the four quarters that make up Oke-Agbe in terms of its origin. While supporting the fact that Ido was under the Oyin community throughout the nineteenth century and up till the 1920s, it argued that the former was also affected by the wars and migrations of the century. Concluding the paper, the author appraised how the issue of non-integration politically by the four Oke-Agbe communities has denied them of inclusive development and profitable access to successive governments. Arguing from the angle of inclusive political integration as always championed by the Afa section of the community, though always viewed with distaste by the elders of the other sections, the author concluded that an early realization of the importance of an acceptable leader to such a large community in this age when vocal leaders are essential for communities to push their way through in the scheme of things of Oke-Agbe's development, failure to evolve acceptable system of administration for unity is unacceptable. The paper submitted that, until this anomaly of non-political integration is fixed, Oke-Agbe may remain edged out in the scheme of things by her integrated neighbours. This paper has revealed how politics led to several migrations of the four communities that make up Oke-Agbe Akoko from the *apole*. Of particular importance, is the place of traditional rulers (kings and chiefs), in the development of the society as captured by the author in his discourse.<sup>73</sup> The paper has provided the needed guide in understanding the political dynamics of one of the major Akoko Yoruba towns.

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<sup>73</sup>J.B. Ogundana, 2003. "Oke Agbe" in G.O. Ogunotomisin (ed.), *Yoruba Towns and Cities*, Ibadan: Bookshelf Resources Ltd. pp.60 – 75.

The chapter eight of the same book titled: ‘Oka’ also provided vital information to the understanding of some of the issues assessed in this research. The paper while acknowledging the dialectical plurality of the Akoko people occasioned by the diversity in their traditions and origins, it agreed that Oka which is the thrust of the paper has a strong tie to Ile-Ife as evidenced in its *oriki* and other ancient chants. Three groups of migrants were said to have founded Oka, but the author argued with historical depth that the most plausible version of tradition of origin is the one linked to the Asin group. He argued that the other traditions of origin, especially the Okikan tradition simply emerged to rationalize the dynastic usurpation of the leadership of Oka, which was masterminded by the British in the 1890s.<sup>74</sup> The paper was able to establish that the groupings that existed in Oka have ensured that there are not divisive factors in Oka politics because they were not based on mere territorial contiguity. The sophistication of the pre-colonial political, social and economic institutions of Oka was scholarly analysed. Oka external relations with her neighbours was adjudged cordial but argued that, traditionally, Oka is the most advantaged among other Akoko towns, possibly on account of precedence of settlement, population and military prowess.<sup>75</sup> The paper however, observed that, the acknowledgement of Oka’s seniority was largely nominal because it did not subject any of its neighbours to vassalage. Rather, commercial and social intercourse took place between Oka and these towns. According to the author, a measure of the cordiality was the relative ease with which Oka farmers secured farmlands from some of their neighbours in the last century.<sup>76</sup> In the concluding part of the paper, developments in Oka since the 1890s to later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century received the necessary scholarly appraisal. The current study has benefitted immensely from the content of this paper as it presents lucid but thought provoking analysis on one of the major towns in Akokoland. A careful x-ray of discussions in the paper revealed the place of power politics in the survival of the different chiefdoms founded by the three group of migrants that later displaced or absorbed the old settlers to form Oka-Akoko as a kingdom.

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<sup>74</sup>A.O. Olukoju, 2003. ‘Oka’ in G.O. Ogunotomisin (ed.), *Yoruba Towns and Cities*, Ibadan: Bookshelf Resources Ltd. p.79.

<sup>75</sup>A.O. Olukoju, 2003. ‘Oka’ in G.O. Ogunotomisin (ed.), *Yoruba Towns and Cities*, Ibadan: Bookshelf Resources Ltd. p.85.

<sup>76</sup>A.O. Olukoju, 2003. ‘Oka’ in G.O. Ogunotomisin (ed.), *Yoruba Towns and Cities*, Ibadan: Bookshelf Resources Ltd. p.85.



A journal article titled: ‘From Kingdoms to Kingdom: A Historical Appraisal of the Chieftaincy Institution in Okaland Southwest of Nigeria’<sup>77</sup> is a discourse on the traditional chieftaincy institution in Oka-Akoko since the pre-colonial period. The trajectory and relevance of the traditional political institution of Oka-Akoko occupied the major thesis of the paper which argues to the effect that, the colonial enterprise in the area fundamentally altered the Oka people political institution and tradition. The author revealed that in pre-colonial Okaland, a village administration headed by hereditary chiefs and elders supported by the age grade system evolved in the fifteen quarters that comprise the present day Oka kingdom. The paper argued further by revealing how the hitherto well organized independent chiefdoms under their leaders were brought under the control of one centralized administration under the paramount rulership of the *Olubaka* Okaland. This development was the direct aftermath of the reckless power politics that colonial rule used to alter the traditional political structure. The author stressed that the subsisting quasi-federal traditional government of Okaland which emerged as a result of the alteration caused by external interference is alien to Oka native laws and customs and therefore, submitted that, the integrity and sanctity of our traditional institutions must be preserved in its proper context to avoid further debasement and balkanization which is not too good for inclusive development of the society. The author however, concluded that, kingship and chieftaincy institutions have always helped to sustain social order and communal harmony among the various communities in Okaland, and that the emergence of the *Olubaka* as the paramount ruler of Okaland marked the beginning of a comprehensive and enduring socio-political system.<sup>78</sup>

Worthy of review is Faboyede’s thesis titled: “The Akoko Elite, 1900 – 1960”.<sup>79</sup> The study was basically tailored towards correcting the general notion that there was no practice of elitism in Akoko-Yoruba communities up until the eve of colonialism. To achieve this, the research examined the Akoko traditional and modern *elite* between 1900 and 1960 and did an analysis of the evolution and contribution of the north-eastern Akoko Yoruba *elite* to the development of the area. The various functions of the Akoko Yoruba *elite* for a critical period of sixty years were also evaluated. The study concluded that the traditional *elite* had been in

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<sup>77</sup>S.A. Ogunode 2012. ‘From Kingdoms to Kingdom: A Historical Appraisal of the Chieftaincy Institution in Okaland Southwest of Nigeria’, *European Scientific Journal*, Vol. 8, no. 23, pp.22-37.

<sup>78</sup>S.A. Ogunode 2012. ‘From Kingdoms to Kingdom: A Historical Appraisal of the Chieftaincy Institution in Okaland Southwest of Nigeria’, *European Scientific Journal*, Vol. 8, no. 23, p.37.

<sup>79</sup>O. Faboyede 2013. “The Akoko Elite, 1900 – 1960”, Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. Nigeria. pp. 1-125.

existence in Akokoland long before the advent of the Europeans and has undergone various stages of transformation. It further submitted by arguing to the effect that, Akokoland produced modern *elite*, which took its root from intra-preneurship into entrepreneurship as a result of which they were able to make invaluable impact on the region between 1900 and 1960. The study equally submitted that contrary to the assumptions that Akoko Yoruba traditional *elite* were autocratic, the study revealed that the indigenous political leadership was characterised by checks and balances.<sup>80</sup>

Adeyeri's work titled: 'British Rule and the Transformation of Akokoland, 1897 – 1960',<sup>81</sup> revealed that Akoko Yoruba communities between 1897 and 1960, underwent a considerable degree of socio-political transformation under the British rule. In the social angle, the study observed that from 1920, western education provided Akoko indigenes with the requisite training to take up employment in the local administration workforce. The research further revealed that Western values, coupled with certain colonial policies, caused significant changes in Akoko indigenous socio-cultural value system, particularly, the *Omoluka* (integrity, dignity and honesty) and traditional marriage institutions. In the same vein, the author observed that, between 1917 and 1960, Akoko settlement pattern changed remarkably in terms of relocation and resettlement of old communities from hilltops and caves to open places and plains, lowlands, spatial arrangement, types and material make-ups of buildings. In the economic sphere, British rule bequeathed to Akokoland, road networks, which marked a clear departure from the pre-colonial transport system in terms of socio-economic utility value. This, was, however, accompanied by a negative development – the introduction of forced labour in the 1920s. The evolution and growth of cash crop economy and the introduction of British currency created new commercial *elite* of Akoko middlemen. Increased cash flow and purchasing power transformed Akoko architecture considerably. The intensive drive for cash crop production and the attendant scarcity of land resulted in frequent land disputes and food crisis from the 1930s. In the political domain, British colonial policies subverted the power and authority of Akoko traditional rulers and also created conflicts within the traditional authorities and institutions in Oka, Akungba and Ikare as evidenced in the imposition of the *Olubaka* over *Asin* (1904), *Alale* over *Alakungba* (1913), and *Olukare* over *Owa Ale* (1946) respectively. The imposition of Momoh, a non-titled person, as

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<sup>80</sup>O. Faboyede 2013. "The Akoko Elite, 1900 – 1960", Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. Nigeria. pp. 122-125.

<sup>81</sup>J.O. Adeyeri 2015. 'British Rule and the Transformation of Akokoland, 1897 – 1960', Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. pp. 1-225.

paramount ruler of Akokoland generated grievances from Akoko chiefs. This aspect of the study is very relevant to the understanding of issues related to power politics in Akoko kingship institution and its ripple effects. The Native Court system completely altered the pre-colonial judicial system and institutions of the people for new ones that generated inter-communal tensions and agitations championed by the village heads for reforms between 1919 and 1929. In response, British rule evolved a caricature of central administration in the area until the attainment of independence in 1960.<sup>82</sup>

#### **1.8.4 Kingship Institution and Modern Governance in Nigeria and Beyond**

“Chiefs, Constitutions and Policies in Nigeria”<sup>83</sup> made very significant input on the continued relevance of the traditional rulers in Nigeria, despite the various attempts to relegate them to the political backwaters. The author observes the irony and paradox that followed the frantic efforts by various interest groups to achieve the complete abolishment of the kinship and chieftaincy institutions. The idea that traditional political institutions will fizzle out in the face of more improved modern political system remains a mirage. The reason for this as submitted by the author, is largely because of the dynamism, adaptability and continuity of the traditional political institutions. This article is no doubt directly related and relevant to the main focus of this thesis.

Another important work is a thirty-two chapter book titled: “The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria” Tunde Babawale, Akin Alao and Bimbo Adesoji (eds.). The point must be made from the outset that, the title of the book betrays its contents. The question then is: how will scholarly compendiums on chieftaincy (*ijoye*) presents discussions on kingship or royalty whose head is the king/*oba*? Chieftaincy and kingship are two different things and any attempt to consider the two concepts as the same will amount to betrayal of history and knowingly adopting the colonialists’ subjugation tactics. It in this regard, that this book will be considered to have done justice to the various aspects of traditional political institutions of great antiquity in Nigeria.<sup>84</sup> The linguistic question of how kingship and chieftaincy matters are advertised in the Nigerian print media receives the attention of the author who shows that propaganda was used to present the would-be title-holders as respectable and reputable

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<sup>82</sup>J.O. Adeyeri 2015. ‘British Rule and the Transformation of Akokoland, 1897 – 1960’, Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. p.125.

<sup>83</sup>Pita Ogaba Agbese 2004. “Chiefs, Constitutions, and Policies in Nigeria”, *West Africa Review*, Issue 6. pp. 1-21.

<sup>84</sup>Tunde Babawale, Akin Alao & Bimbo Adesoji (eds.) 2010. “The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria”, Lagos: Concept Publications. Published for: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC)

citizens in the community. Lere Adeyemi examined the portrayal of Yoruba kingship institutions by some selected prominent Yoruba novelists and argued that the institution still commands a great respect and reverence among the Yoruba people.<sup>85</sup> The next four chapters of the book focused on the role of traditional rulers in communal activities like festivals in some Yoruba communities. Adedayo Emmanuel Afe took a close look at the kingship institution and the traditional taboos in Yorubaland and submitted that taboos and abominations are measures used by chieftaincy institutions to achieve peace and tranquility in traditional Yoruba societies as well as to combat corruption and indiscipline. Amusa Saheed analyzed the major reason behind the continued active participation of the *Ataoja* of Osogbo in the annual *Osun Osogbo* festival celebration in spite of modernity and criticisms from religious groups. His findings showed that *Osun* festival is more than a mere idol worship or an occasion of festivity to the *Ataoja* and the people of Osogbo, but that the festival is meant to showcase the history, culture and hence, the life of the people of Osogbo and their traditional ruler, the *Ataoja*. Yemi Olugbamigbe and M.A Fasheun, in their own chapter contribution on Ondo Kingdom, assessed the poetic images of the praise poems of Ondo war chieftains and the role of Ondo traditional rulers in the celebration of Ogun festivals respectively.<sup>86</sup> These two chapters offer illuminating insights into the history and culture of Ondo people.

What roles could traditional institutions play in grassroots and community development in contemporary Nigeria? Answers to this question were what pre-occupied the three essays that follow in the book reviewed above. The first one, contributed by Dele Ashiru, is on “Chieftaincy Institution and Grass Roots Development in Nigeria,” while the second one written by Meshach Ofuafor is titled, “Rethinking the Chieftaincy ‘Imperative’ in Engendering Grass Roots Development in Nigeria”. The essay written by Anthony I. Okoduwa was on “Chieftaincy Institution and Community Building in Nigeria: The Esan Example.” In these three chapters, the authors made cases for the continued relevance and recognition of kingship and not chieftaincy institutions in grass roots and community development in Nigeria.<sup>87</sup> The authors, therefore, erred by mistaken chieftaincy for kingship. Indeed, discussions in their papers were woven around the king and not the chief. In the same

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<sup>85</sup>Tunde Babawale, Akin Alao & Bimbo Adesoji (eds.) 2010. “The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria”, Lagos: Concept Publications. Published for: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), p. xi.

<sup>86</sup>Tunde Babawale, Akin Alao & Bimbo Adesoji (eds.) 2010. “The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria”, Lagos: Concept Publications. Published for: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), p. xii.

<sup>87</sup>Tunde Babawale, Akin Alao & Bimbo Adesoji (eds.), 2010. “The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria”, Lagos: Concept Publications. Published for: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) p. xii.

vein, the three chapters that follow from here addressed some legal and judicial issues as they relate to kingship institutions among some Nigerian peoples. O. B. Olaoba who examines the nature of the indigenous judicial system in the Yoruba kingship institution was perhaps the only author that understood the kingship institution in context with a good display of historical knowledge of the subject matter, while an assessment of the legal judicial interventions in chieftaincy disputes among the Yoruba of South-western Nigeria receives the attention of Toriola Oyewo. Dolapo Olupayimo presents some of his findings on how judicial pronouncements are being used to legalize some anti-customary claims in contemporary Nigeria and the impact of this on chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria, particularly among the Yoruba.

Islam, as one of the major world religions, has greatly influenced, and has also been greatly influenced by traditional political systems and titles among Nigerian peoples. Abiodun Akeem Oladiti provides a historical analysis of the chieftaincy titles in Islam among the Yoruba, while Kazeem Adekunle Adegoke writes on Islam and the chieftaincy Institution in the Sokoto Caliphate established as a consequence of the 1804 Fulani Jihad. The origin, growth and development of the *Imamate* in Ibadan receives the scholarly attention of Ismaheel A. Jimoh just as Fola T. Lateju takes a look at the religious and cultural implications of Islamic chieftaincy in Yorubaland. Lateef F. Oladimeji analyses the modern trends and challenges of chieftaincy titles among Muslims in Southwestern Nigeria. In between the discussions on Islamic influence on chieftaincy institutions, Victor Osaro Edo, examined the place of the Benin monarchy during the era of decolonization and military rule between 1948 and 1978 (this essay is equally of great value to an aspect of this thesis) before Mashood Omotosho's reflective essay on the enthronement and dethronement of the 18<sup>th</sup> *Sultan* of Sokoto as an aspect of conflict in the Sultanate.

In contemporary Nigeria, the kingship institution has continued to face serious crisis of relevance which has made scholars and analysts to debate the need for constitutional inclusion. To underscore the relevance of this discourse to national life, seven essays examine the various dimensions of the debate from different ideological and disciplinary perspectives. Kingdom E. Orji and Stephen T. Olali examine the traditional institutions and their dwindling roles in contemporary Nigeria, with Rivers State as a case in point. Abimbola Adesoji is more holistic and national in his analysis of the place of traditional rulership in modern governance

in 20<sup>th</sup> century Nigeria, while S.Y. Omoiya directly and unambiguously traces the chieftaincy and intra/inter-ethnic conflicts in Ilorin to the negative influence of colonial rule in Nigeria.<sup>88</sup>

One of the major issues of discourse in contemporary Nigeria is the important role of women in national development efforts. This has led to campaigns for women participation in politics, women empowerment and gender balance in all spheres of our national life. In furtherance of this debate, the last three chapters of the book are devoted to the roles of women in traditional rulership. F.A. Olasupo and M.A. Afolabi examine the status and place of women in traditional chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria in pre-colonial and contemporary Nigeria. B.E. Oseghale and Omon Merry Osiki examine women chieftaincy institutions in the South-South region of Nigeria by providing a comparative study of the *Oluaship* Title in Iuleha Clan of Edo State and the *Omuship* title in the Ubulu-Uku area of Delta State. M.A. Fasiku, writing on women chieftaincy institution in Omuo kingdom in Ekiti State examines the role of women in the management of state affairs and contends that the limitations imposed by the culture-based sex role did not in any material sense frustrates women's involvement. As the editors have rightly submitted, all the chapters in the book have addressed topical issues of kingship and chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria from different academic, ideological and spatial perspectives with a view to facilitating the understanding and appreciation of the enduring legacy of this very important institution in contemporary Nigeria. This book offers fresh insights into the history, nature, character and prospects of the kingship institution in Nigeria and makes a case for its promotion and appropriation in the national efforts aimed at development. The book is indeed a modest contribution to the existing body of literature on the kingship and chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria, particularly now that the institution is facing an unnecessary crisis of relevance as a result of our little understanding of the role of cultural institutions in the onerous task of nation-building.<sup>89</sup> The direct relevance of this book to the present work cannot be overemphasised. It has provided incisive guide to the analysis and understanding of the core areas of discussion in this research.

The work of S.B. Amusa and M.O. Ofuafor titled, "Resilience of Traditions in Contemporary Politics: A Historical Study of the Political Influence of Traditional Rulers in

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<sup>88</sup>Tunde Babawale, Akin Alao & Bimbo Adesoji (eds.) 2010. "The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria", Lagos: Concept Publications. Published for: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) p. xiv.

<sup>89</sup> Tunde Babawale, Akin Alao & Bimbo Adesoji (eds.) 2010. "The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria", Lagos: Concept Publications. Published for: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) p. xv.

Nigeria”<sup>90</sup> is of immense importance to this study. The paper stated that in practical terms, traditional rulers do not have any official role to play in the political machinery and governance in contemporary Nigeria, but agrees that the traditional institutions, particularly traditional rulership has remained a strong political force to reckon with in the contemporary Nigerian politics in spite of their official and constitutional relegation to the background. Reason for their continued reckoning has been aptly captured by Falola when he asserts that: “this has been made possible by the power and resilience of African traditions and spiritualities which have continued to have great influence in the lives and activities of the Africans.”<sup>91</sup>

*Obas of the Ekiti Confederacy since the Advent of the British* by S.A. Akintoye<sup>92</sup> observes that in the traditional set-up<sup>93</sup> (of Ekiti), the government of each kingdom was, in theory, the *oba*'s government, and he was supposed to have the power of life and death over his subjects. In fact, however, he was the head of a system which was broad-based and complex, and his true position was more that of the symbol of authority than the instrument of its execution. As pointed earlier by Fadipe in his “The Sociology of the Yoruba”, the Ekiti *Oba* was not alone in the running of the affairs of the larger kingdom. This is another pointer to the unique political institutional arrangement that obtained in traditional Yorubaland before colonial onslaught. It, therefore, lends further credence to the significance of the thesis title as kingship institution continue to form one of the major planks of societal stability and grass mobilization in the modern age.

“Kings, Soldiers and Nigerians”<sup>94</sup> was another interesting article that provided useful insights into the place of the traditional political institutions in any form of modern governance. The article assessed the impact of the sudden relationship that emerged between the military government of General Buhari and the traditional rulers in Nigeria. While some critical observers of the new found love feared for the traditional rulers, some saw it as a

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<sup>90</sup>S.B. Amusa and M.O. Ofuafor 2012. “Resilience of Traditions in Contemporary Politics: A Historical Study of the Political Influence of Traditional Rulers in Nigeria”, *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences* 4(6): 407-414.

<sup>91</sup>Toyin F. 2008. “The Power of African Cultures”, Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

<sup>92</sup>S.A. Akintoye, 1970. *Obas of the Ekiti Confederacy since the Advent of the British*, in Michael Crowder & Obaro Ikime (eds.) “West African Chiefs; Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence”, Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1970. pp. 255-268.

<sup>93</sup>For details of traditional Ekiti government, see, P.C. Lloyd, 1954. “The Traditional Political System of the Yoruba”, *South-West Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 4, No.(10) pp.366-84.

<sup>94</sup> Fide Odun, et al 1984. “Traditional Rulers: Men of the People or Relics of the Past? *Concord*, Nigeria's International News Magazine. August 24, Issue No. 4. pp. 6-9.

welcome development given the fact the Shagari government did not actually accord them their due place in the scheme of things. The article has indeed helped to throw light on the place of the kingship institution under the military, which is part of the issue for consideration in this work. The *Newswatch Magazine* of 1988, p.19,<sup>95</sup> also examined how the local government reforms of 1976 and the Land Use Decree under the military government further diminished the relevance of the traditional rulers in Nigeria. It, however, observed that the traditional rulers even under the military government were not docile over the deliberate efforts made at suffocating them by the institution of modern governance. It is, therefore, significant to note that the traditional rulers have never supported the Land Use Decree which vested on state governors' absolute authority in land matters. Under the Buhari regime, their opposition to the decree became more vociferous when they suddenly found themselves in a pre-eminent position.<sup>96</sup> In a similar vein, Ekeng A. Anam-Ndu in his article titled, "Traditional Rulers, Politics and Change"<sup>97</sup> discussed the practices which bordered on profanity of sacred traditional institutions. He argued that before governance becomes more complex and difficult in Nigeria, it is important that the political class, be they in uniform or not, become aware that the traditional rulership institutions is not like the civil service that historically dance to the tune usually played for them by the political leadership. It concludes on the simple note that, it is and must be leadership that sets values and norms which overtime, become traditions that slant the behaviour of the civil service and the general society including traditional rulership. Once these normative standards are laid, the wider society adjusts to those standards.<sup>98</sup> The bearing this has on the present study lies in its realization of the possibility of engaging the traditional rulers more fruitfully, which is one of the areas of concern of this study.

The place of tradition and the role of the kingmakers and not outsiders in the emergence of a new traditional ruler was the central message conveyed in *African Concord* of 2 January, 1989.<sup>99</sup> Ikenna Nzimiro' "Of What Relevance are Traditional Rulers",<sup>100</sup> notes that the impact

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<sup>95</sup>Bala Dan Abu et al 1988. "New Constitution" *NewsWatch Magazine*, Nigeria's Weekly News magazine. November 7. p.19. See also Fide Odun, et al 1984 "Traditional Rulers: Men of the People or Relics of the Past?" *Concord*, Nigeria's International News Magazine. August 24, Issue No. 4. p. 12.

<sup>96</sup> Fide Odun, et al 1984. "Traditional Rulers: Men of the People or Relics of the Past?" *Concord*, Nigeria's International News Magazine. August 24, Issue No. 4. p. 12.

<sup>97</sup>Ekeng A. Anam-Ndu, "Traditional Rulers, Politics and Change".*National Concord*, Friday March 16, 1984. p.3.

<sup>98</sup>Ekeng A. Anam-Ndu, 1984. "Traditional Rulers, Politics and Change".*National Concord*, Friday March 16. p. 3.

<sup>99</sup>Anumihe E.A., Dimorji Obokwe & Mbieri Owerri, 1989."Kudos for the Kingmakers". *African Concord*, The Premier Pan-African Weekly, 2 January. Vol. 2 No. 40.p.6.



of the colonial rule on the institution of kingship which has led to the emergence of negative institutional values, has inevitably necessitated the need to pay attention to other aspects of our culture that need be developed as instruments of national growth and cultural pride. In this vein, he was indirectly supporting the views held by some uncritical extreme radicals that have continued to call for the scrapping of the traditional institution in Nigeria. Tony Iyare was also of the opinion that the kingship institution is fast losing relevance in Nigeria. He buttressed his observation when he stated that, ‘the traditional authority in Nigeria seems to be fast becoming a shadow of itself. In his view, the institution sowed the seed of its own destruction through the commercialization of traditional titles by the traditional rulers to all comers.’<sup>101</sup> Despite the seemingly plausible issues raised against the chieftaincy institution by the two writers, this study will provide reasons why the call for the scrapping of the kingship institution might be achieved. However, the personnel of the modern government might try as there is always treasure in inheritance.

This study has also received boost from the wealth of incisive pieces of information from other research works in the area of kingship studies. In this category, the PhD thesis of V.O. Edo titled, “The Benin Monarchy, 1897-1978: A Study in Institutional Adaptation to Change”<sup>102</sup> stands very useful. While the study clearly agrees that we cannot compare the position of the present day monarch to the relatively lofty position they occupied in the pre-colonial period, it, however, supports the school of thought making strong case to the effect that the traditional political institution in Nigeria is still very much alive and relevant in modern day politics even as Nigeria gravitates towards a more complex democratic system of government. The thesis appreciation of the impact of the colonial hegemony, military rule and place of the monarchy in the period of decolonisation gives the present study its analytical viability and justification. This study has hugely benefited from the thesis.

The conflict between the traditional rulers and the modern governance personnel on land and the local politics that results from such conflict was the main thrust of Christian Lund’s *Local Politics of Time and Space in Ghana*.<sup>103</sup> Using Bolgatanga in Ghana, the author

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<sup>100</sup>Ikenna Nzimiro, 1984. “Of What Relevance are Traditional Rulers?”.*The Guardian Newspaper*, Thursday, May 17. p. 7.

<sup>101</sup>Tony Iyare. “The King’s Epitaph”, *Time Week Magazine*, May 6, 1991.p. 11.

<sup>102</sup>V.O. Edo 2001. “The Benin Monarchy, 1897-1978: A Study in Institutional Adaptation to Change”, PhD Thesis submitted to the Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

<sup>103</sup>Christian Lund, *Local Politics of Time and Space in Ghana*, Roskilde University, unpublished working paper. The paper is a product of a research in Ghana conducted from 2002 to 2006. See also P.C. Lloyd 1968. “Conflict

observes that conflicts over land and chieftaincy are characterised by an intense reference to the past as the source of unadulterated legitimacy of claims to the future. This is so as the past and lines of heritage are frequently rehearsed in Ghana. It is a pastime in which everyone who depends on pedigree for position or privilege engages with passion.<sup>104</sup> The paper, therefore, submits that while the competition over chieftaincy and land depends on framing of the past, success has equally hinged on fortuitous or clever readings of the structures of opportunity. The changes in government, adoption of a new constitution and tenure reforms,, decentralisation policies and creation of new administrative boundaries, and government policies relating to taxation or chieftaincy have all, in isolation or in combination, created openings for a rearrangement of political rights and positions. It, therefore, means that all institutions in the society, ancient or modern all provide a functional semantic terrain for time and space.<sup>105</sup> This is the core of the present study, which seeks to discuss the effective use of the traditional rulers as part of the indispensable socio-political institutions in Nigeria's road to building a working system for all.

*Emergent Democracy and 'Resurgent' Tradition: Institutions, Chieftaincy and Transition in KwaZulu-Natal* by Jo Beall, Sibongiseni Mkhize & Shahid Vawda<sup>106</sup> explores chieftaincy in democratic South Africa and particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, where traditional leadership is particularly vocal and politically embedded. It argues that in KwaZulu-Natal, tradition is more persistent than 'resurgent' and that the relationship between chieftaincy and wider governance structures in the province and its relations with South Africa must be seen as part of a much longer history that exhibits both continuities and discontinuities. It, however, submitted that the powers and relevance accorded the chieftaincy institutions should not necessarily be because of political exigencies if the fledging South African democracy is to survive. It is true that up till now, many countries still recognize the enormous power and influence of traditional authorities and this necessitate the conclusion that politicians seeking elected office must not compete with them as they will be doing that to their peril. However, to say the traditional authorities are hardy perennials is only half the truth. Though resilient,

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Theory and Yoruba Kingdoms" in T.M. Lewis (ed.) *History and Social Anthropology*, London: Travistock Publications

<sup>104</sup>Christian Lund, *Local Politics of Time and Space in Ghana*, Roskilde University, unpublished working paper. The paper is a product of a research in Ghana conducted from 2002 to 2006. p. 1.

<sup>105</sup>Christian Lund, *Local Politics of Time and Space in Ghana*, Roskilde University, unpublished working paper. The paper is a product of a research in Ghana conducted from 2002 to 2006. p.17.

<sup>106</sup>Jo Beall, Sibongiseni Mkhize & Shahid Vawd 2005 "Emergent Democracy and 'Resurgent' Tradition: Institutions, Chieftaincy and Transition in KwaZulu-Natal". *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31 (4).pp.755-771. Online version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/2915> Accessed 26/02/2015.

the institution of chieftaincy across the continent bears the battle scars of having to adapt to survive.<sup>107</sup> This is also part of the view that the study will be advancing as the work progresses.

Another paper that appraised the continued relevance of the traditional authorities in Africa, which bore direct relevance on this study is Markus V. Hohne's work titled, "Traditional Authorities in Northern Somalia: Transformation of Positions and Powers."<sup>108</sup> In appraising the relevance of traditional institutions in modern political space, Markus observes the need for caution as he argues that, the fact that the traditional rulers derive their legitimacy from tradition is not a basis for its translation into modern politics. This view has been buttressed by Englebert when he observed that, "legitimacy (of tradition) does not necessarily translate into the realm of modern politics and development..."<sup>109</sup> The paper is, therefore, of the view that, the more intensive the traditional authorities get involved in politics beyond their control, the higher is the probability that they have to make unpopular decisions and therefore lose the support of the community they claim to represent. It went further to say that if the partisanship of the traditional authorities gets out of hand, (a situation which the paper has described as a process of de-legitimization), groups split and the traditional authorities may end up 'alone' deriving their only support from the immediate kin.<sup>110</sup> Arguing further, it holds that, the entanglement of the traditional authorities in political conflict (as it was the case in northern Somalia which was used as case study in the reviewed paper), may end up changing their role completely from being the 'fence' and working for the well-being of their community to become spoilers of social cohesion, and consequently leading their people into conflicts that did not serve the collective interest, but the interest of the politicians. This study borrows a leaf from Markus argument (even a buttressed by Englebert) by stating the need for a thick line that demarcates the responsibilities of traditional institutions and key modern political players. This study is of the position therefore, that, traditional institutional should perform consultation roles.

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<sup>107</sup>Jo Beall, Sibongiseni Mkhize & Shahid Vawd 2005, "Emergent Democracy and 'Resurgent' Tradition: Institutions, Chieftaincy and Transition in KwaZulu-Natal". *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31 (4).pp.755-771. Online version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/2915> Accessed 26/02/2015. p.8.

<sup>108</sup>Markus V. Hohne 2006. "Traditional Authorities in Northern Somalia: Transformation of Positions and Powers. *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Paper No. 82* pp. 1-26.

<sup>109</sup>Englebert Pierre 2002. "Patterns and Theories of Traditional Resurgence in Tropical Africa." *Modes en Developpement*, vol.30. pp. 51-64.

<sup>110</sup>Englebert Pierre 2002. "Patterns and Theories of Traditional Resurgence in Tropical Africa." *Modes en Developpement*, Vol 30.p. 22.

In the six chapters report by Georg Lutz and Wolf Linder,<sup>111</sup> the role of traditional structures in local governance for development in Africa was lucidly discussed. There was a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between the traditional structures and local governance and how it helps to engender local development. It observes that due to the growing interest and support for local development in recent years, many countries have passed legislation to decentralised governmental structures, which has received the support of many international agencies with their own activities. The report further argued that the functionality and wellbeing of local government system is largely dependent on the extent of inclusion and implementation of decentralised policies.<sup>112</sup>

The authors held that social and political organisation at the local level has continued to evolve despite the non-presence of the state. It, however, observes that in the rural areas of many developing countries with weak presence of the state, traditional structures survived the colonial as well as the post-colonial period, and people were able to maintain their traditional forms of social organisation.<sup>113</sup> They, therefore, agree that traditional structures remain very important in organising the life of the people at the local level despite modern state structures. To them, traditional authorities, for example, regulate village life, control access to land, and settle disputes. The existence of traditional authorities means that both the decentralisation and the strengthening of local governance are not taking place in a vacuum. It goes to show that recent experience has shown that successful decentralisation has to take existing traditional structures into account. It concludes that while the standard view has been that they are a historic burden on the road to modernity, it is now widely recognised that for many people, traditional structures are often more legitimate than the modern state.<sup>114</sup> The paper has been able to examine the complexities between traditional and political leadership and sustainable development in the context of developing countries. The analysis of Georg and Wolf has also leant scholarly support in the works of Alastair McIntosh: *Rethinking Chieftaincy and the Future of Rural Local Government, A*

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<sup>111</sup>Georg Lutz and Wolf Linder, “Traditional Structures in Local Governance for Local Development”. A report submitted to the University of Berne, Switzerland Institute of Political Science, Berne, Switzerland, May 2004.

<sup>112</sup>Georg Lutz and Wolf Linder, 2004.“Traditional Structures in Local Governance for Local Development”. A report submitted to the University of Berne, Switzerland Institute of Political Science, Berne, Switzerland, May. p.2.

<sup>113</sup>Georg Lutz and Wolf Linder, 2004.“Traditional Structures in Local Governance for Local Development”. A report submitted to the University of Berne, Switzerland Institute of Political Science, Berne, Switzerland, May. p.2.

<sup>114</sup>Georg Lutz and Wolf Linder, 2004.“Traditional Structures in Local Governance for Local Development”. A report submitted to the University of Berne, Switzerland Institute of Political Science, Berne, Switzerland, May. p.3.

*Preliminary Investigation*,<sup>115</sup> Bern Guri's *Traditional Authorities, Decentralization and Development*.<sup>116</sup> Both works, despite their shortcoming which hugely manifested in the use of chieftaincy to mean kingship, will be widely consulted in the analysis of issues as the study progresses.

The 2007 Economic Commission for Africa workshop report on "Relevance of African Traditional Institutions of Governance"<sup>117</sup> Donald I. Ray and E. Adrian B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal's *The New Relevance of Traditional Authorities in Africa*<sup>118</sup> and "States and Chiefs" Are Chiefs Mere Puppets? by E. Adrian B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal<sup>119</sup> were other relevant literature adequately assessed to enrich the contents of this study.

### **1.8.5 Power and Power Politics**

*The End of Power: From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches to States, Why Being In Charge Isn't What It Used to Be* by Moises Naim,<sup>120</sup> is a book of great import that helps our understanding of the nature of power in the modern world. It was rightly argued in the book that power is not merely dispersing; it is also decaying. Those in power today are more constrained in what they can do with it and more at risk of losing it than ever before. He took us on a journey that disassembles power as we have known it, and reassembles what is left into a new meaning of power that explains why, as he wrote, it is "easier to get, harder to use—and easier to lose." He demonstrated that power is increasingly more dispersed in individual countries and in the world at large. And this in turn has made populations and resources more "difficult to regiment and control."<sup>121</sup> In the review of same book by Lili, he observed that Naim was least compelling when it falls into a shopworn tradition inherited from treatises lamenting the end of monarchy – of predicting that the decay of centralized

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<sup>115</sup> Alastair McIntosh, 1990. "Rethinking Chieftaincy and the Future of Rural Local Government, A Preliminary Investigation." *Transformation*, vol. 13. pp.27-45.

<sup>116</sup> Bern Guri, "Traditional Authorities, Decentralization and Development". A concept paper for strengthening the capacity of Traditional Authorities for Good Governance and Development at the Local Level, Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD), July 2006.

<sup>117</sup> Economic Commission for Africa workshop report on "Relevance of African Traditional Institutions of Governance," *Addis Ababa, 17-18 June, 2006*. The report was published in 2007.

<sup>118</sup> Donald I. Ray and E. Adrian B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996, "The New Relevance of Traditional Authorities in Africa". *Journal of Legal Pluralism*. pp.37-38. The original paper was presented at the Ghana Conference on the Contribution of Traditional Authority to Development, Democracy, Human Rights and Environmental Protection: Strategies for Africa. September 02-06, 1994, Accra and Kumasi, Ghana.

<sup>119</sup> E. Adrian B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal "States and Chiefs" Are Chiefs Mere Puppets"? The original paper was presented at the Ghana Conference on the Contribution of Traditional Authority to Development, Democracy, Human Rights and Environmental Protection: Strategies for Africa.

<sup>120</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The End of Power: From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches to States, Why Being In Charge Isn't What It Used to Be* by Moises Naim (Review), *Americas Quarterly*, spring 2013, pp.143-145 <http://www.saskiasassen.com/PDFs/publications/the-end-of-power.pdf>

<sup>121</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The End of Power: From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches to States, Why Being In Charge Isn't What It Used to Be* by Moises Naim (Review)... pp.143-145

authority will lead to anarchy. It is an understandable concern, but its sheer conventionality undercuts Naim's suggestion that power itself is "ending" or undergoing a historically unprecedented mutation. It would be interesting, frankly, if some new anarchy- adjacent, "powerless" form of social organization came to pass, but if history has taught us anything, it is that kingdoms might rise and fall, but power always finds a way.<sup>122</sup> The idea conveyed in Naim's work is directly related to the thrust of this work as it concerns the changing nature of power and its usage. Although his claims were sometimes sweeping, what stands out was his lucid discussion of the changing nature of power and the struggle to keep using it to access societal privileges and control human actions.

Dahl in his scholarly attempt to conceptualise and operationalize the concept of power in terms measure, argues that power has always been unequally possessed by people of all ages. Having used various models to explain power as a universal concept, he concluded that there was need to be more elaborate in discussing the probable method and research requirements that could help situate the actual use of power rather than its theoretical valuation.<sup>123</sup> This means that power is a dynamic concept in societies of all ages and its dynamism lies in its ability to find a way even if the wielders are less as powerful as we have it in the pre-colonial period. Robert has been able to elucidate on the need to understand the concept of power by approaching it from both operational and conceptual perspectives which is also the angle from which this present study views it. It must, however, be mentioned that power is used in this study within the context of its usage and efficiency as it relates to kingship survival in Akokoland within the period under review.

Posner and Young<sup>124</sup> discussed how political power can be checked or sought and attained through institutional framings. He also gave general instances of how the sit-tight syndrome has made many African leaders to seek and use every means possible to hold on to power. While he underscored the unsuccessful attempt of Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria to achieve a desperate push for a third term in office, he cited other African leaders who were able to manipulate institutions to achieve tenure extension even if it was grossly against the norm. To him, the cases of the African leaders that succeeded in circumventing processes to hold on to power, remind us that many African leaders still possess the power to shape

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<sup>122</sup>Lili Loofbourow, "The End of Power by Moises Naim Review – A Study in Mass Alienation" <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/15/the-end-of-power-moses-naim-review> Accessed 06/10/2016

<sup>123</sup>Dahl, Robert A. 1957. "The Concept of Power" *Behavioral Science*, 2:3. pp.201-216

<sup>124</sup>Daniel N. Posner and Daniel J. Young, 2007. "The Institutionalization of Political Power in Africa" *Journal of Democracy* Volume 18, Number 3 July. pp. 126-140.

outcomes to suit their preferences, even when those preferences conflict with formal limitations on what they are legally permitted to do. The institutionalization of executive power in sub-Saharan Africa depends heavily on third-term issues. Thus an important question to ask is why certain term-limited executives decide either to step down or to attempt to amend the constitution in order to extend their tenure. It was on the strength of this concern, that the authors argued that, not every African country is moving in a direction of greater institutionalization of political power, and that reversals remain possible in some of the countries that currently appear to be heading toward greater institutionalization. They concluded that African politics needs to be viewed through a lens that recognises the formal constraints on executives and rejects the assumption that African leaders simply get what they want.<sup>125</sup> This article buttresses the position of Moses Naim that power indeed is not what it used to be. Its relevance to this study, therefore, lies in its explanation that political power can only be retained to the extent that the holder understands the intricate complexities and nuances that surround the phenomenon. This is the angle that kingship and power politics in Akokoland is presented by way of revealing measures put in place by the kings to ensure that they retain their power and the expected loyalty as they lead their people in the period under review.

From the foregoing, efforts have been made to review some works relevant to this study. While some have lent credence to the continued relevance of the kingship institutions in Africa in general and Nigeria as a whole, some were directly related to the general Yoruba society with some discussing the issues connected to the study area. In all the works reviewed, no one situated the traditional political institutions in Nigeria, and indeed, Akokoland, by appraising aggregation of issues covering a period of ninety-nine years which is critical in any serious scholarly work that seeks to discuss the kingship institutions in Africa holistically. This is the gap this present study intends to fill by looking at how power politics has been strategically employed by the kings and other traditional rulers in Akokoland in the survival of the kingship institution from 1900 to 1999.

## **1.9 Chapter synopsis**

This work is structured into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction which presented preliminary issues such as background to the study, statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study, scope of the study, significance and justification of the study,

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<sup>125</sup>Daniel N. Posner and Daniel J. Young, 2007. "The Institutionalization of Political Power in Africa" *Journal of Democracy* Volume 18, Number 3 July. pp. 126-140.

methodology, conceptual clarification and literature review. It mentioned that since 1900, various chieftaincy declarations and the official pronouncements thereafter, have given validity to many non-royal families seeking to be part of the ruling houses without recourse to the history of the people of Akoko Yoruba. It argued that emerging from this development, is a complex power play among traditionally organized ruling houses and those that evolved due to legal pronouncements and their eventual recognition by the government of the day. It submitted that, power politics has been strategically employed by various ruling houses in Akokoland to retain the relevance of the kingship institution and its survival.

Chapter two analysed the historical antecedence of kingship institution in Yorubaland up to 1900. It also examined divine kingship and the tradition of seclusion as important components of kingship in its pristine state. Power structure, political administration, the king as social mobiliser and the political geography of Akoko Yoruba before 1900 were appraised. It argued that kingship developed in accordance with the traditions and customs of the people across the Yoruba country and the institution was and still remains a viable mechanism of governance and social control in the period under review. It however, submitted that communities Akoko Yoruba before 1900 were not under any one overarching political control in contrast to what obtained throughout the colonial era.

Chapter three was focused on kingship, colonial rule and power politics in Akokoland from 1900 to 1960. It took off discussion with the analysis of the socio-political administration in Akokoland before colonial rule. The subsequent discourse was on colonial rule, power politics and kingship in Akokoland, 1900 to 1960 which is the thrust of the chapter. The thrust of this chapter was comprehensively captured through an x-ray of the bitter colonial manipulations and politics that Akokoland was subjected to under Kabba Division, Lokoja Province up to 1919, Owo Native Administration, 1919 to 1935, the Akoko Native Administration, 1935 - 1948, and the eventual formation of the Akoko Federation Council, which marked the final phase of colonial rule in Akokoland between 1948 and 1960. It concluded that, the British manipulations, as exemplified in the Momoh-Ajaguna story in the extant discourse in the chapter, set off a chain of events whose impact on Akoko political history were great and fundamental.

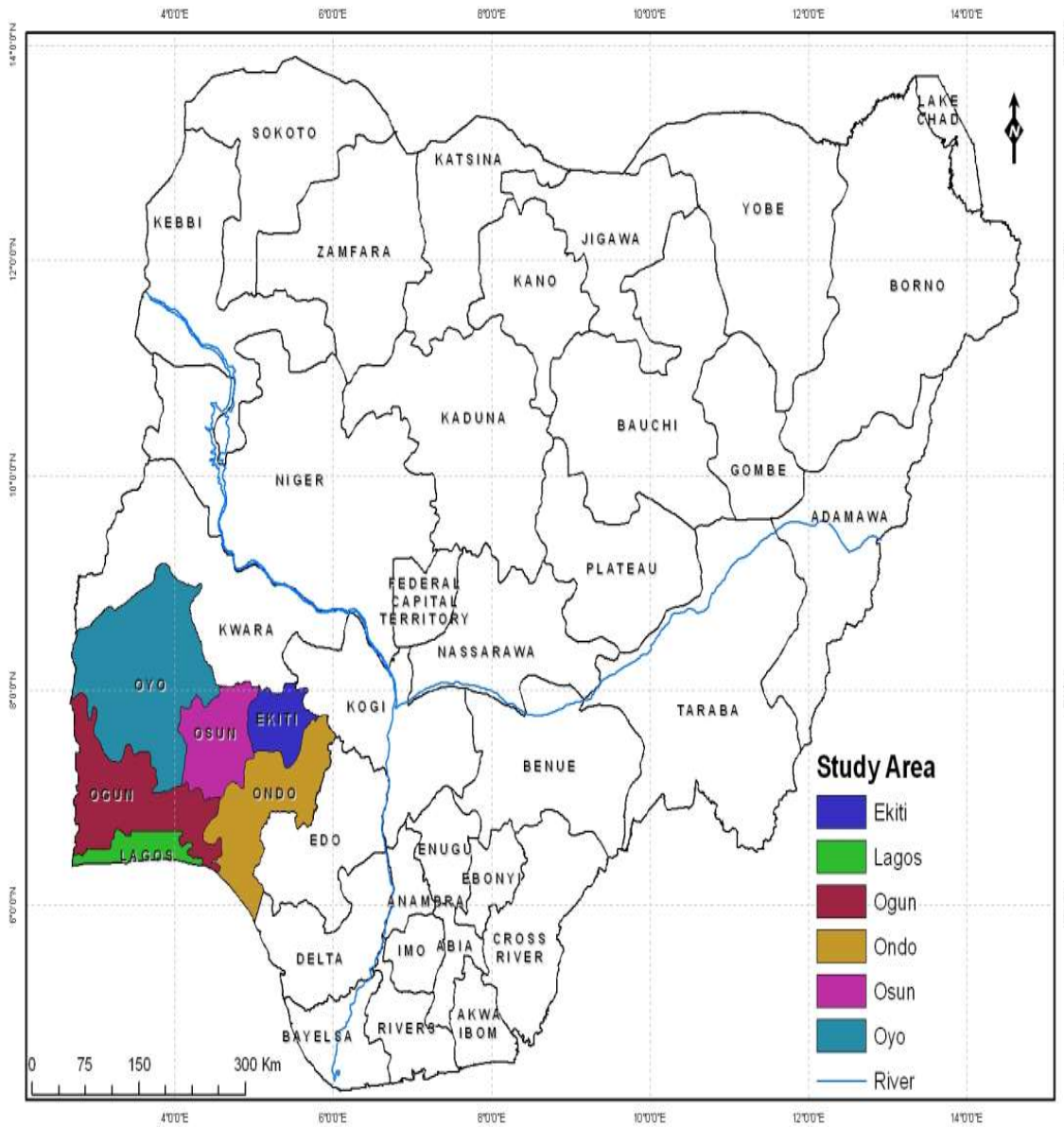
The fourth chapter discussed kingship institution and power politics since 1960. It essentially analysed how the kingship institution in Akokoland fared in the early years of Independence, 1960-1966, the subsequent military and civilian governments that ruled between 1966 and 1999. The fifth chapter looked at kingship and power politics in Akoko communities,



northeastern Yorubaland, dynamics and paradigms. For clarity of discussion, the chapter further looked at the kings in Akokoland and their quest for relevance, challenges faced by kingship and other traditional political institutions in Akoko Yoruba communities, continuity, change and adaptation. The chapter also concluded the study. It harmonised all the arguments presented in the previous chapters and relying on the sequence of discussions drew appropriate conclusions that reflected the thrust of the study on kingship and power politics in Akoko communities in north-eastern Yorubaland, 1900 to 1999.

This chapter laid the foundation on which other chapters are premised. By way of general introduction, the fundamental components of research such as the statement of the problem, significance and objectives were carefully outlined. It also stated in clear terms the methodology of the study with specific references to where the various data for the work were sourced. The next chapter discussed the historical antecedence of kingship institution in Yorubaland and concluded with reflection on the pre-colonial political geography of Akokoland with emphasis on its political plurality which was largely responsible for the non-existence of overarching political leadership before the establishment of colonial rule.

**Fig 1: Map of Nigeria showing Yorubaland**



Source: Ministry of Land and Housing, Akure, 2011

## CHAPTER TWO

### HISTORICAL ANTECEDENCE OF KINGSHIP INSTITUTION IN YORUBALAND UP TO 1900

Pre-colonial traditional political arrangement in Nigeria in whatever form was properly organized and the administration of areas under the rulership of the traditional rulers witnessed appreciable development in all spheres. In fact, it is often argued that the traditional rulers in pre-colonial Nigeria performed their duties very well and their power was as viable as that of the kings in places which had such system of traditional political organization.<sup>126</sup>

Political system and institutions of the Yoruba, despite their largely cultural traits and common tradition of origins are not exactly the same. Though with peculiar similarities, all the kingdoms founded by the various groups of the Yoruba (Oyo, Ekiti, Ondo, Egba, Ife, Ijebu, Awori, etc.) seem to have developed independently under their various rulers on whose ingenuity they depended for their social, economic and political organization.<sup>127</sup> The *Ewi of Aje* did not mince words on the indigenous nature of the kingship institution in Yorubaland when he observed that: *idalu ni iselu, oro iselu tiwa tipe* (governance emerged with the establishment of town or settlement, and the need to govern is an age long phenomenon).<sup>128</sup> He was actually buttressing the fact that the various Yoruba communities indigenously developed their socio-political institution according to their cultural peculiarities and traditional dictates. His statement also confirms that kingship is an ancient institution in Yorubaland and that the people had organised themselves politically, notwithstanding its nature and degree of sophistication. The not too different nature of the political structure of the Yoruba people is particularly evidenced in almost all their socio-political institutions. Among the northern Yoruba, the patrilineage is the dominant socio-political group, among the southern Yoruba (Ijebu and Ondo); it is the cognate descent group.<sup>129</sup> In some areas, chiefs

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<sup>126</sup>A. E. Davies, 1990. "The Fluctuating Fortunes of Traditional Rulers in Nigeria", *Plural Societies*, Vol. xix, Nos. 2 & 3, March.p.138.

<sup>127</sup>G.O. Oguntomisin, 1981. "Political Change and Adaptation of Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 223.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Oba Oloruntoba Bello, The *Ewi of Aje*, Okeagbe-Akoko. 12/05/2015.

<sup>129</sup>P.C. Lloyd, "Some Notes on Yoruba Rules of Succession and on Family Property", *Journal of African Law*, vol. iii, 1959.pp.7-32.

were selected by and from among lineage members; in others, appointment to a grade rests, basically, with the existing members of the grade.<sup>130</sup> However, despite these differences, the kingship institution and the ceremonial roles of the *oba* was the main common feature in the traditional governmental system of the Yoruba country. In all Yoruba towns, the traditional rulers derived their power from the people and functioned in accordance with the dictate of the customs and traditions of the people. Though the traditional rulers were seen as absolute, they were not in the practical sense of it.

This chapter, therefore, on this basis, provided an understanding of the traditional significance of the kingship institution in Yorubaland up to 1900 and its relevance as mechanism of governance. The chapter particularly emphasises, that, the nature of the kingship institution in pre-colonial Yorubaland attests to the ingenuity and sophisticated structure of the system of governmental administration in Nigerian states, like other polities in Africa, prior to the intrusion of colonial rule.

## **2.1 Origin of the Kingship Institution in Yorubaland up to 1900**

Yorubaland is located in the present day South-West Nigeria which was a creation from the Old Western Region which now comprises states like Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti and Ondo. The land occupied mainly by the Yoruba today lies within latitude 6<sup>0</sup> and 9<sup>0</sup> north and longitude 2<sup>0</sup>30' and 6<sup>0</sup>30' east. The Atlantic Ocean forms the southern border. Among the south-westerners, the general language of communication is Yoruba with variances of indigenously developed dialects which are often used for more personal discussions and cultural preservation. The area's fertile tropical forests cover about 181,300 square kilometers and, according to the 2006 census, their population is about 30 million people.<sup>131</sup> It is important to also note that Kwara State which is geographically located in the North-Eastern part of Yorubaland and the *Okun* speaking people of Kabba in Kogi State in the Middle-Belt also play host to large number of people speaking the general Yoruba language and variance of it which is indigenous to them. Strong speakers of the Yoruba language can also be found in Togo and Benin Republic and in fact, the National Radio Station of Benin prides its cultural link with the Yoruba ancestry by using the Yoruba language during its news broadcast and other items. It is, however, instructive to say that,

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<sup>130</sup>P.C. Lloyd, "The Traditional Political System of the Yoruba", *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, vol. x, 1954, pp.366-84.

<sup>131</sup>The Nation 2007, Census 2006: North is 75 m, South 64 m. 1 (0164): 1, Wednesday, January 10.

while the different Yoruba communities developed their political systems in accordance to the dictates of their culture and traditions which suits their traditional environment, there seem to be consensus on the origin of kingship institution in Yorubaland. This consensus is to the effect that, the development of kingship institution in Yorubaland and other parts of Africa was in phases. This gives it, its evolutionary outlook with the attendant complex stages of sophistication, growth and development. The kingship institution in Yorubaland up to 1900 was still very much considered to be in its pristine purity where everything was done in accordance to traditions.<sup>132</sup> Even the 100 years Yoruba civil war, though exposed the Yoruba kings to some vulnerabilities, did not largely affect their superhuman status as the religious and spiritual links between the people and the gods. Its unique evolutionary history has been one of the reasons why the institution is able to survive all stages of human development since the pre-colonial era.

It would seem that the time of emergence of the Yoruba could be placed in the late Stone Age in West African history.<sup>133</sup> Their historical consciousness started at Ile-Ife, which is regarded as their common point of origin and centre of political gravity. There exist basically two accounts of origin of the Yoruba. The first is the creation myth which throws Ile-Ife up as the centre of creation of the universe, thus attracting the expression; *Ife o' ndaye, ibi ojumotimowa* (meaning, Ife, the point of creation where the day dawns). It states that God sent messengers including Obatala and sixteen others who were given five pieces of iron, a lump of earth wrapped in a white cloth, and a cockerel. In the course of the journey, Obatala got drunk and lost his leadership status to Oduduwa who led the team to the world and landed at a spot known up to the present as *Oke Oranfe* in Ife.<sup>134</sup> This is probably the most popular Yoruba story of creation. The second account is one of migratory theory. It states that the Yoruba original home was somewhere in the north eastern area of Africa. They came from this area, led by Oduduwa and settled at Ile-Ife after a migration that must have covered many years. After Oduduwa established a flourishing kingdom, he sent out his sons and grandsons to form various Yoruba kingdoms.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>. Interview with Olaoba, O.B, 57+, A Reader in History, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria. 04/05/2015

<sup>133</sup>. "Notes on Nigerian History From Earliest Times to the Present", a publication of Department of History and International Studies, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko. Series One.pp.14-15.

<sup>134</sup>. Udo, R. N. 1980."Environments and Peoples of Nigeria: A Geographical Introduction to the History of Nigeria" in Ikime, O. (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books. pp.7-24.

<sup>135</sup>.See "Notes on Nigerian History from Earliest Times to the Present", a publication of Department of History and International Studies, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko. Series One. p.15. This fact was also

It would appear on the surface that these versions of the origin of the Yoruba differ on various grounds. However, they can be easily reconciled in order to explore the development of the kingship institution in Yorubaland. Both accounts establish that Oduduwa led the Yoruba to Ile-Ife as a flourishing kingdom. But, there are evidences to suggest that there were pre-Oduduwa elements at Ile-Ife and that the Oduduwa band overran the autochthones when they arrived in Ile-Ife. What eventually emerged from the vestiges of the pre-Oduduwa era blended with the Oduduwa group's cultural attributes now constitute what may be referred to as Yoruba culture and civilization. Also, the traditions of origin and migrations point to Ile-Ife as the epicentre of their civilization. Ile-Ife definitely was the first city where the children of Oduduwa, their eponymous ancestor migrated to found towns which later became the seats of many Yoruba kingdoms. Evidently, the founders of these various towns evolved an organic and complex political system (though relatively influenced by the circumstances and experiences of people during the migratory phase). This position was well captured when Adediran observed that:

the traditional Ife version of the Oduduwa traditions and the general belief among the Yoruba that Ile-Ife was a 'pristine' state influenced developments in other parts of Yorubaland.<sup>136</sup>

However, a close examination of the origin of individual Yoruba towns point to the fact that not all Yoruba towns were founded in this exact manner. Studies have unveiled that there exist some autochthonous settlements in Ile-Ife, even prior to the arrival of Oduduwa. Ile-Ife before Oduduwa was an agglomeration of semi-autonomous settlements whose heads were like the *Oolu* of early western Yorubaland.<sup>137</sup> Oduduwa, on arrival, was said to have subjugated the aboriginals, and subsequently undertook a series of political innovations which resulted in the fusion of these semi-autonomous settlements and the emergence of a single political unit, which the Yoruba believe was their first kingdom and from which most of their other kingdoms were established. The aforementioned proves, therefore, that the development of the kingship institution can be traced to the pre-Oduduwa period. There had, therefore, existed a political institution which handled the affairs of the autochthonous

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corroborated during an interview session with Ade Ajongolo, 88, retired civil servant, Iro Quarter, Ipesi-Akoko, 01/03/2015.

<sup>136</sup>Biodun Adediran, 1994. *The Frontier States of Western Yorubaland, 1600-1889*, Ibadan: Institut francais de recherche en Afrique, 55.

<sup>137</sup>Ozanne, P.A. 1969. "New Archaeological Survey of Ife" *Odu* (NS) 1, pp. 28-45. This statement is a reflection on the historical antecedence of indigenous political organization among ancient towns in Yorubaland. It gives credence to the fact that, political titles and its sophistication evolved with the society in phases and permeates through cultures.

people. However, sequel to Oduduwa's hegemony over the aboriginals, the kingship institution which was weaved around the *ebi* and *ade ileke* concept became diffused to other parts of Yorubaland. This cultural spread is today represented in the migratory traditions of Yoruba towns and cities, where it has been posited that their progenitors are said to have successfully repeated Oduduwa's political experiment. No doubt, this justifies the major similarities in the kingship institution of the Yoruba people.

Like other African societies, the Yoruba through the centuries, were organised on the basis of a social contract whereby people came together to form a state or nation because they believed that, through their combined efforts, they would be more able to realise their common aspirations for peace and security which were essential for their physical and spiritual welfare and progress, both as individuals and as a community. It was to achieve these objectives that the people agreed collectively to surrender to a king or ruler the power to control their lives and to organise and regulate activities within their society.<sup>138</sup> In the process, they had clear understanding and agreements regarding the ideas and principles that underlie their political systems and on the basis of which power and authority were to be exercised by the various elements of government.

The Yoruba saw their "countries" as extended families, and their political organization was patterned as such. Hence, the Yoruba constituted a collectivist society. The general title for king in Yorubaland was "Oba". The *Oba* was the father of the country, and the subjects were the children. The *Oba*, a crowned head, exercised jurisdiction over the affairs of the country.<sup>139</sup> In discussing the origin of kingship institution in Yorubaland, it is necessary to start with the appraisal of the *ebi* concept using Akinjogbin's analysis. He defined the *ebi* concept as the social system under which and within which the Yoruba cultural group appeared to have lived their political, social and economic existence from about the accession of Oduduwa on the Ife throne until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Because of the awareness of the concept of change within Yorubaland, as they do anywhere else, according to the historical period, Akinjogbin saw the necessity to delimit the period being covered by the *ebi* concept.<sup>140</sup> Importantly, the concept is essentially emphasising the appreciation of the internal dynamics, rather than the external stimulus that encouraged the

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<sup>138</sup>Otumfo Osei Tutu II. Asantehene 2004 "Traditional Systems of Governance and the Modern State". Keynote address presented at the Fourth African Development Forum, Addis Ababa, October 12.

<sup>139</sup>Akinniyi Savage, 2010. *Local Government in Western Nigeria: Abeokuta, 1830-1952: A Case Study of Exemplary Institutional Change*, United States: Xlibris Corporation.

<sup>140</sup>I.A. Akinjogbin, 1979. "The Ebi System Reconsidered", a seminar paper delivered in the Department of History, University of Ile-Ife on 10<sup>th</sup> of January. p.3.

development of a unique social system under which and within which the Yoruba people were able to evolve their own socio-political and economic systems or institutions. Quoting from one of the submissions made by Akinjogbin that:

For in order to have a proper evaluation of the socio-political events in Yorubaland, and measure with any meaningful accuracy, the degree of change, growth or decay within any given period of their history, we must take into account the people's concept of legitimacy in social organization.<sup>141</sup>

Adediran, however, provides another perspective to the *ebi* concept:

As a result of cultural affinity and geographical contiguity, the rulers of kingdoms who shared the ideas of the Oduduwa experiment and modelled their states on Ife were bonded together. Invariably, the rulers of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century Yoruba kingdoms saw each other as belonging to the same family, within which inter-kingdom relations had to be conducted. As they were placed on a single genealogy, their common descent from Oduduwa demanded friendship and co-operation.<sup>142</sup>

Traditions have it that the Oduduwa princes went all out to acquire territories over which they eventually established themselves. The territories thus acquired by these Oduduwa princes who regarded themselves as related by blood has been called an *ebi* commonwealth. As the territory expanded, grandsons and possibly successful outsiders who acquired kingdoms and who accepted the original basis of union got inducted into the system. The characteristics of this kind of political arrangement, according to Akinjogbin, are peculiar to itself. First, the feeling of belonging together was not imposed by any force of arms, but by a common acceptance of having been related by blood. Recourse to force was, therefore, not necessarily the final argument in political disagreements. No one who was not accepted as being related by blood could be a part, and anyone related by blood could not opt out. The concepts of rebellion and independence have no meaning in the system. Secondly, precedence among the princes depended on their natural order of birth and not on their circumstances after birth. Thus, irrespective of acquired wealth and military power, the older claimed privileges before the young and the privileges of the princes were inherited by their subjects. Lastly, it was part of their filial duty to protect their common father and by extension his territory. It was also part of their filial duty to report occasionally back to, and to seek consent of, the father on important occasions. The picture that emerges is one in

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<sup>141</sup>I.A. Akinjogbin, 1979. "The Ebi System Reconsidered", a seminar paper delivered in the Department of History, University of Ile-Ife on 10<sup>th</sup> of January. p.4.

<sup>142</sup>Biodun Adediran, 1994. *The Frontier States of Western Yorubaland, 1600-1889*, Ibadan: Institut francais de recherche en Afrique, 56.



which dependence, independence within a family, in which everyone has well defined roles, responsibilities and privileges, is nearer the picture. The standard of judgment is whether each person has been discharging his roles properly within the laid down family norms, not whether he possesses the physical powers to compel obedience.

But within the context of this present work, commonwealth would rather be interpreted or translated within the *omiye* ties, (a term used to explain the bond that exists among dialectically similar people with same history, culture and traditions) which simply see the social cohesion that exists between the various Yoruba communities as a result of their age long belief in one ancestry or descent, despite the seeming variation in their migration stories and traditions of origin. This is why the broader usage of the *ebi* concept is considered all inclusive rather than anchoring issues of social-political development just on the *ebi* commonwealth. The all-inclusive nature of the *ebi* concept has been buttressed by its proponent thus: the *ebi* is a much longer version of the Euro-American mini family and includes everyone who can be traced to be related by blood, no matter how far removed in time or space. What binds the people together is blood relationship, which is regarded as being stronger than any other connection.<sup>143</sup>

Despite the obvious autonomy exercised by the different towns and villages that make up a kingdom under their different chieftains or *Olori ebi* within the general *ebi* framework, a strong conclusion has been drawn that: the apex of the whole organisation is the collection of the kingdoms in the *ebi* commonwealth, which accepted one *Olor iebi (Oba)*, and which while maintaining its separate “constitution”, remain strongly conscious of belonging together, through its attachment to the *orirun* (the source). It is evident from the forgoing, that the family was the smallest political unit in Yorubaland with the head referred to as *bale* (head of the home).

As the society became more developed coupled with their well-developed agricultural economy, the Yoruba embarked on the process of state formation with the emergence of village settlements. By the 16th century, the socio-political systems of most Yoruba kingdoms had become well defined, and were broadly similar.<sup>144</sup> Each kingdom had a capital

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<sup>143</sup>. I. A. Akinjogbin, “The Ebi System Reconsidered”, Ibid, p.21. See also I.A. Akinjogbin 2002. *Milestones and Concepts in Yoruba History and Culture, A Key to Understanding Yoruba History*. Ibadan: Olu-Akin Publishers. pp.117-119. Oba Nurudeen Adegoroye, the *Oloba* of Oba-Akoko also corroborated this fact of the strong bond of blood as argued by Akinjogbin. *Oloba* palace, Oba-Akoko, Ondo State. 24/09/2015.

<sup>144</sup>. Shaw, T. 1980. “Prehistory” in Ikime, O. (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books. pp. 26-53.

town (*Olu Ilu*), subordinate towns, villages, markets and farmland. Each ruler who had direct descent from Oduduwa ruled a clearly recognised territory. He was regarded as king (*oba*), lived in the palace (*Aafin*) in a large town, wore a crown made with cowries (*owoeyo*) or later with beads (*Ade Ileke*) and other paraphernalia of office. This leading *oba* is the wearer of cowries/beaded crown, bestowed on him by his ancestors, according to legend from Ile-Ife, and his town was defined as *Ilu-Alade* (crown town) to distinguish it from other towns. Under such ruler were other kings of lesser status who held sway in various towns and villages. These subordinate towns were classified as *Ilu-Ereko* (town on the fringe of the farmland) which in turn ranged from *Ilu-Oloja* (a market town with an *Oba* not entitled to wear a beaded crown). Working closely with the king were the chiefs who acted mainly as advisers on various political issues. There were two types of chiefs: the palace chiefs (who were more or less first class palace messengers) and the town chiefs (*Igbimo*).<sup>145</sup>In other words, each *Oba* has its supporting chiefs who advised him on socio-economic and political issues. These chiefs, both substantive titleholders and honorary ones, use the pre-nominal *Ijoye* (meaning owner of a title, also appearing as *Oloye*).<sup>146</sup>Each *Igbimo* member (chief) represented a quarter/ward (*Aduqbo*) in the town. Collectively, and in collaboration with the *Oba*, they developed laws when necessary. They were grouped into two parallel lines: the right hand (*Otun*) who represented the princely interests and those of the left hand (*Osi*) who represented the commoners' interest. These two groups could act to an extent on behalf of the *Oba* in his absence. The leaders of these two ranks constituted the supreme council of states. Thus, the *Ijoye* were representatives of their family groups as well as being officials of the king and the kingdom.

Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Yoruba lived for many years in separate autonomous kingdoms. Most famous ones particularly in the central region were Oyo, Owo, Ijebu, Ketu, Sabe, Ife, Ijesha, Ondo and Owo. Oyo was for a long time the most powerful until its eventual defeat in the 19th century. The enduring dynasty established by Oduduwa, coupled with his revolutionary knack, dynamic leadership and personality cult have all combined to continuously revitalize Ile-Ife as both the political and spiritual home of Yorubaland. Today, most kingdoms of Yorubaland establish connections with Ile-Ife as a means to sustain a claim of originality of Yoruba heritage and their political development. This view has been buttressed by Adediran when he opined that:

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<sup>145</sup>. Atanda, J. A. 1973. "Government of Yorubaland in the Pre-colonial Period". *Tarikh Journal*: Vol. 4, No. 2. pp.1-12

<sup>146</sup>Atanda, J.A. 1980. *An Introduction to Yoruba History*, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press. p.22.

The emergence of kingdoms in the Yoruba culture-area can be closely linked with the concept of *ade ileke* (beaded crown with a fringe over the face) as a symbol of political authority. The possession of *ade ileke* by an individual or a group was related primarily to the association with Oduduwa, the legendary progenitor of the Yoruba, which epoch in Ile-Ife is believed to be the first to be associated with the development of dynastic kingship and of a Yoruba ethnic identity.<sup>147</sup>

This is, however, not to say that the various Yoruba towns did not evolve their political institutions with some measures of independence.

## **2.2 Divine Kingship and the Tradition of Seclusion**

Sacred kingship prevails in very diverse African societies. The divine status of indigenous kings in Africa has raised a strong scholarly current among historians, sociologists and anthropologists. These scholars have held and perhaps still hold sundry opinions concerning the king's spiritual and symbolic status in the political administration of his polity. J.G. Frazer sprang up this debate when he published his highly controversial thesis, *Les Origines Magiques de la Royauté*. He considered the king as representative of a past age dominated by magic. In his own word, he asserted that "the magician became a chief, or a king, partly because of the terror inspired by his abilities, known by all, partly because of the wealth accumulated in the exercise of his profession".<sup>148</sup> Frazer was nevertheless the first to clarify an important fact which cannot be considered banal: the king is a particular type of political ruler, drawing his power from the control he is thought to exercise over nature, and especially over rain.<sup>149</sup> Theoretically, he should be put to death when his strength declines for fear that his physical weakness might bring about a parallel decay of the cosmic forces, mysteriously associated with his person. This argument rented most Western political scholars and commentators into two major camps – The Frazerian and the Functionalist schools of thought. Unlike the Frazerians (the caste of scholars that support Frazer's thesis), the functionalist scholars maintain that, "the king possesses only those super-natural powers that he can draw from the use of his fetishes or from sorcery". And one of the followers of this school of thought specifies: "If I sleep, it is the king; if I eat, it is the king; if I drink, it is the king. Not because he created me, but because without him, there

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<sup>147</sup> J.A. Atanda, 2007. *A Comprehensive History of the Yoruba People up to 1800*, G.O. Oguntomisin (ed.) Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Ltd. p.116.

<sup>148</sup> Frazer, J.G. 1920. *Les Origines Magiques de la Royauté*, Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner. p.139.

<sup>149</sup> Frazer, J.G. 1920. *Les Origines Magiques de la Royauté*, Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner. p.139.

would be anarchy; men could no longer attend to their duties and all fertility would disappear".<sup>150</sup>

These divergent though reconcilable positions can better be appreciated in the discourse of the kingship institution in specific settings. In Yorubaland, as observed by Frazer, the kings were perceived among their people as a representative of the gods whose words were final and also the ritual head of his domain. Indeed, Lloyd has lucidly presented a scholarly piece on the divine or sacred nature of kingship in Yorubaland using the *Ewi Ado* example.<sup>151</sup> The origin of divine kingship in Yorubaland and its unique features have been clearly discussed by Robert F. Thompson.<sup>152</sup> The bead – embroidered crown with beaded veil, was (and still is) the foremost attribute of traditional leaders (oba) of the Yoruba people that symbolizes the aspiration of civilization at the highest level of authority.

According to tradition, it was Odududwa himself who initiated the wearing of the beaded crown (*ade ileke*) with veil as the essential sign of kingship.<sup>153</sup> He placed a crown on the head of each of his sixteen sons.<sup>154</sup> These sons journeyed from the site where the traditional Yoruba believe Odududwa lived- Ile-Ife and founded separate kingdoms. The rulers of these kingdoms all claim descent from Oduduwa, and honoured as seconds of the gods (*ekeji orisa*). Yoruba gods long ago chose beaded strands as emblems. The fact that the crowns of the Yoruba leaders are embellished with bead embroidery, therefore, immediately suggests godhead. Indeed, the prerogative of beaded objects<sup>155</sup> is restricted to those who represent the gods and with whom the gods communicate: kings, priests, diviners, and native doctors. The beaded crown connotes power sustained by divine sanction. This is why the king cannot afford to be unreasonably excessive with the use of his power. The crown thus serves, in part, as a kind of supernatural check against the conduct of the king.

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<sup>150</sup>Vansina, Jan. 1964, p.101.

<sup>151</sup>Lloyd, P.C. 1960. "Sacred Kingship and Government among the Yoruba". *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. xxx, No.3, July.

<sup>152</sup>Robert F. Thompson, *The Sign of Divine King: Yoruba Bead-Embroidered Crowns with Veil and Bird Decorations*. pp.227-260. The author clearly discussed the origin and significance of the bead-embroidered crowns with veil and bird decorations as the essential sign of divine kingship in Yorubaland.

<sup>153</sup> W.F. Mellor, 1938. "Bead Embroiderers of Remo." *Nigeria Magazine*, no. 14. pp.154-155

<sup>154</sup> See details of the Oduduwa sixteen sons in Robert F. Thompson, *The Sign of Divine King: Yoruba Bead-Embroidered Crowns with Veil and Bird Decorations*. pp.227-260.

<sup>155</sup> Privileged royal beaded objects include slippers (*bataileke*), staffs (*opaileke*), fly whisks (*irukere*) with beaded handles, and gowns (*ewuileke*).

Despite the collapse of the divine kingship which was largely informed by the violation of the tradition of seclusion,<sup>156</sup> and the impairment of the symbolic relevance by the epochs of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup> century trajectories, the restoration of the royal throne has come in rather different form. It is now kingship more secular in conception, despite the religious aura which it undoubtedly retains till date. The divine nature of the king derives from the fact that he gets his power from traditions and customs of the land, the triumphs of his ancestors, and the splendour of his royal heritage. He combines all these with strong personality and in-depth knowledge of the workings of traditional governance long rooted in history to carry out his administrative responsibilities. This is the position of the functionalist school when it summed up how the king effectively used his sacred status and symbolic position as the representative of the gods and the link between the ancestors and the people, to maintain law and order, social cohesion, political stability and preservation of cultural heritage up to 1900.

### **2.3 Power structure and political administration**

The pre-colonial governance in Yorubaland differed from the western-conceived form of governance because it was pluralistic. This means that it consisted of many smaller and similar-looking form of governance, principally because Yorubaland, due to its size, was home to a huge diversity of peoples at varying degrees of political, cultural and economic development. In pre-colonial Yorubaland, governance was usually determined by existing systems of succession to power. This system can simply be referred to as Chiefly or Centralized systems. Under this type of social grouping in pre-colonial period, Yoruba city-states existed as separate political entities and governed themselves independently. They had centralized authority, that is, the traditional institution with administrative machinery and judicial institutions; had their own courts and their indigenes were subject to the courts.

Yoruba-city states were ruled by chiefs or rulers who acted as the source of centralized authority. These traditional institutions had authority in every area of the Yoruba community life for easy administration. As observed by Onadeko, the *Oba*, who was the supreme head of government, was an absolute ruler in theory. He was *Kabiyesi* (who should

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<sup>156</sup>O.B. Olaoba, "Yoruba Kings in Concert: The Tradition of Seclusion and its Violation" G.O. Oguntomisin and S.A. Ajayi (eds.), *Reading in Nigerian History and Culture: Essays in Memory of Professor J.A. Atanda*. Ibadan: Hope Publication. pp.87-105. The author has clearly discussed the events that led to the gradual abandonment of the tradition of seclusion by Yoruba kings through the inauguration of concert by the colonial authority.

we ask/challenge?): his authority was not to be challenged by any of his subjects. He was considered the representative of *Olodumare* (God Almighty). But in practice, the *Oba* ruled in conjunction with his *Igbimo* (Council of Chiefs), without which there was no government, and no executive.<sup>157</sup> These chiefs were to large extent representatives of other institutions, lineages, age grade and titled societies. The council of chiefs in fact represented the people in government in the sense that every chief belonged to a lineage, an age grade and a number of titled society.

Each Yoruba kingdom that was ruled by a king that wore cowries/beaded crown was divided into towns, regions and hierarchical units, each under the jurisdiction of an appropriate head known as a King in council or *Baale*, *Olori-Adugbo* or *Olori-Itun* (Village Head) whose appointment was ratified and approved by the *Oba*.<sup>158</sup> *Baale* held the highest authority in terms of hierarchy in his unit. However, he was responsible for the overall administration of the village and management of resources. He was also responsible for maintaining law and order in the village. *Baale* presided over village meetings and hearings and played a major role in ensuring that the traditional land boundaries, customary laws and rituals were followed. *Baale* was usually inherited as long as his personal integrity was fit enough in the eyes and standards of the villagers.<sup>159</sup>

In most cases, *baale* was selected for his extensive knowledge of the custom, wisdom as well as his prowess and organizational ability to protect the village from raids. Below this stratum was the compound (*agboile*). The compound consisted of members of a family (*idile*) which according to Marc Schiltz, were the core agnatic group.<sup>160</sup> In other words, these members included individuals who hold claim to compound via patrilineal connections. The members lived in a large compound with several court yards which also accommodated some slaves and strangers. As observed by Oguntomisin:

the compound was built in rectangular form enclosing and facing an open courtyard. In the middle of courtyard was the family's ancestral shrine. Compound varied in size and dimension depending on the status of the families. There were small, moderate-sized and large compounds. The

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<sup>157</sup> Tunde Onadeko, 2008. "Yoruba Traditional Adjudicatory Systems", *African Study Monographs*, 29(1): 16, March. Interview with Ajana Omoniyi, 52, trader, Ikuba quarter, Ipesi-Akoko 10/03/ 2015.

<sup>158</sup> Ade-Ajayi, J. F and Alagoa, E. J. 1980. "Nigerian Before 1800: Aspect of Economic Developments and Inter-Group Relations" in Ikime, O. (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, pp. 224-235.

<sup>159</sup> Adeoye, C. L. 1980. *Asa ati Ise Yoruba*. Ibadan: University Press, p.29.

<sup>160</sup> Marc Schiltz, Dec. 1982 "Habitus and Peasantisation in Nigeria: A Yoruba Case Study" *Man, New Series*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 730.

compounds of chiefs and Oba (paramount ruler) were usually large. Each compound had one outlet but the large ones might have two. Paths connected all the compounds in a town. Their points of convergence were the market place and the palace of the Oba. Members of each compound were directly responsible to their compound head (*olori agboile*) who was usually the eldest. The compound Head himself was responsible to the Ward Chief. A Ward was made up of a number of Compounds built by a kindred group of people whose members traced the descent to one ancestor. Such Compounds, which belonged to members of the same ancestral group, were contiguously located.<sup>161</sup>

The *idile*, which was the lowest unit, was presided over by the *olori ebi*, who was responsible for the settlement of quarrels among his kinsmen. The appointment of the *Olori ebi* was the sole responsibility of his extended family members, because the oldest member of the extended family usually assumed this position. Lineage meetings were presided over by the oldest man (*olori ebi*) and in these meetings the chief was ranked according to his age. His office as chief gave him such prestige in the lineage that he was often regarded as the head of the lineage.<sup>162</sup> The approval of the *Oba* was never sought in the matter, and every married man was the father in his own home. Because the family was the basic unit of society, it was expedient to recognize it as the fundamental unit of the society's administration as well as a judicial unit.<sup>163</sup> In other words, political control was exercised mainly via the family and extended kin groups. His "court" was an informal one that only dealt with civil cases involving members of his extended family. He settled civil cases and sanctioned the guilty either by imposing a fine (*oji*) or simply by making them give a verbal apology, especially if the person was a child or wife of the family. The father also was meant to be at peace with his wife and children. Any conflict beyond the control of the *Olori ebi* was referred to the compound head.

Societal norms regulated the systems of succession to office in Yorubaland and legitimacy was conferred through the respect accorded to the lines of authority. Despite the absence of the formulation of theoretical concepts, it does not mean that inherent values did not exist in the traditional system of governance practiced across Yorubaland in the pre-colonial period. The values inherent in the practice can be likened to governance values that we see in western societies. In other words, in the sophisticated and well-organised Yoruba system, each person was well placed in defined and generally recognizable relationship to

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<sup>161</sup> G.O. Oguntomisin (ed.), 2003. *Yoruba Towns and Cities*, Ibadan: Bookshelf Resources Ltd. pp.2-3.

<sup>162</sup> P.C. Lloyd, July, 1960. Sacred Kingship and Government among the Yoruba, Africa: *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 226.

<sup>163</sup> Akiwowo, A. 1980. "Ajobi and Ajogbe: Variations on the Theme of Association". Inaugural Lecture Series, 46: 51-55.

others. The king enjoyed certain privileges but not to the extent of absolutism, as there were extant taboos to contain his propensity for excesses. In addition, within the pre-colonial Yorubaland, there was checks and balances on the powers of the rulers. For example, social contract theories also provide a basis for the traditional institution in pre-colonial Yorubaland such that when an *Oba* becomes dictatorial, the *Igbimo* (Council of Chiefs) could remove him. In Oyo kingdom, for instance, while the *Alafin* (the *Oba*) wielded much power that approached veneration, the institution of the *Oyo-mesi* was also there to check his use and possible abuse of power.<sup>164</sup> On the other hand, the *Alafin* could not be deposed; he could be compelled to commit suicide. Salami observes thus:

A critical look through the accounts of some prominent political kingdoms in traditional Yoruba history, it has been discovered that consultation or command went from the *Oba* through the chiefs to the citizenry, an arrangement that promoted systematic checks and balances where each person stood in a defined and generally recognized relationship to others. In addition, the power of the *Oba* was also limited by *eewo* (taboo).<sup>165</sup>

*Eewo* was a mechanism put in place in a bid to put the *Oba* into check. Akinjogbin posits that:

The *eewo*..... were recounted to him during the ceremonies of his core-society. These *eewos* varied from Kingdom to Kingdom, the *eewo* were designed to curb despotism on the part of the King and his immediate family, to promote harmony among the different elements in the town.....and to ensure the orderly existence of the people.<sup>166</sup>

Another means through which the *Oyo-mesi* checked the absolutism of a recalcitrant *oba* was the imposition of sanctions of non-cooperation. They can boycott the palace, thus cutting the *oba* from income in gifts and tributes usually channeled through the chiefs. The chiefs may boycott the major religious ceremonies of the town: the failure to perform these will, it is believed, harm the town, but the purpose of the chiefs against the *Oba* if he continued to oppose his chiefs, they would demand that he die, thus vacating the throne of a new incumbent whom the chiefs would select as more tractable. If he refused to take his own

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<sup>164</sup>Stride, G. T. and Ifeka, C. *Peoples and Empires of West Africa: AD 1000-1800*, p. 298.

<sup>165</sup>Salami, Y.K. 2006. "The Democratic Structure of Yoruba Political-Cultural Heritage", *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 1, no. 6, December, 8. pp.67-78.

<sup>166</sup>Akinjogbin, I.A. and Ayandele, E.A. "Yorubaland Up to 1800" in Ikime Obaro (ed.), 1980 *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books) p.130.



life upon request, the chiefs and the people with force, destroyed his palace, and killed him.<sup>167</sup>

And likewise, the *Oyo-mesi* did not enjoy an absolute power or influence. While the *Oyo-mesi* wielded political influence, the *Ogboni* represented the popular opinion backed by the authority of religion, and therefore the view of the *Oyo-mesi* could be moderated by the *Ogboni*. Yet, the Basorun as the head of *Oyo-mesi* was also in a position to influence the political decisions of both *Oyo-mesi* and the *Ogboni*.<sup>168</sup> And most interestingly, there were checks and balances to the power of the *Alafin* and the *Oyo-mesi*, and thus no one was arrogated absolute power. In another example, in the Ijebu and Egba Kingdom there was also a similar mechanism providing checks and balances among the various organs of government. Hence, occupying the position of *Oyo-mesi* was the *Osugbo* (the name for *Ogboni* among the Ijebu and Egba Kingdoms) with the *Oba* (King) who also enjoyed a high level of respect and power comparable to the *Alafin*. Respectively, the *Osugbo* was the council of society in the Ijebu and the Egba Kingdoms, and at its periodical sessions the “*Osugbo* assumed successively administrative, legislative and judicial roles wherein it discharged all the businesses of society without the King being necessarily in attendance.”<sup>169</sup> However, the King as the head of government referred all businesses to the *Osugbo*, and in turn, the *Osugbo* had to report to the king on all the business transacted, juxtaposing the *Oba* (King) who was considered sufficiently powerful to veto and override the decisions of his *Osugbo*, yet like the *Alafin*, he did not enjoy absolute power.

The traditional rulers lead at the pleasure and behest of the people, and were bound by tradition and customs of the land. There was decentralisation of function but the collective decision as regard the rulership of the entire political spaces was carried out by joint decision of the *Oba* and his chiefs. This is the more reason why the Yoruba traditional system of governance was regarded as democratic and monarchical because the *Oba* or Chiefs did not enjoy absolute power. Keulder writes that in none of the African countries did the colonial policies manage to completely destroy the institution and its legitimacy.<sup>170</sup> Thus it remained important, politically and administratively. Moreover, it could not be ignored when the democratically elected leaders assumed power. It is apparent that Nigeria learnt some lessons

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<sup>167</sup> P.C. Lloyd, 1954. “The Traditional Political System of the Yoruba”, *Southern Journal of Anthropology*. pp. 366-84.

<sup>168</sup> . Stride, G. T. and Ifeka, C. *Peoples and Empires of West Africa: AD 1000-1800*. pp. 299-300.

<sup>169</sup> . See Fadipe, N. A. 1970. *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, p. 245

<sup>170</sup> . Keulder, C. 1998. *Traditional Leaders and Local Government in Africa: Lessons for South Africa*. Pretoria: HSRC, p.14.

on how traditional leadership can be utilised to support the democratic institutions responsible for promoting sustainable livelihoods of the rural communities.

#### **2.4 The *Oba* as social mobiliser**

Before the advent of colonial rule, the traditional leader's role encompassed numerous functions, which revolved around the cardinal theme of guiding, protecting, defending and providing for the needs of the society he served. He was the intermediate between the departed ancestors, the living and the yet unborn. These holistic approaches involved religious, military, legislative, executive, judicial, social and cultural features.<sup>171</sup> These functions were, however, not performed by the king alone, he was required to delegate some to his subordinates. This means that, devolution of power and sharing of responsibilities were major features of the indigenous political institutions in Yorubaland up to 1900.

A traditional ruler is identified in this work as the ruler or the most supreme or paramount sovereign in any village, town or city. In most cases, he is recognised by his subjects as their spiritual leader and chief custodian of traditions. He is seen as the soul of the community whose continuous good health is a good omen for the community's survival and progress. No matter his age, the people see and accept him as their father. Among the Yoruba of South-western Nigeria, traditional rulers are regarded as the reincarnation of the past ancestors of the community. In the pre-colonial Yoruba setting, traditional rulers had sacred duties of defending the territorial integrity of their states and ensuring the security of their citizens. Indeed, a Yoruba *Oba*, in the pre-colonial era, owed it as a duty to his people and kingdom to protect their interests and aspirations.<sup>172</sup>

Equally important is the fact that the traditional rulers in pre-colonial Nigeria were rulers by every standard, because they derived their executive, legislative and judicial functions from traditions long rooted, recognised and revered by their people.<sup>173</sup> In essence, the traditional rulers and their offices were to be accorded utmost reverence by the people whose thought was that doing otherwise was acting contrary to demands of traditions. This could result in anger and punishment from the gods. Consequently, traditional rulers were

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<sup>171</sup>Otumfo Osei Tutu II. Asantehene 2004. "Traditional Systems of Governance and the Modern State." Keynote address presented at the Fourth African Development Forum, Addis Ababa, October 12.

<sup>172</sup>Siyani Oyeweso 2012. *Purposeful Leadership as Panacea for Peace and National Development: The Role of Traditional Institutions*. A paper presented at The Maiden *Oba Okunade Sijuade* Annual Leadership Lecture. Ile Ife: Ife Business School Monograph Series, p.12.

<sup>173</sup>Najeem, A.L. "The Positions of the Chiefs" in B.Y Usman (ed.) 1989. *Nigeria Since Independence The First Twenty Five Years, Volume I, The Society*, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books. p.69.

conceived by their subjects as divine beings whose authority was not questioned. On this basis, the Yoruba, for example, conceive and address their traditional ruler as *Oba, alase ekeji orisa* (king, the ruler, and companion of the gods).<sup>174</sup> He is also addressed as *kabiyesi*; an expression which is the contracted form of the sentence: *ki a bi nyin kosi* (there is no question of anybody querying your authority or action). This has been the situation in Yorubaland from the past. Typically, a Yoruba king was credited in the past with various kinds of supernatural powers including that of clairvoyance. He was regarded as the most powerful, the most knowing and the wisest of men. As a mark of relevance, some things like eating, drinking, sleep, illness or death were expressed about a king in proverbs or metaphors. For example, the traditional way of announcing the death of a king was to say, *Oba w'aja* (the king has passed on), or *Opo ye* (the pillar has fallen).

On his own part, however, a king was relied upon to mobilise for the prosperity of his kingdom. In other words, misfortunes like scarcity of food, failure of rain, sudden death and the outbreak of epidemics were usually blamed on the ill-luck of the king. He was expected to establish a direct communication link with the gods either by magical means or by rites or both. This made the king a religious priest. In the words of Edo, ‘The chiefs or kings are not just the political heads of their respective domain, but also the religious leaders.’<sup>175</sup> The usual remedial measure was to propitiate the gods so that negative tendencies might be reversed. But in most cases, the king delegated this duty to the professional priest. Gluckman is of the view that, “obligations in African law arise from status and not from contract”.<sup>176</sup> The traditional rulers in Yorubaland are considered as the representative of God whose appointment is not unknown to the oracles. They are not just the political head of their domains but as well as the mystical and religious head,<sup>177</sup> thus, the superior chief priest of their gods being the custodians of the people’s tradition. They are variously revered with

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<sup>174</sup> Arifalo, S.O. & Okajare, S.T. 2005. “Changing Role of Traditional Rulers and the Challenges of Governance in Contemporary Nigeria: Yorubaland in Historical Perspective.” AAU, Akungba-Akoko Department of History Monograph Series, Series No. 03.002, Akure: Mobay Nigeria Enterprises. p.3.

<sup>175</sup> Edo, V.O., 47 years, while responding to a question on the roles of traditional rulers. He is a Lecturer in the Department of History, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The interview was conducted at the Adekunle Ajasin University Main Campus, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. 28/06/2012. His observation was originally used in: Ogunode, Sunday Abraham 2012 “The Evolution and Growth of the Chieftaincy Institution in Okaland, 1850 to 1936”. An MPhil thesis submitted to the Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Osun State, Nigeria, 2012.

<sup>176</sup> Ogunode, Sunday Abraham 2012. “The Evolution and Growth of the Chieftaincy Institution in Okaland, 1850 to 1936”. An MPhil thesis submitted to the Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Osun State, Nigeria. p.84.

<sup>177</sup> Mbiti, J.S. 1969. *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann Publishers. p.182.

kingly appellations such as: the ‘*Iku Baba yeye*’ and ‘*Igba keji orisa*’, that is, the “Lord of earth and life’ and the God’s earthly viceroys” etc.

The functions of the king as the head of the society include the protection of the general interest of members of the society which calls for overseeing the general health of the society and her citizens, including the internal security of members, the issues of peace and war, and also concerned with the conduct of the relationship with other regional kingdoms and societies. The *Oba* in pre-colonial Yorubaland was regarded as the chief protector of his kingdom. It was definitely this that earned him the titles, *obal’olu* (the king is supreme), *oba ko se tan* (the king is not ready), *kafilegbon* (stand fast) and *madarikan* (do not oppose him). In fact, major weaponries were kept in the custody of the king in bid to preserve the military legacies of his (the king’s) legacies. The weapons were actually accorded cult or ceremonial significance.<sup>178</sup> Weapons such as sword (*ida*), bow and arrow (*ofa*), spear (*oko*), club (*ikumo*), cutlass (*ada*), protective and offensive charm (*ogun*), et al. In most cases, these weapons were exhibited during the coronation of the *oba* as a symbol of his authority, and also a display of the military prowess of the kingdom.

The *Oba* was equally the Chief Commander of the traditional army, for example, during the Yoruba interstate wars; The *Olusin* was the commandant of the *Owamilere* forces. This was why no son of Okeowa in Owalusin can ascend to the throne of the *Olusin*(until 1916) except he is a renounced warrior.<sup>179</sup> Oral history has it that citizen militia was practiced in the then Owalusin community (the main seat of the *Olusin*). Sometimes rulers of chiefdoms were warriors in their right. Thus, *Asin* Ologunagba of Oka-Odo, the paramount ruler from the kingdom, was an accomplished warrior in his own right, who led Oka to “victory” in the war with the Nupe.<sup>180</sup> The chief of the powerful chiefdom of Ibaka styled himself “Uba Akoko” (father of the Akoko) on account of his military exploits. The *Alaafin* of Oyo was also strategic with the defense of the vast Yoruba empires with the assured loyalty of the *Aare Ona Kakanfo*- the Commander of Oyo military. This lends credence to the fact that the traditional rulers in pre-colonial Oka-Akoko and other Yoruba towns and villages were patriotic defenders of their people and their territorial pride.

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<sup>178</sup>Robert Smith, 1967. “Yoruba Armament”, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 88.

<sup>179</sup>The praise poem (oriki) of Owalusin is very informative and reflective in this regard. Owalusin is one of the Quarters in Oka-Akoko, Akoko South-West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria.

<sup>180</sup>Olukoju, A.O. “The Siege of Oka, ca. 1878-84: A Study in the Resistance to Nupe Militarism in North-eastern Yorubaland” in *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-colonial Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Robert Smith*, Toyin Falola and Robin Law (eds), 1989, Madison: African Studies Projects University of Wisconsin. p.107.

The military role of the traditional leader was accentuated by the frequent incidence of inter-ethnic wars or the normal process of acquiring territory for statehood. But in this function, the welfare of the people was paramount. Any chief who ignored this forfeited the trust of his people and was liable to deposition. As a social mobiliser, the king can effectively harness the mental and material resources of his people for the development of the society. It is instructive to note that, during the century long Yoruba inter-states wars and the Tapa invasion of Akokoland, the traditional rulers were reputed to have provided excellent leadership through the effective mobilisation of their people towards the defense of their territorial integrity. Oka-Akoko traditional rulers at that time were able to repel Ogedengbe of Ilesa and the Tapa invading armies through popular mobilisation and well-coordinated leadership.<sup>181</sup> The traditional rulers as social mobilisers, were (and still are) looked upon as the most reliable mobilisers of human and material resources for the collective development of their respective community. Olaoba, while reacting to the role of the king as social mobiliser, observed that:

All activities, even in this contemporary situation we are into in Nigeria are in the hands of the kings if properly handled. He stated that, the kings, notwithstanding the general opinions held by many people as touching their continued relevance in contemporary governance, are still very revered and respected. As social mobilisers, the kings employed their right to summon people to the palace to discuss important issues affecting the progress of their domains with them and even sometimes threaten them of what *ifa* said about the current situation and the need for all to cooperate in finding lasting solution. The result of this strategy is always very positive.<sup>182</sup>

Speaking further on the role of the king as social mobiliser, Afe stated that:

Even in the good old days, you find the kings through the town criers inviting people to the palace to alert them of the looming situation around the kingdom. So they have a way of mobilising their people. This means that, the kings are closer to the people and government knows about this. He concluded that, notwithstanding the government neglect of this all important role of the traditional rulers, they (the

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<sup>181</sup>Ogunode R.A. 2014. 78. He is the *Rotowa* of Ayeye Oka-Akoko. He provided information on the military prowess of Oka warriors during the Yoruba inter-state wars and the Tapa invasion of Akokoland. He was interviewed at his residence behind Energy filling station, Ayeye Oka-Akoko on 14/06/2014.

<sup>182</sup>Interview with Olaoba, O.B, 57, A Reader in History, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria. 04/05/2015

kings), to the end of the world, remain social mobilisers and custodian of their peoples' cultures.<sup>183</sup>

It is trite to say that the institution of traditional leadership was, for many years, at the centre of governance for the Yoruba people before the colonization of Nigeria. As mentioned earlier, the head of traditional Yoruba monarchy was the King who wielded the executive power which no doubt varied one set-up to the other, yet his power was not but without in-built checks, as he in most cases, enjoyed a respect and veneration from the citizenry (in most cases, the king presided directly over the council of society). Before the emergence of the European style of court and administration of justice in Nigeria, the palace of the *Oba* played a vital role in this regard as the final arbiter. Their traditional wisdom in resolving disputes gave them a pride of place in their respective domain. They were often looked upon as beings with the gift of clairvoyance and traditional foresight. The *Oba* also held territorial lands in trust for their people though he has only a 'usufructuary' title over those lands of his subjects. This position has been given a judicial backing by the Privy Council<sup>184</sup> in 1930 in the decided case of *Oshodi v. Dankole* where it made a definitive statement that: "the paramount chief is the owner of lands... though he has only a usufructuary title."<sup>185</sup> The explanation is that, the chief of the chieftdom being the custodian of the people's land does not automatically translate to mean that the Chief/*Oba* can impose fee and sell land arbitrarily." They<sup>186</sup> also were acting as tax collectors for the District Officers in the colonial period.

Coupled with the above, the *Oba* in pre-colonial Yorubaland engaged in the administration of justice. With the King as the last court of appeal for his kingdom, he maintained law, customs and orderliness through the use of the traditional institution hierarchy of command. He performed this role in conjunction with his council. Issues to be legislated on were brought to the council and debated upon by members and the king. After such debates, agreeable decisions were taken on the issues. Such decisions were later promulgated to the entire community in the name of the king and the council.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, the *Oba* in pre-colonial Yorubaland enforced traditional laws such as tribute payments

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<sup>183</sup> Interview with Afe Adedayo, E., 47, A Senior Lecturer, Department of History and International Studies, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko. Block U, plot 45, Temidire, New Ilu-la Quarters, Akure. 16/08/2015.

<sup>184</sup> This was the highest court of Appeal in the Colonial Nigeria until 1963 Constitution.

<sup>185</sup> i.e. he is not the owner in the sense in which owner is understood in this country. He is just the custodian

<sup>186</sup> The traditional rulers

<sup>187</sup> S.O. Arifalo, S.T. Okajare, 2002. "The Changing Role of Traditional Rulers and the Challenges of Governance in Contemporary Nigeria: Yorubaland in Historical Perspective", *Department of History Monograph Series*. Interview with *Oba* Oloruntoba Bello, 70 The *Ewi* of Aje, *Aje's palace*, Okeagbe-Akoko. 12/05/2015

through dialogue and persuasion, which consequently promoted developmental projects across Yorubaland.<sup>188</sup>

The roles of the King also included the representation of the gods. In other words, the *Oba* in pre-colonial Yorubaland was so significant to the extent that none of the communities under his leadership could survive without him. He was respected with awe and was believed to be divine. By virtue of the divine position he occupied in pre-colonial Yorubaland, the people knew him as *Igbakeji Orisa* (next in rank to the divine).<sup>189</sup> He seldom appeared physically in the society but ruled his people through the chiefs and officials because his powers covered every sphere of the communities including social, economic, military, political and religious activities. During this era, his appearance signified the presence of the divinity in his kingdom as he was believed to be ordained by the gods to bring peace and cohesion to his kingdom.

In addition, the king also served as agent of cohesion in the pre-colonial Yorubaland. That is, the *Oba* was collectively seen as part of human agents that the gods used to sustain cohesion and stabilities in Yorubaland. Every institution in pre-colonial Yorubaland was religiously oriented, and religion permeated the whole of man and as such, every activity was also seen as religious activity. The *Oba* was enthroned to serve the various communities that formed the pre-colonial Yorubaland and his existence was for the wellbeing of their subjects. His existence brought unity, peace and harmony into his communities during the pre-colonial era. Not only did the *Oba* ensured cordial relationship among the different settlements in pre-colonial Yorubaland for effective and efficient participation in community development programmes, but also maintained peace and harmony between communities that bound Yorubaland often through trade and marriages.<sup>190</sup>

The *Oba* in pre-colonial Yorubaland was regarded as the custodian of the people's history and culture. That is, the king personified the kingdom and represented the reincarnation of the past ancestors of the community. Therefore, the *Oba* appeared in public during important traditional festivals and religious celebrations to perform rituals and bless the people as his political position was not only divine, but it was also based on ritual leadership.<sup>191</sup> In other words, the *Oba* was seen by his people as the symbol of the peoples

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<sup>188</sup>. Bascom, W. 1965. *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*. New York: Rinehart and Winston, p.21.

<sup>189</sup>. Akinjogbin, I. A. and Ayandele, E. A. 1980. "Yorubaland up to 1800" in Ikime, O. (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, pp. 121- 143.

<sup>190</sup>. Crowder, M. 1966. *The Story of Nigeria*. London: Faber and Faber, p. 26.

<sup>191</sup>. Johnson, S. 1956. *The History of the Yoruba*. Lagos: CMS, p. 36. Interview with *Oba* Olagunjoye Fajana 70 The *Ajana* of Afa, *Ajana's palace*, Okeagbe-Akoko. 12/05/2015

past, custodian of their history and past, upholder and preserver of their culture and customs, epitome of cultural norms and values of the society such as truth, discipline, courage and responsibility. Thus, the *Oba* participated in different festivals, rituals and ceremonies in pre-colonial Yorubaland which created unity, love and oneness.

Above all, the idea of classifying cases into either civil or criminal existed among the pre-colonial Yoruba people, and a criminal was called *odaran*.<sup>192</sup> To be considered *odaran*, one had to commit a heinous offense that could not easily be settled or dismissed as trivial. Such cases included homicides, treason and felony, burglary, accidental or provoked manslaughter, assault, and rape, while civil cases included willful damage of property, quarrel, insult, debt, and other offenses. The *Oba* together with his chiefs passed judgments on such cases. The due punishments depended on the nature of the crime and it was the *Oba* that could impose such capital punishment. *Oba's* sanction was usually based on a real rather than putative consensus of the community. However, a consensus had to be obtained among the adjudicating chiefs. Since the *Oba* was seen as the father of all, he was concerned with elements of reconciliation as well as blame, but blame was not paramount as he was concerned with management of disputes within his territories to promote justice and equality.

It is important to say that, the functionality of the *Oba's* power and the success of his reign as discussed above is always premised on his ability to effectively use his skills as a social mobiliser to continuously have the full support of his people and his chiefs-in-council. While it is true that the *Oba* in Yorubaland up to 1900 was all powerful and supreme, his continued stay on the throne of his fathers' was largely dependent on the people's good will and popular support. Though his words were laws, various mechanisms which were sanctioned by the customs and traditions of the people were put in place to check his power and ensure administrative sanity. During this period, any king who despised the wishes of his people did that at his own peril.<sup>193</sup> In fact, everybody was involved in the day to day running of government in the Yoruba kingship institution up to 1900. This is not however, suggesting that the place of the king as the supreme head of his people was in anyway tampered with. The beauty of what obtained then was the inclusive nature of the institution of traditional governance and its indigenous evolutionary history.

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<sup>192</sup>. Olaoba, O. B. 1997. "Yoruba Traditional Court Model", *Journal of the Humanities*: Vol. 1 & 2: pp. 76-99.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with *Oba* Sunday .O. Mogaji, 66, The *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko, his palace at Erusu-Akoko, 15-08-2014



The Yoruba kingship institution is regarded as monarchical in structure and highly democratic because the *Oba* did not enjoy absolute power and control over his subjects. There was the principle of checks and balances in the political set up. The above traditional institution of governance in pre-colonial Yorubaland thus, without doubt, portrayed a participatory democracy. It accommodated the participation of both the rulers and the ruled; although the *Oba* was the supreme commander, every cadre of the society was in various ways included in the operation to the point that the activities of the *Oba*-in-council at the societal level were replicated at the ward and compound levels to indeed establish a participatory democratic process in traditional Yoruba society. And moreover, the democratic tenets of freedom of expression, separation of power, and checks and balances were embedded in various forms in the Yoruba traditional settings. Hence, apart from the separation of power and checks and balances, citizens also could enjoy the license to express their opinion of the *Oba* and the rulers through songs and other forms of symbolism during various festivals.<sup>194</sup> For example, during *Edi* festival in Ife, there are various songs and traditional poetry by the people (masses) to either praise or pass insult onto the ruling *Oba*, thus, expressing the feelings of the people and equally providing opportunities for citizens to make their feelings known to those who govern them, forming part of the democratic instruments for regulatory purposes.

In spite of the absolute nature of the king/*oba*, he administered the kingdom or society with the council and the masses in what has been termed king, council and masses (K.C.M), thereby checkmating the institution and allowing for inclusive governance and development.

## **2.5 Political geography of Akokoland before 1900**

In the pre-colonial era, the Akoko political geography was indicative of a unique picture of human settlement. The whole was a galaxy of heterogeneous political unit, each maintaining and sustaining its internal political autonomy and sovereignty. Akokoland has no tradition of a single centralised political organization.<sup>195</sup> What existed were mini-states, which were never incorporated into any large, over-arching single kingdom. This resulted largely from geographical dissection of the whole area whereby the towns/villages were naturally demarcated from one another. It follows, therefore, that Akokoland is peopled by groups of individuals who for centuries had migrated to an area, which had come to represent

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<sup>194</sup>Interview with Olaoba, O.B, 57+, A Reader in History, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria. 04/05/2015

<sup>195</sup>National Archives, Ibadan. Intelligence Annual Report, Owo Division, Ondo Province, 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1930. p.4.

a meeting ground for diverse peoples and cultural traits. With about forty towns/villages, the Akoko area of Yorubaland also has its heterogeneity demonstrated in the people's linguistic culture, as most of the dialects are mutually unintelligible. Consequently, five categories of Akoko can be identified as the basis of language character. These are: Owo-Akoko, Ekiti-Akoko, Benin-Akoko, Akoko-Bangeri (kukuruku), and Kabba-Akoko.<sup>196</sup> However, the parent Yoruba language serves the purposes of common communication (*lingua franca*) among the people. Yet, it suffices to state that despite their deep-seated difference in political geography, language and sources of origin, the Akoko people are cohesive. They have come to see and appreciate themselves as fellow products of historical circumstances that were brought together by forces of human history and development in a given geographical location. And, there exists no fundamental differences between the pre-colonial and extant political system of one group and another. This explains why Akokoland can be conveniently identified as an organic political system with some sub-units. It is in this context that the next chapter examines Akokoland in the period under review.

This chapter has essentially presented a discussion on the kingship institution as mechanism of governance among the Yoruba people up to 1900. In appraising the origin of the kingship institution in Yorubaland up to 1900, the chapter argued that the development of political institution in Yorubaland predated Oduduwa, but accepted that the later arrival of the Oduduwa group, actually helped to introduce more sophistication to the existing political arrangement evolved by the original inhabitants which has formed what can conveniently be tagged as Oduduwa model of political institution from which other Yoruba communities took leave from in modeling their own power structure and political administration. It was equally agreed in this chapter that, the success of the king is largely dependent on his popularity among his people and his ability to effectively use his skills as social mobiliser.

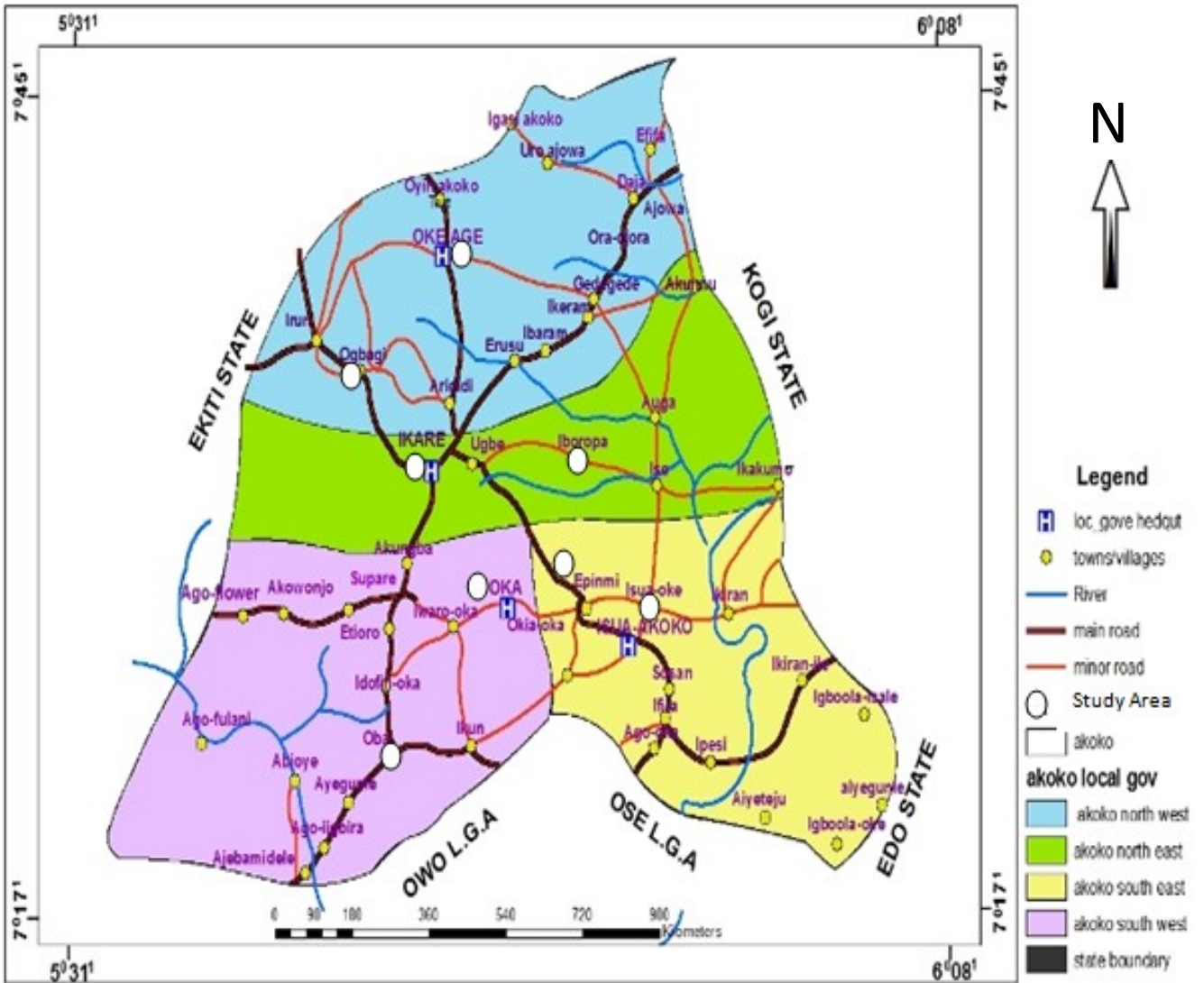
The kingship institution in Yorubaland, as discussed in this chapter, evolved in phases with the *idile* (family) as the smallest political unit. But as the family got larger, the need to sustain the growing population naturally called for the establishment of a more inclusive control system to the extent that law and order were properly managed and improved upon. This is indicative of the fact that, the kingship institution was and still is a potent pillar of socio-political cohesion among the Yoruba up to 1900. Having established the historical antecedence of the kingship institution being a viable mechanism of governance and social control in the period under review, the next chapter domesticated issues as it examined

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<sup>196</sup>See J.H., Beeley 1934. *Intelligence Report on the Akoko District*, N.A.I. C.S.O. 26 29667. Vol. II. pp.85-87.

kingship and power politics in Akokoland since 1900 up to the end of colonial rule in 1960. This essentially meant that the preceding chapter carefully explored and analysed issues around kingship in Akokoland as it affected the thrust of the study. Put correctly, chapter three discussed kingship, colonial rule and power politics in Akokoland, 1900 – 1960 by appraising the trajectories the institution has undergone within the context of staying relevant in the scheme of things for a period of six decades.

**Fig.2: SKETCH MAP SHOWING THE STUDY AREAS IN AKOKOLAND**



Source: Ministry of Lands and Housing, Akure, 2011

## CHAPTER THREE

### KINGSHIP, COLONIAL RULE AND POWER POLITICS IN AKOKOLAND, 1900 - 1960

The period between 1900 and 1960 marked an important watershed in the political transformation of Akokoland, especially the fortunes of the traditional rulers. The divisive power politics that featured prominently during the colonial rule left impact that have continue to choke the stability of the kingship institution in Akokoland and other parts of Nigeria.<sup>197</sup>

The dethronement of the Nupe imperial control over Akokoland by 1897 marked the end of an era and the beginning of a new phase of political domination established by the British Government in 1900. Although there are many narratives (which are most times incomplete) to the effect that colonial rule profited the communities that were brought under it, the study reveals that, beyond these often one-sided narratives which are often lacking in historical depth, colonial rule in Nigeria in general and Akokoland in particular adversely impacted and altered many traditional institutions and processes. The particular focus of this chapter is to discuss how the instrument of power politics was used as a divide-and-rule tactic to enforce loyalty and consequently altering well developed traditional political institutions using the kingship institution in Akokoland as case study. It will, however, be instructive to commence this chapter with the analysis of the socio-political administration before the establishment of colonial rule in Akokoland.

#### 3.1 Socio-Political Administration in Akokoland before Colonial rule

Akokoland is a sub-ethnic division of the Yoruba-speaking people and a collection of communities. As stated earlier in chapter two, with its location in one of the “hilliest and most rugged” parts of Yorubaland, and noticeable diversity in dialects and traditions, Akokoland presents a peculiar and unique picture of human settlement. In fact, Akokoland is a collection of heterogeneous groups of people. What followed migration and settlement in the pre-colonial history of Akokoland was that, the people soon evolved a culture of socio-political organization and agricultural economy as a response to the natural stimulus of survival. Expectedly, any society with such historical experience as Akokoland had, would be

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<sup>197</sup>Oba Adeleye Yusuf Adebiori, aged 73. The *Olubaka* of Okaland, *Olubaka* palace, Oka-Akoko, Ondo State, 6/8/2018.

one with profound diversity. This necessitated a social orientation that would enhance easy communication among close neighbouring communities. While the consciousness of their diversity would be kept intact, it would not be allowed to negatively affect their unity. Akintoye aptly observes that:

The degree of diversity in each (Yoruba) sub-group was obviously the result of its history and circumstances. Apparently, the sub-groups owed their origin to the fact that in a Yorubaland in which long-range lateral communications were considerably inhibited by thick forests, kingdoms in particular localities tended to develop closer contacts and stronger bonds with one another than with other kingdoms in far-away places. In each sub-group that thus emerged, the extent to which any initial differences (as in dialects and traditions) would tend to disappear would depend on the nature of the locality and the historical experiences of its members.<sup>198</sup>

This agrees with Ojo's position on the Ekiti country that "the hilly and dissected topography of the area...slowed down contacts and therefore kept the sub-kingdoms intact".<sup>199</sup> Awe argues along similar line that, "Although the Ekiti could be grouped together culturally, the hilly nature of their country has always encouraged a certain amount of parochialism".<sup>200</sup> However, in the Akokoland instance, this diversity and geographical features were not profound enough to prevent the development of the people's sense of unity and sentimental attachment to their sub-group. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, they were able to exploit their environment and historical experiences to evolve a common identity. In the emergent socio-political and economic system that followed migration and settlement in Akokoland, there was no fundamental difference from one kingdom to another. And, in their formative years, the kingdoms interacted among themselves such that they exchanged many ideas and practices.<sup>201</sup> It is on that basis that the present study identifies Akokoland as a sub-group and study area. Lloyd's argument about the Owe sub-group in Kabba is germane here. He states that, "There are fewer (less fundamental) differences in culture (among the member-communities of the sub-ethnic division) than between the group as whole and

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<sup>198</sup>S. A. Akintoye, 1971. *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840 – 1893, Ibadan Expansion and the Rise of Ekitiparapo*, London: Longman.p.4.

<sup>199</sup>G.J.A. Ojo 1966. *Yoruba Culture: A Geographical Analysis*, London. p.124, as cited in S. A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840 – 1893, Ibadan Expansion and the Rise of Ekitiparapo*, London: Longman.p.4.

<sup>200</sup>B. Awe 1964. "The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power, 1851-1893", D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford, p.127.

<sup>201</sup>Details of inter-group relations among Akoko kingdoms in the pre-colonial era are in F. Saba, "Inter-group Relations...", 6-15.

neighbouring sub-tribes.<sup>202</sup> It follows from this that it will be utterly misleading to over-emphasize the differences in culture and traditions of Akokoland communities and represent each of them as independent. At least, Akokoland had, by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, become identifiable as a sub-ethnic division, whose constituent kingdoms had grown to be closely knitted in an emergent Akokoland common identity and consciousness, in spite of their dialectical differences.

Indigenous administration played a pivotal function in human affairs that is meant to be a continuing exercise or practice. The indigenous political system was an integral part of the Akoko Yoruba society right from its formative stage. It is an institution that is significant to the value of the society, which guides the ruling of the Akoko society. Given historical explanation, the kings were (and still are) conceived by their subjects as sacred and as such, the kings were recognised as “semi-divine” or next to the gods.<sup>203</sup> Similarly, the kings were and still addressed as *kabiyesi*, an expression which is a contracted form of the sentence *ki a bi nyin ko si* (there is no question of anybody challenging your authority or action). By 1900, British rule had gained ground in Akokoland. Before then, the people of Akokoland, for administrative convenience appointed the king and as previously pointed out, the towns and villages were structured and divided into quarters and compounds, and each contained ad hoc units known as District and Village Groups. The selection and appointment of kings in the pre-colonial period was done by the traditional kingmakers. The number of kingmakers varies from five to seven (5-7), depending on each town and village’s traditions. One immediate effect of such arrangement was to make every subject become part of the political affairs of his town or village and, also be part of a larger organic level of his domain. This was the situation in Akokoland in the past, before the kings became Yes-men to the British colonialists.

The political arrangement in Akokoland before the establishment of colonial rule was a mix grill of religious beliefs/practices, and indigenous administration. Before the imposition of colonial rule in Akokoland, towns and villages were administered by the traditional rulers with the consent and support of the people, but the high status accorded the kings became low

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<sup>202</sup> P.C. Lloyd 1954. “Traditional Political System of the Yoruba”, in *South-West Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 4, no 10. pp.366-384.

<sup>203</sup> Johnson, Samuel 2001. “The History of the Yorubas; From Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Protectorate”, Lagos: CSS Ltd. p.40. See also Arifalo, Stephen O. and Okajare, Solomon T. 2005. “The Changing Role of Traditional Rulers and the Challenges of Governance in Contemporary Nigeria: Yorubaland in Historical Perspective”. Akure: Mobay Nigeria Enterprise. p.3.

under British rule. In 1900, the British administrators were received as the liberators of the people of Akokoland from the imperial rule of the Etsu Nupe.<sup>204</sup> The conquest of Nupe with the assistance of British constabulary was seen as a period that would offer in peace and tranquility; instead the British introduced indirect rule to replace Nupe hegemony in Akokoland. However, indirect rule was a system of administration which employed the services of existing legitimate chiefs in the area. But colonial administration altered the traditional structure of the political system and it affected the society. Politically, Akokoland had no tradition of a single, centralized political organization. What existed were mini-states, each of which maintained its sovereignty. Unlike what obtained in other parts of Yorubaland, these mini-states were not at any time incorporated into a large kingdom. This resulted largely from the aforementioned geographical features of Akokoland, whereby the towns and villages were largely demarcated from one another. The political system was organised along village line with the result that each village was on its own; each maintained its political autonomy with a village administration run by its own traditional head, a hierarchy of chiefs and elders. The system was rudimentary, but considerably democratic as greater majority were represented at different levels of administration. This was also strengthened by age grades.

The smallest unit of administration was the family. Family units began to emerge right from the beginning of society. In each village, families and lineages made up the quarters to which such village had been divided. The nature of these quarters and even the village was ultimately determined by the wave of migration and settlement. The family was headed by *Agba Ile* or *Olori ebi*, (who was usually the oldest male in such family). This family patriarch provided leadership by settling minor disputes among members, and ensuring members' welfare. He was the spiritual leader of the family who led all members in prayers to the gods and the ancestors. There were different names for titled family heads in different towns and villages. Such names included "Ighare" or "Ihare", "Amurun", and "Opon".<sup>205</sup> These titled men, who were members of the highest age grade, were superior in rank to the untitled men who were required to rise through the ranks of age-grade to the highest level before they could rank with the titled superiors. This was usually concluded

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<sup>204</sup>Akomolafe, Cornelius. O. 1976. "Akoko under British Rule, 1900 – 1935", M.Phil. Thesis, University of Ife, pp.37 & 56.

<sup>205</sup>In Ikun-Akoko for example, while *Ihare* is the general title for the highest age grade, *Opon* is the title for the oldest man, whether at the family or quarters levels. But, an *Opon* (as in Oka-Akoko) must have undergone the rite of passage to the highest age grade. Also, the practice of elaborate age grade initiation has always been a popular segment of Akoko culture.



with an age-long practice of acquiring titles through elaborate ceremony of feasting, which was a common phenomenon in Akokoland.

At the echelon of the administrative ladder was the village head that coordinated every segment of administration. He headed the ruling council. Generally, a village headship derived from relations with the ancestors, and it was therefore hereditary. This soon generated crises of succession as more scions of the lineage became ambitious. The people consequently evolved different ways of choosing village heads. Among the Ife migrants for example, it would seem that there was no clear-cut rule of succession, which often generated heated succession disputes among members of the royal families after the death of a village head. An exception in this group, however, is Iboropa, which had a form of republican system like Ibadan.<sup>206</sup> There was a peculiar instance at Shosan where the quarters produced candidates for the vacant stool on rotational basis. This practice is strange in other Akoko-Yoruba communities where the candidate for the throne was selected from any of the ruling families. Where there was one ruling house, the family branches created along paternal lines might rotate the ascension to the throne. It would seem that, the communities that had Benin cultural traits, like Afin, Erusu, Isua and Epinmi, among others, practiced the principle of primogeniture as it was popular in Benin.<sup>207</sup> At the quarter level, each quarter was headed by an *Oloriadugbo* (quarter head) who had an advisory council composed of other titled men and influential elders in the quarter. These ones were subordinate to the village head or king. In some large towns like Ikare and Oka<sup>208</sup>, quarters were organised further into sub-quarters, each having a head. This quarter head was subordinate to the village head, but he had in his turn, sub-quarter heads that were subordinate to him.

However, the selection of a village head was finalised with consultation of the *Ifa* oracle for divine guidance on necessary information about the fate of such village in the reign of the incoming head. Following this, the relevant chiefs who constituted the kingmakers would complete the process by performing some rituals and introducing the new head to the entire village in a village meeting. At least, the candidate was expected to be of robust health,

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<sup>206</sup>F.O. Saba, "Inter-Group Relations among Akoko Communities in the Pre-Colonial Times" in Olukoju, et.al. "eds." 2003. *Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone*, Ibadan: Rex Charles. p.9. But, this is not generally applicable to all Ife migrants. See Olukoju, A. O. 1982. "A History of Local Government in Akokoland, 1900-1962: A Study in Political Integration and Changes", B.A. Long Essay, Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, p. xxiii

<sup>207</sup> This is the practice in Isua for example.

<sup>208</sup> See J.B. Ogundana, "Ikare" in G. O. Oguntomisin (ed.), 2003. *Yoruba Town and Cities*, Ibadan: Bookshelf Resources Ltd., pp.20-31, and A.O. Olukoju, "Oka" in G. O. Oguntomisin (ed.), *Yoruba Towns...*, pp.77-88.

free from any form of deformity, possess sound moral character and integrity as well as capable of providing and sustaining leadership.<sup>209</sup>

As briefly mentioned in the introductory part of this study, it needs be admitted that, the kingship institution was not created in most Akoko Yoruba communities until the advent of the colonial era.<sup>210</sup> Hitherto, most of the villages were ruled by *Baale* (village head). It can be suggested that, the kingship institution became famous across Akokoland in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century following the activities of Archdeacon Lennon, other missionary agents and colonial officers.<sup>211</sup> Thus, there began a new administrative structure in which the village or town head was recognised as the *Oba* (king). The town was divided into quarters, each headed by a chief. Such chiefs were working with the *Oba* in the town council in the process of administration. Other members of the council were the lesser chiefs and elders. Power could be delegated by the *Oba* to the chiefs who were empowered to settle minor cases. On a general note, the *Oba* headed the realm. On ascending the throne, an *Oba* in Akokoland was seen as the representative of the gods and ancestors. Thus, his words were taken as those of the gods, which should be honoured. A traditional ruler in any Akoko town or village was seen as the most important functionary who necessarily enjoyed a divine (sacred) status over and above other members of his community. In the words of Lloyd, “he was not just a chief; he was the complete embodiment of the whole town with royal divinity”.<sup>212</sup>

The king was in charge of governance and chief executive of the realm. His divine kingly status was never in doubt and theoretically, he had absolute power of life and death. This largely entrenched easy administration and compliance with extant rules and regulations. However, while this could be true in theory, it was not practically so, as there were checks and balances in the system to prevent executive recklessness. While customs, convention and traditions would seem to have accorded the king some extraordinary clouts, this was more in theory than in practice. The *Oba*'s powers were (and are still) subject to considerable checks and curtailment of freedom of action. His installation rites included periods of seclusion

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<sup>209</sup> Oba Nurudeen Adegroye, 80years, The *Oloba* of Oba. *Oloba* Palace, Oba-Akoko, Ondo State. 24/9/2015

<sup>210</sup> Okajare S.T., 2012. “Akoko Yoruba and their Neighbours 1800-1960: A Study in Inter-Group Relations”, A Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. p.65.

<sup>211</sup> Okajare S.T., 2012. “Akoko Yoruba and their Neighbours 1800-1960: A Study in Inter-Group Relations”, A Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. p.65.

<sup>212</sup> cf. I.B. Bello-Imam, “The Paralysis of Traditional Rulers in Nigerian Politics”, in O. Aborishade (ed.), 1986. *Local Government and Traditional Rulers in Nigeria*, Ile-Ife: University Press, p.183.

during which he received instructions on his roles and relationship with the chiefs, who it was obligatory on him to consult on every aspect of state affairs. Thus, the Oba reigned but did not rule. He was forbidden from any direct contact with the public at large; he saw through the eyes, heard through the ears and spoke through the mouths of his principal counselors.<sup>213</sup> Atanda argues in this vein that the Oba was not that absolute despite the power at his disposal. History is replete with records of how powerful a king was before external intervention through colonialism. As the head of the government, the king exercised considerable powers particularly over the people in his jurisdiction. He could arrest, punish even behead them without trial. But, he was conditioned by tradition to use such power sparingly and with justification.<sup>214</sup> Essentially, a king was merely first among equals. He could not make any law without the concurrence of the members of his council. In other words, there were checks and balances built into the system to ensure a just and fair administration. As shown chapter two, the king did not rule alone. He administered in collaboration with a council of chiefs, and their conducts were guided by customs and traditions. The essence was to ensure that no king grew tyrannical while he still enjoyed the honour of office. This was the general trend across Akoko communities. They did not evolve any typical socio-political system that was different from the parent Yoruba system even if there were some minor local peculiarities.

One important belief among pre-colonial Akokoland people was that the king was responsible for the prosperity of his kingdom. His primary duty, therefore, was to ensure that the ancestors were regularly propitiated through festivals and rituals. He usually performed this role through the chief priests of the various gods.<sup>215</sup> Also, under the king's headship, the village council otherwise known as *Apejo* or *Ajo* controlled the village affairs, enacted local laws and held regular meetings to discuss any important matters. Issues to be legislated on were brought to the council and exhaustively debated upon by members and the king. After such debates, decisions agreed on were later communicated to the entire community in the name of the king and his council. Members of the council were the king; quarter heads, all titled family heads, and such ordinary family heads as had passed the highest age-grade and

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<sup>213</sup> I. Olomola 2002. "Antidote against Royal Absolutism among the Yoruba: A Preliminary Survey", *IFE Journal of the Institute of Cultural Studies*, no. 8.p.3.

<sup>214</sup> J.A. Atanda 1972. "Government of the Yoruba in Pre-colonial Period", in *Tarikh*, vol. 4, no.2.p.1.

<sup>215</sup> Arifalo, S.O. and Okajare, S.T., 2002. "The Changing Role of Traditional Rulers and the Challenges of Governance in Contemporary Nigeria: Yoruba in History perspective" Series Edition in Olaniyan, R.A. (ed.) *AAU Akungba-Akoko. Department of History and International Studies Monograph Series. Series No.03.002.* Akure: Mobay Nigeria Enterprise. pp.4, 10.

become elders of the village. The council met at regular intervals of five, seven or nine days to discuss matters of administrative importance. Emergency meetings might also be summoned if the need arose. And, whenever issues of general interest were to be discussed, a mass meeting of the people could be summoned usually at the village square or the king's palace. For such mass meetings, quarter heads would be required to send messengers (gong bearers) to announce the notice of meeting to the people usually in the evening preceding the day of the meeting. Local laws were formulated with the ultimate aim of protecting the community. Such laws were chiefly concerned with prevention of crime.

The process of judicial administration, which was a bit decentralized, was preventive and protective, and not combative. However, punishments were inflicted on offenders as a corrective measure to serve as deterrence to others. There were three stages of judicial administration in Akokoland. One, the family head had competence to handle minor disputes among family members so as to keep and strengthen the family/kinship ties. It could also help in apprehending any member of the family who committed a major crime. Two, the quarter chief had competence in cases involving persons belonging to different families. Also, cases that could not be tried at first court were referred to the second. This court could also conduct preliminary investigations into criminal cases before transferring them to the king's court. Three, the village court headed by the king was the highest court of appeal in the land. All civil and criminal cases could be heard, tried and settled in the king's court, while capital punishment could also be imposed.<sup>216</sup> In most places, litigants were required to swear to an oath before the hearing of their cases. In civil cases, parties were required to deposit fees of cowries; the amount which varied from one place to another and on account of seriousness or otherwise of crime. The successful party had his fees refunded after judgment, while that of the unsuccessful party would be kept by the village head until the time that such money was sizeable enough to be shared by court members.<sup>217</sup> Trial was conducted by ordeal whereby the defendant was made to drink sasswood concoction (epo obo), or to swear to a deity. This ordeal was to make the defendant, if he was guilty, betray his guilt or he could die after seven days.

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<sup>216</sup> J. A. Atanda, 1972. "Government of the Yoruba in Pre-colonial Period", in *Tarikh*, vol. 4, no.2. pp.5-6.

<sup>217</sup>Such fees were not charged in some places like Irun-Akoko, Ise-Akoko, Ipe-Akoko, Auga-Akoko and Ikaram-Akoko. See Olukoju, "A History of Local Government in Akokoland, 1900-1962: A Study in Political Integration and Change," M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan., p. xxv. Also, interview with High Chief M.O. Osanyintuyi, Elejemo of Irun-Akoko, c. 67, June 16, 2016.

To provide good governance, the kings' decision was final. However, many a time, the traditional rulers might consider the consent of their chiefs in some fundamental issues such as decision on arsonist or rapist in their domains. In that circumstance, no king ruled without taking into consideration the advice of his chiefs and elders in council. Examining such devolution of power, the chiefs at the lower chamber formulated local laws that could prevent theft and violence in the Akoko society, while criminal cases and heinous offences such as murders, arson, and rape among others were carefully handled by the kings to avoid skeptics. The administration of justice depended on the gravity of the offences, the king (s) decided on the judgment. The palace court headed by the traditional ruler served as the highest court of Appeal.<sup>218</sup>

The age-grade system, *egbe*, was (and still remains) a common feature of the social system of Akoko as obtained in the past in other parts of Yorubaland. The *egbe* is like a society or organization set up along age grade line. The more junior ones of the age grades performed all the communal works of the village, while the senior ones did the supervision. Such communal duties included clearing bush paths, cleaning up the market, and re-thatching or repairing the roof of the village head's house. The number of the *egbe* varied from one village to the other. But generally, it ranged from four to ten. Acquisition of membership of the *egbe* involved some light and not too elaborate ceremony for junior members. Festivals for initiation were held every seven, or in some cases, nine years. On such occasion, apart from admitting new members, each of the *egbe* moved up one grade on the ladder.

The maintenance of law, peace and order was usually the duty of members of the most senior age-grade working through the village council. The policing duty fell on members of the young age-grade. Court verdicts were enforced by appointed age-grades. It could also be enforced by a successful litigant empowered to seize the livestock of a debtor or convict, in lieu of the debt. The debtor could redeem his livestock by settling the debt within a specific period. The young age-grade also provided security for the society. They formed the corps of the military system in each community, which served mainly to protect the territorial integrity and interests of a given community. The ranking system was also common as obtained in other parts of Yorubaland, although not as elaborate as it was in established kingdoms and mega-states like Oyo, Egba and others. Usually, the most senior officer was a (military) chief called *Balogun*.

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<sup>218</sup>Olusanya Faboyede, 2013. "Indigenous Political System in the Pre-colonial Akokoland: A Reappraisal during Colonial Rule", *Turkish Journal of Politics*, Vol. 4 No. 1 pp.101-102.

Largely, the age grade system served as a connecting link between the village council and the people who made their wishes known to this council through their heads. In most Akoko towns and villages, age grade was organised along gender line as the male and female did not usually belong to the same group even if they were age mates. The male groups were more visible and dominant in the scheme of things. It can be suggested therefore that pre-colonial Akoko was a male-dominated society, with little or no consideration for gender balance in administration. However, women had their own age group even if for mere formality of existence and social interaction among members. In most cases, they were relevant in trading activities. Age grade could be organised at two levels; quarters and town. Offices were often created for the purpose of minimal administration within each group. Such offices included president (*olori egbe*), vice president (*atele* or *igba keji*), treasurer (*akapo*), and sharer of menu or such other item (*olojua* or *ejoa*).<sup>219</sup>

It can be inferred from the above that in Akokoland, where each of the communities maintained its sovereignty, and autonomy within its geographical bounds, each of them operated a centralized monarchical system that generally reflected the fundamental features of such system in other parts of Yorubaland. But, there was no single, over-arching central administration with jurisdiction on the entire Akokoland. While there were general Yoruba features in the communities' political system, each of them still manifested its peculiarities. The establishment of colonial rule in Akokoland by 1900 seriously altered the indigenous political institution. The next discussions focused on the British colonial rule in phases, its impact and the place of power politics between 1900 and 1960 in Akokoland.

### **3.2 Colonial Rule, Power Politics and Kingship in Akokoland, 1900 to 1960**

The British establishment of their imperial presence and colonial rule in Nigeria began before 1900. This was manifest in the British declaration of colonial rule in Lagos in 1861 ten years after the bombardment of same, the granting of royal charter to the Royal Niger Company (RNC) in 1886 and the activities of the Company particularly in the North. The establishment of the Company's headquarters at Lokoja brought British informal colonial interest near Akoko. In 1895, two out-stations of the RNC were established at Kabba and Omuo-Oke (a northern town of Akoko). Eventually, after RNC forces had trounced

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<sup>219</sup>See N.A. Fadipe 1970. *Sociology of the Yoruba*, (Ibadan: University Press). See also, S. A. Akintoye, 1971 *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893, Ibadan Expansion and the Rise of Ekitiparapo*, London: Longman. p. 14.

Nupe forces in 1897 liberating Akoko communities from Nupe imperialist rule, the RNC commenced company rule in Akokoland – a rule that served as a precursor for formal colonial rule. Acting under the pretense of establishing a lasting peace or instituting *Pax Britannica*, the RNC agents clearly established mechanisms that were later to be operated for colonial administration with all its attendant exploitative features. Of course, the picture later became clearer to the people that the Company’s agents wanted more than mere restoration of peace and trading relations.

In a clear demonstration of their readiness to assume proper control, the British Government revoked the 1886 charter of RNC in December 1899, and assumed full control of the, “territories of the Niger” on January 1, 1900. This revocation was due to a number of reasons. One, the Company lacked sufficient (human and material) resources to undertake effective occupation of the conquered territories. Secondly, the French remained aggressive competitors against British interest along the Niger coast and the hinterland. Three, the Company had successfully gained for Britain the custodianship of free navigation of the Niger River in the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference. Apparently, the official mind-set in London was that the Company had fulfilled its mandate, and so it had to give way for a direct involvement of the British Government in colonial acquisition of the conquered territories.<sup>220</sup>

Consequently, in 1900, Britain made a louder statement with the direct occupation of the conquered territories. The process of direct occupation began on January 1, 1900, when Lord Lugard, who was the British High Commissioner in Northern Nigeria, proclaimed the Northern Protectorate at Lokoja and hoisted the Union Jack, thus symbolizing the official commencement of British rule. In course of this proclamation, Lugard emphatically stressed *inter alia*; “We are charged to hold in peace and good order this vast territory, no mean part of that Empire. Whatever may betide elsewhere, we have a charge to fulfil”.<sup>221</sup> This charge was fulfilled in Nigeria of which Akokoland was an integral part between 1900 and 1960, with prompt deployment of force and/or diplomacy as the situation might require and according to the judgment of the colonial officials.

### **3.3 Akokoland under Kabba Division, Lokoja Province up to 1919**

By 1900, the colonial authorities had established themselves strongly over all parts of Yorubaland including Akokoland. It should be re-emphasised, however, that, Akokoland was

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<sup>220</sup>F. Lugard, 1965. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., p.19.

<sup>221</sup>M. Crowder, 1973. *West Africa under Colonial Rule*, London: Hutchinson & Co. p. 132

not colonized as a part of mainstream Yorubaland, but rather as an extension of areas of jurisdiction of Nupe within the Gwandu Emirate. This followed the modified recommendation of a committee; the Niger Committee<sup>222</sup>, to the effect that on the basis of the principle of jurisdiction, northeast Yorubaland (hitherto under Nupe) should be grouped along Nupe in the Soudan Province that is, the Northern Protectorate.<sup>223</sup> Consequently, Akokoland was grouped with other areas like Bassa, Kabba, Yagba, Kakanda, Abunu, Oworo, Igbira and Kukuruku to form the Middle Niger Province with its headquarters at Lokoja.<sup>224</sup> From there, the tentacles of colonial rule with its attendant structures were extended to Akokoland.

Eventually, William Wallace who was formerly the Agent-General of RNC was appointed the first Resident of the Middle Niger Province. He also doubled as the Deputy High Commissioner, holding the fort in the absence of Lugard.<sup>225</sup> Before 1900, Wallace had been prepared for colonial assignment. For example, he accompanied Lord Lugard in the 1897 expedition against Bida (Nupe) and Ilorin. The Province was changed to Lokoja Province in July 1901<sup>226</sup>, and was further divided into a number of administrative divisions with Akokoland becoming part of Kabba Division, while Kabba was the divisional headquarters. This reflected the previous central position of Kabba in Nupe pre-colonial administration. Mr. R.I. Rankine was appointed Assistant Resident to oversee the affairs of the Division and report directly to the Resident.

Lugard did more administrative restructuring that later exposed the underlying acute problem of shortage of administrative personnel, which ultimately led to the appointment of military officers as Residents. The persistence of this problem coupled with the refusal of the Colonial Office in London to send more staff to Lugard, made the adoption of Indirect

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<sup>222</sup>For details on the Niger Committee, see Z.A. Apata, 1986. "Administrative Changes and Reorganisation in the Old Kabba Province in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1939", Ph.D. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, pp.88-94.

<sup>223</sup>Z.A. Apata, 1986. "Administrative Changes and Reorganisation in the Old Kabba Province in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1939", Ph.D. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, p.94.

<sup>224</sup>A. O. Olukoju, 1982. "A History of Local Government in Akokoland, 1900-1962: A Study in Political Integration and Change", M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, p.2. See also N.A.K. Loko. Prof. 2, *Residents Letter Book*, Entry for 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1901

<sup>225</sup>Akomolafe, C.O., 1976. "Akoko under British Rule, 1900-1935", M.Phil Thesis, Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, p.59.

<sup>226</sup>N.A.K. *The Northern Nigeria Gazette*, July 31, 1901



Rule<sup>227</sup> system the only alternative. The main feature of this system was the use of the indigenous structure to meet the administrative expediency of colonial rule.

As a way of totally subjugating Akokoland and forestalling any resistance, military patrol teams were deployed to Akoko towns and villages. The military garrison at Ikaram, which had been established by the RNC in 1895 was reorganized and reinforced with both men and materials. This was a calculated action to frighten the people into early submission. The Assistant Resident, Rankine, requested for handcuffs with which to arrest any miscreants, criminals or any other such person who might show resistance to British rule.<sup>228</sup> Soldiers were billeted on the entire Akokoland for a considerably long time as an army of occupation, with their characteristically unwholesome and indecent attitudes of rape, harassment, extortion, pillaging and intimidation. Thus, the people became disillusioned.<sup>229</sup>

Consequently, an early take-off of proper administration suffered severe setback up till 1910 when Lugard made a Native Authority Proclamation. Under this new political structure, Akoko towns and villages were brought under effective colonial administration. They were grouped into districts under selected district heads in 1912 as a means of bringing governance closer to the people. The traditional ruler of the headquarter town of each district automatically became the Native Authority and district head in conformity with the spirit and letters of Indirect Rule. There were five districts in all. Oka-Akoko district comprised Oka, Ikun, Ishe, Epinmi and Afo; Ikare-Akoko district comprised Ikare, Akungba, Supare, Iboropa, Oba, and Ugbe; Ogbagi-Akoko district consisted of Ogbagi, Irun, Afin, Ese, Arigidi, Erusu, Afa, Oge, Aje, Oyin and Omuo; Isua-Akoko district consisted of Isua, Ifira, Ipesi, Upe, and Sosan; Ikaram-Akoko district consisted of Ikaram, Iyani, Gedegede, Daja, Akunnu,, Ojo, Efifa, Ora, Oso, Ibaram and Esuku.<sup>230</sup> This District Head system, as it came to be known, was not only artificial, it was also unpopular among the people, except those of the headquarters towns. Even in Southern Nigeria, the system was not well received.<sup>231</sup> This was

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<sup>227</sup>W.E.F. Ward "The Colonial Phase in British West Africa" in J. F. A. Ajayi & I. Espie (eds.), 1981. *A Thousand Year of West African History*, Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press pp.392-396

<sup>228</sup>Loko. Prof. 2, *Residents Letter Book*, Entry for 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1901

<sup>229</sup>C.O. Akomolafe's "The Introduction of Direct Taxation: An Ingredient of British Administration in Akoko, 1900-1935"- *Mimeo*, pp.3-7

<sup>230</sup>Olukoju, A.O. 1982. "A History of Local Government in Akokoland, 1900-1962: A Study in Political Integration and Change", M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

<sup>231</sup>J. H. Beeley, *Intelligence Report...*, para. 122. The situation in Southern Nigeria has been discussed in P. A. Igbafe, 1967, "The District Head System in Benin, 1914-1935", *Odu: University of Ife Journal of African Studies*, vol. III, no. 3, January, pp.3-21.

more so as there was no historical evidence that any Akoko town or village had ever been under the control of another.

Beyond their immediate environment, the people of Akokoland were subjected to the leadership of the Obaro of Kabba who was appointed by Lugard as the Paramount Chief and Native authority of the Kabba Division. The Native Authority was empowered to issue administrative order, maintain law and order, prevent crimes, arrest and deport any known felons, make and enforce order relating to the public health and sanitation of his area, and recruit staff necessary to carry out effectively the government business of the Division.<sup>232</sup> However, he was under the control and supervision of the provincial Resident whose whims ultimately determined the dimension of governance.

Expectedly, the people saw the imposed *Obaro* leadership on them as an affront on their traditional institution and sovereignty. The resultant reaction compelled the need to internalize the paramountcy system by the colonial authority in Akoko. But the sheer lack of a paramount monarchy with jurisdiction over the entire Akokoland made this quite difficult. Such leading personality would have formed a link between the district heads and the British officials in the day to day administration instead of communicating with individual district head. Yet, the Olukare and Olubaka as the two most important kings in the land became the obvious contenders. In a rather surprising twist, Lay Greaves, who had become Resident, chose Momoh - half-brother to Olukare Ajagunna - as the paramount chief. The deep-seated disharmony between the *Olukare* and *Olubaka* might have prompted the Resident to take the decision. He had described the duo's frosty relationship as "mutual jealousy between them", and felt that none of them was suitable to be appointed as paramount chief.<sup>233</sup> In this circumstance, the British were left with no other choice than to appoint Momoh who was a half-brother to the *Olukare* Ajagunna because of his experience as a local agent of Nupe administration. Momoh possessed a wide experience by the standard of the time. He had served under the Nupe local administration during which time he was responsible for the collection of tributes and its transmission to Bida. Moreover, he spoke Nupe and Hausa fluently and had an average knowledge of English. With these qualities, Momoh had an edge over other contenders and he gained the favour of the British who found him a very useful

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<sup>232</sup>Olukoju, A.O. 1982. "A History of Local Government in Akokoland, 1900-1962: A Study in Political Intergration and Change", M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.p.4. For additional details on this colonial assignment, see I.F. Nicholson, 1969, *The Administration of Nigeria : Men, Methods and Myths*, Oxford:Clarendon Press, pp. 20-45.

<sup>233</sup>*Letter from District Officer, Kabba to Resident, Ilorin, 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1917, enclosed in Loko. Prof., No. 25*

tool in their own local administration.<sup>234</sup> Momoh thus became the main instrument or agent of British rule in Akokoland during colonial rule. As events turned out later, Momoh was empowered with a warrant and placed on an annual salary of £48. He soon became a link between the district heads, the village chiefs and the people on the one hand, and the colonial authorities on the other. This vantage position enabled Momoh to influence the proceedings and the verdicts of the courts even though he had no court of his own. Quite substantially, he could also influence the appointment of candidates to vacant stools as the district officers usually regarded his recommendation as crucial.<sup>235</sup>

With Momoh's appointment, it would appear that the operation of colonial (indirect) rule in Akokoland became relatively easier for the British. However, while he was considered "a loyal agent of the British"<sup>236</sup>, his appointment became a subject of grievances among Akokoland 'chiefs'<sup>237</sup> (particularly the *Olukare* Ajagunna and *Olubaka* Odudu). What angered the chiefs most was the unlimited powers that the British backed Momoh to wield particularly as he could oversee native courts. The chiefs saw him as a British agent and an impostor whose appointment was an infringement on traditions. What is more, the fact that he had no court of his own made his appointment irregular and unconventional. But having taken the decision, the British were bent on seeing their experiment to fruition. Towards this end, the District Officer in Kabba, G. L. Monk called for an increase of Momoh's salary from £48 to £84 per annum to make him earn more than the two traditional chiefs, who were earning annual salary of £60 each. Monk also demanded for the creation of a 'Grade B' court for the Paramount Head, which should be an Appeal Court for all cases tried in the lower native courts. He should also have a retinue of administrative aides to include four native authority policemen, a mallam and a court messenger.<sup>238</sup> These provisions, according to Monk, were to strengthen the position of Momoh. However, the Resident did not grant Monk's request such that Monk commented in 1918 that:

The experiment of making Momoh the Paramount Head of the whole of Akoko was foredoomed to failure, as Momoh though

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<sup>234</sup>Akomolafe, C.O., 1976. "Akoko under British Rule, 1900-1935", M.Phil Thesis, Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, p.85.

<sup>235</sup>Letter from District Officer, Kabba to Resident, Ilorin...N. A. K. Loko. Prof., No. 25

<sup>236</sup>Letter from District Officer, Kabba to Resident, Ilorin...N. A. K. Loko. Prof., No. 25

<sup>237</sup>These so called 'chiefs' were beaded crown wearing kings in Akokoland. The use chief was deliberate as the British officers were ready to do everything within their reach to ensure that Yorubaland kings were not in any way compared to the British Crown: the Queen of England.

<sup>238</sup>Letter from District Officer, Kabba to Resident, Ilorin... on Native Administration in Akoko District, enclosed in N. A. K. Loko. Prof., No. 25

loyal, popular and energetic and comparatively 'straight' (for an Akoko) held no rank in his own town and was bitterly hated by his brother the *Olukare*, the richest ruler in Akoko. Furthermore, his position may remain, in all except name what it had previously been, namely that of the District Officer's messenger and tax collector for the District. In fact, his position, authority and function were practically those of an *Ajele* under the Bida regime and that was the official title by which he was known...<sup>239</sup>

Apparently frustrated by his failure to secure the Resident's approval and the unveiled hostility of the *Olukare* Ajagunna against his choice candidate, Monk resolved to get rid of the *Olukare* as a means to fortify the position of Momoh. But shortly thereafter, Momoh fell out of favour with the British as he was embroiled in a case of fraud in the succession process of the Olubaka chieftaincy. The Olubaka Odudu joined his ancestors in 1911<sup>240</sup>, thus making the stool vacant. In his capacity as the Paramount Head of Akoko, Momoh was alleged to have collected a bribe of £7.10/- from Prince Adeleye, who was less popular than the other candidate; Prince Ilegbusi. In 1917, Momoh was arrested, tried, found guilty and sentenced to a year imprisonment in Lokoja<sup>241</sup> while Prince Ilegbusi was made the king in 1918 after late Oba Odudu.<sup>242</sup>

Later, a similar fate of imprisonment befell the *Olukare* who was also found to possess worse records of misdeeds and intrigues than Momoh. He was charged with the following; one, retrying and reversing decisions of the Native Court of Ogbagi-Akoko and actually reversing the ruling of the District Officer; two, offering protection to accused persons who were summoned before the Ogbagi-Akoko Native Court, thus undermining the prestige of the court; three, aiding and abetting a notorious Hausa thief, Tanko Marafa, who was charged with murder in the Ilorin Native Court. Particularly for the first two charges, in 1918, the *Olukare* Ajagunna was arrested, tried and sentenced to two years jail term, which he served in Ifon.<sup>23</sup> On the third charge, the Resident K. V. Elphinstone exonerated the *Olukare*.<sup>243</sup>

The above scenario implied that the *Olukare* and his brother, Momoh, had been taken out of the political turf of Akoko. This created an administrative vacuum and breakdown in

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<sup>239</sup> N. A. K. Loko. Prof., No. 26, *Annual Report, Kabba Division of Ilorin Province*, 1918.

<sup>240</sup> H. Oripeloye and G. Sanni, *Ogboo Olubaka-Oye Aabao: Biography of HRM Oba (Dr.) Yusuf Adebori Adeleye, the Olubaka of Okaland*, Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2009, p. 40

<sup>241</sup> N. A. K. Loko. Prof., No. 25, *Kabba Divisional Report for 1917*. See also N. A. K. Loko. Prof., No. 26, *Annual Report, Kabba Division of Ilorin Province*, 1918, para. 7

<sup>242</sup> H. Oripeloye and G. Sanni, 2009, *Ogboo Olubaka-Oye Aabao: Biography of HRM Oba (Dr) Yusuf Adebori Adeleye, The Olubaka of Okaland*, Ibadan: Kraft Books, p. 41.

<sup>243</sup> N. A. K. Loko. Prof., No. 26, *Kabba Divisional Report*, 1918, by G.L. Monk, District Officer, Resident's comment in para. 8

communication between the colonial authority and the village heads particularly in the Ikare District. Still committed to actualizing his intention, Monk suggested to the Resident, through a letter, that the sentence of Momoh be reduced or commuted outright. This was to install him as the Olukare of Ikare<sup>244</sup> and District Head of Ikare District to replace Ajagunna who was serving jail term in Ifon. Eventually, Momoh was so installed. But the continued incarceration of Ajagunna attracted the attention of nationalist leaders in Lagos who labeled the British officials as high-handed on simple matters on which they could simply maintain peace and order.<sup>245</sup>

While calling on the colonial authority to release *Oba* Ajagunna, the nationalists implored the authority to adhere to its earlier pledge of respecting the dignity of African chiefs as made by Lugard at the beginning of colonial rule. Lugard had said that African chiefs should work closely with the colonial administration with their powers and functions regulated and patterned by the Colonial government and extant laws.<sup>246</sup> His general policy direction was to reinstate those traditional rulers whose domains had been occupied, and uphold their authority provided they were ready to fully support colonial rule.<sup>247</sup> Demand for the release of *Oba* Ajagunna continued throughout 1918 and early 1919 across Akoko and Lagos. This demand, and the needs to protect the image of the administration and secure the support of other Akoko chiefs for the Owo Native Administration, which was being proposed to commence in 1919 compelled the release of *Oba* Ajagunna on an *ad misericordiam* (plea for clemency) appeal in November 1919.<sup>248</sup>

The colonial master continued to use manipulative power politics in Akokoland to favour the sections that supported the colonial policies even if they were anti-people and burdensome. The question of headship or paramount rulership of Akokoland as manifested in the case of the *Olukare* and the *Olubaka* was also pervasive in Oka-Akoko (the struggle between the *Asin* and the *Olubaka* on who the paramount ruler of Oka should be). Ikare-Akoko (manifested in the chieftaincy disputes between the *Owa-Ale* of Ikare-Akoko and the *Olukare* of Ikare-Akoko) and Akungba-Akoko where colonial power politics pitched the tent of bitter chieftaincy disputes between *Alakun* J. Aremo and the *Alale* S.F Adekanye. The root

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<sup>244</sup>Letter from District Officer, Kabba to Resident, Ilorin..., enclosed in N.A.K. Loko. Prof., no. 26

<sup>245</sup> See "Arrest and Imprisonment of the King of Ikare" in N. A. I., *The Lagos Standard*, Wednesday April 2, 1919

<sup>246</sup> N.A.I., F.D. Lugard, *Political Memoranda*, London, 1919, p. 296

<sup>247</sup> N.A.I., F.D. Lugard, *Annual Report, Northern Nigeria, 1900-1911*, p. 75

<sup>248</sup> N.A.I., Ondo Prof. 4/1, 2 *Annual Report, Owo Division, 1920-21*, para. 9(ii)

of the problem of incessant disputes among these three Akoko communities was hinged on the recognition accorded to village heads in Akoko District of the then Kabba Division by the colonial administrator between 1913 and 1918. This development brought with it a serious disaffection in some communities in the District.<sup>249</sup> The disputes that ensued from the British imposition of one Akoko town over the other are appraised in the next subheadings that discussed the colonial shift that brought Akokoland under the control of Owo Division, the creation of the Akoko Native Administration, 1935b- 1948 and the Akoko Federation, 1948 – 1960. This was yet another deliberate attempt at altering the ancient socio-political tradition and history of Akokoland through offensive colonial hegemonic policy of forced union without mutual consent. The creation of the Akoko Native Administration did little to solve the tense situation created by the colonial master divisive tactics deliberately conditioned to discourage concerted efforts among Akoko traditional rulers to question their various unhealthy and anti-people policies.

Judicial administration and tax policy were two crucial aspects of colonial rule in Akokoland. The process of judicial administration in Akokoland during this period entailed the application of both the native law and custom, and the common law of England. In 1902, a provincial court was set up in Kabba with the Resident, District Officers and all other executive officers that had been appointed as justices of the peace as members. The major concern of this court bordered on suits between Africans and non-Africans. The court administered the Common Law, which was in force in England on January 1, 1900. It had jurisdiction over the entire Akokoland. This court operated until 1908 when it was replaced with a judicial council, composed of chiefs and a Hausa Mallam.<sup>250</sup> A year later, the first native court in Akoko was set up at Ikare, and the official warrant was handed over to the then Olukare, Oba Ajagunna. But, due to the pervasive dissatisfaction and resistance to the colonial administrative and judicial restructuring, the court, which handled only five cases in its four-month life span, was dissolved in June of the same year, and cases were once again tried in Kabba Provincial Court.<sup>251</sup> This situation subsisted until 1914 when the District Head system came in full swing.

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<sup>249</sup>Legal Brief Africa, 2004. Oba J. Aremo versus S.F Adekanye, Ondo State Government and Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Issue No. 107, November, p.29. see also S.F Ojumu, 2008, "Law versus Justice: Aremo/Adekanye as a Case Study". *Journal of Law and Diplomacy*, vol. 5, No. 1.pp.26-31.

<sup>250</sup> Davies, P. T. 1960. *Historical Notes on Kabba Division*, Ibadan: Africana Library. p. 7

<sup>251</sup>SNP 7/10, 3172/1909/ *Kabba Provincial Report for June Quarterly*, 1909, by H.L. Norton Trail. He was the Resident at Kabba between January and June, 1909, and August, 1911.

By the provision of the Native Courts Proclamation of 1914, the provincial Resident, with the High Commissioner's approval, constituted by warrant, native courts within his province. Four grades of such native courts were to be set up, with the highest in each administrative area styled a Judicial Council. Headed by the Paramount Chief in such division, this council was to comprise all leading councilors of the Native Authority. Apart from its almost unfettered jurisdiction on all civil and criminal matters, this court also had some executive and legislative powers. The only limitation to the court's power was the High Commissioner's confirmation before any death sentence could be enforced. Furthermore, the Judicial Council was the only Court of Appeal for Africans who were the subjects of the Native Authority. Also, the excessive and sweeping powers given to the Judicial Council went a long way to stir the ember of internal dissension in Akoko. In the first place, the paramount chief was not even a king in Ikare. This 'divide and rule' strategy of the colonial authority gravely affected the pre-existing internal cohesion in Akokoland. It should be noted further that the Resident and his lieutenants (non-African) had access to the records of proceedings of the native courts and were empowered, if need be, to review, suspend or otherwise modify a sentence of a native court. This was meant to be a mechanism of safeguard against judicial manipulation. This system of judicial administration was not fundamentally different from what operated in the Northern provinces. As the colonial officials also had power to transfer a native case to a provincial court or order a retrial in the same native court, or another court of equivalent jurisdiction.<sup>252</sup>

In all, from 1914, each of the five Akoko districts had a native court, while each district head presided over such courts, which were at Ikare, Isua, Oka, Ogbagi and Ikaram. This was to ensure that litigants might be able to obtain redress without traveling long distance in the context of the 1914 policy of Lugard, which called for an increase in the number of courts for that purpose.<sup>253</sup> But in reality, the courts were far from being independent of the whims and overbearing manipulations of the colonial authority. Also, the system encouraged feeling of superiority in the five host towns whose people saw themselves occupying vantage positions to the discomfiture of others. This system was on until after 1918 when further restructuring took place as will be shown later.

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<sup>252</sup> See S. Abubakar, "The Northern Province Under Colonial Rule, 1900-1959", in O. Ikime 'ed.', 1980. *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heinemann. p.455.

<sup>253</sup> F.D. Lugard, "Memorandum on Native Courts in Southern Provinces", in *Report on Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria and Administration, 1912-1919*, London, 1920. p.2.

The need for a direct taxation policy was compelled by the acute financial burden, which the colonial authority faced at the early years of colonial rule. To raise fund, it became expedient for Lugard to curry the favour of the chiefs. This was more so because the people of Akoko had considered the freedom they gained in 1897 as encompassing freedom from financial obligation to any overlord. It would become more painful naturally when they had to pay tax to a purely foreign, non- African overlord. The imminence of tax payment from the 1900s made such consideration a misconception. This misconception was addressed in 1901 when Sir William Wallace, on behalf of Lugard, addressed a letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, calling for the retention of the system of taxation, which had been operated prior to the time of colonial rule. In addition, he sought for an approval of British Government to introduce measures, which would ensure the maintenance of the West African Frontier Force, and effective administration of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria.<sup>254</sup> In this vein and in a tactical move to curry the favour of the chiefs, in mid-1901, Lugard directed the Residents to allow the chiefs who had once taxed their subjects to continue to do so. But the Residents were to hear and deliver judgments on cases of excessive taxation as might be complained of by the subjects. Also, only male adults should be taxed and the payable rate should not exceed a tenth of the total income of the taxable individual.<sup>255</sup>

On the surface, these directives were gracious concessions to the chiefs. But in practical terms, they were calculated to subordinate the chiefs' authority to the Residents' and to prepare the ground for the eventual collection of tax by the colonial masters. Lugard swiftly demanded in 1902 that half of the total collected tax be paid to government coffers.<sup>256</sup> He issued a *Land Revenue Proclamation* in 1904, which highlighted the formats to be employed in ascertaining an accurate assessment of the people's income. Each Resident was required to decide the amount payable as tax after income assessment.

Eventually, Major H.D. Larymore, who was the Resident at Kabba in 1905, introduced the lump sum system<sup>257</sup> of taxation. Following this introduction was the deployment of

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<sup>254</sup> N.A.I. CSO Paper file no. 1/27, 1. William Wallace, Acting High Commissioner, Northern Nigeria, to Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21/5/1901

<sup>255</sup> These directives are contained in *Enclosure No. 1, in Dispatch to Northern Nigeria*, No 186 of 21st May, 1901, in N.A.I. CSO Papers No. 1/27, p.1.

<sup>256</sup> *Enclosure No. 1, in Dispatch to Northern Nigeria*, No 186 of 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1901, in N.A.I., C. S. O. Paper, No. 1/27

<sup>257</sup> For details on the merits and demerits of the lump sum system, see C. O. Akomolafe "The Introduction of Direct Taxation...", pp. 10-12



soldiers as members of tax collection team. Residents' reports had been consistent to the effect that, tax collection could only be possible when tax collectors had the force behind them to back up their demand if necessary.<sup>258</sup> For example, in 1907, Larymore reported that a military patrol team was deployed to Akoko and other districts for fear that, without some display of force; tax from those places would not be forthcoming.<sup>259</sup> In other words, the people would not willingly pay their tax except they were forced to do so. This was why Captain Uniacke, a District Superintendent of Police at Lokoja, famous for his notoriety and callousness, was deployed to lead a team that bombarded Isua in May, 1906 for the people's uncooperative attitude in payment of tax. Major Larymore strongly called for his transfer to the political department on the basis of his good work and general efficiency.<sup>260</sup> In 1908, Norton Trail (then Assistant Resident at Kabba) stated that the political situation in Akoko, Kukuruku and Igbira districts had become distinctly hopeful because the people had ceased to shoot arrows at the police when sent to make arrests. He saw this as a result of the presence of the detachment of Nigeria Royal Navy (N.R.N.) officials stationed in the districts. He further called for an arrangement by which a small detachment could always be provided at short notice on the request of the Resident of the Province. Through this, he believed, a reoccurrence of the 'truculent' attitude of the people would be curbed. Otherwise, law and order would break down, since the chiefs had no power or influence over the people.<sup>261</sup> This demand was strengthened by J. C. Sciortino, Assistant Resident after Norton Trail that the cost of upkeep of the soldiers should be borne by the districts "until all arrears are paid".<sup>262</sup>

This generated a state of palpable chaos as the whole Akoko people demonstrated their opposition to the whole idea of paying tax to the colonial authorities. They considered it not only painful, but also insulting and unacceptable. This was more so due to the requirement of the system that the assessment officer had to count the number of wives, children, other dependents, livestock, farm proceeds and other personal effects of a taxable adult male. This

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<sup>258</sup> N.A.K., SNP 7/8, 1654/1907, *Annual Report on Kabba Province, 1906*, by J.A. Lay Greaves

<sup>259</sup> N.A.K., SNP 7/8, 5262/1907, *Report on Kabba Province*, December Quarter, 1907 by Major H.D. Larymore, para. 5

<sup>260</sup> N.A.K., SNP 7/8, 5262/1907, *Report on Kabba Province*, December Quarter, 1907 by Major H.D. Larymore, para. 5

<sup>261</sup> SNP 7/10, 3172/1909/ *Kabba Provincial Report for June Quarterly*, 1909, by H.L. Norton-Trail

<sup>262</sup> N.A.K. SNP 7/10, 2299/1909, *Report on Lokoja Province*, March Quarter, 1909

practice was against the people's traditions<sup>263</sup> and the unpopularity of the system became obvious.

As a means to stave off local opposition against colonial tax policy, Lay Greaves, who had replaced Larymore as Resident, opted for minimum use of force. He contended that the people often took the presence of soldiers as a declaration of war on them.<sup>264</sup> He introduced a poll tax of five shillings (5s) per adult male to replace the unpopular lump sum system in 1910. But like the old system, it was difficult to enforce the new policy of poll tax. The outbreak of the World War I in 1914 particularly affected tax collection. There was the general belief that Britain's hold on its colonies would sag in view of the early defeats the Allied forces suffered in the hands of Germany. There was the general opinion that Germany was going to take over the land after the war. Thus, the time had come for Britain to go. Such sentiments were expressed among the local folks in songs and chats in market places and other social gatherings.<sup>265</sup> Also, an influx of traders from the Southern Protectorate to Akoko following the opening of the Lagos railway extension to Oshogbo in April 1908 worsened the difficulty for British officials. Most of them were cloth sellers and produce buyers. Since they were not used to paying tax in Southern Nigeria, they encouraged the people to resist tax payment.<sup>266</sup> Thus, the use of force to ensure payment and collection of tax continued to be a popular feature of British rule in Akoko, and incessant arrest of tax evaders became commonplace. For example, in November 1914, a detachment of twenty (20) soldiers was sent to supervise tax collection in Akoko by force contrary to the official reports that the

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<sup>263</sup> Apart from the opposition to the lump sum tax policy in Akoko as typified by the Isua event of 1906, similar events have been recorded as having led to riots in some parts of Nigeria during the colonial era. See some examples in;

- a. J.A. Atanda, "The Iseyin-Okeiho Rising of 1916: An Example of Socio-political Conflict in Colonial Nigeria", in *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. iv, no. 4, June, 1969. pp. 499-514
- b. O. Ikime, "Anti-Tax Riot in Warri Division, 1927-1929", in *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1966, pp. 559- 573
- c. A.E. Afigbo, "Revolution and Reaction in Eastern Nigeria, 1900-1929", in *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1966, pp. 539-557

<sup>264</sup> SNP 7/10, 3172/1909/ *Kabba Provincial Report for June Quarterly*, 1909, by H.L. Norton-Trail

<sup>265</sup> Okajare, Solomon Tai. 2012. "The Akoko-Yoruba and Their Neighbours, 1800-1960: A Study in Inter-Group Relations", A PhD thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. p.173

<sup>266</sup> Okajare, Solomon Tai. 2012. "The Akoko-Yoruba and Their Neighbours, 1800-1960: A Study in Inter-Group Relations", A PhD thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. p.173. N.A.K. SNP 7/12, 655/1911, *Kabba Provincial Report*, December Quarter, 1910. On the differences between the Northern and Southern Protectorates in terms of colonial fiscal policy, see T. Tamuno, "British Colonial Administration in Nigeria in the Twentieth Century" in O. Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History...*, pp.393-396.

chiefs themselves were collecting tax from their subjects.<sup>267</sup> In some cases, the colonial officials abused their office by using their patrols for other unofficial purposes like intimidation of the local folks and extortion. This was commented on in 1916 by Mr. R.M. Blackwood, the District Officer in Kabba that year that such a patrol could only be justified if it would be needed for tax collection.<sup>268</sup> This was the general picture of colonial tax policy in Akoko up to the end of 1918. Throughout the period, revolts against colonial rule heightened across Akoko in reaction to the tax policy. Examples of such revolts took place in Arigidi, Ogbagi, Afo, Omuo, Isua, Epinmi, Ipesi, Ifira, Oba, Oka, Ikun, Okeagbe, Oyin and so on.<sup>269</sup>

The foregoing offers a general explication of the establishment and operation of colonial rule in Akokoland from 1900 up to 1918, particularly in the areas of political and administrative restructuring, judicial administration and tax policy. In all aspects, colonial rule in Akokoland during the period not only administratively placed Akokoland in the North against the area's geography and history, it also eroded vital aspects of the communities' pre-colonial social, political, economic and cultural structure. In addition, it introduced the alien feature of internal hegemony of a few communities over many others, thus weakening the once vibrant structures of cohesive inter-communal relations in Akokoland. Therefore, the people always expressed their gross dissatisfaction over their continuous placement in the North with the attendant overlordship of Kabba paramount chief on them. They were not placated by the appointment of Momoh to replace the *Obaro*, a development largely seen as historically wrong. Thus, they continued to seek transfer to the South where they belonged (and still belong) both historically and geographically.

### **3.4 Akokoland under Owo Native Administration, 1919 to 1935**

The agitation of the people of Akokoland for transfer to the South to join their kith and kin was informed by certain obviously unacceptable features of colonial administration. Among others, the overlordship of *Obaro* of Kabba as the Provincial paramount chief, the historically unprecedented imposition of Momoh of Ikare-Akoko as Divisional paramount chief and tax collector, and the cruel, brutal and inhuman manner of collection of poll and other taxes were the immediate factors that made them react against colonial rule. The people's calculation was that "things would be properly situated if they were transferred to

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<sup>267</sup> N.A.K. SNP 10/3, 112P/1915, *Kabba Provincial Report*, 1914

<sup>268</sup> N.A.K. SNP 10/5, 139P/1917, *Annual Report, Ilorin Province*, 1916

<sup>269</sup> Aminu, F. and Kolawole, W. 1997. *Akokoland: History and Distinguished People*, Ibadan: Lizab Nigeria Ltd pp. 24-25.

the South where, *ab initio*, people were not subjected to excruciating taxation policy”.<sup>270</sup> Also, the forced merger of Akokoland with peoples of diverse origins such as the Abunu, Oworo, Owe, Yagba and so on in the Kabba Division was another major cause of agitation.<sup>271</sup>

The Akoko agitation seemed strengthened by a claim made by the *Olowo* of Owo, *Oba* Ladegbegi, on 25th August, 1918 that Akoko towns and villages were under his territorial jurisdiction in the pre-colonial era. It would seem that the colonial authorities accepted this claim as the *Olowo* was paid an annual allowance of £20 between 1900 and 1918, to compensate him for the loss of those towns and villages, which had formed part of the Northern Provinces.<sup>272</sup> Deriving strength for his position from this allowance, the *Olowo* demanded that Owo be reunited with its ‘erstwhile satellite towns’ in Akoko. This development had prompted the colonial authorities to contemplate the transfer of Owo to the Northern Provinces in 1915.<sup>273</sup> Eventually, this idea was dropped and Owo remained in the South. Meanwhile, the colonial authorities set up a commission; Palmer-Hargrove Delimitation Commission<sup>274</sup>, in 1917 to look into the problems of boundary adjustment and recommend as appropriate.

Members of this commission had visited Owo in 1917 when the *Olowo* made a verbal presentation of his demand. He buttressed his position that the Akoko towns and villages were “still paying tributes to him at the moment”<sup>275</sup> However, he did not reveal in what form the tribute was paid. From all indications, that would not have been the case if the *Olowo* received the £20 compensation from 1900 to 1918. The Commission recommended that the two districts of Afenmai and Akoko be merged respectively with the Benin and Ondo Provinces. This recommendation was approved in November 1918 when Colonel Moorhouse, who was then acting on behalf of the Governor-General, announced that the latter had finally

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<sup>270</sup> Interview with Oba Saliu Akadiri Momoh, the *Olukare* of Ikare, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2016

<sup>271</sup> See J. H. Beeley, *Intelligence Report...*, paras. 121- 127

<sup>272</sup> Okajare, Solomon Tai. 2012. “The Akoko-Yoruba and Their Neighbours, 1800-1960: A Study in Inter-Group Relations”, A PhD thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. p.174

<sup>273</sup> N. A. I. Ben Prof. 2/5 B.P.471/191, *Handing Over Notes of Owo District to Ondo Province*, p. 36

<sup>274</sup> Messrs H.R. Palmer and R. Hargrove were Residents in the Northern and Southern Provinces respectively at that time. See details in H.W.B. Bewley, Ondo Prof. 4/1, *Annual Report on Ondo Province*, 1923, pp. 5-6

<sup>275</sup> This claim is not popular among the Akoko elements. The *Olukare* strongly debunked it in an interview on 18/08/2016. However, Akoko is more often than not derided as *Ugbo Akoko*, (meaning the back wood region of Akoko) by local folks in Owo, and the *Olowo* is often praise-sung as *Oko Ekiti*, *Oko Akoko* as a reminder of the multi-directional victories recorded by the *Olowo*.

agreed to transfer Akoko towns to the South, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Eventually, the approval (of the Secretary of State for the Colonies) was obtained and the colonial authorities set out to implement the transfer of Akoko to the South, and took cognizance of the Olowo's claim. Mr. Hargrove convened a meeting with Olowo and Akoko traditional rulers on December 20, 1918. The meeting ended with an agreement on a Native Administration over Owo, Ifon and Akoko towns, with the Olowo as the Paramount Chief. But sensing the agitating disposition of the Akoko traditional rulers, Hargrove sternly warned the Olowo not to meddle in the internal affairs of Akoko unless the received order from the Ondo Provincial Resident. On the other hand, the Akoko chiefs and people were to remain under the District Officer of Kabba until 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1919, when the new arrangement was to take off officially. It can, therefore, be said that the Owo Division made up of Owo, Ifon and Akoko districts came into existence officially on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1919, when it was decided "with the concurrence of all the people concerned that the River Osse to its confluence with Ogbese, south of Okeluse, should form the boundary between Benin and Ondo Provinces".<sup>276</sup> It would seem that the above was an answer by the colonial authorities to the Olowo's request and the Akoko people's desire to be moved to the South. Also, Ifon retained its position as the seat of government until 1925, but Olowo was the Paramount Chief.

In the new Native Administration, the underlying principle was that the whole Division should be governed, as elsewhere in Nigeria, through traditional institutions. A major feature of that principle was administration of justice through native courts. Thus, some native courts were established in Akoko along the line of the District Head system. The Ikare and Ikaram Native Courts were established by warrant on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 1919 as Grade 'C' courts. The Olukare presided over the court at Ikare, while other members were the village heads in the district and a few Ikare chiefs. Internal wrangling gravely affected the court until 1923 when Momoh succeeded Ajagunna again as the Olukare. Akala of Ikaram was the president of the court at Ikaram. But from 1921, another member of the court, Saba of Akunnu, presided over the court in its last sitting of every month. This was probably to protect the interest of distant villages in the Ikaram group. This practice was on until 1929, when the sessional court was closed down due to non-performance. The Isua court functioned under the presidency of the Olistua with the Onifira as his deputy.

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<sup>276</sup> J.A. Mackenzie, "Annual Report on Owo Division, 1927". See also "Government Notice No. 69, p.230 of Gazette No. 34, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1919" for the boundary of the new Owo Division.

On 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1921, the Oka native court was set up with the Olubaka as President, and other village heads as well as some quarters' chiefs in Oka as members. With an extensive area of jurisdiction, the court was comparatively more effective in its duties, but the president was reported not to hesitate in using the court "as a means of disposing summarily of his political enemies". Following the creation of the Omuo district in 1927, Ogbagi district had a new native court on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1927. The *Owa* of Ogbagi and Zaki of Arigidi were President and Vice President respectively. Also, the Omuo native court was created with the *Olomuo* as President.<sup>277</sup>

Also, in his capacity as the Native Authority of the Division, the *Olowo* proposed the establishment of a Judicial Council with full jurisdictional power to entertain appeals from all the native courts in the Division. The proposed Council was to consist of the *Olowo* as President, eight of his chiefs, the *Oloja* of Ifon and the five district heads from Akoko. At first, the colonial officials turned down the proposal. But it was granted in 1922 and the Council fully established to comprise all the district heads in the Division. The immediate result of this for Akoko was a lopsided representation in the judicial system. This was because the *Olowo* soon became the *de facto* overlord even in judicial administration. This situation was aptly captured by Bewley that, "As might be naturally expected, the *Owa* (as the *Olowo* was then known) was overjoyed but on the contrary, the Akokos (sic) did not like the idea of once again coming under the *Olowo*, from whom they had been free for a number of years".<sup>278</sup> The Owo Quarter chiefs also became over-bearing by frequently interfering in issues that were internal to Akoko, apparently on the instruction of the *Olowo*. The immediate import of this was that Akoko chiefs and people soon realized that the euphoria that greeted their transfer to the South was misplaced. Thus, they began to agitate for exclusion from the Judicial Council, and total separation from the Owo Division.

Another major component of the Native Administration was the fiscal policy. Following the transfer of Akoko to Owo Division, the colonial authorities took steps to extend taxation to other parts of the Division. All revenues accruing to the Native Administration would be paid to the Native Treasury from which fund was to be provided for

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<sup>277</sup>Olukoju, A.O. 1982. "A History of Local Government in Akokoland, 1900-1962: A Study in Political Intergration and Change", M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.pp.22-25 contain some hints on the establishment and composition of the various native courts in the Akoko Districts.

<sup>278</sup>Okajare, Solomon Tai. 2012. "The Akoko-Yoruba and Their Neighbours, 1800-1960: A Study in Inter-Group Relations", A PhD thesis submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. p.178.

payment of salaries of chiefs and other local administration personnel, for the building of roads, bridges, hospitals and the execution of other numerous public works. From 1919, a new tax regime of two shillings for taxable adults at Owo and Ifon and seven shillings, six pence for Akoko, was introduced. Thus, Akoko taxable adults had to pay more than thrice of what their counterparts paid in Owo and Ifon. This development angered the chiefs and people of Akoko. What is more, the collection of cattle tax (jangali), that the people of Akoko had paid up to 1918 in the North, continued up till 1922 when it was finally abolished.<sup>279</sup> In short, the hope of the people of Akoko in 1918 that they would enjoy some respite from the burdensome tax policy in the North upon their transfer to the Southern Provinces, where there had been no taxes was dashed with the above discriminatory tax policy of 1919. It is on record that the Owo chiefs regarded the people of Akoko “as a fruitful source of income and as contributors towards their very considerable salaries”.<sup>280</sup>

In the following year, a high-powered Akoko delegation, led by the *Olukare* and the *Olomuo*, was dispatched to Owo to register Akoko’s complaint before the Colonial Governor, Hugh Clifford, who visited Owo in August. The colonial Governor found in details of the revenue and expenditure of 1919-1920 that, while the Owo District paid £2,890 in tax, half of which went to the Government, Owo chiefs were paid £2,400 as salaries.<sup>281</sup> In revenue, the Akoko paid over two-third of the amounts between 1919 and 1928. Random samples of the total revenue accrued to Owo Division during the period from poll tax are given as follows; 1919: £8, 607:11/9a, 1920: £4803: 10/3a, 1921: £5,603:7/-, 1922: £6, 350, 1923: £7, 799: 4/-, 1924: £9,600, 1928: £6, 940. Also in 1920 alone, the Akoko courts accounted for £2184: 10/- out of the figure of £3, 234: 14/- for the whole Division.<sup>282</sup> The implication of this was that expenditure at Owo District was mainly financed by revenue from Akoko in addition to what was derived locally at Owo as paltry addition. This elicited a comment from the Chief Secretary that;

The Owos (sic) are living on the Akokos (sic) and His Excellency has grave doubts whether the latter should be subject to the Owa at all. In brief, the sums being spent on the Owo chiefs, by whom are meant the chiefs of one of the districts of the division and not for the division itself are already out of proportion to the amount

<sup>279</sup> Akomolafe, C.O. “The Introduction of Direct Taxation: An Ingredient of British Administration in Akoko, 1900-1935”- *Mimeo*, p.9.

<sup>280</sup> N.A.I. Ondo Prof. 4/1, *Annual Report on Ondo Province*, 1923, p.18.

<sup>281</sup> N.A.I. Ondo Prof. 4/1, *Annual Report on Ondo Province*, 1923, para. 51. See also, F. Aminu and W. Kolawole, 1997, *Akokoland: History and Distinguished People*, Ibadan: Lizab Nigeria Ltd., p.35

<sup>282</sup> See Ondo Prof. 4/1, *Annual Reports on Ondo Province*, 1919 to 1929

which that district contributes in taxation. The authority exercised by the Owa in the Akoko country is almost negligible, but the Owa gets their money nevertheless.<sup>283</sup>

The above easily captures the skewed fiscal regime that characterized native administration in Owo Division up to 1935, although with minor modifications. For example, there was a general redistribution of emolument in accordance with the taxation worth of the districts. This was why the annual salary of the Olowo was reduced from £600 to £400.

Between 1919 and 1929, agitation for severance from Owo Division was rife in Akoko. However, the Lieutenant Governor suggested the resuscitation of the central judicial council. In reaction, the Akoko chiefs demanded that such resuscitation must be on the conditions that such council would be an assembly of equals in which the Olowo would be first among equals, and a separate appeal court be established for Akoko.<sup>284</sup> Eventually, the Akoko Appeal Court and Owo Central Advisory Council were constituted separately in April 1930 following the approval of proposals for their establishment in November 1929.<sup>285</sup> This simply marked Akoko's first experience of severance from Owo Division, but the judicial council<sup>286</sup> agreed upon in 1929 still held them together.

The continuance of skewed fiscal policy in the Division, which put Akoko at a gross disadvantage, led to a more rigorous and unprecedented tempo of agitation for separation of Akoko from the Division. At this point, it became clear that neither force nor diplomacy could hinder the Akoko people's determination to have their separate administrative structure. The 1919 arrangement, which had brought Akoko to the Owo Division, was dissolved in 1933. Thus, a separate Native Administration with all paraphernalia of a colonial authority was created for Akoko after the approval of the intelligence reports gathered by Mr. J.H. Beeley in 1934. The proposals were ratified after consultations with the people of Akoko. On April 1, 1935, the Akoko Native Administration took effect as a separate political entity.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>283</sup>N.A.I. Ondo Prof. 4/1, *Annual Report on Ondo Province*, 1923, para. 52

<sup>284</sup> N.A.I. CSO Papers, file no. 11874, vol. III, *Annual Report, Ondo Province*, 1924, para. 48. Also, N.A.I. Ondo Prof. 4/1, 11, *Annual Report, Ondo Province*, 1929, para. 13

<sup>285</sup> Olukoju, A.O. 1982, "A History of Local Government in Akokoland, 1900-1962: A Study in Political Intergration and Change", M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. p.43.

<sup>286</sup> Upon establishment, the Judicial Council consisted six Akoko District heads (as Omuo district had been created in 1927) in addition to Oloja of Ifon, and the Olowo still the President.

<sup>287</sup> See J. H. Beeley, *Intelligence Report...1934*, paras. 154-162 for details on the proposals. See also F. Aminu and W. Kolawole, 1997, *Akokoland: History and Distinguished People*, Ibadan: Lizab Nigeria Ltd., pp. 42-46



The foregoing shows that from 1935, Akokoland's history in the colonial years began to witness another phase namely, separate administrative structure out of the Division. Indeed, that year marked a period of transition from 'district-within-a-Division' status to that of a separate Native Administration for Akoko. Thus, the area was ushered in to the third phase of her history under colonial administration.

### **3.5 The Akoko Native Administration, 1935 -1948**

When the new Akoko Native Administration began in 1935, the call for more administrative reforms became commonplace and unstoppable. Also, colonial rule had up till then sown the seed of discord in Akoko by engineering an internal hegemony of one community over another; a development that was quite alien to the people's pre-colonial social system. Oka and Ikare became more enmeshed in the complex web of struggle for superiority. This inter-communal rivalry was brought to the fore in the 1930s with the proposed creation of Akoko Appeal Court and the headquarters of the proposed Native Administration. On the one hand, the *Olubaka* wanted to become the Appeal Court President and he wanted Oka named the headquarters of the Native Administration. On the other hand, the *Olukare* wanted either of the two positions. Eventually, the *Olubaka* was named president of the court, while Ikare became the headquarters.<sup>288</sup> Of course, the *Olubaka* saw the whole arrangement as half-measure as he was willing to win all. But the arrangement was sustained and the Native Administration took off in April 1, 1935.

The main impact here is that the 'divide and rule' style of the colonial system had encouraged some Akokoland rulers to lay claim to hegemonic leadership position against the dictates of history. As colonial rule progressed, the people's experience under the Kabba and Owo hegemonies had fertilized in some Akokoland communities, particularly Oka-Akoko and to some extent, Ikare-Akoko, the syndrome of superiority and domination. Gradually, the pre-colonial trend of inter-communal equality and brotherhood, which Akokoland had been noted for, was being pushed to the background. By 1933-34, it became evident that the people were grossly opposed to the District Head system in use in the Owo Division, and that they needed a structure that would guarantee internal autonomy with administrative and judicial powers given to their kings and village heads. This prompted Mr. J.H. Beeley to recommend the restructuring of the District Head system into village groups with strong

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<sup>288</sup>Omosola, A.B, 76, farmer/community leader. He is very verse in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history of Akokoland. His knowledge of the history of Oka-Akoko is particularly commendable. 30/7/2018.

consideration for linguistic and historical bonds.<sup>289</sup> Thus, by 1935, Akoko was divided into seven village groups as follows:

- (a) Ikare group comprised Ikare, Akungba, Supare, Oba, Ugbe, and Iboropa;
- (b) Oka group comprised Oka, Ikun and Ishe;
- (c) Ogbagi group had Ogbagi, Irun, Afin and Ese;
- (d) Arigidi group had Arigidi, Erusu, Oyin, Okeagbe, Ojo Igashi, Iye and Eriti;
- (e) Ikaram group comprised Ikaram, Akunnu, Auga, Daja, Gedegede, Ikakumo, Ora, Efifa, Eshuku and Oso;
- (f) Omuo group had Omuo and Uro,
- (g) Isua group comprised Isua, Ifira, Epinmi<sup>290</sup>, Upe, Ipesi

and Sosan.

The town after which the group was named was usually the headquarters, and the king of such town headed the council created for the group. In addition to the group council, an advisory council with Akoko-wide jurisdiction was created with the mandate to discuss and decide on issues of central revenue and expenditure. Presidents of all village groups, and all village heads were members of this council.

Also, each village had a considerable quantum of internal autonomy over its internal affairs, but the village council was still subordinate to the group council, as the latter was also subordinate to the advisory council. This was a form of three-tier system of local administration, which largely conformed with Donald Cameron's<sup>291</sup> reform "to develop indigenous mode of local government based on the tradition of the people (sic) at the same time adaptable to modern trends".<sup>292</sup> Each village also had a grade 'D' court where the village head presided with elders or family heads as members. The middle aged (25-45 years old) performed police duties as it was in the traditional setting. Such village court had power to handle both criminal and civil cases, which fines would not exceed £15. On the whole, this

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<sup>289</sup> J. H. Beeley, *Intelligence Report...1934*,

<sup>290</sup> Epinmi was hitherto in the Oka District.

<sup>291</sup> Donald Cameron was Nigeria's colonial Governor between 1931 and 1934.

<sup>292</sup> Quoted from F. Aminu and W. Kolawole, 1997. *Akokoland: History and Distinguished People*, Ibadan: Lizab Nigeria Ltd., p.42.

system made Akoko people have “a feeling of freedom not exactly of the pre-colonial character, but quite close to it”.<sup>293</sup>

The foregoing represents a general picture of the early years of Akoko Native Administration up to 1948. But, it remains to be noted that the rivalry engendered particularly between Oka-Akoko and Ikare-Akoko over the appeal court presidency and seat of government still subsisted. The *Olubaka* was not placated even with the provision that the *Olukare* would never parade himself as the head of Akokoland.<sup>294</sup> Consequently, the *Olubaka* led the Oka village group out of the Akoko Native Administration, to form a separate Oka Native Administration. On the long run, however, the two parallel systems served as a major boost for development in Akokoland because, “As vehicles for the development of the grassroots and maintenance of law and order, the two Native Administrations did a lot in the area of provision of public utilities such as dispensaries, roads, N.A. offices and the maintenance of health services and grants to schools....”.<sup>295</sup> Thus, in Akokoland there were two Native Administrations between 1935 and 1948 when the Akoko Federation Council was formed. This further underscored the rivalry between Oka-Akoko and Ikare-Akoko,<sup>296</sup> and marked the beginning of the final phase of Akokoland history in the colonial period.

### **3.6 Akoko Federation Council: The Final Phase of Colonial Rule, 1948-1960**

After 1945, the tempo and agitation for administrative reforms across Nigeria became more strident than before.<sup>297</sup> It was in this mood that the Akokoland chiefs worked together to form the Akoko Federation Council that would integrate the two administrations.<sup>298</sup> A meeting to this effect was held at Ikare-Akoko in March 18, 1948 under the chairmanship of T.B. Bovell-Jones who was the acting President. And, for the usual reasons of not being able to secure the headquarters status, Oka-Akoko, which had agreed to join earlier, backed out

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<sup>293</sup> Information extracted during interview with the Olukare of Ikare-Akoko, *Oba Saliu Akadiri Momoh*, 80, interviewed at his palace in Ikare-Akoko, 18/08/2016. Pa. Ogodu Patrick, 85, community leader. Interviewed beside the Asin’s palace, Oka-Odo, Oka-Akoko. 30/7/2018

<sup>294</sup> Interview with the Olukare, *Oba Saliu Akadiri Momoh*, at Ikare Akoko on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2017

<sup>295</sup> F. Aminu and W. Kolawole, 1997. *Akokoland: History and Distinguished People*, Ibadan: Lizab Nigeria Ltd., p. 46.

<sup>296</sup> This point has been severally buttressed by Ogunyemi, Tunji, 50, lecturer, Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. 24/01/2018, Chief Ojo, S.A, 58, Public Relations Officer, Oka Day Planning Committee/farmer, No 1, Shineshine Villa, Ikese Oka-Akoko, Ondo State. 30/7/2018, and Pa. Omosola, A.B

<sup>297</sup> This was following the end of the Second World War. For details on the impact of the war, see G.O. Olusanya, “The Nationalist Movement in Nigeria” in O. Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History...*, pp. 560-565

<sup>298</sup> The chiefs were also encouraged and emboldened by their counterpart in Ekiti who had formed the Ekiti Federation in 1947.

later. Despite this initial setback, the Council was formed without Oka-Akoko in 1948 in line with the extant colonial policy of broad representation and indigenous participation in local government. With this event, Akokoland had become well prepared for the unfolding scenario of political development in contemporary Nigeria. Akoko people were further emboldened in 1949-50 to demand for a separate Division for Akokoland as the resuscitated judicial council of 1929 still tied them in a way with Owo. Akokoland chiefs called for the abrogation of the group system for a more efficient federalist local administration in Akokoland, and “specifically demanded for a Divisional Council for Akokoland and Local Councils for “every town or reasonable village”. The initial figure of 28 local councils was later reduced to 19”.<sup>299</sup> At this point, it was becoming clear that the Akokoland people were gaining a louder voice in asking for more administrative reforms.

Yet, the colonial authorities had its official mind-set of establishing a divisional council without a president for the Owo Division. Apparently, this was to allay the fears of Akoko as to any continuous tie with Owo. Also, there were to be four district councils for Owo, Akoko, Oka-Akoko and Ekamarun; and seven local councils for Ikare-Akoko, Isua-Akoko, Ogbagi-Akoko, Omuo and Irekari group councils as well as Ikare-Akoko and Owo towns. These proposals were entirely rejected particularly those that would imply continuous tie with Owo. Thus, Akokoland leaders and chiefs demanded for a divisional council and several local councils for Akokoland. These demands were collated and articulated by a “Committee for Preliminary Investigation into the Application of the Western Region Local Government Law in Akoko”, using the platform of the Akoko Federal Council. Members of the Committee included Hon A.O. Ogedengbe and Hon R.A. Olusa of the Western Region House of Assembly, the Zaki of Arigidi-Akoko, the Olisua of Isua, the Osunla of Erusu-Akoko, Chief Ogundipe, the Olisa of Irun, Chief Alabilogbo of Ogbagi-Akoko, Mr. J.O. Oguntuyi, and Mr. G.O. Akusebo, the Native Authority Treasurer.<sup>300</sup> Meanwhile, Mr. Donald Cameron; the Divisional Officer, had encouraged Oka to work with the rest of Akoko in this new struggle. A joint Akoko and Oka-Akoko committee later toured the area between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> August 1953 “to ascertain the types of local government demanded by the people”. The committee found that “37 towns and villages desired a two-tier structure (divisional and

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<sup>299</sup> A. Olukoju, “The Western Region of Nigeria Local Government Law of 1952: A Study of Application to Akokoland, 1952-1962” in Olukoju Ayodeji, Apata, Z.O. & Olayemi Akinmumi (eds.) 2003. *Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone*, Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication.p.205.

<sup>300</sup> A. Olukoju, “The Western Region of Nigeria Local Government Law of 1952: A Study of Application to Akokoland, 1952-1962” in Olukoju Ayodeji, Apata, Z.O. & Olayemi Akinmumi (eds.) 2003 *Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone*, Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication.p.205.

local councils). Only Ogbagi-Akoko, Ikaram-Akoko and Oka-Akoko demanded a three-tier structure, while the people of Upe-Akoko and Isua-Akoko were divided on which structure to adopt. Sosan-Akoko on the other hand registered its desire to join the proposed Irekari Local Council in Owo Division, and so refused to cooperate with the committee”.<sup>301</sup> The grave import of this was that Akoko communities were yet to speak with one voice on their march to political self-determination.

Later in 1953, the Divisional Officer, I.D. Cameron, unveiled the officially approved proposal. The main component of this proposal was a three-tier system in the existing Owo Division, obviously an unpopular option in Akokoland. There were to be fourteen local councils for all the Akoko and Oka Native Administrations, and a divisional council for the new Akoko District and the Owo District. He informed that the proposed Akoko District would be a rating authority.<sup>302</sup> These proposals were indicative of the fact that the official mind was already made notwithstanding the people’s popular demand.

Oka-Akoko was excluded from the proposed divisional council and opted instead for an all-purpose district council. This was conveyed to the Resident in September 8, 1954. Twenty days later, the legal instruments establishing Akoko councils were approved by the Regional Executive Council at Ibadan, and thus the coast was cleared for full “application of Western Region Local Government Law of 1952 in Akokoland”.<sup>303</sup> But before now, the Divisional Officer encouraged Akoko people to accept one divisional council with Owo as such would enhance an efficient, financially stable and internally autonomous local government system. His suggestion was accepted on the basis that the divisional headquarters would be sited somewhere between Akoko and Owo.

Eventually, this recommendation on the number and composition of Akoko local council was accepted with minor modifications. Six councils of Ikare, Oka, Omuo, Isua, Ogbagi, Irun, were granted. Others made of people of two or more communities were: Arigidi Local Council (Arigidi and Iye), Upe-Epinmi Local Council, Ikamerin Local Council

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<sup>301</sup>A. Olukoju, “The Western Region of Nigeria Local Government Law of 1952: A Study of Application to Akokoland, 1952-1962” in Olukoju Ayodeji, Apata, Z.O. & Olayemi Akinmumi (eds.) 2003. *Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone*, Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication.p.205.

<sup>302</sup> A. Olukoju, “The Western Region of Nigeria Local Government Law of 1952: A Study of Application to Akokoland, 1952-1962” in Olukoju Ayodeji, Apata, Z.O. & Olayemi Akinmumi (eds.) 2003. *Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone*, Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication.p.205.

<sup>303</sup> A. Olukoju, “The Western Region of Nigeria Local Government Law of 1952: A Study of Application to Akokoland, 1952-1962” in Olukoju Ayodeji, Apata, Z.O. & Olayemi Akinmumi (eds.) 2003 *Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone*, Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication.p.210.

(Auga, Kakumo, Iboropa, Ise and Ugbe) Ajowa Local Council (Akunnu, Ojo, Daja Gedegede, Ora, Igasi, Uro, Oso, Efifa, Eriti, Esuku), and Ikaram Local Council (Ikaram and Iyani). In all, Akokoland had two district councils in Oka-Akoko and Ikare-Akoko by February 1954. In addition, there were twelve local councils (established on 26th March, 1954), and the Akoko Divisional Council (established to replace the old Akoko Native Authority on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1954). Also, the Akoko Divisional Council was to have sixty-nine members, eighteen of whom should be traditional (appointed)<sup>304</sup> and fifty-one elected. The proportion of the elected members was; Ikare District Council (10), Ikamerin Local Council (6), Ajowa-Akoko and Ilumejo Local Councils (5 each), Omuo Local Council (4), Arigidi-Akoko, Ogbagi-Akoko, Upe-Epinmi-Akoko, Isua-Akoko, Isowopo Local Councils (3 each), Irun-Akoko, Ikaram-Akoko, Ilelabo Local Councils (2 each). Elections into these councils were held between 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1955 in only twenty-two out of the three hundred and thirty-three wards to which the councils had been divided.<sup>305</sup>

The Akoko Divisional Council was inaugurated on the 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1955 following its establishment by the instrument of Western Region Law of Nigeria of 1954. To avoid the old rivalry among Akokoland chiefs, rotational presidency was approved for the council, among the following traditional rulers; the *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko, *Olukare*, *Olomuo*, *Zaki* of Arigidi-Akoko, *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko, *Olisua* of Isua-Akoko, *Alale* of Akungba-Akoko, *Onirun* of Irun-Akoko, *Olusupare* of Supare-Akoko and the *Akala* of Ikaram-Akoko. The *Olukare* was appointed the first President, while Hon I.S Popoola, the *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko and Member House of Representative was elected its first chairman. It should be noted that all these fundamental developments took place in Akoko history after the introduction of the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution, which has as its main feature as the establishment of federalism in Nigeria. Also, while it can be admitted that party politics had not been sufficiently embraced by the people, it was noteworthy that many of the councils had their flair for the Action Group led by late Chief Obafemi Awolowo.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> The appointed traditional rulers/members included the Olukare, the Olomuo, the Zaki of

Arigidi, the Owa of Ogbagi, the Olisua, the Alale of Akungba, the Ajana of Afa, the Onirun of Irun, the Olisupare, the Akala of Ikaram, the Olupe of Ipe, the Oloba of Oba, the Olufira of Ifira, the Oluwade of Akunnu, the Osunla of Erusu, the Oloja of Ojo, the Egbiri of Epinmi, and the Owa of Ikare. . Olukoju, "The Western Region of Nigeria Local Government Law of 1952: A Study of Application to Akokoland, 1952-1962" in Olukoju Ayodeji, Apata, Z.O. & Olayemi Akinmumi (eds.) 2003 *Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone*, Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication.p.210.

<sup>305</sup> N.A.I. Ondo Prof, 1/1, 2937, vol. II, "Application of Local Government Ordinance to Akoko of Owo", p. 300

<sup>306</sup> N.A.I. Ondo Prof, 1/1, 2937, vol. II, "Application of Local Government Ordinance to Akoko of Owo", p.300

It can, therefore, be claimed from the foregoing that with the introduction of the Western Region Local Government Law of 1952, local government became well entrenched in Akokoland particularly from 1954. The councils settled down and began to operate the new system. Yet, there was no uniformity in the operation as shown in the composition above. For example, each of the first six in Akokoland, namely, Ikare-Akoko, Oka-Akoko, Omuo, Isua-Akoko, Ogbagi-Akoko, Irun-Akoko, was homogenous, and the quantum of internal autonomy enjoyed by the councils differed from one to another. While Ikare-Akoko and Oka-Akoko were to have three committees; Finance, General Purposes, and Works, the others were to have only the first two. Thus, the rate of political and social development was slowed down in most of the councils. But, this structure was in place from 1954 through the remaining years of colonial rule. Also, at this time across Nigeria, local politicians had become well integrated into the mainstream of politics both at the local and national levels. Thus, the 1952 arrangement remains a watershed in the political history of Akokoland.

This chapter has discussed the four phases of colonial rule in Akokoland viz: 1900 to 1918, when Akokoland was merged with the North; 1919-1935, when the area became a part of the Owo Divisional Native Administration; 1935-1948, when there was a separate system for Akokoland outside the old Owo structure, and 1948-60, when three-tier system of local government was introduced. In all these, Akokoland had a chequered history, which was marked by transition from one phase of colonial domination to another. This trend was soon internalized by the operations of colonial rule as one set of communities was upgraded and set up in hegemonic position over others. Thus, the pre-colonial political culture of heterogeneous, but peaceful co-existence suffered severe setback in the face of divisive colonial power politics. At every turn, it became clear to any discerning mind that colonial rule was a system foisted primarily to ensure speedy and consistent exploitation of the colonized people's resources for the ultimate benefit of the coloniser's metropolitan economy. As it was everywhere in Nigeria, colonial authorities provided a number of social amenities ostensibly for developmental purposes in Akokoland. But actually, such provision was intended to fast-track the process of economic exploitation, cultural imperialism and political domination of the people and their communities. While they lost their identity between 1900 and 1933/34, things became far better from 1935 for Akoko communities when they had their separate Native Administration in spite of backlash of internal wrangling and bad blood among various interest groups.

### 3.7 Impact of Colonial Rule on Kingship in Akokoland up to 1960

The establishment of colonial rule after the Native Authority Proclamation of 1910 remained an event that continues to impact and shapes the indigenous political system in Akokoland. Traditional rulers who were hitherto, seen as embodiment of powers and authorities by the people lost such status during colonial rule. They became subjects rather than the objects or put succinctly the conscience of the society. Against their wishes, they were compelled through tempting offers and official gratification to help the British achieve their policy of colonial exploitation. Consequently, the traditional rulers became the yes men of the colonilists in the much talked about system of indirect rule. It was the opinion of Awe that the traditional rulers were not allowed a voice in the running of their domains as the leadership of the British colonial authority was forced on them.<sup>307</sup> This development put the traditional political institution under the indirect rule at a great disrepute as the custodians became the enemies of the people that were naturally expected to rally round them in time of despair because of the anti-people roles they were made to carryout and implement to the benefit of the colonial masters and the disadvantage of the people. Despite the enormous power allowed the traditional rulers in the colonial years, their activities ran contrary to the traditions of the people. The idea of native authority became a system that was reputed for its notoriety as the traditional rulers became the sole agent of and representative of the colonial exploitative and repressive administration. The hitherto cherished components of our culture and history was seriously endangered as the traditional rulers' ultimate concern was how to survive and stay relevant in the face of waned relevance and lost of their authority. It therefore, became a struggle for survival rather than striving to protect and defend our cherished culture from going into total extinction.<sup>308</sup>

In the same vein, the traditional rulers put more succinctly became the compelled 'obedient servants' used to implement harsh colonial policies which were most of the time achieved through coercion without the option of choice on the part of the people.<sup>309</sup> The continue survival of the traditional rulers as the head of their domains was premised on their loyalty and readiness to do the biddings of the colonialists without complaints.<sup>310</sup> The impact

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<sup>307</sup>Bolanle Awe, "Nation-Building and Cultural Identity: The Colonial Experience", in Peter P. Ekeh and Garba Ashiwaju (eds.) 1989. *Nigeria Since Independence: The First 25 Years, Volume VII, Culture*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, p.19.

<sup>308</sup>Bolanle Awe, "Nation-Building and Cultural Identity:.....", p.19.

<sup>309</sup>Patrick Heinecke 1986, *Popular Fallacies in the Nigerian Social Sciences* (Okpella, S. Asekome and Company, Publishers), p. 6.

<sup>310</sup>Patrick Heinecke 1986. *Popular Fallacies in the Nigerian Social Sciences* (Okpella, S. Asekome and Company, Publishers), p. 6.



of this strange development was the complete alteration of the traditional *modus operandi* that characterised the workings of the traditional political institution before the subversion caused by the colonial rule in the period under review. Despite the fact that the traditional rulers enjoyed certain privileges as allowed by the British colonial authority, their status did not in any way improve. The traditional aura that announced their authority and giving meaning to their leadership suffered great impairment.<sup>311</sup> This was why the establishment of native authorities came with different reactions and opinions. It was submitted that:

The establishment of native authorities came with mixed feelings which led to a build-up of conflicting opinions as to what the exact functions of the traditional rulers should be. Consequently, two schools of thoughts emerged to settle the debate on the functionality and the main use of the new form of government which is expected to run within the dictates of the colonialists. The first school suggested whether these native authorities should be subordinating agents of colonial administration while the second school suggested that the local system of government should be allowed to operate and assisted to evolve a more sophisticated local administration which fits into the current of the time.<sup>312</sup>

British colonialism impacted the political history of Akokoland in many ways. Generally, all the traditional chiefs lost their authority following the introduction and operation of colonial rule. The awe and reverence hitherto attached to the office and personality of a traditional chief evaporated. There were instances of official interference in the process of selection of local rulers in Akokoland. This became commonplace after the appointment of Momoh as the District Paramount Head against the dictates of history and traditions in 1914. This was to promote unmitigated crisis across Akokoland, but particularly in Ikare between *Olukare*; Ajaguna and Momoh. Issues came to the peak from 1917 when Momoh was jailed by the colonial authority for some fraudulent charges. The *Olukare*, Ajaguna was also jailed later only to be released in November, 1919. Following this, voting was introduced to the process of installing an *Olukare*, and Momoh was declared winner with overwhelming majority.<sup>313</sup> Thus, Ajaguna was deprived of his throne as he was accused maladministration, aiding and abetting three well known thieves to escape arrest.<sup>314</sup> The Mackenzie's report that accorded paramountcy to the *Alale* as far back as 1924 actually

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<sup>311</sup>Patrick Heinecke 1986. *Popular Fallacies in the Nigerian Social Sciences* (Okpella, S. Asekome and Company, Publishers), p. 6.

<sup>312</sup>Eleazu, Uma O. 1977. *Federalism and Nation-Building: The Nigerian Experience: 1954-1964*. Elms Court: Arthur H. Stockwell, Ltd., p.255.

<sup>313</sup>Ondo Prof. 4/1, 2., *Annual Report*, Owo Division, 1920-21

<sup>314</sup>N.A.I. Ondo Prof. 4/1, 6, C.S.O. Papers File No. 09166, *Annual Report*, Ondo Province, 1922, para. 49.

succeeded in rewriting the political history of the people of Akungba-Akoko who he has no knowledge of their history and culture. This was the kind of evasive decision made by colonial officials across Akokoland with recourse to its long time effect on the people. One thing that is certain is the fact that, colonial rule recklessly succeeded in establishing deep rooted mutual distrust among many ruling families in Akokoland, especially those aggrieved off usurpation and short changings of their legitimate rights to the thrones of the forefathers.

Colonial rule took away from the people the traditional right to hold the traditional rulers to account with regards to performance and administration of their area of jurisdiction. The relationship and link that existed between the people and their rulers in the pre-colonial period was removed as the traditional rulers became the paid agents of the colonial government. Their appointment became the prerogative of the colonial administration not by the popular choice of the people and the kingmakers. Letters of appointment were now the source of their power not through rules and procedures allowed by customs and traditions. It was now the case of he who paid the piper dictates the tune.<sup>315</sup> Strange things were infused into the traditional political system which was largely meant to unsettle the traditional rulers thereby hampering them from putting concerted efforts in resiting the exploitative policies of colonialism. It was expected that the creation of the Oka Native Court will help in the internal dispense of justice and maintain orderliness without undue interference from external forces. The case was, however, different as the colonial government had strong control of all that happen in the court. With the emergence of the *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko as the consenting authority and paramount ruler of Okaland in defiance of tradition of the people, the colonial officials succeeded in altering tradition and creating serious bad blood among hitherto united people of Oka-Akoko with very strong bond of brotherhood and historical fraternity. Oka-Akoko became divided into two opposing blocs: upland (Oke-Oka) under the *Olubaka* and the lowland Oka (Oka-Odo) under the leadership of the *Asin*. The disputes between the *Olubaka* and the *Asin* manifested in the membership of the Oka Native Court. Aletile of Oka-Odo was not expected to sit in the court as a member by the order of the District Officer of Owo Division.<sup>316</sup> This development was anchored on the wrong assumption that the people of Oka-Odo were rebellious against colonial government policies.

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<sup>315</sup>Pita Ogaba Agbese, 2004, "Chiefs, Constitutions, and Policies in Nigeria", *West Africa Review*, Issue 6, p. 8. ISSN: 1525-4488

<sup>316</sup>N.A.I. File No. 145 vol III, Oka District: General Political Inspection Notes, Owo Division, 1948.

Much as the argument could be made speak in favour of the disadvantaged position the traditional rulers found themselves under colonial rule, their dispositions towards perceived political opponents and the people who dared to speak against their roles in the promotion of colonial repressive policies negates whatever sympathy anybody had for them. The use of local institutions such as police, prisons and courts at the local level to gag oppositions and even intimidate concerned members of the community meant only one thing, which was that the traditional rulers during despite working as subordinates to the colonial government became so powerful that they began to use their enormous powers to oppress the very people they were meant to serve and protect.<sup>317</sup> It goes without saying, therefore, that most traditional chiefs in Akokoland as elsewhere in colonial Nigeria, fell victim of the British political expediency as they were used to stabilise colonial rule and discarded thereafter with inexplicable loss of both their traditional status, honour and prestige. Hence, the British manipulations, as exemplified in the Momoh-Ajaguna story above, set off a chain of events whose impact on Akokoland political history were great and fundamental.

The next chapter discussed kingship and power politics in Akokoland since 1960. While countenancing the place of the institution in the early years of independence in Nigeria – 1960 to 1966, discussions were extended to how the kingship institution in Akokoland fared during the military and civilian governments that ruled from 1966 to 1999.

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<sup>317</sup>Pita Ogaba Agbese, 2004. "Chiefs, Constitutions, and Policies in Nigeria", *West Africa Review*, Issue 6. pp.7-8.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### KINGSHIP AND POWER POLITICS IN AKOKOLAND SINCE 1960

...added to this category of persons are politicians who on coming to power debased the chieftaincy (kingship) institution which, according to them, should remain sacred.<sup>318</sup>

The attainment of independence in 1960 opened a new vista in the political history of Nigeria as the new nation, was after long years of tortuous journey in the hands of aggressive external control and coupled with series of destructive internal disturbances across villages, towns, cities throughout the polity, had the first opportunity at self-governance in the modern sense. Retrospectively, historians and other scholars have explicitly documented and argued the huge impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the legitimate trade, colonial rule and the forced union called amalgamation in 1914 on Nigeria. The attainment of political or flag independence was, however, not an automatic guarantee of solutions to the many damages that were done to our socio-economic and political institutions by the above development in our collective history. This chapter, therefore, presents discussions on how the kingship institution in Akokoland in particular and Nigeria in general has fared since independence up to the period of return to civil rule in 1999.

#### 4.1 Kingship in Akokoland in the early years of Independence, 1960-1966

In many parts of the world, societies are ever more recognising the importance of political stability and democracy as the underpinning for societal development, the African continent is still bogged down by instability in a number of regions. From a political perspective, quite a significant number of African countries claim some form of 'independence' from their former colonial masters. The experiences in specific African country contexts suggest that the reasons for different struggles for independence have not changed. In the post-colonial era, contemporary African leadership has not had a mental or ethical re-calibration in terms of how they treat their own citizens, the society and public

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<sup>318</sup>Ikenna Nzirimo 1984. "Of What Relevance are Traditional Rulers"? *The Guardian Newspaper*, Thursday, May 17.

goods.<sup>319</sup> This has been the bane of inclusive development and recurring agitations among different interest groups in Nigeria in general and Akokoland in particular since independence. The early years of independence was promising and full of high expectations from Nigerians. Emerging from the dust of nationalist struggles were men of high reputation and vision for a better nation fit for all to live and make their contributions as citizens. The new class of politicians (mostly nationalists) who were later joined by the intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie constituted a class labeled, in social sciences, as the bourgeoisie. As observed by Nzimiro; every class in the society has its gradations; there are within the bourgeoisie the upper, the middle and the lower class.<sup>320</sup> Buttressing his classification, he submitted that among the classes is a strong group that consists of those who control the destiny of our country, and we call them the ruling class.<sup>321</sup> The ruling class in the early years of independence in Nigeria before the men in uniform intervened in 1966 accorded the kingship and other traditional political institutions and their custodians their due place as partners in the efforts towards building a better Nigeria. The thinking then was that, all hands needed to be on deck if the expected advancement in the socio-economic and political institutions must be achieved. In fact, the experimental parliamentary system of government in operation which was reflective of what obtained in Britain helped the inclusion of the traditional rulers in the political equation even though their powers and functions were largely limited to their kingly and chiefly domains. The kings, especially in the early of years of independence, still had a feel of their secular powers, but later developments soon proved otherwise as the politicians and in connivance with power brokers who were desperately seeking for means of total control of institutions of state enacted unfavourable policies and chieftaincy declarations to undermine the powers of the traditional rulers. Divide and rule system as used by the colonial masters became a ready tool in the hands of later politicians to depose or checkmate dissenting kings and chiefs in Akokoland in particular and Nigeria in general. The impact of the Western Region crisis of 1962, which pitched the tent of war between the Awolowo camp and the Akintola supporters had serious impact on the kingship institutions in Akokoland as will be revealed later as discussions progress in this chapter.

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<sup>319</sup>Aihie, Joseph "Africa at Fifty: The Paradox of the Post-Colonial State" Department of Political Science University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, p.2. Nigeria. Being a paper prepared for the 23rd World Congress of the International Political Science Association, July 19-24, 2014, Montreal, Canada.

<sup>320</sup>Ikenna Nzirimo1984, "Of What Relevance are Traditional Rulers? *The Guardian Newspaper*, Thursday, May 17.

<sup>321</sup>Ikenna Nzirimo1984. "Of What Relevance are Traditional Rulers? *The Guardian Newspaper*, Thursday, May 17.

The roles played by the traditional rulers during the colonial period seriously undermined their stake as custodians of traditions and expert in local governance. The traditional rulers served British colonial administrative needs wherever they existed. Where they did not, the British created and imposed them by sheer force.<sup>322</sup> As it was in the colonial period, there were provisions for the House of Chiefs in the then regions to serve as an equivalent of House of Lords. But the House of Chiefs, in the final analysis was some House of Lords. The chiefs (kings of course attended the meetings called throughout the period) were at the mercies of the colonialists who were not for any reason ready to equate the functions of the House of Chiefs with that of the House of Lords. It, therefore, goes to say that, whatever functions and relevance accorded the traditional institutions during the colonial periods were just cosmetic and never expected to extend beyond what the British permitted. The same development played out in Nigeria in the early sixties. Though the influence of traditional rulers was still considerable in the early sixties, they could not win concession from the rising new political class that dominated the constituent assembly. The political class often advanced that it is necessary to insulate the traditional rulers away from partisan politics. They were to preside over the traditional councils, but as far as the local government council was concerned, they had no role.<sup>323</sup> That is the irony of the much touted excuses of the politicians for reducing the institution of kingship and chieftaincy to the backwater of history. The professional politicians had outplayed the traditional ones and erstwhile potentates had been humiliated and put in their 'proper' places in the scheme of things. Oguntimehin summed up the experience of kingship institution in Akokoland from 1960 to 1966 when he observed that:

The attainment of flag independence was initially mistaken by the new political elites as a ticket to securing automatic socio-economic emancipation and stability; sadly, the imagined Eldorado was hanging in the balance due to the faulty foundation created by the British with the amalgamation of 1914. The Action Group crisis of 1962 was a huge dent on the nationalist disposition of those who claimed to have fought for 'one Nigeria.' Some parts of Akokoland got seriously entangled in the power politics that resulted from the Western Region crisis. Pro-Akintola kings in Akokoland especially in

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<sup>322</sup>Aikhen, Uduehi 1984. "Kings, Soldiers and Nigerians" Concord, *Nigeria's International Newsmagazine*, Weekly, Issue No. 4. August 24. p.11.

<sup>323</sup>Ray, Ekpu 1988. "A Harmless Anachronism" *Newswatch Magazine*, April 18, p.16.

Arigidi-Akoko and Ikare-Akoko were deposed and those for the Awolowo camp were spared.<sup>324</sup>

The impact of the Western Region crisis of 1962 on kingship institution varied from one Akokoland town to another. The extent of the damage done to the kingship institution in Akokoland and other parts of Yorubaland depended on the political alignment or bloc that each town or interest groups supported during and after the crisis. The personality of those for or against the major political bloc with regional appeal and acceptance also determined the level of impact of the crisis. In Ogbagi-Akoko, for instance, the royal stool of the *Owa* was saved from the raging crisis because it supported the Awolowo camp. The *Owa*, while reacting with a tone of relief observed that:

Although I was not king as at the time of the Western Region crisis of 1962, my father, the *Oba* then consulted widely before pitching his tent with the Awo bloc. The *Owa* was able to mobilise the larger part of the town to join in supporting the Action Group as the Akintola group was viewed as having more to do with the northern political scheme than the Awo bloc which was fully a Yoruba brand. What mattered to the *Owa* then was the safety of his kingdom and from every signal, the Awo bloc was worth supporting. The only support that went the way of Akintola from Ogbagi-Akoko came from the Awelewa family but their support was not a popular one. Ogbagi-Akoko was fortunate to have supported the Awolowo camp. So we were not seriously endangered since the choice we made was a wise one.<sup>325</sup>

Okeagbe-Akoko also followed the wise choice made by Ogbagi-Akoko in supporting the Awolowo group. Adewumi detailed the mix feeling that rented the political atmosphere throughout Akokoland, but with particular emphasis on Okeagbe-Akoko in the build-up to the crisis. He asserted thus:

The Western Region crisis of 1962 and the general elections upheaval of 1965 that led to the famous ‘operation wetie’ did affect us here in Okeagbe-Akoko like it did to other Akokoland communities and the entire Yorubaland. The very first party we knew was the Awolowo party – the Action Group with the palm tree insignia. Akintola joined the Northern Peoples Congress as a result of his fallout with Awolowo. He later formed his own party Nigeria National Democratic Party

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<sup>324</sup>Oguntimehin, Paul 76, retired Principal, C/36, Oke-Igbagbo Street, Ogbagi-Akoko. 15/4/2017. Similar view was given by Onibalusi Akinyemi, 87, the *Oluparu* of Ogbagi-Akoko, farmer, third in rank to the *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko. 18/4/2017. For details on the Action Group Crisis and its impact see Adedayo Emmanuel, Afe, 2013. “Impact of Political Crisis on National Development in Nigeria: Action Group Crisis in Context”. *Kenya Studies Review*, Vol.6, No 4. pp.172-187.

<sup>325</sup>*Oba* Adetona Victor Ojo, Odagbaragaja III, 53+, the *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko. 18/4/2018

(NNDP). Some of our sons and daughters who had sympathy for Akintola joined his party and returned home to convince some of us to join the Akintola party but for fear of aligning with the weaker bloc and its eventual consequences, there was palpable tension in the town given the challenge of choice.<sup>326</sup>

This was the situation in Akokoland and the Yoruba country when the crisis eventually started. With the ember of discord already fanned from the outcome of the Jos Convention of February 2, 1962,<sup>327</sup> the stage was now set for a full blown crisis and the 1965 Federal elections crisis which went into history as ‘operation wetie’ because of the carnage and wanton destruction that followed its outbreak. In actual sense, a lot of people died because it was then seen as direct conflict between Awolowo loyalists and the Akintola loyalists. This crisis permeated down to the villages across Akokoland. The point must be made here that, Awolowo’s free education policy seriously endeared many people to his party throughout the region. This policy contributed largely to the quality education and exposure received by many sons and daughters of Akokoland and other parts of the region. Oloruntoba and Adewumi were in agreement when they submitted that:

While Akintola was able to whip up sentiments and garner sympathizers in his period of travails, Chief Awolowo naturally won over large followers and supporters throughout the region due to his visionary leadership which manifested in his hugely successful policy of free education. No matter how hard the Akintola camp tried, there was no way they could have succeeded in outwitting the cult of acceptance of the visionary leadership of Awolowo.<sup>328</sup>

The *Ologotun-Igase* of Ogosi was one of the Okeagbe-Akoko privileged few that enjoyed the Awolowo free education policy. He was very objective when he presented his view on the circumstances that informed the political leaning of many interest groups in Akokoland with regards to the warring camps in the Western Region crisis. He stated that:

I am one of the proud beneficiaries of the Pa Awo’s visionary free education policy in the then Western Region. This rare privilege informed the larger part of my decision in terms of alignment during the crisis that engulfed the region. In terms of spread and acceptance, what we knew was the Action Group.

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<sup>326</sup> Adewumi Ojo Stephen, 70, *Ologotun-Igase*, Ogosi Quarters, Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko. 12/4/2018

<sup>327</sup> Afe, Adedayo Emmanuel 2013, “Impact of Political Crisis on National Development in Nigeria: Action Group Crisis in Context”. *Kenya Studies Review*, Vol.6, No 4. p. 172.

<sup>328</sup> Oba Oloruntoba Bello Arasanyi I, 70+, *Ewi* of Aje, Okeagbe-Akoko. 12/5/2015 Adewumi Ojo Stephen, 70, *Ologotun – Igase*, he is the high priest of Afa community in Okeagbe-Akoko. Interviewed 12/4/2018. Pa Jimoh Aodu, 115, the oldest man in Iwonrin Oka-Akoko also supported the view above during an interview session. Beside Ariseh M.A house, Iwonrin, Oka-Akoko. Interviewed 1/8/2018



So, when our enlightened sons and daughters who had in one way or the other had sympathy for Akintola returned home from Ibadan and Lagos, they were able to convince some of us to join the Akintola group. It was not surprising therefore; that some of our traditional rulers joined the Awolowo side while some had sympathy for the Akintola group but could not show it for fear of what the consequences of their action or inaction could bring.<sup>329</sup>

He observed further that those who pitched their tent with Akintola suffered dire consequences. For instance, in Afa community, people who joined hands with Akintola were seen as *persona non-grata*. Houses that were traditionally supposed to produce high chiefs, but had supported Akintola in the past were denied chieftaincy titles. Such titles were said to have been hung on the tree. Until very recently, this was happening here.<sup>330</sup> The case of Ikare-Akoko is also worthy of mention. The Western Region crisis led to the dethronement of *Oba* Babatunde Ajaguna II who was a strong supporter of Akintola. The politics that resulted from the deposition cleared the way for the emergence of Momoh III who was Awolowo's loyalist.<sup>331</sup> The supremacy tussle between the Ajaguna and the Momoh ruling houses has been properly analysed in chapter three. So it was natural to know who the Awo camp would use to ensure their foothold in the area during and after the crisis.

Arigidi-Akoko also had its own fair share of the 1962 Western Region crisis. The migration history of the people and their strong link with the northern part of Nigeria through their link with the Tapa group to the Niger informed the direction of their political appeal. The Arigidi-Akoko people felt that since the new Akintola party had more links with the north, which is basically their source of history, they supported Akintola. The Western Region politics and the melee that ensued affected the *Zaki* throne between 1967 and 1984. The then *Oba* Momodu Olanipekun was forced on exile to Ibadan due to his open support for the Akintola camp. In fact, his palace was burnt down and three people died in the crisis. Reprieve only came to Arigidi-Akoko's political circle when the exiled *Oba* returned home in 1984.<sup>332</sup> Epimi-Akoko and Isua-Akoko were not caught in the violent current generated by the Western Region crisis. According to George Olusegun, *lessons of happenings in other*

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<sup>329</sup>Adewumi Ojo Stephen, 70, *Ologotun – Igase*, he is the high priest of Afa community in Okeagbe-Akoko. Interviewed 12/4/2018

<sup>330</sup>Adewumi Ojo Stephen, 70, *Ologotun – Igase*, he is the high priest of Afa community in Okeagbe-Akoko. Interviewed 12/4/2018

<sup>331</sup>*Oba* Akidiri Saliu-Momoh IV, 80+, the *Olukare* of Ikare-Akoko. 14/4/2018.

<sup>332</sup>High Chief Francis Rotimi Alabi, 50+, *Edibo* of Ogo quarters, Arigidi-Akoko. He is one of the kingmakers. 6/4/2018. Adesugba J.A, *Eleho* of Oguo quarters, Arigidi-Akoko. 6/4/2018. Adamu Yekini Olugbenga, *Osere* of Ayase quarters. 6/4/2018

*communities in Akokoland who supported the less popular political bloc helped to shape our decision as the crisis spreads to other parts of Yorubaland. It was only wise for us to have supported the popular Awo party.*<sup>333</sup> By 1965, the political atmosphere throughout Yorubaland was frenzy, tense and the looming danger was better imagined than described. The crisis that broke out after the 1965 Federal elections was what went down in history as “operation wetie”.<sup>334</sup> Ideological differences between Awolowo and Akintola and the unresolved battle of party leadership supremacy metamorphosed into what history has tagged as the most dangerous political crisis ever in the early political history of Nigeria. A regional problem escalated to become a national problem. Fund that could have been directed towards development projects was expended on security and conflict management. This unfortunate development, coupled with other alleged reasons, set the stage for the first military intervention in Nigeria politics and the eventual collapse of the First Republic. In a simple expression, the birth of new Nigeria meant a lot to the political history of the newly emergent nation. Hopes were high and millions expected quick turnaround in all facets of life from the ruling class. Sadly, just six years into the euphoria of gaining independence, the uniform men struck and the rest was history.

The forgoing has revealed that the Western Region crisis of 1962 and the 1965 general elections were major events that shaped the early history of Nigeria up to 1966. The impact they had on the kingship institutions in Akokoland and other parts of Yorubaland varied from one community to the other depending on the level of involvement in the power play and politics that characterised the period. Despite the ominous signs occasioned by the happenings in the early years of independence in Nigeria as a whole and Akokoland in particular, the kingship institutions and their custodians stayed hopeful with the conviction that lessons will be learnt from the mistakes of the early years. The extent to which this positive thinking connects to later developments from 1966 to 1999 is the focus of the next discussion. At any rate, the kingship institution in Akokoland has continued to show resilience even though the events of the early years of nationhood have not been pleasant in terms of policy direction and implementation.

#### **4.2 Kingship in Akokoland under Military and Civilian Governments, 1966 -1999**

In the sixties, when Nigeria operated the Westminster type of constitution, each region had a House of Chiefs as an Upper House in the Regional Legislature. Though it did not have the power to veto, the house of chiefs was perhaps the last time when the

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<sup>333</sup>Oba George Olusegun Oyekan, 50+, *Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko. 7/6/2018

<sup>334</sup>Oba George Olusegun Oyekan, 50+, *Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko. 7/6/2018

*Obas* directly participated in governance beyond their local government areas. Since the first coming of the military in 1966, the lot of the royal fathers has been that of gradual but steady decline in power and influence. Opinions are diverse on the impact of the military and civilian regimes on the kingship institutions in Akokoland in the period under review. The *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko, *Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko, the *Olojo* of Ojo, Ajowa-Akoko all agreed that the military responded better to the aspirations of the traditional rulers in Akokoland in particular and Yorubaland as a whole than their civilian counterparts in the area of consultations on sensitive local issues and those of national concern.<sup>335</sup> The views of the above mentioned kings on the military are not without reservations. They also queried the manner in which they got to power and their style of rule. Looking at the military regimes from the point of view of the power of the gun and the need to obey order without complaints, one may also submit that, their rise to power and pattern of administration was not masses based. Whatever the case, later discussion reveals the extent to which the military regimes and the civilian administrations impacted the kingship institution in Akokoland in the period under review.

The period under review is explicit with the impact military administration had on the kingship/chieftaincy institutions and its custodians. The alteration and eventual suspension of the independence constitution of 1963 dealt a huge blow on the hitherto existing roles enshrined therein. With the suspension of the constitution, the military as a way of courting the support of the traditional rulers consulted them for advice on some issues of national concern and appointed them to head parastatals and institutions. This move did little to salvage the dwindling fortunes of the traditional rulers as the supposed privileges accorded them by the military administrators were more cosmetic than providing viable and practical platforms to help them stay relevant in the scheme of things. The 1968 taking over of local policing, prisons and native courts were few among the series of political changes that adversely affected the fortunes of traditional political institutions in the northern part of Nigeria. This development also affected the kings in Akokoland. The *Osunla* of Erusu was explicit when he observed that; “the military and the politicians deliberately snatched our judicial powers to sit at the native courts to hear and dispense justice on issues that have local colouration. This was all in a desperate attempts by the later to take full control of the

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<sup>335</sup>The views of these Akokoland kings were premised on the positive intervention the military government of Badamosi Babangida, Muhammadu Buhari in the area of meaningful consultation and General Sanni Abacha had on their remuneration.

machinery of the state.”<sup>336</sup> Sadly, various villages, towns and even cities are crisis ridden today due to several unresolved legal battles at the courts over petty issues such as goat theft, fighting, and family issues which were hitherto, locally handled by the traditional rulers at the native courts. It is common in local communities today to see people from the same family or household threatening to involve the police at any slight provocation and on many occasions, family members have got each other detained over issues that can ordinarily be handled at local community gathering.

The kings’ palaces are no longer viewed by many as where issues of local concerns can be resolved. The traditional rulers in Akokoland are definitely not taking lightly this ugly development as efforts have been made by the kings with the corporation of the chiefs to educate the people on the need to allow local issues to be handled locally by those charged with the responsibility. An informant at Aje, Okeagbe-Akoko was apt when he observed that; although some people still find joy in washing their dirty linens in public glare, the *Ewi* has repeatedly emphasised the need for the people to settle all issues as a community. Aje is so small that we cannot afford to allow distraction of any type to impede our collective resolve to build a united and orderly society. We shall continue to evolve better ways of solving our problems without having to externalise them.<sup>337</sup> Von Trotha while suggesting provisional principles, by which the transformation of administrative chieftaincy into civil chieftaincy may be evaluated, submitted that:

the state has to recognize the de facto legal pluralism and to institutionalise the chiefs’ independent legal system, except for such cases as communal violence. While Von accepted that this local justice may ‘perpetuate the injustices’ of the local order, he believes that local autonomy in this matter is to be preferred.<sup>338</sup>

More interesting in the principles of Von was the rider he gave to the first principle which is based on local autonomy. Arguing with a depth of native understanding, Von opines that local problems must be solved locally. As long as injustice is not challenged locally,

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<sup>336</sup>Oba Sunday Olaniyi Mogaji, Imole I, 63years, the *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria, Interviewed on 10/04/2018

<sup>337</sup>Emmanuel Elegbelye Onipinla (JP), 84years, S40A, Aje, Okeagbe-Akoko. 12/4/2018

<sup>338</sup>Troha, Trutz von 1995 “From Administrative to Legal and Civil Chieftainship: Diversity, Intermediary Domination, Tradition and Authority. Historical and Sociological Consideration about some Problems and Prospects of African Chieftainship.” pp. 457 – 473 in Kwame Arhin Brempong, Donald I. Ray. E. Adrian B. van Nieuwaal (eds.), *Proceedings of the Conference on the Contributions of Traditional Authority to Development, Human Rights and Environmental Protection: Strategies for Africa*. Leiden: African Studies Centre.

outside intervention should be very cautious. Local people have to determine their own interests, he argues.<sup>339</sup> Buttressing Von view, Obada queried that:

only a shallow thinking government (civilian or military) would want to handle all issues without delegating some to the spread of the state. In the face of dwindling financial fortunes, government can safe itself from the heavy financial burden incurred in multiple court cases while handling local conflicts that could have been handled internally by experienced traditional leaders and community elders.<sup>340</sup>

The above is pointing to the fact the wielders of modern political power have continued to impose their will on the traditional rulers and the grassroots people under the pretense of maintaining law and order as if those societies have no indigenous system of social control and conflict management. The closeness of the kings and chiefs to the rural people which form the largest chunk of any state in Nigeria put them at better position to handle disputes locally and resolve same without necessarily degenerating into serious conflicts. Meaningful development can only be achieved in a peaceful space. It is, however, sad to note that party and electoral politics have contributed significantly to a process in which local disputants seek support from national patrons, whilst national parties seek electoral advantage by engaging with local factions.<sup>341</sup> This, according to Crook, has intensified the political character of chieftaincy (kingship) disputes and ethnic rivalries among communities under the hegemonic influences of disputing kings and chiefs.<sup>342</sup>

The hitherto power of the kings over land also suffered serious setbacks with the promulgation of the 1978 Land Use Decree which watered down the traditional rulers' power as the custodian of the land which they held in trust for the people. As observed by the *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko, 'the taking over of lands by the wielders of modern political powers was a strong signal to the end of the relevance of the old Yoruba saying that, *Oba lo ni ile* – meaning the king is the owner of the land. Prior to the relegation of the powers and relevance

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<sup>339</sup>Troha, Trutz von 1995 "From Administrative to Legal and Civil Chieftainship: Diversity, Intermediary Domination, Tradition and Authority. Historical and Sociological Consideration about some Problems and Prospects of African Chieftainship." pp. 457 – 473 in Kwame Arhin Brempong, Donald I. Ray. E. Adrian B. van Nieuwaal (eds.), *Proceedings of the Conference on the Contributions of Traditional Authority to Development, Human Rights and Environmental Protection: Strategies for Africa*. Leiden: African Studies Centre.

<sup>340</sup>Obada Joseph, 76 years, *Edibo* of Imo, Arigidi-Akoko, Ondo State. Interviewed on 6/4/2018.

<sup>341</sup>Richard Crook, 2005. "The Role of the Traditional Institutions in Political Change and Development" Center for Democratic Development/Overseas Development Institute *Policy Brief No.4, November*. p.3.

<sup>342</sup>Richard Crook, 2005. "The Role of the Traditional Institutions in Political Change and Development" Center for Democratic Development/Overseas Development Institute *Policy Brief No.4, November*. p.3.

of the kings by the modern political class, the command the traditional rulers had over land was huge and unequivocally confirmed by their powers to give final verdict on any disputed land. The Land Use Decree has changed this. It must, however, be observed that the kings' power over land has not been totally abolished as various kings and other traditional rulers in Akokoland still reserve the power to allocate large portion of land for projects that would be of direct benefit to the people. The allocation is most time done in consultation with the chiefs and some select elders of the community. Given the complexity of power play and the sophistication occasioned by enlightenment, traditional rulers, however powerful and connected, are conscious of the fact that their continued reign is largely dependent on the stability of their domains and of course maximal acceptance of their leadership by the people. They, therefore, tend to always make and implement decisions with extreme caution. In the same vein, the political jurisdiction of the Northern emirates in terms of geographical spread was also reduced with the emergence of new states and local government areas.<sup>343</sup> The functions of the kings and chiefs also came under threat with the scripted local government reforms imposed on the nation in 1976. Consequently, the very bastion of the traditional rulers' power –local government administration, was taken away from them and moved to the new local councils. Egwurube argued that the 1976 local government reforms changed the vantage position that customs and traditions once placed the traditional rulers in local government administration. The reforms invariably reduced them to mere observers of happenings in the arm of government that was once under them.<sup>344</sup>

From the submission made by Joseph, it is clear that the impact of the 1976 local government reforms could be better imagined than described given the fact that those who have no direct contact with the people at the grassroots were saddled with the responsibility to administer one of the most sensitive and perhaps difficult arms of government. The traditional knowledge and methods needed to resolve small disputes in the local communities was replaced with methods that would only help in externalizing local issues that were hitherto resolved among the people amicably by the traditional rulers with ease. Whatever the arguments are, the fact is that the reforms had come to stay as the kingship/chieftaincy

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<sup>343</sup>While the creation of states and local governments worked against many traditional rulers, it also benefitted some of them especially those in the newly created states who had their status and power enhanced with their first class status and some second class traditional rulers who showed loyalty and support to the government of the day got elevation to first class too.

<sup>344</sup>J. O. Egwurube, "Traditional Rulers and Modern Local Government in Nigeria-Where the Problem Lies", Paper presented at the International Conference on Local Government in West Africa, Ile-Ife, University of Ife, February 1982.

institutions and their custodians have come to accept this reality. Council to allow the traditional rulers to meet was also created as aftermath of the 1976 reforms. Despite the seemingly attractive functions given to the traditional/emirate council to carry out at the level of local government administration, their lots did not in any way improve.<sup>345</sup> It is, however, significant to note that the traditional rulers though had no choice than to accept the rather strange decree enacted by the Murtala/Obasanjo administration, they never supported it because the development bequeathed the state governors absolute authority in land related issues. Their resentment to the Land Use Decree got to its peak during the military regime of Muhammadu Buhari who was favourably disposed to the traditional rulers as viable and reliable partners in the nation-building project. The Gowon regime argued that it had no need of the traditional rulers since it had the civil war to serve as a mobilising instrument. This view was not a popular one among the traditionalist school which observes that the traditional rulers are part of our cultural heritage and must not be allowed to disappear. This school hinges its argument on the fact that, since the kings and chiefs are insulated from politics at all levels and given the esteem bestowed on them by people, they are politically and socially viable. While political expediency might have necessarily served as a strong factor for courting the support of the kingship and chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria by some of the military regimes, the central thesis anchors on the obvious fact that, the military who have no constituency of their own, find it easy to fall back on ready-made vehicles of influence through which to get at the grassroots, especially where the rabble-rousing politicians have been discredited and many of them languishing in jail.<sup>346</sup>

Before continuing discussion on the impact of military regimes on the kingship institution, it is important to briefly assess the extent to which lessons were learnt and applied throughout Yorubaland with regards to the Western Region crisis of 1962 and the 1965 general elections conflict. Kings in Akokoland and other parts of Yorubaland agree that party conflicts and politics, especially where the personalities involved are strong mobilisers of crowd must be managed properly to avert a repeat of what happened in the first most documented political crisis in Nigeria. Unfortunately, a similar crisis broke out in Ondo State

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<sup>345</sup>Pita Ogaba Agbese. 2004. "Chiefs, Constitutions, and Policies in Nigeria", *West Africa Review*, Issue 6. pp.2-3. See also Z. I. Abubakar "The Role of Traditional Rulers: Nigeria's Emirs and Chiefs in Conflict Management Since 1976" in I. O. Albert and Is-haq O. Oloyede (eds.) *Dynamics of Peace Processes*, Ilorin Ilorin: Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies University of Ilorin. 2010. pp.237-248

<sup>346</sup>Concord, 1984. "Kings, Soldiers and Nigerians" *Nigeria's International Newsmagazine*, Weekly, Issue No. 4. August 24. p.11.

on August 13, 1983.<sup>347</sup> The lessons that were not learnt through the political crises of 1962 and 1965 were learnt the hard way after the destructive political crisis that shook Ondo State from its very foundation in 1983. Adetona and Arise agreed that the 1983 political disturbance that rocked Ondo State was needless and if indeed the camps involved in the conflict were sincerely aspiring to serve the people, their actions during and after the election did not portray qualities expected from supposed public servants. Even if the Supreme Court finally laid the case to rest, the tension the crisis had created in many parts of the state and the destruction that came in its wake has continued to linger in the minds of many.<sup>348</sup> Again, state fund was used to prosecute the lengthy court cases that later gave victory to Adekunle Ajasin. The victory, however resounding it was, did not translate to good governance as the state had ran into financial difficulty and the problem was even compounded with the second coming of the military in 1984. Sadly, all institutions in the State suffered neglect because of the crisis. For the kingship/chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria without the exemption of Akokoland, the journey to stability has been a tortuous one. The second coming of the uniform men was equally received with mixed feelings throughout the country. Ayesa gave his view on the return of the military to active politics in Nigeria when he submitted that:

In my early adult life, the word military was synonymous with barracks and security. The military was not expected to have any business whatsoever with partisan politics. In the first instance, their first coming was hinged on maladministration and massive corruption which characterized the politics of the first republic but they ironically ended up promoting the vices that led to their intervention. Since the major function of the military is to restore order and ensure stability in the polity, the events that featured their return fell short of expectation.<sup>349</sup>

Debates on the impact of modern governance on kingship and chieftaincy institutions in Akokoland appear to favour the military more than the civilian governments in the period of study. The reason for this is simple. Discourse on colonial rule has revealed that the politicians have scores to settle with the traditional rulers who they believed usurped their positions as having better qualifications to take over leadership in the period. The obvious

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<sup>347</sup>Afe, Adedayo Emmanuel, 50, lecturer, Department of History and International Studies, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State. 11/7/2018

<sup>348</sup>ObaAdetona, Victor Ojo, Odagbaragaja III, 53+, The *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko, interviewed at the *Owa* palace, Ogbagi-Akoko. 18/4/2018. Ariseh Micheal Adefemi, 80, pensioner and a member of the Iwonrin Elders-in-Council since 2004, interviewed at his residence, Iwonrin Oka-Akoko. 1/8/2018.

<sup>349</sup>Ayesa Christopher, 60+, hotel manager, Imo, Arigidi-Akoko. 6/4/2018. His view was also corroborated by Sule Obafemi, 60+, Aro of Owake, Oka-Odo, Oka-Akoko. 26/7/2018. He is a retired military officer who fought actively during the Nigerian Civil War.



exclusion of the political elite in the British divide and rule tactics in the administration of most parts of the country was what climaxed to the bitter disenchantment and strong hatred for the traditional rulers. The opportune time came when the country gained independence in 1960. The political elite were now at an advantaged position to take their pound of flesh. Government policies, declarations and laws were established to put the traditional rulers in their rightful place. The Kano riot of 1981 and its aftermath meant little or nothing to the politicians from the South- west. The belief by the political elite that once they have control of the machinery of State that all other things will fall place in place was what perhaps emboldened Governor Abubakar Rimi to ignore the feudal power of the then *Emir* of Kano. His action led to unprecedented cataclysmic events that almost consumed the State. The point of emphasis here hinges on the fact that, the wielders of modern political power certainly need to come to terms with the viability of the traditional rulers as useful partners in the management of the polity towards building a better and safer society for all.

The Shagari administration was a law and order, conservative, government unwilling to alter anything in the status quo – a philosophy which suited the traditional rulers best during the period. Many observers have viewed this development as a product of political expediency. The position of the administration was good omen for the traditional rulers across the country between 1979 and 1983. The point must be made that the ruling party was not having the entire country under its control. The need to court new friends to gain large scale acceptance became necessary. Like in the colonial period, the Shagari administration found the traditional rulers as useful agents of mobilising the people at the grassroots to support and accept the ruling party. Adewumi observes that:

However gracious the hands of friendship extended to the traditional rulers by the Shagari administration might be, later developments show that, the government did what it had to do to court the support of the kings and chiefs given the unpopularity of the government as a result of maladministration and the unmitigated high incidence of financial and administrative corruption among politicians of the period.<sup>350</sup>

To gain the support of the traditional rulers in the states not controlled by the ruling party, the Shagari administration utilised all the perquisites at its disposal, including contracts, gifts and other privileges. This alliance between the rulers and the unpopular government

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<sup>350</sup>Adewumi Ojo Stephen, 70, *Ologotun – Igase*, he is the high priest of Afa community in Okeagbe-Akoko. Interviewed 12/4/2018

accounts for the cynicism and open jeers at the love-affair between the new government and the traditional rulers. The spontaneous condemnation that trailed the Shagari administration from the traditional rulers who had hitherto supported the same government was a clear display of their frustration during the hay day of the administration. Across the country, the traditional rulers praised the ousting of the Shagari government because they believed that they would fare better under the military. So the events that followed the sack of the second civilian administration reaffirmed the earlier confidence expressed in the leadership of the new military regime.

The Buhari junta after sacking the Shagari administration at the close of 1983 started off his government by sending General Muhammed Magoro (rtd.) to the *Sultan* of Sokoto to plead their case and seek his support.<sup>351</sup> This hand of friendship was extended to traditional rulers in other parts of the country. Since 1984, the military regime treated the traditional rulers with velvet gloves. Buhari was never tired of referring to them as our “royal fathers.”<sup>352</sup> The Buhari military regime was perhaps the warmest to the traditional rulers in terms of consultation and inclusion in vital decision making during the one year plus of its existence. The regime, though short, left its impact in many areas in the evolving nation. Its usual romance with the traditional rulers was what received widespread condemnation from the class of Nigerians who perceived everything that is evil, oppressive and corrupt in traditional rulership. Those who hold this often hard stance, belongs to the pseudo-revolutionaries who see the kings and chiefs as part of the oppressive ruling class which feeds fat on the sweat of the poor masses.<sup>353</sup> The democrats are also of the view that there is no longer any meaningful role for traditional rulers, especially after the Land Use Decree of 1978 had taken away the last vestiges of the of the old powers of these rulers who are now left with the near-empty role of the custodians of our traditions. The Buhari administration had a different view from the above pseudo-revolutionary and democratic stance. The memory of the Kano riot of July, 1981 was perhaps one the factors behind the hands of friendship extended to the traditional rulers by the Buhari administration.

Buhari, therefore, knew exactly what he was doing in calling on the kings and emirs for support. He pursued his principle of courting the friendship of the traditional rulers all through his one year plus in power. His coup message to the traditional rulers set the

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<sup>351</sup>Dapo Thomas 1991, “Discord Here, Concord There” *Time Week Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 4, May 6. p.14.

<sup>352</sup>Ekpu, Ray, 1988 “A Harmless Anachronism” *News watch Magazine*, April 18. p.16.

<sup>353</sup>Labanji, Bolaji, 1984, “Traditional Rulers Have a Role to Play”, *National Concord*, Friday March 16. p.6.

precedent for the relationship between the military and traditional rulers. His government indeed, enhanced the standing of the kingship and chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria despite its short reign. *Olukare* of Ikare-Akoko aptly captured the impact of the Buhari's military regime when he observed that short as the Buhari military regime was, he was smart to have courted the friendship of traditional rulers across the country. While some people argued that his action was largely because of political expediency, I am of the opinion that the Shagari regime which was rather choking and unfriendly, left little to be desired in terms of relationship with the traditional authorities.<sup>354</sup> During this period, the politicians, to further circumscribe the powers of the traditional rulers, promoted some lesser ones to higher status as if they were civil servants and even went ahead to increase the number of local government from 301 in 1979 to 703 by 1983.<sup>355</sup> The development further eroded the little that was left for the traditional rulers to relish in terms of power and relevance in the modern political space. It was a painful period of hide and seek game for the royals and when the military struck again in December 31, 1983, it was seen as a rescue from the jaw of disaster.

The military only courted the friendship of the traditional rulers to curry their support and help in ensuring the acceptance of their unpopular rule. The insincerity of the military government in implementing the promises made to the traditional rulers became manifest with the promulgation of the 1979 Constitution which deliberately refused to countenance any formal legislative role for the later. As a way of escaping antagonism from the traditional rulers, the military government cleverly silenced the them with the establishment of Council of Chiefs which provided for insignificant advisory roles in the state. Council of State was also established at the federal level with no significant roles to play. The new constitution promulgated ten years later-1989 to be precise did not make any marked departure.

Babangida era was seen as a summer of mutual affection with regards to his administration relationship with the traditional authorities across the country. His regime was reputed to have continuously stated that the traditional rulers constitute a direct link to the grassroots and the latter, too, recognised the romance as an instrument of class survival.<sup>356</sup> Adedeji submitted that the attitude of the Babangida military administration was a direct function of what Buhari did when he came to power. He has perhaps learnt that despising the traditional rulers could mean something ominous to the survival of his regime. Yes, the

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<sup>354</sup>Momoh, Saliu Akadiri, 80, the *Olukare* of Ikare-Akoko. 18/08/2016.

<sup>355</sup>Ray, Ekpu 1988, "A Harmless Anachronism" *News watch* Magazine, April 18. p.16.

<sup>356</sup>Ekpu, Ray, 1988. "A Harmless Anachronism" *News watch* Magazine, April 18.p.16.

military has the power of the gun and could make pronouncement and take decision at very top speed, they are not necessarily in charge of the grassroots which is our strongest base. As efficient mobilisers of people with little resources, the traditional rulers can influence acts that could make governance difficult for wielders of modern political power, however powerful. So the Babangida regime made the best choice by following the path of his predecessor. Our powers might have been seriously eroded by the events of the past years, but we are not weaklings and cannot be wished away for whatever reason in the agenda of building a better and safer society for all.<sup>357</sup> Like the recognition given to the kingship institution during the Buhari era, the Babangida regime brought respite and assurance to the institution across the country, Akokoland inclusive. The sheer stability and assurance availed the traditional rulers the opportunity to settle down to provide the needed leadership longed for by their people. As it was in Erusu-Akoko so it was in other parts of Akokoland. As a result of the recognition extended to the kings and traditional rulers by the Babangida government, his Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and MAMSER scheme were widely supported and applauded by the traditional council. In the civilian years of the first and second republic, the traditional rulers suffered a lot of degrading and painful experience as concerted efforts were made to confine them to a state of little or no relevance in the power equation.<sup>358</sup> Opinions may vary on the Babangida SAP policy; the support he received from the traditional rulers in many parts of the country was a question of class survival borne out of the quest to stay relevant in the scheme of things at the time.

The Abacha regime also impacted the kingship institutions in Akokoland in the period under review. For instance, between 1993 and 1997, the highest paid kings in Akokoland were the *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko and the *Olukare* of Ikare-Akoko who were earning a little above one thousand naira. The nearest to it was the *Olisua* of Isua-Akoko who was on a monthly stipend a little above four hundred naira. Others like the *Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko, *Alale* of Akungba-Akoko, *Oloba* of Oba-Akoko and the *Olusupare* of Supare-Akoko earned between three hundred and eighty four naira. According George, it was the Abacha regime that changed our fortune with the approval that 5% of the total money allocated to the local

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<sup>357</sup>HRH *Oba* Adedeji Kasali Adejoro Omosogbon II, 65, the *Olusupare* of Supare-Akoko. Interviewed at his palace on 7/6/2018

<sup>358</sup>Olagunju Moses, 65, High Chief *Olukosi* of Okesan.10/C33, Okesan, Erusu-Akoko. 7/4/2018

government should be given to the Traditional Council of Obas.<sup>359</sup> The implementation of the directive has not been sincere as the politicians saw it as a way of controlling the kings and other traditional rulers in their domains. In fact, at the end of the Abacha regime, the kings and their chiefs have had running battles with the government with regards to the regular release of the five percent share of the total allocation sent to the local government areas in the State. Reacting to the impact of the military and civilian governments on the kingship institution in Akokoland, apart from the improvement in the royal fathers' allowances, Adetona opined that:

In my own view, the military era fared better than the civilian government. Specifically, General Sanni Abacha with the help of the then military administrator in Ondo State, consulted widely with the *Olukare* of Ikare-Akoko when the Akoko North-West local government area was to be carved out of North-East. The military head of state followed the advice of the *Oba* and things worked out as expected.<sup>360</sup>

He argued further that the civilian government contrary to their military counterpart, made frantic effort to choke the institution. According to him:

civilian government from 1960 up to the terminal period of your study orchestrated plans to de-emphasise the powers and relevance of the kings and other traditional rulers in Ondo State in particular and Nigeria as a whole. Today, everything has been politicised, no respect, no recognition, no honour given to *obas* by the civilian government personnel. While I agree that the military had their flaws, they still respected *Obas*. Today, you will see a common Councilor inviting an *Oba* with higher educational qualifications and far older in age and experience to his office, it was never done during the military era.<sup>361</sup>

Discussions in this chapter revealed that kingship institution in Akokoland and other parts of Yorubaland in the period under study, survived the civilian and military governments unfavourable policies directed towards undermining the powers and relevance of the kings and the chiefs. While the military could be accused of seizing power through the force of

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<sup>359</sup>HRM *Oba* George Olusegun Oyekan, 57, the *Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko. Interviewed at his palace on 7/6/2018. This view was also buttressed by the *Olukare* of Ikare, *Oba* Akadiri Saliu-Momoh IV (JP, CON), 80+. 14/4/2018.

<sup>360</sup>Adetona, Victor Ojo, Odagbaragaja III, 53, The *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko, *Owa* palace, Ogbagi-Akoko. 18/04/2018. HRM *Oba* George Olusegun Oyekan, 57, the *Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko. Interviewed at his palace on 7/6/2018. He equally lent his voice to the observation made by the *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko.

<sup>361</sup>Adetona, Victor Ojo, Odagbaragaja III, 53, The *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko, *Owa* palace, Ogbagi-Akoko. 18/04/2018.

gun, their administration according to popular opinions as analysed above, gave more leverage to the traditional rulers in Akokoland than the civilian governments. Be that as it may, from a balance perspective of narrative, it is correct to say that the traditional rulers were at best under successive military and civilian administrations instrument of class of survival and victims of deliberate neglect. Even the local government administration where they are supposed to be actively consulted as experts in local issues fell short of such expectation. The traditional rulers have continued to survive by cooperating with the ruling elite. It was revealed that in the early years of independence, the kingship institution in Akokoland as it happened in other parts of Yorubaland faced serious threats from the Western Region crisis of 1962 and sad events that followed the 1965 general elections. The kings and chiefs that survived the storm of the two political crises were those that aligned with the stronger political bloc. It, therefore, means that the period marked an important watershed in the politics of power struggle and leadership supremacy among the Nigerian modern political elite who were up in arms to control the political soul of the new nation. As the struggle for control rages, the traditional rulers who equally desire to stay relevant in the scheme of things became the victims as their loyalty or otherwise to the warring political blocs came with dire consequence as in the case of Arigidi-Akoko and Ikare-Akoko where the traditional rulers were removed and exiled because of their alliance with the Akintola bloc.

The story of the experience of the kingship institution and the adoption of power politics in Akokoland between 1960 and 1999 has been one of mixed feelings, struggle for survival to secure a little space to operate in the rather complex system of government deliberately created by the politicians to completely have control of the institutions of state. The question of continued relevance and the politics involved was the focus of chapter five. The chapter looked at issues as varied as kingship and power politics in Akokoland, dynamics and paradigms.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### KINGSHIP AND POWER POLITICS IN AKOKOLAND, DYNAMICS AND PARADIGMS

As an institution that has survived despite its travails, the dynamism of the chieftaincy (kingship) institution in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. Beyond attesting to its dynamism, the changing role, power and perception of the institution in different dispensations are a clear manifestation of its resilience.<sup>362</sup>

#### 5.1 Kingship, *karaole*, and the question of loyalty in Akokoland

Discussion in chapter two has captured the historical antecedence of kingship institution in Yorubaland and concluded with the analysis of the traditional political institution that evolved in Akokoland before the advent of colonialism in the area. It particularly emphasised the plurality of Akokoland which made it difficult to ascribe political power to one recognisable individual as the overall leader of all Akoko-Yoruba communities before the establishment of colonial rule in most parts of the area by 1900. Kingship at its pristine stage was symbolic, sacred and revered. The office and the person of the king were held in great awe by the people. The members of the royal family were always interested in the wellbeing of the king who is seen as the representative of not only the royal family but the people, true symbol of tradition, embodiment of history and the kingdom under his watch. Traditionally, *karaole* (let the body strong) was the greeting specially made to the king by royal family members and other well-wishers to ascertain the king's state of health and his availability for the administration of the kingdom. A resounding response from the king from his closet is always received with deep sigh of relief as the people were reassured of the readiness and availability of the *Oba* to continue to provide the needed leadership and direction of affairs of the kingdom. Loyalty then was non-negotiable as disloyalty was severely punished. The sacredness of the institution of kingship in Akokoland as elsewhere in Yorubaland, created the conscious in the minds of the people who needed not be reminded of the danger of desecrating the hallowed institution. Ancient landmarks like covenants, oath-taking and restraining taboos connected to the institution of royalty and the founding of the

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<sup>362</sup>A.O. Adesoji, 2010. "Traditional Rulership and Modern Governance in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Nigeria" being a chapter contribution in Tunde Babawale, Akin Alao & Bimbo Adesoji (eds.) *The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria*, Lagos: Concept Publications. p.416. Published for Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC)

towns were very potent in the pre-colonial phase of the kingship institution in Akokoland. These components of ancient landmarks are still used by the traditional rulers in Akokoland to stem potential threats to their powers and authority. An aspect of this chapter has been dedicated to discuss this in detail.

The kings and their subordinate chiefs in Akokoland in the pre-1900 era were sure of their survival as the people voluntarily presented gifts to them in kind and in cash. The people took the upkeep of the traditional rulers as their traditional responsibility and found it a worthy gesture towards those that have been appointed by the gods to intercede on their behalf. Services on the kings' farmlands were rendered free of charge by some select members (usually drawn from the age grades) of the towns or kingdoms. As revealed in chapter three, colonialism introduced many strange dimensions to the indigenous political institution across Nigeria without the exception of Akokoland. Akokoland towns and communities that were hitherto not under any unified political control or hegemony were forced to accept a new political order. By the beginning of colonial rule as already discussed in chapter three of this thesis, Akokoland was brought under the control of the Kabba Province and later Owo Province after many years of protests by the traditional rulers in Akokoland. The *Olukare* of Ikare-Akoko, the *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko and the *Olisua* of Isua-Akoko were some of the royal voices that fought for the restoration of Akokoland to the people. Removing Akokoland from the Kabba and Owo hegemonic domination was eventually achieved but not without its huge negative consequences on the kingship institution.<sup>363</sup> This development altered many aspects of the political traditions in Akokoland. Western education and the excessive politicisation of the kingship institution by later political elites further imperilled the institution in terms of relevance and authority. Kingly greeting of *karaole* gradually lost its viability and the traditional trust that was characteristic of it as the kings no longer trust members of the royal family who are equally eager to ascend the throne. Loyalty became a matter of convenience not compulsion. The issue of loyalty in the modern sense of its usage was succinctly captured by Adewale when he observes that:

When you talk of loyalty in the traditional political space, we are deceiving ourselves. Loyalty is a complex concept which in the context of modern political reality can only be elastically explained. The real question to ask is how the *Oba* has managed the issue of loyalty among his chiefs, princes and the people. Sincerely, those who work with me have the choice to corporate with me or do otherwise. For loyalty to be ensured, the *Oba* must

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<sup>363</sup>This issue has been properly explained in the chapter three of this work.



be able to know those chiefs who are with him and those who are not. Knowledge of this will help the *Oba* to develop viable strategy on how to relate with them. This is where a clear understanding of power politics and its usage becomes helpful.<sup>364</sup>

Aminu while buttressing Adewale's view aptly submitted that:

'a wise *Oba* will find a way to win the disloyal chiefs, ambitious princes and other interest groups to his side as avoiding them could be counter-productive to his power and the progress of his domain. In fact, the wise thing to do is to court new friends from known enemies rather than relying too much on already established friends. The danger is that, when you rely too much on old friends, however reliable without making new ones, the day they turned their back on you, your fortune may change completely for the worst. So making friends from known enemies is a wise strategy to living long and taking charge.<sup>365</sup>

The emphasis is to the effect that, the kingship institution in Akoko-Yoruba communities northeastern as we have it in other parts of Yorubaland and Nigeria in general has continued to show flexibility to evolving new paradigms to enable it adapt and show continuity in the modern age. The point must be made that the *karaole* greeting is now a silent but useful instrument used by dissenting princes, ambitious chiefs and members of ruling houses to determine the timing of their access to the throne. The kings interviewed in Akoko communities during the fieldwork agreed that, their survival is largely dependent on how well they are able to manage the various interest groups in their respective domain. Being in charge for a long time required two edged politics. The king who wants to stay in charge and have full control of his domain must play the government politics and the people's politics as well. One sided politics in this modern era is not in the best interest of the traditional rulers. There must be a real balance of power play within and outside the royal jurisdiction. Given the unpleasant politics that now characterised the selection and election of a new *Oba*, the traditional rulers have as a matter of survival and strategy become weary of greetings from those who lost out during contest for ascendancy to the royal office. As noted by Sunday,

The wise counsel of the *Oloje* of Igasi-Akoko has really helped my reign as the *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko. The *Oloje* advised when he

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<sup>364</sup>Oba Timothy Adewale Afiwasaye I, 86, The *Olojo* of Ojo, Ajowa-Akoko. 10/04/2018. Same view received the support of: *Oba* Josiah Kolawole, 87, *Elesuku* of Esuku, Ajowa-Akoko and *Oba* Ipinmoroti, Timothy, 70, *Oluro* of Uro, Ajowa-Akoko, Ondo State. 7/04/2018

<sup>365</sup>Aminu, C.O., 92, community leader/farmer, Amo, Erusu-Akoko. 6/4/2018. *Oba* Jimoh, Clement Omo-Ola, 65, *Oloso* of Oso, Ajowa-Akoko. 7/04/2018. Ipinlaiye, A.E., 82, the *Oloje* of Igashi-Akoko, Igashi-Akoko, Ondo State. 15/4/2018.

remarked that: see *kabiyesi*, all these members of the ruling house (chiefs and princes and other interests) that visit every morning to greet you do so to confirm whether the crowned head is still living, hale and available to continue the administration of the kingdom. So, each time they come, always ensure that you give them resounding response and beyond this, treat them with great love and equally show interest in their own wellbeing. This is how to prove to them that you are their king, father and friend. Wishing you bad becomes a hard task for them.<sup>366</sup>

Kings in Akokoland while countenancing the danger posed by many interest groups in their domains, believed that their emergence was divinely arranged and mortals can only try, but they would only succeed if the end of their reign has come. This should not be understood in the context that, the kings are indispensable. The place of the people in the survival of the institution cannot be wished away. The institution of kingship has always been people centered. The analysis has earlier been given in chapter three and four that the kingship and other traditional political institutions throughout Nigeria is not what it used to be in its pristine state, while this is true, the traditional content of the institution has not been totally eroded as consultation through the *ifa* oracle is still relied on in the selection and installation of a new *Oba* in Yorubaland. Traditional rites before and after the installation/coronation of a new *Oba* are still given serious priority. In fact, however wealthy, powerful and connected an individual might be, if he or she must wear the royal crown, such a person must pass through all the lay down traditional rites. Ordinary head do not wear the crown as doing so goes with great consequences. In Yorubaland, when royalty is bestowed on you, it places you in another realm far beyond the ordinary mortal. Whatever opinions the politicians and other critics might hold, the crowned head is not an ordinary head and the holders of modern political powers may use their access to instrument of state to enforce control of the traditional rulers, their actions or inaction cannot change the fact that the institution of traditional authorities have come to stay.<sup>367</sup>

The next discussion focused on one of the major concepts of the research – power politics which was interrogated within the premise of strategy for control and survival among kings and other traditional rulers in Akokoland.

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<sup>366</sup>*Oba* SundayOlaniyi Mogaji, Imole I, 63, the *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko, Ondo State. 10/4/2018

<sup>367</sup>*Oba* SundayOlaniyi Mogaji, Imole I, 63, the *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko, Ondo State. 10/4/2018

## **5.2 Power politics as instrument of control and stability among kings in Akokoland**

In the context of this study, power politics was used in its narrow interpretation to assess how its usage by foreign colonial merchants and the traditional rulers has impacted the kingship institution in Akokoland in the period of the study. Pieces of information gathered from interviews conducted across Akokoland revealed that power politics manifested in different forms from one town to another. The traditional rulers in Akokoland were very much aware of the concept and its application as a means to an end. Kings in Akokoland used ancient landmarks, marriage, festival, compulsory meeting, wielding of the big stick, appointment of head of traditional groups and the management of ambitious royal family members, chiefs and powerful non-titled members of the towns as instrument of control and stability between 1900 and 1999. Each of the area where power politics was used to ensure the survival of the kingship institution in Akokoland is discussed in turn.

### **5.2.1 Ancient landmarks**

Ancient landmarks were basic requirements to fulfill before laying claim to royalty, tenancy and other rights in the period before 1900. As different people moved in groups or bands from their original settlement (apole) to settle at a new location, certain agreements were reached through covenants or oaths by some selected elders (usually leaders of the migrated groups) to seal the bond that brought them together. All the items used for the oaths and the secret behind them were not often revealed to one person because of its sensitive nature and for the sake of unforeseen development which may warrant one group taking advantage over the other in the period of dispute. For royalty, claimants to it must, as a matter of traditional necessity, be able to have an ancient palace traceable to them, a verifiable link to Ile-Ife ancestry, list of previous kings that had reigned in their lineage and a tradition of right to wear beaded crown. These were the things that allowed for communal cohesion and easy conflict management in the period before 1900. The upkeep of the kings was also handled by the people of the town who saw it as their traditional responsibility to cater for their rulers. Starting from 1900 when the colonialists gradually took the traditional duty of the people to provide for the needs of their kings and chiefs away from them through their manipulative tactic of divide and rule, loyalty of the people became divided between the old political order and the new one introduced by the British.

The introduction of stipend by the British administration led to the gradual commercialisation of the kingship institution in Akokoland. As the kings became salaried agents of the British, their survival and continued relevance became the prerogative of the colonial government officials. As discussed in chapter three, kings in Akokoland who could not quite adapt to their new subservient status dissented but due to the lack of concerted efforts amongst them lost the fight. Colonial government took advantage of the disunity among traditional rulers in Akokoland to alter their political traditions by imposing untitled persons as kings. The introduction of outsiders through colonial manipulation into royalty became a serious issue after the attainment of independence in 1960. Strangely, communities that, hitherto, settled disputes through internal mechanisms became enmeshed in protracted legal tussles to reclaim ‘stolen’ titles and settle chieftaincy disputes.<sup>368</sup> To this end, various Commissions of Inquiries have intervened to settle decades of kingship/chieftaincy contests in Akokoland. Available information in most court judgments revealed that *Owa Ale* of Ikare-Akoko, *Asin* of Okaland and the *Alakungba* of Akungba-Akoko secured respite from the court of law because of the strong traditional evidence provided. They were all able to trace their lineage to Ife, presented list of previous kings that ruled in their lineage and the tradition of beaded crown.<sup>369</sup> Adetona buttressed the place of ancient landmarks in laying claim to royalty when he observed that:

You see, before one can lay claim to royalty, certain requirements must be met. Historically, a special building called *Ile Olori* and later *Afin Oba* must be linked to the claimant, verifiable list of previous *obas* that had reigned in their lineage and the tradition of right to wear beaded crown. Again, the Ife link is also central in the claim to royalty. So, ambitious chiefs though aware of these requirements, have over the years repeatedly tried in futility to alter well respected tradition of kingship in Ogbagi-Akoko and other towns in Akokoland.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>368</sup>Ipinlaiye, A.E. 82, *Oloje* of Igashi-Akoko, Igashi-Akoko, Ondo State. 15/4/2016. For details on traditional rulers and chieftaincy disputes see: Oguntomisin, G.O. 2004. *The Processes of Peacekeeping and Peace-Making in Pre-Colonial Nigeria*. Ibadan: John Archers and Olaoba, O. B. (n.d.).”The Traditional Approaches to Conflict Resolution in the South-West Zone of Nigeria,” *Nigerian Army Quarterly Journal*, Vol., no.1, Negatons (W.A) Ltd. 22-37.

<sup>369</sup>Except the *Owa Ale* whose tradition of beaded crown was questioned by the Morgan Commission, the other two had valid tradition of beaded crown traceable to Ile-Ife. The Morgan Commission however, agreed that the *Owa Ale*’s feathered crown (*Iya ade*) was an ancient one used by his ancestors as one of the symbols of royalty.

<sup>370</sup>Adetona, Victor Ojo. 53, *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko, his palace at Ogbagi-Akoko, Ondo State. 18/4/2018. For details on kingship tradition in Yorubaland see: Johnson S. *The History of the Yorubas, from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*. Lagos: CSS Bookshop Limited, 1921.

Omosola argued further to support the potency of the different manifestations of ancient landmarks when he observed that: “it is an expensive joke to think that our tradition is dead and has no place in the modern age. Towns across Akokoland have their different mechanism of ensuring order and curbing excesses that could create crisis.”<sup>371</sup> Placing curse (s) on an individual or a group of people for grievous offences such as murder, kidnapping, desecration of sacred places is still very efficacious in many Nigeria town and villages. Those things that gave potency to traditional pronouncements in those days are still in existence. In very extreme cases, the king may be forced to lay curse on willfully recalcitrant chief (s), individual or group of trouble makers in his domain to serve as deterrence to others. The current *Olubaka* of Okaland almost invoked the powers of his ancestors to place curse on a particular ‘chief’ (research later found the alleged ‘chief’ to be a crown wearing king) with whom the *kabiyesi* had serious issue that bothered on paramountcy and the right to wear beaded crown, but he was prevailed upon to commute it to mere punishment. Those who pleaded knew the far reaching consequence of the king’s pronouncement especially when done out of anger.<sup>372</sup> The Ajowa-Akoko example of a Yoruba town with seven kings living in harmony for over five decades was interrogated in line with the potency of ancient landmarks. Alhassan was clear when he observed that:

By the time we moved from our different *apole* to Ajowa-Akoko, we started with love and there was a solid agreement by all the eight towns to come together as a mega settlement with each having its leader. It is true that we are in modern time with its own sophistication and dynamism, the place of covenant or oath taking in the unity of Ajowa-Akoko cannot be played down. The elders that met to conclude on how affairs of each town would be managed were very frank with the need to respect the agreements reached before the establishment of the town. Consequences of betraying the terms of agreement to bond despite the obvious diversity in traditions and cultural were constantly re-echoed at important meetings. It was, therefore, very hard for anybody to wake up one morning to alter the structure.<sup>373</sup>

## 5.2.2 Marriage

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<sup>371</sup>Pa Omosola A.B, 76, farmer/community leader, Ikanmu, Oka-Akoko. 30/7/2018.

<sup>372</sup>Pa Omosola A.B, 76, farmer/community leader, Ikanmu, Oka-Akoko. 30/7/2018.

<sup>373</sup>Alhaji Alhassan Adesina, Elela Sasere (Elela II), 82, The *Oloro* of Ora. Interviewed at his palace in Ora, Ajowa-Akoko, Ondo State. 7/4/2018. For details on covenant or oath taking in Yoruba traditional institutions see: Thorpe, C. O. 1972. *Awon Èèwò Ilè Yorùbá*. Ibadan: Onibon-Oje Press.

Marriage remains one of the best mediums of bonding in traditional African societies. The ancient *odesan* (inter-cousin) marriage in Okaland and the *arokun so omiye* (conjugal union between relatives) in Akungba-Akoko played a key role in the strong bond between the different communities that make up the two prominent Akoko towns. This marriage system has proved helpful in the survival of the traditional political institution and the overall progress of the two towns in the period of the study. Up till the late 90s, these forms of marriage existed in the two towns. Family members related to the throne of the two towns married close relatives which have produced strong extended bond among the different interest groups. In most cases, daughters of powerful chiefs with potentials of creating serious problems for the throne were the ones married to either the king or relatives. The married daughters often served as checks on their powerful fathers and also regularly give useful pieces of information on plans that may be inimical to the throne and the kingdom. Afa in Okeagbe-Akoko presented a good instance of how marriage was used by one of their kings as instrument of power politics to stay in control of his domain. Adewumi in his response to the place of power politics in the survival of kingship in Akokoland reminisced on how one Afa king that reigned in the 1930s outsmarted his opposition with the unlikely weapon of marriage. He revealed that:

The *Oba* Omoegun Arasanyi I married 15 wives. During his reign, there were many powerful men who were equally ambitious in the three communities in Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko. He therefore, married daughters of these powerful people who he thought were potential threats to his power and leadership. These wives helped the *Oba* gather intelligence report which the *kabiyesi* relied on to stay in control and survived all threats to his throne.<sup>374</sup>

The *omiye* bond (relationship built on the basis of belonging to the same fraternal cord through marriage) as we have it in Oka-Akoko and Akungba-Akoko remained one of the most reliable factors responsible for the relative peace, good concord and stability enjoyed in the two prominent towns in Akokoland. Stephen buttressed the place marriage in the survival of the throne when he argued that:

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<sup>374</sup>Adewumi, Ojo Stephen, 70, High Chief *Ologotun-Igase*, he is the high priest of Afa community in Okeagbe-Akoko. Ogosi quarters, Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State. 12/4/2018. For more details on women influence in Yoruba traditional systems see: Ukpokolo, F.C. "Gender Politics and African Culture: Concepts, Issues and Practices" in Oguntomisin, G.O. and Edo, V.O. (eds.). 2005. *African Culture and Civilization*, Ibadan: GSP University of Ibadan.

In most towns in Akokoland with few exemptions where only one ruling family exists like in Isua-Akoko, marriage is one of the socio-cultural instruments used to build strong fraternal closure. Despite the age long chieftaincy dispute between the *Asin* of Oka-Odo and the *Olubaka* of Okaland, the two traditional rulers have not found a good reason to go into a full fledged war with each other. Although the *Olubaka* sometimes in 1992 or there about, tried to force allegiance of the *Asin* to him as the paramount ruler of Okaland by not allowing the latter hold the annual new festival for that year. This unfortunate incidence was expected to have generated serious conflict between Oke-Oka and Oka-Odo, but tradition forbids them because of the close relationship that was built over the years through marriage.<sup>375</sup>

While the debate on the role of marriage as viable instrument of power politics in future research efforts continues, one fact that has been established was that marriage formed one of the strongest links to the continue survival of the kingship institution in Akokoland during the period examined.

### 5.2.3 Festival and market

Festival and market were also employed to ensure loyalty to the throne. The parade at the annual Oka-Day celebration which started since 1990 has been a very potent instrument used by the *Olubaka* of Okaland to publicly enforce loyalty of all chiefs and communities under his jurisdiction. At the warm glare of dignitaries present at the venue of the celebration, each community head chief with selected delegates in a well-coordinated marching parade took turn to pay homage to the *kabiyesi* and openly pledge their loyalty to his leadership. The parade was meant promote unity in diversity. The quarters' parade allowed the people to collectively revere the king despite their divergent history and tradition. The *odun ijesu titun* (new yam festival) in Oka-Odo, the Supare, Oba, Ajowa, Ikare and Ogbagi day celebration play key role in the survival of the kingship institution and the culture of the people. Like the Oka-Day celebration, the kings in the above listed Akoko towns use the festival to measure the quality of support they have from the people. The kings during the festival and as a matter of necessity expect all their chiefs and eminent sons and daughters to be in attendance to show solidarity. When a/or some chiefs and key individuals who have confirmed their attendance failed to attend the festival, the kings as expected would summon a meeting of his

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<sup>375</sup>Interview with *Oba* Stephen Oloruntele Ogunoye, 57, the *Olusin* of Owalusin, *Olusin's* palace at Iwaro, Oka-Akoko. 30/7/2018. For more details on Yoruba traditional marriage and its significance see: Fadipe, N. A. 1970. *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan: University Press.

Council-of-Chiefs with the festival organising committee to review the situation for further necessary action. This was discovered from the information gathered to have helped the kings to know those that needed to be reached out to, those to be managed for their peculiarity and those to be avoided. This lent credence to the fact that festival can be deployed as instrument of power politics to regulate power and ensure allegiance.<sup>376</sup>

One of the traditional things that promote communal spirit and cohesion is trading. Apart from buying and selling, the market performs socio-religious functions. Traditionally, people tend to relate well when they meet in an atmosphere with social appeal. Across many Yoruba towns, the common nomenclature for market around the palace is *oja oba* (the king's market) which does not necessarily mean that the king owned all the businesses operated around the palace. The name is beneficial to the throne and the merchants dealing in different items in the market. As expected, such market helps to give wide coverage to the institution and its custodian as visitors needed not ask if such town has a king. Sometimes, some visitors even requested to pay courtesy visits to the throne and when they returned to their different domains related issues accordingly. Markets in Akokoland due to their location some distance away from the palaces were named after the town where the kings ruled. *oja Oka-Akoko*, *oja Okeagbe-Akoko*, *oja Iwaro*, *oja Oba*, *oja Supare-Akoko*, *oja Ikare-Akoko*<sup>377</sup> and many more.

The case of Oka-Akoko and Okeagbe-Akoko deserved mention. Each of the fifteen quarters in Oka-Akoko before colonial era operated their market differently without any hitch. The appointment of the *Olubaka* as the paramount ruler of all the quarters that hitherto enjoyed virtual independence under their village heads changed the status quo with regards to market operation. The king must ensure his acceptance by all and to do this, he must ensure that the people buy and sell in one central market which has his direct approval. Quarter by quarter market was therefore cancelled with the establishment of the *oja Oke-Oka* (upper Oka market) where all the communities under the *Olubaka* carry out their trading activities. As observed by Omosola:

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<sup>376</sup>Interview with Chief Ojo, S.A., 58. Community leader, No. 1, Shineshine Villa, Ikese, Oka-Akoko. 30/7/2018. For more details on festivals in Yorubaland see: Ajetunmobi, R.O. 2009. "Traditional Festivals in Nigeria" in Ajetunmobi, R.O. and Osiyale, B.O. (eds.) *Themes in Nigeria as a Nation*. Abeokuta: Gabby Printing (Nig.) Enterprises.

<sup>377</sup>The market at Ikare-Akoko can be partly regarded as *oja Oba* because of its proximity to the palace but *oja Ikare* appear to be the accepted name among several buyers and sellers. For more details on market in Yorubaland see: Olaoba, O.B. 1999. *Rural and Urban Market in Yorubaland: Bodija Market in Ibadan 1987-1995*. Ibadan: John Archers Limited.



the current king is a lover of peace but very strategic in ensuring his acceptance through collective loyalty from the people of the town. Originally we had different markets on quarter by quarter basis; this was the situation until the colonial masters pronounced the *Olubaka* as the paramount ruler of Okaland. This development meant one thing: the alteration of the old order to allow the needed changes to be effected. One market was established by the king to ensure inclusion and collective allegiance to the throne by all and sundry. The king could not have allowed the town to run independent of his total grip. While the central Oka market might have promoted cohesion and communalism, the ultimate concern of the king was to ensure collective loyalty through the subtle instrument of market.<sup>378</sup>

Okeagbe-Akoko also presented a good case of how market served as instrument of ensuring loyalty to the crown. Like Oka-Akoko, the four Okeagbe-Akoko communities of Afa, Aje, Oge and Ido observed different market day as independent community under their different ruler before their relocation to their present settlement. To also promote and entrench a deep sense of togetherness, the four communities since relocation in 1924 collectively agreed to have one unifying market. The initial name for the new market was *enyenyen* which was originally an Afa market. To avoid bad blood among the other three communities who might naturally view Afa as usurping its advantage as the biggest of the four towns, the *Ajana* of Afa met and agreed with other kings and renamed *enyenyen* as Okeagbe market. This development greatly endeared the people the more to their leaders. The market thus, allowed the people to see the survival of their communities as a collective responsibility as instability in one community would naturally have spillover effect on the others. The collective support enjoyed from the people of Okeagbe-Akoko allowed the traditional rulers the latitude to administer their domain and collectively see to the inclusive development of the area. As a show of solidarity and good wishes from the throne, the kings also send palace messengers with the long beaded royal staff carrying a small beaded crown to convey their prayers and wishes for smooth trading among the traders. The *Iyaloja* (the traditional head of the market women) and associations get words of commendations for their role in ensuring order among the different business interest in the markets. Through this, the people reaffirmed their readiness to support the reign of the king who has shown warm

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<sup>378</sup>Omosola, A.B., 76, Farmer/ community leaders, Ewu Ikanmu, Oka-Akoko, Ondo State. 30/7/2018. For more details on market as instrument of socio-economic relations see: Hodder, B.W and Ukwu, U.I (eds.) 1969. *Markets in West Africa*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

disposition towards them as their fathers and rulers concerned with their wellbeing and progress and partners in progress.

#### 5.2.4 Compulsory meeting

Another means of ensuring loyalty to the leadership and power of the *Oba* in Akokoland is through the imposition of compulsory meeting period for all chiefs with the *Oba*-in-Council. Oka-Akoko presented a good example of how the *Olubaka* has been able to ensure loyalty of his chiefs through the mandatory meeting with them. Tuesday of every week is the day for a compulsory meeting of Oka Chiefs-in-Council with the *kabiyesi*. The Expect when the *kabiyesi* is unavoidably absent, he presided over the meeting to provide leadership and direction on important issues that bothered on the growth and development of the kingdom.<sup>379</sup> Specifically, Council is like *agbo iba wi* where notes are compared and ideas are shared on how to move the community forward. Also, the last Sunday of every month has been set aside by the *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko as the time of general meeting of all the chiefs' resident in Oka-Akoko and those living outside to meet with him to discuss the problems and progress of the town. This arrangement has seriously helped the *kabiyesi* to detect dissenting chiefs and as a leader and father of all, he has always find a way to win them back as friends ready to work with him for the progress of the kingdom.<sup>380</sup> As it would be discussed later, the *Olubaka* like his counterparts some Akoko towns did not succeed in bringing all the dissenting chiefs back to his fold.<sup>381</sup> In Aje, Okeagbe-Akoko, the *Oba* presided over the *ajo ilu* attended by the male elders (*agba okunrin*) and the chiefs of the town. At this meeting, important issues that concerned the progress of the town are collectively discussed. The king ensured that definite conclusions were reached before the end of the meeting. The general meeting of the entire town (*ajo gbogbo ilu of apejo ilu*) is then called. The general meeting

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<sup>379</sup>Interview with Chief Ojo, S.A., 58.Community leader/farmer, No. 1, Shineshine Villa, Ikese, Oka-Akoko. 30/7/2018. For more details on Yoruba traditional political structure see:Oguntomisin, G.O. 1997. "Through the Changing Scenes: Traditional Rulers in Nigeria", *Journal of African Studies*. 2. no.1 Olofa.

<sup>380</sup>Interview with Chief Ojo, S.A., 58.Farmer/community leader, No. 1, Shineshine Villa, Ikese, Oka-Akoko. 30/7/2018. For details about politics and interaction among the Akokos see: Olukoju, A.O. 1989. "The Siege of Oka, ca. 1878-84: A Study in the Resistance to Nupe Militarism in Northeastern Yorubaland", in Toyin Falola and Robin Law (eds.). *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-colonial Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Robert Smith*. Madison: University of Wisconsin.

<sup>381</sup>Same was the case in Erusu-Akoko where the *Osunla* have failed to reconcile with chiefs from Amo, Aga and Okesan, the *Zaki* of Arigidi-Akoko has also failed in his many attempts to reconcile with chiefs from Iyu, Imo and Osin quarters. Interestingly, these three Arigidi-Akoko quarters have their kingmakers. This has made reconciliation more difficult.

holds in front of the *Oba's* palace. Again, the king presided over the meeting but everyone interested in making presentation was allowed to do so without constraints.<sup>382</sup> The strategy is to ensure that the king takes control and stay in charge.

Afa in Okeagbe-Akoko also showcased how the king used compulsory meeting venue to secure loyalty to his power and authority. There are two lines of High Chiefs in Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko: *Iyares* (the father chiefs which are the highest ranked in Afa and the *Elegbe* representing the lower chiefs. The *Ajana* of Afa and his deputy the *Rawa* are both *Iyares*. Just as the *Ajana* is the head of the community, he is also the head of the *Iyares* and the *Rawa* the second in command. For strategic reason, the *Iyares* members as a matter of compulsion meet in the palace of the king at all its meetings.<sup>383</sup> The *Osunla* heads the *Elegbe* chiefs and they meet at the *Osunla's* house. The king allowed the meeting of the *Elegbe* outside the palace to allow the chiefs engage themselves freely in discussion without the limitation that their meeting in the palace could have imposed. This tradition continued in Afa until 1932, when something unusual happened during the reign of *Oba Omoegun Arasanyi I.*<sup>384</sup> The year marked an important chapter in the history of ascendancy to the throne of the *Ajana* of Afa. For the first time, two people contested but Prince *Omoegun* won. While the people preferred his candidature, his second-in-command *Rawa Aliu* did not like him. Due to the high level of education of *Rawa Aliu*, he manipulated *Ajana Omoegun* who was of less educational exposure.<sup>385</sup> This negative tendency of *Rawa Aliu* did not go down well with the *Ajana* who saw his action as deliberate attempt to usurp his powers and authority. *Oba Omoegun* now decided that both the *Elegbe* chiefs and the *Iyare* chiefs should, henceforth, meet in his palace, because he knew that if he allowed some dissenting chiefs to meet separately outside the palace, his power, authority and control might be seriously threatened. Records available

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<sup>382</sup>This arrangement was commended by many in Aje community and linked to one of the major reasons why the king is widely supported and accepted by the people.

<sup>383</sup>Adewumi, Ojo Stephen, 70, High Chief *Ologotun-Igase*, he is the high priest of Afa community in Okeagbe-Akoko. Ogosi quarters, Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State. 12/4/2018. For details on this see: O. Faboyede. 2015. "Akokoland before Colonial Rule: Earliest Times to 1900". *International Journals of Arts and Humanities (IJAH)*, (Bahir Dar-Ethiopia, 4, no.1

<sup>384</sup>Adewumi, Ojo Stephen, 70, High Chief *Ologotun-Igase*, he is the high priest of Afa community in Okeagbe-Akoko. Ogosi quarters, Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State. 12/4/2018. (For details on this see: For details on this see: O. Faboyede. 2015. "Akokoland before Colonial Rule: Earliest Times to 1900". *International Journals of Arts and Humanities (IJAH)*, (Bahir Dar-Ethiopia, 4, no.1.)

<sup>385</sup>Adewumi, Ojo Stephen, 70, High Chief *Ologotun-Igase*, he is the high priest of Afa. For community in Okeagbe-Akoko. Ogosi quarters, Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State. 12/4/2018. For details on this see: S. A. Ogunode. 2014. "An Appraisal of the Roles of the Warriors' Guild in Addressing Pre-colonial Security Challenges in Okaland South-West Nigeria." *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies (IJHCS)*, Vol.1, Issue 3

during data gathering revealed that the change in the in meeting venue of the *Elegbe* chiefs has played key role in raising the relevance and power of the *Ajana* as loyalty to the throne was made stronger and better. This has helped in the effective management of the town by subsequent *Ajana* that reigned after the demise of *Oba* Omoegun Arasanyi I.

Like the *Oyomesi*, a powerful age grade called the *Oyere* was the organ saddled with the responsibility to check the excesses of the *Ajana* of Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko. Tradition provided that the *Oyere* age grade members must meet at the king's palace. Unlike the *Iyare* and *Elegbe* chiefs, the *Oyere* have their own kind of kind of mini-palace located within the main palace. This mini-palace is called *omode owa*. The king is forbidden by tradition from visiting the *omode owa* despite its location in his official residence. Membership of the group comprised hunters picked from the three quarters of Ogosi, Oguna and Ogotun in Afa. The *Oba* hunter is also chosen from the palace to represent him in the *Oyere* age grade. This is where power politics come to play. Traditionally, the *kabiyesi* is not allowed to attend their meeting since it is the only body that can call him to order in the event that he erred. In fact, it was revealed that the *Oyere* is so powerful that no *Ajana* has ever risked joining issues with them. Interestingly, the palace hunter out of respect for the *Oba* is naturally allowed to assume the leadership of the *Oyere*. This does not translate to the *kabiyesi* having control over the membership or decisions of the group. The head of the group also functions as the eye of the *Oba* as he was expected to give first-hand useful pieces of information on developments in the town. The quality of information provided and the actions taken by the palace representative either make or mar the position of the *Ajana*. His loyalty to the *kabiyesi* and his readiness to always pursue the interest of the throne are key to determine the usefulness of the game of power play between the *Ajana* and the *Oyere* on the one hand, and his relationship with the other three members of the group.

### **5.2.5 Management of ambitious royal family members/chiefs and others**

The economic dimension visited on the traditional political institutions across Nigeria communities and villages with the introduction of salary for the traditional rulers since the colonial period, has created cut-throat quest for royalty by both the qualified and outsiders. Even chiefs with no link to royalty have suddenly become awakened with the desire to upgrade to *obas*. It is very true that all royal male members of the ruling family are qualified to desire the throne but the final decision rests in the hands of the kingmakers and the collective decisions of the people. Interestingly, Isua-Akoko presented a unique example of

ruling family in Akokoland. Only one ruling house produced the *Oba*. So, managing the intra-royal family crisis becomes a very easy task. The records available revealed that Isua-Akoko *Oba* (then and now) have not had serious issue with equally qualified princes and where such cases were reported, the king has been able to handle them with traditional wisdom without resulting in serious legal frenzy.<sup>386</sup>

Committees with different community related assignments to be carried out by designated individuals also play important role in the survival of the kingship institution in Akokoland. Interestingly, the committees are headed by chiefs or individuals who posed serious threat to the power and authority of the kings. This strategy has really worked in Aje, Okeagbe-Akoko, Oka-Akoko, Ogba-Akoko, Ajowa-Akoko, Isua-Akoko and others for many decades. The result of this strategy has been awesome, as the king through his seeming benevolence imposed a moral burden on the head of each committee to deliver the set goals. Through this, the chiefs are made to see the unity and progress of the town as a collective responsibility that can be achieved when they give the king who is the eye of the town the needed support.<sup>387</sup> For the assurance of loyalty, the different committees meet in the *Oba's* palace at an agreed date. The head of each committee reports directly to the king who was expected to give approval to all issues agreed upon. It is, however, important to say that, the king don not usually attend the committee meeting, except when there is a pressing issue that required his intervention. Holding the meeting in the palace is enough to compel loyalty from the committee members. While some members appointed into the different committees were often those loyal to the throne, others are there to help the king close ranks and ensure that they are positively engaged in activity that give them a sense of inclusion as partners in the development of the community. They see themselves as stakeholders who must do everything possible to ensure the unity and stability of their towns.

Some of the kings interviewed also believed that dialogue can be used to manage aggrieved members of the town especially the princes and chiefs. In one of his speeches at the *ajo ilu*, the *kabiyesi* (Ewi) was apt when he observed that:

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<sup>386</sup>Interview with Akande Sunday, 30, palace staff, *Olisua* palace, Isua-Akoko, 18/5/2018. For details on traditional wisdom see: Olaoba, O. B. "The Traditional Approaches to Conflict Resolution in the South-West Zone of Nigeria". *Nigerian Army Quarterly Journal*, Vol. no.1, Negatons (W.A) Ltd.

<sup>387</sup>Onipinla, Emmanuel Elegbelye, 84, Clergy and community leader, S40A, Aje, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State. 12/4/2018. For details on power and status of Yoruba chiefs see: Falola, T. 2006. "Power, Status and Influence of Yoruba Chiefs in Historical Perspective" in Falola, T. and Geneva, A. *Yoruba Identity and Power Politics*. New York: University of Rochester Press.

I am aware that some of the princes that contested with me would be sad at the turn of event, but having emerged after fulfilling all that was required of me by the extant provisions of our customs and tradition and with the collective acceptance by the people of Aje, I am ready to be the father of all which by virtue of my royal office I am expected to exhibit at all times. Aggrieved princes and other interest groups have the natural right to vent their anger, but in doing so, they should ensure that their actions do not in any way endanger peace, unity and stability of the community. I am not Oba of my household; I am the father of all and the rallying point, whatever the issues are, remember we could always talk and reach valid conclusions for the good of all. Aje was handed over to me united and I forbid anybody for whatever reason start any bad history during my reign. While the unity of all in this town is not negotiable, the place of dialogue cannot be overemphasised.<sup>388</sup>

Momoh also stressed the place of dialogue in handling cases that involved aggrieved members of the society especially in the royal circle. In his words:

I soft pedal a little to avoid shooting myself in the leg. Remember the princes are very much free to interact with the people of the town and if the *Oba* in power fails to manage these princes and allow them to muster ready and willing hands to revolt against the power of the reigning king the result can be damaging.<sup>389</sup>

Oyekan also lent his voice to the importance peacefully resolving problems in the society. Although he acknowledged that he went through the most harrowing experiences before ascending to the throne of his fathers, he never avenged those who were bent on taking all from him. He aptly captured his view thus:

At emergence and after winning all the court cases, I extended hands of friendship to my aggrieved uncle who contested with me. Despite my appeal to him, he went ahead to institute legal process against me at the High Court. He lost and never appealed because he was convinced that his case has no merit for further legal interrogation. Thankfully, we mended fences and the peace that followed has been very tremendous. Interestingly, I made a point of duty to visit all those who were not in my support and I even slept in their houses as a king. My open-mindedness and sincere love has allowed the chieftaincy disputes in Epimi-Akoko to die a

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<sup>388</sup>Oloruntoba, Bello, 70, *The Ewi of Aje, Aje's palace*, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State. 12/05/2015. The use of dialogue to manage ambitious princes, chiefs and other members of the town was also buttressed by the *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko, the *Zaki* of Arigidi-Akoko, the *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko and the *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko. For details on the use of dialogue see: Nwosile, O.B. (ed.) 2005. *Traditional Models of Bargaining and Conflict Resolution in Africa: Perspective on Peace and Conflict in Africa*. Ibadan: John Archers Ltd.

<sup>389</sup>Interview with *Oba* Akadiri Saliu-Momoh IV, The *Olukare* of Ikare-Akoko, 80+. *Olukare's* palace, Ikare-Akoko. 18/08/2016. O. Faboyede. 2015. "Akokoland before Colonial Rule: Earliest Times to 1900". *International Journals of Arts and Humanities (IJAH)*, Bahir Dar-Ethiopia, 4, no.1.

natural death. They have come to accept the fact that, only little can be achieved in crisis and vice versa.<sup>390</sup>

The *Olusin* of Owalusin, who was hitherto an active member of the Oka-Akoko Council of Chiefs, suddenly renounced his membership due to his conviction that he is more than a High Chief. His consistent absence from meetings of Oka Chiefs-In-Council with the *Olubaka* of Okaland was perceived as disrespect to the paramountcy of the consenting authority in Okaland. The chiefs, the people and the *kabiyesi* held divergent opinion concerning the decision of the *Olusin* to become a king. While the first two groups, especially those of Oke-Oka collectively condemned the action of the *Olusin*, the *Olubaka* held a contrary view. While acknowledging the painful decision taken by one of his trusted high chiefs to become king, he submitted that:

As the paramount ruler of Okaland, I have managed the unfortunate development, the point must be made that choices made by conscious individuals must be respected and where there are conflicts that cannot be resolved with the available traditional mechanisms; the parties concerned can approach a court of competent jurisdiction to settle the matter. Whatever the outcome of the court intervention might be, the disputants remain one big family strongly linked together by the bond of one ancestry, *omiye* tie and language. We will always disagree to agree and this is good for communal bonding, fraternity and collective progress.<sup>391</sup>

As noted earlier, it is important to state here that the *Olubaka* has not succeeded in resolving issues with all the alleged dissenting chiefs. For example, the *Asin* of Oka-Odo has consistently refuted the claim that he is a chief under the *Olubaka*. Pieces of information gathered through extensive interviews, archival documents and court proceedings have proved to the contrary that the *Asin* is a chief under the paramountcy of the *Olubaka*.<sup>392</sup> In the same vein, the *Olusin* of Owalusin who fell out with the *Olubaka* of Okaland has also argued that he is an *oba* in his own right not a chief. While clarifying issues on his decision to become independent of the *Olubaka*, he argued that:

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<sup>390</sup>Interview with *Oba* George Olusegun Oyekan (JP), The *Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko, 57+. *Gbiri's* palace, Epimi-Akoko. 7/6/2018. For details on this see: O. Faboyede 2013. "Elitism in Pre-colonial Akoko Society: Its Disorientation from Socio-Cultural Value in Contemporary Akoko", *LUMINA*, Vol. 22, No.1.

<sup>391</sup>Interview with HRH *Oba* Adeleye, Yusuf Adebore, 73+, *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko., *Olubaka's* palace, Oka-Akoko.6/8/2018. For details on this see: O. Faboyede 2013. "Elitism in Pre-colonial Akoko Society: Its Disorientation from Socio-Cultural Value in Contemporary Akoko", *LUMINA*, Vol. 22, No.1.

<sup>392</sup>Interview with HRM Ambassador Regent Adekemi Omorinbola, *Asin* of Okaland. 27/7/2018. For details see: Orojo, J. O. 2008. *A Short History of Arigidi-Akoko*. Lagos: Royet and Day Publication Ltd.

As you now know and can confirm, there is an old palace traceable to my lineage. My claim to royalty was not accidental. My forefathers came from Ile-Ife with the beaded crown. Yes, there are a lot of issues surrounding my claim to kingship, the question is not whether I am qualified to be accorded the obaship but why on earth was the old palace from where I oversee the affairs of my people built? Does a chief build palace, only royalty use palace and that is the class I belong. Until our plurality is respected and accepted, there will always be issues to fight over. *Oba agba la fi mo agba*, if the higher king cannot tolerate the existence of the smaller ones with their own unique story of migration and crown history, there will always be an issue to argue over.<sup>393</sup>

Concluding his clarification, Stephen submitted that language may unite us but sometimes and even more often, because of sophistication occasioned by the waves of modernity, our interests are bound to conflict and managing same requires a combination of native wisdom and the application of necessary legal instrument. In my honest opinion, I have met all the requirements needed to be called a king. Those forcing the High Chief title on me are still living under the illusion that time is constant. I respect the crown head at Oke-Oka but I cannot compromise my lineage rich history on the altar of loyalty.<sup>394</sup>

### **5.2.6 The support of the people and wielding of the big stick**

Kings through the ages were and are still looked upon as the father of all. They are expected to provide leadership with traditional finesse and native wisdom. As the Yoruba elders would always say: *oju l'oba ya, oba ki ya enu* (the king should be patient in observing more, but never in hurry to make pronouncement especially when he is angry).<sup>395</sup> While patience is a long term strategy, kings who are not super humans, are sometimes, although rarely, forced to wield the big stick to arrest some disturbing situations that could jeopardise peace and order in their domains. It is equally a fact that the survival of the traditional rulers on the thrones of their fathers is largely premised on the quality of support they get from the people. Kings do not oversee buildings, vegetation or animals; they manage human beings –

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<sup>393</sup>Interview with *Oba* Stephen Oloruntele Ogunoye, 57, the *Olusin* of Owalusin, *Olusin's* palace at Iwaro, Oka-Akoko. 30/7/2018.

<sup>394</sup>Interview with HRH *Oba* Adeleye, Yusuf Adebori, 73, *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko., *Olubaka's* palace, Oka-Akoko.6/8/2018. For details see: Kolawole, D.O. 2009. *A History of Oka*. Ibadan: Demman Consultancy & Printers.

<sup>395</sup>Same advice was given to *Alafin* Abiodun Adegoolu when he was installed as the new *oba* of Oyo in the epic movie titled: "Basorun Gaa" directed by Adebayo Faleti. For details on proverbs and conflict management see: Ademowo, A.J. & Noah Balogun. 2014. "Proverbs and Conflict Management in Africa: A Study of Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions". *International Journal of Literature, Language and Linguistics*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1(1)



people. While the support of the chiefs is critical, the place of the people from whom the kings derive their power and relevance is more central to the overall wellbeing of the throne and the administration of the society.

The sad event of 1957 that led to the burning down of *Zaki* of Arigidi-Akoko old palace by some elements that supported the opposing Memudu Olanipekun family is worthy of mention. When the *Oba* was away in exile, a very rich member of the dissenting group that forced the *kabiyesi* on exile, Jaccinto Akande from Ekiteji quarters made several clandestine efforts to usurp the absence of the *Zaki* and impose himself with the help of his supporters as the leader of Arigidi-Akoko. Many people have, perhaps, betrayed by their uncritical and lack of analytically understanding, submitted that, money is everything. This submission was proved wrong in the case of Jaccinto when he relied on his wealth to steal power that he did not merit in accordance with laid down traditional rules of ascension to the *Zaki* throne in Arigidi-Akoko. He was unable to achieve his inordinate ambition as he met stiff opposition from the people who insisted that since their king was not dead, he must be allowed to return home and continue his reign as the paramount ruler of the town.<sup>396</sup>

Interestingly, those who led the rebellion of 1957 were also responsible for the return of the deposed *Oba* from exile in 1985. Because of the wisdom applied by prominent sons and daughters of Arigidi-Akoko who saw the need to acknowledge the fact that those who dissented had the right to do so, but they were however, reminded of the consequences of their actions which ran contrary to the customs and traditions of the land in relation to their ancient landmarks. Threats were issued to invoke the powers of the land to lay curses on those who were involved in the travails of the exiled *Oba*. The fear of the grave consequences of their actions in the event that curses were placed or invoked on the perpetrators, compelled the actors involved in the ill-fated scheme to accept the peace move that was spearheaded by some respected and trusted members of the town who of course had the firm support of the people.<sup>397</sup> What the king enjoyed was the quality of support he got from the people. The people saw his removal as improper and went all the way to ensure that the right thing was done. Despite the huge financial resources expended by the leaders of the rebellion, the will of the people prevailed with the restoration of the exiled king in 1985.

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<sup>396</sup>Interview with Francis Rotimi Alabi, 50, *Edibo* of Ogo Quarters, Arigidi-Akoko. 6/4/2018. For details see: Orojo, J. O. (2008). *A Short History of Arigidi-Akoko*. Lagos: Royet and Day Publication Ltd.

<sup>397</sup>Interview with Francis Rotimi Alabi, 50, *Edibo* of Ogo Quarters, Arigidi-Akoko. 6/4/2018.

Still on the place of the people's support to the survival of the kingship institution, Omosola commended the leadership style of the *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko when he remarked that:

As you have noticed in all the communities that have not been able to produce their traditional head chiefs and minor chiefs for over four decades, the *Kabiyesi* would have, like some kings that believe that all power belonged to them, forced leaders on the affected communities without minding the people's preference. But that has not been the case. This is why I among those elders that appreciate the leadership qualities of the current *Olubaka* of Okaland who holds the strong view that the real power resides in the people. To him, it is safer to win more friends than making enemies. Grass roots mobilisation remains a factor in any rural society where a ruling king desire to stay relevant and have the support of his people at all times. A wise king will court the support of the people by running an open government and leading aright.<sup>398</sup>

The masquerade menace of 1998 in Epinmi-Akoko was an event that the king and the people would not want to remember again because of the ugly crisis it created. *Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko detailed the situation when he recounted how hard it was for him to use extreme measure to restore order and take charge of his domain that was at verge of anarchy due to unnecessary crisis secretly orchestrated by some vested interests in the town. Oyekan narrated that:

there was a religious crisis that seriously threatened the peace of my kingdom but I was able to arrest the situation through careful dialogue. But since some vested interests were bent on complicating issue and thereby making the management of the town difficult for me, I had to assert my authority as the *Oba*.<sup>399</sup>

He also commented on how he was forced to invoke his power as the paramount ruler of the town to restore order. In his words;

The crisis was connected to a violent masquerade that was harassing and beating elders and even chiefs in the town for unfathomable reason(s). To arrest the ugly development, I arrested the masquerade in its full costume and locked him up at the Isua-Akoko police station. This action of mine did not go down well

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<sup>398</sup>Interview with Pa Omosola, A.B., 76.Ikanmu, Oka-Akoko. 30/7/2018. For details on the personality of the ruler see:Sofola, J.A. 1973. *African Culture and the African Personality: What Makes an African Person African*.Ibadan: African Resources Publishers Co.

<sup>399</sup>Interview with *Oba* George Olusegun Oyekan (JP), The*Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko, 57. *Gbiri's* palace, Epimi-Akoko. 7/6/2018. For details on this see: Ayo B. 2002.*Public Administration and the Conduct of Community Affairs among the Yoruba in Nigeria*. California: ICS Press.

with the masquerade supporters who went violent and almost threatened the sanity of my kingdom. In fact, they shot at me but I escaped unhurt. Through the intervention of the law enforcement agents, some respected son and daughters of Epimi-Akoko and with my resolve to take the centre stage as the father of all, peace was restored and the town has remained united since then.<sup>400</sup>

Akande explained how the Oba of Isua-Akoko also used extreme measure to ensure loyalty. He asserted that:

The kabiyesi has been able to manage dissenting chiefs by appointing new loyal ones from the same quarters. The new ones are always, as expected in a hurry to impress the *Oba* through their swift execution of assigned responsibilities. Through this very strategic means, the *Oba* has been able to maintain his hold to power and ensure loyalty to his throne as the paramount ruler and consenting authority in Isua-Akoko.<sup>401</sup>

The above is stressing the fact that the *Oba* certainly cannot tolerate, however accommodating and fatherly, any chief, individual or group, however powerful to usurp his royal office and power. The *Oba* has his own loyal chiefs who are readily available to put any dissenting chief in his rightful place. The *Oba* remains the rallying point of all interest groups in his domain and he will go to any length allowed by the law to establish his authority. Summarily, the obvious challenges of modern governance and the readiness of the politicians to wield the big stick has made it difficult for our today's traditional rulers to assert their authority as it was in the past. Due to sophistication and exposure through western education, the *Oba* employs legal instrument to address serious threat (s) to his power.<sup>402</sup> This was the case in the several court battles to decide issues of chieftaincy declarations which led to the emplacement of multiple Commissions of inquiries in by the government of the then Western State and Ondo State.

The Regent of Oka-Odo gave her view on the most reliable means of ensuring loyalty and respect of the people for the throne in a more inclusive way when she argued that:

Once you understand the people you are managing, you can be sure of their commitment and loyalty. It is normal for some chiefs to dissent but the king in power must also show that there is the need to ensure that such dissent is managed properly to the extent

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<sup>400</sup>Interview with *Oba* George Olusegun Oyekan (JP), The *Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko, 57. *Gbiri's* palace, Epimi-Akoko. 7/6/2018. For details on this see: Foluso, A. and Kolawole, A. *Akokoland: History and Distinguished People*. Ibadan: Lizab Nigeria Ltd, 1997.

<sup>401</sup>Interview with Akande Sunday, 30, palace staff, *Olisua* palace, Isua-Akoko, 18/5/2018.

<sup>402</sup>Interview with D.F Oloba, 58, MB/17, Ita, Imo Arigidi-Akoko. 6/4/2018.

that it does not affect the peace and stability of the kingdom. It must be stressed also that, the king may have to sometimes wield the big stick in the event that a dissenting chief, aggrieved royal family member(s) refused to accept amicable resolution after due intervention from stakeholders.<sup>403</sup>

### **5.2.7 The kings and the politics of staff of office**

Sincerely, the handing over of staff of office to the elected king by the government either at the state or federal level has come to stay but it is really not a good development. In the first instance, there is a clear indication that the real power rests in the giver of the staff of office not the receiver – the *Oba*. The holding of the staff of office by the receiver is only a function of his level of loyalty and patronage to the giver – the government of the day. You can now see the politics of a deliberate scheme aimed at controlling us (Obas) against our wishes. This is why it is very important for all the traditional rulers to unite in order to have a common voice in checking the excesses of wielders of modern political powers. Politicians can be very funny, but if we are wise and united, we can secure our place in the scheme of things. There is the urgent need for one voice despite our differences and societal affiliations. We know the people better than the governors, chairmen, councillors and even the president. We cannot be totally neglected because any attempt to do so would be counterproductive. It is the case of he that pays the piper, dictates the tune. This notwithstanding, we still deserve our place as important agents of progressive partners in the journey towards building a better and safer society.<sup>404</sup>

### **5.3 Kings in Akokoland and the quest for relevance**

Kingship institution is no doubt remains a key component of our culture given its central role in grassroots governance and development. While there may be the need to have some specific functions enshrined in the constitution for its custodians, it important to note that the traditional rulers have continued to perform their roles as makers, builders and keepers of peace, ensuring societal cohesion, stability and order by collaborating with other government personnel. While future government may deem it fit to capture specific functions for the kings and chiefs in the constitution, the fact remains that the institution of kingship/chieftaincy cannot be pushed to the backwater of history as it has continue to show

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<sup>403</sup>Interview with HRM Ambassador Regent Adekemi Omorinbola, *Asin* of Okaland. 27/7/2018. For details on these reactions see: Faboyede, O. 2013.“The Akoko Elite”.Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Ekiti State University, Nigeria.

<sup>404</sup>Interview with *Oba* Akadiri Saliu-Momoh IV, The *Olukare* of Ikare-Akoko, 80+. Olukare palace, Ikare-Akoko. 14/4/2018.

resilience in the face of decades of harsh policies designed by the modern power welders to choke it. More importantly, the personalities of traditional rulers play a central role in the degree of influence, which they wield under the modern governmental arrangement. Consequently, communities in Nigeria now compete in terms of enthroning/installing rulers who are wealthy, influential or educated, as these were considered effective factors that could enhance the growth and development of their communities. However, it would seem that these effective factors are not only being used by the traditional rulers to protect and project their personal interests, they also account, among other factors, for the clashes between the traditional rulers and the modern government elite. The incidence of salary cut, salary stoppage, restriction, dethronement and banishment are products of such clashes.<sup>405</sup> In fact, the political elite and wilders of powers in the modern machinery of governance have continued to regard the kingship institution as an anachronism, a type of aristocracy that does not benefit the modern Nigerian political system, yet, a good number see the traditional rulers as having a secure role to fulfill if properly guided. This view was buttressed by Obiyan when he argued that:

The king is an expert in local matters and because he knows the history of his people, where they came from, how they got there and who owns what, he can be a source of confidence for getting at the right solution in disputes and similar family problems.<sup>406</sup>

Van while arguing in favour of the continue relevance of the traditional rulers in Africa submitted that;

In the light of the comparative failure of the African state, undermined as it has been by greedy and violent political elites within and without Africa, to bring about democracy and development, chieftaincy (kingship) has re-emerged as an important vehicle for more or less authentic indigenous political expression.<sup>407</sup>

Obiyan was in agreement with Van in terms of resurgence of indigenous political expression among traditional rulers in contemporary Africa. He argued that the unpleasant stance of the ruling elites that the kings and chiefs have no place in the contemporary

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<sup>405</sup> A.O. Adesoji, "Traditional Rulership and Modern Governance in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Nigeria"... p.416.

<sup>406</sup> Sat Obiyan, 52, Professor of Political Science. He was interviewed at his office in the Department of Political Science, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. 24/01/2018.

<sup>407</sup> Donald I. Ray and Adrian B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, 1996, "The New Relevance of Traditional Authorities in Africa". *Journal of Legal Pluralism*.p.7. The 1996 issue of the journal grew out of the Conference on the "Contribution of Traditional Authority to Development, Democracy, Human Rights and Environmental Protection: Strategies for Africa."

political equation is porous and lacking in merit. Yes, the happenings in the last five decades have adversely affected the powers and relevance of the traditional authorities in Nigeria and the other Africa countries, this is, however, not enough reason to wish away the institution as its survival is largely derived and dependent on the customs and traditions of the people. The handing of staff of office and approval of the selection or election of kings by the government does not reflect a total capturing of the kings and the institutions they represent.<sup>408</sup> This was the position of Van when he argued further that, contrary to the views held by some people, chieftaincy (kingship) is not totally controlled by the ruling elites that appear to have firm grip on states' structures.<sup>409</sup> Kings and chiefs have varying bases of power from that of the state. This was why Hyden explained in his scholarly piece titled: *Beyond Ujama in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an Uncaptured Peasantry*,<sup>410</sup> that the modern political power brokers may have severally developed means of impoverishing the masses and local rulers especially in East Africa state with the intent to silence or relegate them further, they have, nevertheless, failed to present a narrative to the effect that the locals and their indigenous rulers have a way of playing around the disadvantages coercively imposed on them with meaningful results gained to better their lots and stay relevant in the happenings in the state. Leaning on Hyden and Van perspectives, it can be argued that the kings and other traditional rulers space for maneuver is potent in terms of the strategies they can use to stay relevant in the modern political space.

Hatt's interrogation of the relationship between traditional authority and democratization reveal that people in the grassroots desire political leaders who could settle local challenges as well as relating well the state. He argues further that the chief (king) in order to retain relevance in the modern political space often has to be able translate perceptions of politics from the local understanding into official one. This is what he suggests as the expression of dual sovereignty.<sup>411</sup> In explaining this duality, Hatt observed that:

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<sup>408</sup>Sat Obiyan, 52, professor of Political Science, Obafemi Awolowo University, Osun State, Nigeria. 28/01/2018

<sup>409</sup>Donald I. Ray and Adrian B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, 1996. "The New Relevance of Traditional Authorities in Africa". *Journal of Legal Pluralism*.p.7.

<sup>410</sup>Hyden, Goran 1980. *Beyond Ujama in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an Uncaptured Peasantry*. London: Heinemann

<sup>411</sup>Quoted in:Ray, Donald I. and Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, E. Adrian B. van 1996."The New Relevance of Traditional Authorities in Africa". *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, vol.28, Issue 37-38. p.12.

The practical authority of chiefs lies in their ability to mediate between two political systems which operate in two completely different styles and through different political idioms – one bureaucratic and hierarchical and concerned with the implementation of policies mainly generated elsewhere, and the other personalistic and bound up in the subtle politics of reputation in the tribal sphere.<sup>412</sup>

#### **5.4 Challenges of kingship and other traditional political institutions in Akokoland**

The kingship institution in Akokoland as elsewhere in other parts of Nigeria and Africa have undergone several stages of mutations with regards to their relevance in current political space. As discussed in chapter two of this work, the splendour and reverence accorded the institution of traditional authorities and their custodians in the pre-colonial times was a direct reflection of the institutions' centrality as pivotal pillar of viable societal organisation and communal cohesion. Thus, from being at the centre of authority in the pre-colonial period, traditional rulers (kings and chiefs) have been empowered and disempowered at different times, accommodated or excluded, depending on the interests at stake and incorporated, manipulated, hoodwinked or humiliated, depending on the dispensations, circumstances or even the level or extent of relationship between chieftaincy title holders and leaders of modern governance.<sup>413</sup> Despite the above observation, the kings and chiefs continue to draw their strengths from their local roots. This is so because they defend local culture and social order as well as being 'at the centre of local political life.' Yet kings and chiefs continue to be subject to the pressures of the state, Trotha argues, especially pressures to encourage local people to conform to the state's administrative policies, to accept the regime's politics, and to recognise the state as legitimate.<sup>414</sup> The desperate move by politicians to take full control of state structures and institutions have led them to enact ambiguous chieftaincy declarations which are meant to get the traditional rulers constantly engaged in conflicts and struggle for powers amongst themselves. The immediate impact of this is easy to decipher. The already waned powers and relevance of the kings and other traditional rulers is further eroded with the government hiding under such pretext to wish away the institutions and their custodians. In many Akokoland communities, kingship and chieftaincy tussles have done more harm than good to the people in terms of inclusive development and stability. Details of this have been

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<sup>412</sup>For details see Ray, Donald I. and Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, E. Adrian B. van 1996 "The New Relevance of Traditional Authorities in Africa". *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, vol.28, Issue 37-38.p.12.

<sup>413</sup>A.O. Adesoji, "Traditional Rulership and Modern Governance in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Nigeria"..... p.416.

<sup>414</sup>Donald I. Ray and Adrian B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, 1996, "The New Relevance of Traditional Authorities in Africa". *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, vol.28, Issue 37-38.pp.8-9.

provided in the chapter three of this study. For instance, the overstretched legal debacle between the *Owa-Ale* of Ikare-Akoko and the *Olukare* of Ikare-Akoko on the one hand, the *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko and the *Asin* of Oka-Akoko struggle of who has the right to wear beaded crown, the *Alakungba* of Akungba-Akoko and the *Alale* of Akungba-Akoko over eight decades legal battle, the intra-*Alale* of Akungba-Akoko supremacy struggles and many other cases of right of claim to the throne in Akokoland have continue to threaten the fragile relevance that the institution has struggled to garner over the years. While the political elites may largely be blamed for the recurring crises faced by the institution, this research discover that lack of concord amongst kings in Akokoland have made many of them to dissipate time and money that could have been used in the development of their domains to prosecuting court cases while the masses of the people who are at the vulnerable end of the royal tussles and chieftaincy quagmire continue to lack access to social amenities. Alabi argues that;

Kings in Akokoland as elsewhere in Nigeria, especially those who feel threatened by some powerful groups in their area of jurisdiction, often prefer to use legal means to hold on to the throne. Certainly every king would want to administer his domain peacefully and ensure that he is fully in charge, but when his power is threatened by forces beyond his immediate reach; he will be playing save if he decides to bring the hand of the law into it.<sup>415</sup>

The kings in an attempt to secure their powers and retain control of their domains through legal means have unwittingly continued to expose themselves and the institution to more danger and the politicians have often use this as ploy to set up Commissions of Inquiry to look into issues responsible for the disputes among kings and chiefs. Many Commissions have been set up within the period under review. The Morgan, Adeloje, Ajayi Commissions of inquiries was few among the formal platforms set up to address the problems facing the institution of kingship and chieftaincy in Akokoland. While records show that the Commissions did yeoman jobs to deliver on their mandates, successive governments in Ondo State have deliberately ignored well thought out recommendations which if implemented, would have helped in reducing the incidence of chieftaincy disputes in Akokoland and other parts of the State. *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko was very critical of the Commissions of Inquiry emplaced in Ondo State when he observed that:

The agenda of successive governments in most cases is not because they want to find solutions to problems but to compound them. The Commissions were mere political tools employed by the wielders of

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<sup>415</sup>Alabi J.I., *The Asupori* of Ilepa Quarters, Arigidi-Akoko. 6/4/2018



modern political powers to punish kings or traditional rulers perceived as dissidents. What explanation can you give to the demotion of the *Osunla* from grade B to grade D *oba* while kings of the same rating were left untouched? I thought Commissions were supposed to heal old wounds and clear grey areas; unfortunately, bitter politics of reprisals and witch-hunting have reduced the viability of the Commissions as solutions provider.<sup>416</sup>

The economic dimension of kingship and chieftaincy in the modern time with regards to financial benefits in form of reasonable salary package and other hand-outs from the government have intensified the quest for leadership and power control among kings and chiefs in Akokoland and Nigeria. Instances abound in this regard in Akokoland. Besides the examples well expounded in the chapter three of this work, the Arigidi-Akoko and Erusu-Akoko examples are worth mentioning. Before the struggle for power control went bad, the Chieftaincy Gazette of 1957 which is used in Arigidi-Akoko specified that there are only fourteen kingmakers who can select, elect and install a king. Four communities: Imo, Osin, Ita and Iyu pulled out from Arigidi-Akoko due to grievances on decades of neglect and exclusion from the overall administration of the town by the *Zaki* of Arigidi-Akoko. In fact, the four quarters, particularly the Obada family from Imo-Arigidi alleged that the *Zaki* title originally belonged to them but as a result of politics of manipulation and the undue interference by the government of the day, the current *Zaki*, Oba Yisa Abu Olanipekun was installed despite court cases on the issue.<sup>417</sup> Obada queried further that despite knowing the amount that comes to the *Zaki* through the Local Government monthly allocation, it is sad to note that I and few other high chiefs who are also kingmakers have been embarrassed many times by the amount sent to us as our share. For the record, amount as meagre as one thousand naira (#1000) and sometimes five hundred naira was sent to me and other chiefs in like sum as our monthly stipend. After several entreaties made to the king to improve on what comes to us as monthly stipends went unattended to, the four communities of Imo, Osin, Ita and Iyu decided to break away and stand on our own independent from the control of the *Zaki*.<sup>418</sup>

Further findings on the above revealed that some chiefs loyal to the *Zaki* though played down the validity of the allegation of short changing the concerned chiefs, agreed that certain issues have cursed division in Arigidi-Akoko and efforts have been made to bring all

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<sup>416</sup>Oba Sunday Olaniyi Mogaji, *Imole* I, 63, *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko. New *Osunla's* palace, Erusu-Akoko. 10/4/2018

<sup>417</sup>Joseph Obada, 76, *Edibo* of Imo-Arigidi-Akoko. Interviewed 6/4/2018

<sup>418</sup>Joseph Obada, 76, *Edibo* of Imo-Arigidi-Akoko. Interviewed 6/4/2018

quarters together for concerted efforts directed towards building an inclusive society. One issue that constantly reverberated was the acceptance of the fact that, many people have become more conscious of happenings with regards to kingship and chieftaincy matters especially among the enlightened chiefs and members of the larger society. The era of having chiefs working with educated kings in the past without deep knowledge of various chieftaincy declarations and their entitlements has long gone. Indeed, it was discovered in most Akoko towns that, hitherto loyal high chiefs especially in Erusu-Akoko, Oka-Akoko, Arigidi-Akoko, Ogbagi-Akoko and Akungba-Akoko have through submissions to different Commissions of Inquiry sought to move their chiefly status to kingly status even when most of them have not been able to fulfil the vital conditions of laying claim to royalty. This has caused virtually irreconcilable communal division which, most of the time reduced the access of the affected communities in Akokoland to government programmes and amenities.

There is also the challenge of intimidation from politicians especially those that did not receive the support or blessing of the traditional rulers yet won their respective elective positions. This aspect appeared to run through the observations made by most of the kings and chiefs interviewed in Akokoland. In this respect, the issue is not that the traditional rulers in Akokoland in particular are seeking for specific roles they can perform with the backing of the constitution, there concern have been constitutional protection from unnecessary harassment from politicians during and after election. While advocacy is not fashionable in professional historical writing, it is important to admit the view made by Adeleye when he argued that: “myself and other kings in Akokoland as elsewhere in Nigeria are not asking for constitutional roles, because these roles had always been there and we have effectively played them as managers of traditional authority in our different domains. What is needed is for the government to accord us constitutional protection so that we can be free from the choking interference from the ruling elite. The idea of dethroning and enthroning traditional rulers at will for issue of non-loyalty during and after elections would be curbed or reduced to the barest minimum. Yes, the traditional rulers (kings and chiefs) are also meeting to talk to themselves on how to earn the institution of kingship and chieftaincy their due place in the modern political space. For instance, it has been resolved that all traditional rulers must have something tangible doing to avoid unnecessary dependence on government hand-outs. When the kings stay in their domain to face the business of governing the people, they will certainly

have little or no time to patrol or patronise politicians in their offices and homes.<sup>419</sup> This will help them gradually earn the respect that has been lost through past wrong actions. Arguing further, Adeleye submitted that:

Our position as traditional political administrators in our kingdoms is not as transient as that of the elected political office holders. Till date, we derive our powers from tradition and the people. A king can reign on the throne of his fathers for over four decades but the tenure of a political office holder is conditioned by the extant provisions of the constitution. The highest a politician can go is eight years except in exceptional cases and at times the political party platform on which he/she got elected may even collapse but our palaces and powers are enduring and the institution of kingship and chieftaincy have come to stay. The modern political elite should come to terms to this stark reality and accept us as viable and reliable partners in the quest for a better nation, well and safe for all to live.<sup>420</sup>

Mangled oral tradition handed down over time from one generation to the other on the political history of many towns in Akokoland is another challenge faced by the kingship and other traditional institution in Akokoland. *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko responded to the issue of how altered traditions negatively impacted on the traditional political institutions when he submitted that:

Deliberately watered down oral traditions handed over time by inordinately ambitious elders seriously affected the kingship institution in Erusu-Akoko as it was the case in other parts of Akokoland. As soon as salary was attached to the royal office from the colonial period, many interest groups emerged to seek unmerited participation in the supposed largesse. Sadly, some of them succeeded in joining hands with the colonial masters to alter traditions and the history of kingship in Akokoland. The politics of divide and rule became a very potent instrument in the hands of the colonial masters who recklessly dethroned perceived non-cooperating traditional rulers and installing their preferred stooges who were ready to do their biddings.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>419</sup>Interview with HRH *Oba* Adeleye, Yusuf Adebiori, 73+, *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko., *Olubaka's* palace, Oka-Akoko.6/8/2018

<sup>420</sup>Interview with HRH *Oba* Adeleye, Yusuf Adebiori, 73+, *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko, *Olubaka's* palace, Oka-Akoko, Ondo State.6/8/2018 Ipaye, A.Y, the *Olumogun* of Isiri Quarters also buttressed this view during an interview session in house at Isiri, Korowa-Akoko, Ondo State. He is a retired police officer who served his nation meritoriously for 35years. 2/8/2018.

<sup>421</sup>*Oba* Sunday Olaniyi Mogaji, Imole I, *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko, 63, *Osunla's* palace, Erusus-Akoko, Ondo State. 10/4/2018

The McKenzie deliberate error of 1924 which looked away from the political history of Akungba-Akoko by handing over the control of the town to the *Ale* at the expense of the *Alakungba*, the relegation of the *Asin* of Oka-Akoko and the *Owa Ale* of Ikare-Akoko as ordinary chiefs despite their valid history of royalty, were decisions made by the colonial administration to spite dissenting traditional rulers in Akokoland in the period of the study.<sup>422</sup> These anti-tradition chieftaincy declarations succeeded in altering traditions and establishing deep rooted chieftaincy problems which successive governments have expended huge funds to mitigate through the setting up of Commissions of Inquiries and protracted legal scuffles. Chief Adewumi view on the place of Commissions of Inquiries in solving chieftaincy problems was in consonance with the submissions made by other traditional rulers in most Akokoland communities. He argued that: Commissions of inquiries were initially set up to find solution to some of the traditional problems that were created by the internal political problems that we had. Sadly, many people went to the Commissions with their mind made up to pursue certain ends which were most of the time selfish. Sincerely, apart from the Morgan Commission that did fairly well, others were set up so that the people can believe that the government is doing something.<sup>423</sup> This view was equally buttressed by Sunday in a more detailed manner when he specifically observed that:

It was true that the government originally had good intention setting up the various Commissions of Inquiries as argued by some persons. In my honest opinion, they were set up by government to make people believe that they have real interest in finding lasting solution to decades of chieftaincy disputes. History is, however, replete with how successive governments have tactically but knowingly played down the good recommendations made by the Morgan, Adeyoye, Ajayi and Ogunleye Commissions of Inquiries in the resolutions of matters of chieftaincy declarations across Akokoland.<sup>424</sup>

The issue here is simple. For many decades, aggrieved persons whose titles were handed over to people without verifiable history of previous occupation, have sought respite

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<sup>422</sup>This issue has been extensively discussed in chapter three of this thesis.

<sup>423</sup>High Chief Adewumi Ojo Stephen, 70, the *Ologotun-Igase* of Ogosi quarters, Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State. 12/4/2018. The *Olukare* of Ikare-Akoko, *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko, *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko, *Olojo* of Ojo, Ajowa-Akoko and others supported this view. The point must, however, be made that some of the traditional rulers who did not appreciate the reports of some the Commissions based their assessments on those aspects of the reports that did not favour them. For instance, the *Olubaka* of Okaland would have appreciated it if the report on *Asin's* Chieftaincy had not recognised him as a crown wearing traditional ruler but as an ordinary chief paying allegiance to him the *Olubaka* as the paramount ruler of Okaland.

<sup>424</sup>*Oba* Sunday Olaniyi Mogaji, Imole I, *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko, 63, *Osunla's* palace, Erusus-Akoko, Ondo State. 10/4/2018.

in the various official and legal outlets available to them. Where good recommendations were made to government to resolve the issue permanently, selective implementation of the recommendations as it deemed fit has only compounded and created more problems rather than solving them. The agreement is that traditions cannot be restored wholesale, but when machinery is put in place to correct visible distortions with huge financial investment, government should find the courage to do the needful.

### **5.5 Continuity, Change and Adaptation**

Traditional rulers maintain continuity within the local political system. This puts them head and shoulders with any local politician, though a local government chairman might be extremely powerful for a while, he has to vacate the moment his party is defeated at the polls. The secretary to the local government will also quit or be transferred, but the traditional rulers remain. It is arguably true that traditional rulers (kings and chiefs) are not expected to be partisan so as to allow them discharge their duties impartially as dictated by the customs and traditions of their respective community. In fact, the traditional rulers are still held in high esteem within the modern power equation. It is, however, sad to note that, the Nigerian political culture does not really allow for the non-partisan status of the traditional rulers, given the obvious unfriendly political environment they found themselves in the country. In a frantic effort to become relevant in the scheme of things, some traditional rulers have been tempted to derail from their traditional standpoint of non-partisanship to even openly showing their support for a particular political party in favour of another. This changing role and status of the traditional rulers so as to make strong proposal for the enactment of inclusive policies and practices in favour of the traditional political institutions and the traditional rulers which as a matter of urgency must be enshrined in the constitution of the country. With this, the traditional rulers will no longer continue to see themselves as outsiders (excluded) as their thoughts and inputs will now be sought by the government of the day.

Those who see some virtues in the monarchy talk about its capacity for ensuring continuity and unity and for identification with culture and tradition. Those who oppose it speak of its capacity for stifling the spirit of inquiry, individualism and rationalism. But somehow, some countries have tried to make the best of both worlds by seeking to consummate a marriage between monarchy and democracy. Britain and Scandinavia seem to believe that both are compatible if not complementary and they have thus gravitated from absolute monarchy to what has come to be known as limited or constitutional monarchy.

Somehow, the marriage has worked with minimum stress and its workability seems to support the thesis that there can be an amicable sharing of the political turf between those who reign and those who rule.<sup>425</sup>

Reacting to the issue of adaption of the kingship institution to the continue changes that it has been subjected to by the forces of the modern age in the period of the study, George argued that:

The Southwest *obas* and other traditional rulers are the problem to the throne. Some of us go ‘crown in head’ to pay unsolicited visits to the politicians to seek for contact and other demeaning favour. Imagine an *Oba* going to politicians as PRO. The traditional rulers in the north are very conscious of their self-esteem and hardly comprise it. I am deeply convinced that if the kings in Akokoland and other parts of Yorubaland place themselves in the position of respect and honour as in the case of the *Awujale*, *Ooni* and even the *Oba* of Benin, the politicians would begin to see reason why they should respect the institution. Lack of unity among the Akokoland kings and chiefs makes the presentation of issues that concern our welfare difficult. There is power in unity and the earlier we realised this, the better for the throne.<sup>426</sup>

Adetona provided further explanation on why he is convinced that the kingship and other traditional political institutions have the wherewithal to adapt to the changes occasioned by the series of events that featured in the socio-political history of Akokoland with their attendant cataclysmic effects. He observed that:

Wielders of power at all levels of government since independence have tactically, through the coercive instrument of the state use the kingship institution to oil their political aspirations. This rather unfortunate observation is nothing but the truth. Efforts are on ground to restore the institution to an enviable status, but the ruling class are also not relenting in their desperate efforts at making sure that we remain subservient in the larger political equation. Whatever the case, we are hopeful of better days ahead. Unlike political parties and the various tenured elective positions, the palace and the person of the king can reign for as long he is alive. Even when circumstances required that a new king be selected or elected as the case may be, the title or the palace of the king does

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<sup>425</sup>Ray Ekpu 1988. “A Harmless Anachronism”. April 18. *Newswatch Magazine*. p. 13.

<sup>426</sup>Interview with *Oba* George Olusegun Oyekan (JP), The *Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko, 57+. *Gbiri*'s palace, Epimi-Akoko. 7/6/2018

not change. This is reflective of the enduring nature of the kingship institution and why it will continue to weather the storm.<sup>427</sup>

He submitted that:

No matter the efforts of vested interest in undermining the traditional political institutions, I make bold to say that, royalty remains a pivotal part of all traditional African societies and its survival depends largely on the people. However hard the government of the day may try, the kingship institution would continue to survive the choking politics and policies of the ruling elite. The resilience of the institution in the face of unfavourable dispositions anchors on the strong conviction that kingship has the flexibility and dynamism to adjust and adapt to any given circumstance. That it survived the colonial enterprise, independence and post-independence politics is not accidental. I am certain that things will fall in place in no distant time.<sup>428</sup>

## 5.6 Assessment of the kingship institution in Akokoland and beyond, 1900-1999

Despite the call for the total abolition of the traditional political institution by the ruling elites, the institution has continued to show resilience. While it is not possible to restore the institution to its pristine state, efforts should be made to reform it and partner with it for better society and inclusive nation-building beyond 1999.<sup>429</sup>

Traditional kingship and chieftaincy institutions are vital for societal cohesion and if there were no traditional rulers in the country, all of Nigeria's culture would have been lost to European cultures during the dark centuries of the slave trade and colonial domination. It is, therefore, lacking in time and space all theories, models and generalization designed to reduce the institutions to the back water of history. Indeed, it was the ability of the traditional rulers to guide jealously the very bastion of our collective heritage and history that have made it possible for us to continue to cherish what we have left of our history today despite the tortuous phases of mutation the continent went through during the socio-political and economic changes imposed on us by external forces beginning from the 15<sup>th</sup> through to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>430</sup> At the pre-colonial phase of the kingship institution, kings were objects of the society, but now, they are the subjects of the society. Oyekan accepted the fact that the

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<sup>427</sup>Interview with *Oba* Adetona, Victor Ojo, Odagbaragaja III, 53, the Owa of Ogbagi-Akoko, *Owa* palace, Ogbagi-Akoko. 18/04/2018

<sup>428</sup>Interview with *Oba* Adetona, Victor Ojo, Odagbaragaja III, 53, the Owa of Ogbagi-Akoko, *Owa* palace, Ogbagi-Akoko. 18/04/2018.

<sup>429</sup>Iyortange, Igoil "The Evolution of Political Institutions among the Tiv of Nigeria and the Question of Relevance, in Ayoade and Agbaje 'eds.', 1989. *African Traditional Political Thought and Institutions*, (Lagos: Center for Black and African Arts and Civilization), p.173.

<sup>430</sup>Olufemi Vaughan, 1991. "Chieftaincy Politics and Social Relations in Nigeria", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol.29, No. 3, p.308.

powers of the traditional rulers have waned over the years, but submitted that the kings throughout Yorubaland have continued to provide leadership in their respective domain despite obvious challenges faced by them in the modern political space. Regrettably too, the issue of money and greed has dangerously corrupted many kings and other traditional rulers, thereby limiting the quality of the representation they can make on behalf of those they represent at the grassroots. Rural dwellers' access to social amenities from government of the day becomes a major challenge since those entrusted to serve as bridge have been overtaken by personal interests.<sup>431</sup> In spite of the permanence of traditional against the termed period of political offices, the traditional rulers have continued to come under the control of the politicians because of the authorization the kings and chiefs now have to get from the government of the day to give legal validity and recognition to their powers and authority. For the central role of tradition and customs guiding the selection and election of the traditional rulers, they would have been completely alienated from the scheme of things in the contemporary arrangement. This has been one of the reasons why calls have been made for the institution to be scrapped by the ruling elites and even scholars who find it difficult to decipher what exact roles of the traditional rulers should be in the modern time.

Consequently, Badejo, Ogunyemi and other scholars, argued that the kingship/chieftaincy institutions have become out fashioned and as such cannot fit into the more sophisticated and modern system of governance. They observed further that, the institutions are not fit any way to partner with modern system of political organization with its various levels of sophistication and dynamism. They therefore, submitted that that institution may not be able to come up with the needed concrete plan to enhance development in the limitations imposed by Western capitalism.<sup>432</sup> Although the kingship institution has been tainted and somewhat cheapened by past associations with the institution of modern governance, the recrudescence of their voices in the body politics has set off a major national debate on the precise role that they should play in contemporary Nigeria. With the exception of a few extreme radicals, most Nigerians firmly believe that there is a place for them in modern government structures. As aptly captured by Ray:

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<sup>431</sup>Interview with HRM *Oba* George Olusegun Oyekan, 57+, *Gbiri* of Epimi-Akoko., Imo Arigidi-Akoko. 7/6/2018

<sup>432</sup>Babafemi A. Badejo and S. A. Ogunyemi, "Integrating the Past with the Present: A Futile Exercise?" in John A. A. Ayoade and Adigun A. B. Agbaje eds. 1989. *African Traditional Political Thought and Institutions* Lagos: Center for Black and African Arts and Civilization. p. 183.



Despite its obvious decline and obsolescence, the monarchy has managed to survive the buffets of modernity in several centuries, one must admit, in a somewhat modernised form. Monarchy has defied death. If it has not waxed stronger, it has not quite buckled under. It has managed to remain, in virtually all those countries, a harmless anachronism.<sup>433</sup>

In addition to the above, while the institutions of the modern Nigerian state have continued to renege on its duties to the citizenry, the traditional rulers through the institution of kingship and chieftaincy have continue to provide succour to the people especially those living in the rural areas through communally inclined schemes and policies. The continuum in the circle of leadership provided by this institution has allowed the traditional rulers to enjoy the people's support and cooperation. The existence of and the progressive application of traditional political mechanisms of maintaining law and order has enhanced the stability of many traditional communities where modern government institutions have failed to make impact. The consistency in the inability of the modern Nigerian state and its policy makers to make available the needed deliverables of governance has accentuated the importance of the traditional political institution as viable partners in the effort towards building a better and saner society.<sup>434</sup>

Pita argued that despite the various attempts made by government to silence the traditional rulers through the instrument of the state, the institution has shown resilience and ability to adapt to change. Interestingly, the governments that have severally struggled to choke and even abolish the institution of kingship and chieftaincy have continued to patronise its custodians for advice and interventions in many areas of socio-political and economic importance.<sup>435</sup> While not all traditional are upright in their dealings, the institution still enjoy patronage and goodwill because of its responsive nature and the ability of the people to access it all the time. In fact, it is easier for the people to hold the traditional rulers accountable unlike the elected officers in the modern Nigerian state in the three tiers of government.

A pessimistic view of the kingship institution in Akokoland like other Nigerian societies will definitely undermine the relevance of the institution in the contemporary political space. Other climes have seen the relevance of this institution and have evolved

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<sup>433</sup>Ray Ekpu 1988, "A Harmless Anachronism". April 18. *Newswatch Magazine*. p. 13.

<sup>434</sup>Pita Ogaba Agbese. 2004. "Chiefs, Constitutions, and Policies in Nigeria", *West Africa Review*, Issue 6. pp.2-3. ISSN: 1525-4488.

<sup>435</sup>Pita Ogaba Agbese, "Chiefs, Constitutions, and Policies in Nigeria" ..., p.3. ISSN: 1525-4488.

means to cautiously incorporate it into existing political realities. As argued by Georg Lutz and Wolf Linder, informal and formal traditional structures have always played an important role and still do in many countries. It, however, observes that in the rural area of many developing countries with the weak presence of the state, traditional structures survived the colonial as well as the post-colonial period, and people were able to maintain their traditional forms of social organisation.<sup>436</sup> It, therefore, goes to say, that, that there should be a proper synergy between the traditional institution and the local government administration.

Since the political class has continued to exaggerate the importance of the traditional rulers in local government administration which in the truest sense is non-existent, the traditional rulers because of long years of deliberate exclusion by the political elite from making input in local politics since independence, have constantly shown their dissatisfaction as being just titular heads of their local communities, or being impartial arbiters in the tussle for political power by breaking the secure fence of traditionalism and reverence to venture far afield to join the turbulence of partisan politicking and often times, they have emerged with claw-wounds and blood stains. Such trespass by the traditional rulers in the study under review came with a penalty: the erosion of respect. This led to series of attempts to explain away the relevance of the traditional authorities in the modern political space by associating the traditional rulers with feudalism, conservatism and arbitrariness. But no Nigerian government since 1960 would conveniently accept that such features existed in government to justify legislating traditional rule out of existence.<sup>437</sup>

Alabi gave his view on the kingship institution Akokoland when he asserted that:

the *Zaki* rose to become one of the first class Obas in Akokoland. There have been ups and downs, but the institution has continued to show consistency in the area of providing leadership to the people as the existing political structure permitted. Agreed that the powers of the king has weaned seriously in the period covered by your study, the *Oba*, however, still holds pre-eminence among his people if properly guided. The *Oba* can function well within his locality in conjunction with other stakeholders without necessarily seeking for relevance through involvement in partisan politics. It is not the case that the *Oba* should be apolitical, but it is expected at all times that the *Oba* has the consciousness of his limits to avoid

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<sup>436</sup>Georg Lutz and Wolf Linder, "Traditional Structures in Local Governance for Local Development". A report submitted to the University of Berne, Switzerland Institute of Political Science, Berne, Switzerland, May, 2004.

<sup>437</sup>Lewis Obi, 1984. "The Uncertain Reign of Traditional Rulers" Concord, *Nigeria's International Newsmagazine*, Weekly, Issue No. 4. August 24. p. 11.

dangerous entanglement which is often inimical to his survival and powers when the chips are down.<sup>438</sup>

Obada on the other hand, drew his comparison from northern Nigeria when he argued that: “as first hand witness, I lived in the north and I saw how much respect is accorded traditional rulers there. Unfortunately, here in the southwest, the kings and other traditional rulers are just ordered around by these politicians who act as if they do not have any clue about our customs and traditions. Different governments have deliberately made moves in the past to permanently silence the little voice left for the institution of kingship but for its resilience, the political elite would have succeeded. As the traditional rulers battled with the issue of continued relevance, they must also ensure that their survival is not entirely tied to the politicians. They should all have a means of sustenance. This is the only way they can deservedly earn their place. Going cap in hand to beg for financial assistance, contract and other forms of favour from the politicians has been the bane of their relevance in modern governance. They must strive through sacrifice to redeem the damaged image of the institution of kingship and other traditional political institutions in Akokoland in particular and Nigeria as a whole.<sup>439</sup>

Beyond the local level, some of the more powerful kings and chiefs have the capacity to influence national policy debates and to promote developmental change. In an era of competitive politics, the kings and other traditional rulers can help serve as voices for pressuring politicians to deliver on their promises to the people. They are elder statesmen and respected opinion leaders in crucial decision making and policy implementation, especially when it concerns local administration. Kingship is certainly a living institution, not a museum piece. The institution, therefore, needs to be repositioned to enhance its performance as one of the instruments of national growth and cultural pride.<sup>440</sup> The idea of constitutional roles for the traditional rulers is really not the issue; the major issue has been that the kings and other traditional rulers have always been made to live in the vague and patronising sentiments that they are the “highways to national unity” by successive governments since independence. And they do stretch this doubt even further by pretending to have powers that are not within their grasp. This challenge has sometimes compelled them to seek for more practical roles in

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<sup>438</sup>Interview with Francis Rotimi Alabi, 50, *Edibo* of Ogo Quarters, Arigidi-Akoko. 6/4/2018

<sup>439</sup>Interview with High Chief Joseph Obada, 76, the *Edibo* of Imo Arigidi-Akoko, at his residence at Imo, Arigidi-Akoko. 6/4/2018

<sup>440</sup>Ikenna Nzirimo 1984. “Of What Relevance are Traditional Rulers? *The Guardian Newspaper*, Thursday, May 17.

modern governance. This is not in any way trying to make case for constitutional roles for the kings and other traditional political institutions power holders, it was just a cautious presentation of the various efforts that have been made by successive governments in Nigeria at institutionalising the roles of the traditional rulers in the nation's statutory book. As argued by Obiyan:

the idea of seeking for constitutional inclusion of the traditional rulers roles makes no immediate sense in the modern political space. The right thing to do is to put in place well thought out mechanisms and guidelines that would help in guiding the traditional rulers so that they can function efficiently within their domains. Of course, there is nothing bad in allowing them to make relevant inputs on both local and national issues, it is however, important to err on the side of caution with regards to the possibility of becoming unnecessarily meddling in partisan politics.<sup>441</sup>

The study has analysed and presented discussions on the kingship institution and power politics in Akoko-Yoruba communities within a critical period of ninety nine years. It essentially started with the assessment of the historical antecedence of kingship in Yorubaland up to 1900. This was meant to give synopsis of the pre-colonial evolutionary history of kingship and the status of the traditional rulers before the series of disruptions caused by internal socio-political disturbances of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the establishment of colonial rule from 1900. Kingship in Akokoland, to a large extent, is somehow complex in its entirety. The complexity is a reflection of the fact that Akoko-Yoruba communities did not have a single leader in the pre-colonial times, unlike what was obtainable in some other Yoruba kingdoms such as Oyo, whose overall traditional ruler was the *Alaafin* and Benin, where the *Oba* was the grand head and controller of their political institution. The pre-1900 ruling houses in Akoko-Yoruba communities could be described as being fragmented as a result of the independent or autonomous political structure, which was largely influenced by the dictates of their geographical peculiarities. This further lent credence to the truism, that, the influence of geography in all human endeavours cannot be de-emphasised for whatsoever reason(s). Discussion of issues was made easy with the carefully structured five chapters of this study.

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<sup>441</sup> Sat Obiyan, 52+, Professor of Political Science, Department of Political Science, Obafemi Awolowo University, Osun State, Nigeria. He made the remark during an interview session on 28/01/2018 at his office.

As expected, the first chapter painstakingly provided background information on the thrust of the study. This was meant to give a good platform on which other chapters were premised. The second chapter was basically dedicated to an analysis of the pre-colonial antecedence of kingship institution in Yorubaland which allowed arguments to start from a macro level. It was established that kingship or monarchy was not peculiar to Akokoland as it was a general practice throughout Yorubaland in the pre-colonial period with modifications to suit the cultural and traditional milieu of the area concerned. It was revealed that in the pre-1900 Akokoland, a form of village government headed by hereditary chiefs and elders and strengthened by the age grades was evolved in the different Akoko-Yoruba communities. The parameters for appointing the hereditary chiefs have been discussed in chapter three. Families and lineages made up the quarters which occupied specific parts of each village. The family was the smallest unit of administration. By 1900, the traditional political structure of most Akoko-Yoruba communities was altered to the effect that the towns, villages and chiefdoms that had, hitherto, enjoyed virtual independence under their respective traditional ruler or head chief were brought under a foreign administration. This period marked the gradual erosion of the political powers and traditional importance of kings and other traditional rulers who were before now held in high esteem by their respective subjects as the sure link (spiritual and traditional) between them and their ancestors. The period that marked the use of the cold blooded principle of divide and rule, colonial fiat proclamations, defective chieftaincy declarations, forced dethronement of 'disloyal' kings and the installation of supposed 'loyal' and ambitious ruling family members were some of the tools used to erode the powers and sacredness of the kingship institution in Akoko-Yoruba communities by colonial administration between 1900 and 1960. It was particularly revealed, that, despite the possession of military power and other instrument of coercion by the colonial administration, the traditional rulers in Akoko-Yoruba communities openly showed their dissatisfaction to the imposition of external lordship on them. Several primary documents sourced from the national archives at Ibadan and Kaduna revealed that the kings in Akokoland, especially the *Olukare*, *Olisua* and the *Olubaka* exchanged several correspondences with the colonial officials to register their displeasure on their style of administration. Although the efforts of the traditional rulers in Akokoland towards self-actualisation was achieved with creation of two native administrations between 1935 and 1948 and the Akoko Federation Council in 1955, colonial rule succeeded in the transformation the political structure of Akokoland. Akoko communities disintegrated into a hot bed of disaffection and suspicion as seen in the

case of *Olukare Momoh* and *Olukare Ajaguna* on the one hand, and *Olubaka* and *Asin* leadership tussle on the other hand. It was, however, submitted that, despite the transformation that occurred, the kingship institution in Akokoland has continued to show resilience and dynamism while adapting to changes occasioned by the forces of the modern age. Indeed, the kingship institution in Akokoland through resilience survived the harsh colonial policies and has continued to show resilience beyond 1960.

The study also revealed that the kingship institution in Akokoland since 1960 still showed resilience against policies which seek to disunite and dislodge it like it did in the colonial period. Kingship survived the civilian and military governments enacted policies such as the 1976 Local Government Reforms, Land Use Decree of 1978, chieftaincy declarations and the setting up of scripted Commissions of Inquiry to further undermine the powers and relevance of the kings and the chiefs. Popular opinions as earlier presented in chapter four, agreed that the military gave more leverage to the traditional rulers in Akokoland than the civilian governments. Essentially, despite the fact that the fortunes of the traditional rulers improved under successive military and civilian administrations, they became instrument of class of survival and victims of deliberate neglect in the hands of ruling elite. Even at the level of local government administration, where they were supposed to be actively consulted as experts in local issues, they fell short of such expectation. The traditional rulers have, continued to survive by cooperating with the ruling elite while exploring other survival strategies to stay relevant in the scheme of thing within the context of modern political realities. It was revealed that in the early years of independence, the kingship institution in Akokoland as it happened in other parts of Yorubaland faced serious threats from the Western Region crisis of 1962 and the chaotic events that followed the 1965 general elections. This was a turbulent period in the political history of the then Western Region. The kings and chiefs that survived the storm of the two political crises were those that aligned with the stronger political bloc. It, therefore, meant that, the period marked an important watershed in the politics of power struggle and leadership supremacy among the traditional rulers and wielders of modern political powers. It was struggle for survival and a game of chance for whoever pitched its tent rightly. As the struggle for control raged, the traditional rulers who equally desired to stay relevant in the scheme of things, became the victims as their loyalty or otherwise to the warring political blocs came with dire consequence as in the case of Arigidi-Akoko and Ikare-Akoko where the traditional rulers were removed and exiled because of their alliance with the Akintola bloc.

Unlike the colonial administration, the traditional rulers in Akokoland between 1960 and 1999 relied heavily on the instrumentality of power politics, which manifested in festivals, ancient landmarks, appointment of traditional groups heads, marriage, occasional threats, propaganda and alliance building to stay relevant, hold on to power and take full control of their royal jurisdiction. They did not employ it to further impair their powers and authority, power politics was tactically deployed as strategy of survival while seeking other avenues to address issues that conflict with their powers, authority and relevance as traditional administrators.

The question of pluralism was prevalent in the many royal conflicts and chieftaincy issues in Akokoland. Within a kingdom, there is an expectation of having only one king as the paramount ruler.<sup>442</sup> In Akokoland, however, more than two beaded crown wearing kings exist, as in the case of Ajowa-Akoko where there are eight crown wearing kings with each overseeing the affairs of his people without necessarily infringing on the area of influence of the other. The same instance of more than one crown wearing king can also be found in Ikare-Akoko, Okeagbe and Oka-Akoko. The issue of different personalities functioning as kings within a kingdom i.e. more than one *Oba* within a kingdom, call for concern. The question then is who can be called an *Oba*? Rev. Samuel Johnson in his book: *The History of the Yoruba* said that:

The word king as generally used in this country includes more or less distinguished chiefs, who stand at the head of a clan, or one who is the ruler of an important district or province. Especially those who can trace their descent from the founder or one of the great leaders or heroes who settled with him in this country.<sup>443</sup>

From the above definition, three fundamental observations can be raised:

- i. he must be a distinguished chief,
- ii. be the head of a clan, district or province,
- iii. be able to trace his descent from the founder/great leader/hero who settled in the place.

From a traditional centralised government point of view, a king or *oba* is the most supreme or paramount sovereign in a community or city. Generally, he is recognised by his

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<sup>442</sup> Although not in all cases, see Okeagbe-Akoko, Akure, Ikare-Akoko, Owo, Ajowa-Akoko, Idanre etc. in Ondo State.

<sup>443</sup> Johnson, S. 1973. *The History of the Yoruba*, Lagos: CSS. Bookshop.p.41.

subjects as their spiritual leader and chief custodian of tradition.<sup>444</sup> The Akokoland case is, however, different due to the complex nature of its geography, histories of migrations and linguistics variations. Indeed, pluralism is a major feature in Akokoland which was largely responsible for the absence of an overarching political leadership before the establishment of colonial rule in the area. Though some towns in Akokoland have had the problem of usurpation during the colonial period which led to the introduction of non-royal persons to assume royal power and subsequent claim to the throne of towns by reason of their loyalty to the colonial government, the issue that cannot be played down is the fact that, virtually all Akokoland communities before the advent of colonial hegemony had evolved and developed vibrant socio-political institutions and machinery of governance with which they were able to organise themselves as a people.

For communities in the Akoko area of northeastern Yorubaland where the traditional rulers have achieved royalty with validation from courts of competent jurisdiction, the concerned kings should come to terms with the fact that Akokoland is a plural society with its historical and cultural complexities. Those days are far gone when an individual would arrogate to himself all powers. Power is not what it used to be anymore. There is a sharp shift in the power equilibrium. To accommodate this change, interest groups must be ready to dialogue, give concession and agree to disagree. This is the hallmark of the modern society which is constantly experiencing change and adaptation as it relates to the fluidity of power, influence and control. Arguments were advanced by some kings in Akokoland, particularly in Ikare-Akoko, Oka-Akoko, Erusu-Akoko and Ogbagi-Akoko that those communities leveraging on Ajowa-Akoko with eight crowned kings and Okeagbe-Akoko with four crowned kings to make case for royalty are bereft of history and only interested in creating avoidable crisis. They collectively argued that, since they did not start with more than one crowned head, it would be unheard of that a new form of history was written in their own time. They, however, agreed that dissenting voices should be accommodated by allowing each quarter to have a kingmaker so that there would be a sense of inclusion. While this observation might seem good, what explanation can one give to the obvious cases of the *Owa Ale* of Ikare-Akoko and the *Asin* of Oka-Odo, Oka-Akoko that have history of royalty with all its embodiments. Both have been severally vindicated to be crown wearing *Obas* after

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<sup>444</sup>Anyawu U.D., "Kingship and Leadership in Igbo Culture, Historical Portrait", in S.O. Oguntomisin and S. Ademola Ajayi 'eds.' 2002. *Reading in Nigerian History and Culture, Essays in Memory of Professor J.A. Atanda*, Ibadan: Hope Publications.



decades of legal battles and the different Commissions of Inquiries that investigated their claims to royalty found them worthy of it. A visit to the *Owa Ale*'s palace with its ancient trappings would leave only one question in the mouth of a discerning mind: what has a chief got to do with an ancient palace with all the paraphernalia of royalty? Do chiefs have kingmakers and ruling families? Unlike the cases of Ogbagi-Akoko and Erusu-Akoko where those laying claims to royalty have not been able to win cases taken to court or got reprieve from Commissions set up by preceding governments, *Owa Ale* and *Asin* have unequivocally been cleared as kings in their domains. That the *Olukare* and *Olubaka* refused to acknowledge the kingly status of the two, has not changed anything. Although the court judgement on the case between the *Olubaka* and the *Asin* requested that the later should accept the paramountcy of the former as the leader of the entire Oka-Akoko, the *Asin* chieftaincy declaration has made it abundantly clear that the *Asin* has a recognisable jurisdiction where he provides leadership to his people as king and cannot accept the paramountcy of the *Olubaka*. This has been the cause of the perennial conflict between the *Olubaka* and *Asin* in Oka-Akoko.

The government recognising a chieftaincy as the 'prescribed authority' in a community does not mean that it has been elevated beyond its original traditional functions etc.<sup>445</sup> Hence, the classification of traditional rulers as minor by the Government contrary to the native law and custom of the people does not imply that their traditional values, functions and importance are of lesser significance.<sup>446</sup> The integrity of our traditional institutions must be preserved and be given a proper perspective to avoid being debased and bastardised to the detriment of our society. The point, however, remains that kingship and chieftaincy institutions form the bedrock of tradition of the Yoruba communities and indeed that of Akokoland.

The foregoing has revealed that the traditional rulers (kings and chiefs) being closer to the people than any state, provincial, regional, federal or national government agents still remain and serve as veritable linkage between the people and the government as well as the translators and interpreters of government policies at the grassroots. Given the various hardship that have been brought upon the kingship and chieftaincy institutions in Africa as a result of the biting consequences of colonialism and post-colonial politics, many people were

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<sup>445</sup> Adegbola Abayomi, 2008. *Alarokun Chieftaincy House: History, Challenges, Travails and Triumph*, Ibadan: Okerebiu Publishing House. p. 35.

<sup>446</sup> Adegbola Abayomi, 2008. *Alarokun Chieftaincy House: History, Challenges, Travails and Triumph*, Ibadan: Okerebiu Publishing House. p. 37.

of the erroneous view that the institution of traditional leadership would collapse but instead, it has proved highly flexible and resilient. Rather than being phased out as relics of pre-modern times, frantic effort should be made at harmonising the traditional political institutions and modern governance for a collective resolve towards a more comprehensive development and inclusive nation building in Africa. Beyond these existing narratives, there is a new face to the argument – the need to situate that despite the pessimistic stances (which are often stereotypic) on the continued relevance of the kingship institution in postcolonial Nigeria, there still exists major cultural values of this institution, which were particularly obvious in their activities during the colonial period, despite the fact the traditional rulers played second fiddle role in their respective settings.<sup>447</sup> In clear terms, this study provided a historical knowledge of the significance of the kingship institution in colonial and postcolonial Akokoland. It, therefore, provided explanations on how the kingship institutions can be integrated and harmonised with modern governance structures for more focused development and inclusive nation-building project in Nigeria, despite the critical phases it has undergone between 1900 and 1999.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This study is expected to stir up reflections among other historians in the future and these reflections are good, because they will tend to solve some major problems that this study has not envisaged and will open further debate in the future. By relying on multiple sources of data, this study has given credence to the multi-disciplinary dimension of historical research, which shows that, history with regards to the study of kingship institution especially in North-eastern Yorubaland where we have multiplicity of states and peculiarities cannot be properly understood by relying only on a single approach of historical representation. This study has also corrected the many unfavourable positions against the kingship institution in Nigeria and argued for the placing of the institution in as favourable a position as could be envisaged so that it could effectively carry out its political and socio-economic roles not only within the micro-system of local administration but also in consideration of the entire macro-

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<sup>447</sup> Philip A. Dennis and Michael D. Olien through historical and ethnographic analysis presented a similar view concerning the kingship institution among the Miskito people of Nicaragua and Honduras. They opined that, though earlier writers have given disparaging views of the Miskito kings as puppets of the British, imposed from the outside, who had little legitimacy of their own, the kings did play an important middleman role. The authors have therefore, confirmed that there was a greater degree of local authority than has been recognised by existing scholars. Kingship among the Miskito: Social Structure and Social Relations, Author(s): Philip A. Dennis and Michael D. Olien, Nov., 1984, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 11, No. 4, (Nov., 1984), pp.718-737

system; the Nigerian political space. The key word is inclusive governance for enhanced development.

The study has also underscored the resilience of the kingship institution in the face of suffocating and threatening changes imposed on it through the various stages of mutation it has undergone for over ten decades. Rather than fading away or become an item fit for only the trash can of history, the platform of traditional and modern politics held on and the kings and other traditional rulers in Akokoland remained the rallying point of the society. The kings have thus remained in direct line of continuity. Dynamism within the kingship institution in Akokoland is a direct function of its adaptation to regular changes. Hence, the kingship institution continues to be relevant and could not be wished away having withstood decades of stormy gale and survived the test of time. The custodians of the institution have continued to evolve creative ways of adjusting and adapting to the development or change in the socio-political situation of the country without necessarily altering the extant provisions of their customs and traditions. This is where the dynamism of the institution has proved fluid and enduring as the institution has continued to make itself relevant to the needs of the society. The ability of the kings to bring developmental projects to the grassroots people have played central role in endearing them to the people. In Ojo, Ajowa-Akoko for example, the European Commission built a public library for the community due to the benevolent disposition and the unity of the eight kings in Ajowa-Akoko who took the development of the town as a collective responsibility despite their geographical, historical, dialectical and cultural differences.<sup>448</sup>

So far, the kingship institution in Akokoland has survived even beyond 1999. Its survival as revealed in chapters three, four and five was due to the understanding of the place of power politics (with its many manifestations) by the custodians of the institution as viable instrument of influence, control, stability and order in the society. The tactical application of the different components of power politics by traditional rulers in Akokoland was a direct consequence of its resilience and readiness to adapt to the changing political dispensations not only in towns in Akokoland, but throughout the country. The kingship institution in north-eastern Yorubaland has received very little scholarly attention among historians. Existing works on this part of Yorubaland are around themes other than this subject matter. A historical reconstruction of the development of the kingship institution in Akokoland is a

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<sup>448</sup>The public library was visited during one of my many post field visits to collect oral data in Ajowa-Akoko.

delicate and highly controversial aspect of Akokoland history. The current kingship and chieftaincy disputes, the sacred nature of the kingship institution, the interest of political elites in overseeing the affairs of kingship and the push for modernity through democratization are some of the major justifications for this scholarly neglect on kingship studies.<sup>449</sup> This work delved into these critical and highly controversial aspects and issues that have characterised the institution in Akokoland for close to ten decades. This attempt was aimed at opening a new vista of scholarly discourses on this aspect of Akokoland history. Fundamentally, as a result of the controversial nature of this research area, it is expected that this thesis will stir up a current of criticisms, scholarly interventions and further research from other interested scholars. This study, therefore, has contributed immensely to the already existing literatures on north-eastern Yorubaland, the kingship institutions and other traditional political systems in other parts of Yorubaland. Further research is expected to interrogate the other areas where kingship and power politics interfaced in Akokoland, Yorubaland and other parts of Nigeria beyond 1999.

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<sup>449</sup>For detail on kingship studies see: Oakley, F. 2006. *Kingship: The Politics of Enchantment*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. pp. 1-9, Falola, T. "Alaafinology: The Ideology and Epistemology of Kingship", in Oyeweso, S. and Adesina, O.C (eds.) 2021. *Oyo History, Tradition and Royalty: Essays in Honour of His Imperial Majesty the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba (Dr.) Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi III*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. pp. 1-35.

## I. PRIMARY SOURCES

### A. Oral Interviews

Names of Informants	Age	Designation	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
Adamu, Yekini Olugbenga (High Chief)	n.g	The <i>Oserere</i> of Ayase quarters	Ayase, Arigidi-Akoko, Ondo State	6/4/2018
Adeleye, Yusuf Adebiori (Oba)	73	The <i>Olubaka</i> of Okaland	<i>Olubaka</i> palace, Oka-Akoko, Ondo State	6/8/2018
Adetona, Victor Ojo, Odagbaragaja III (Oba)	53	The <i>Owa</i> of Ogbagi-Akoko.	<i>Owa</i> palace, Ogbagi-Akoko, Ondo State	18/04/2018
Adedeji, Kasali Adejoro Omosogbon II (Oba)	65	The <i>Olusupare</i> of Supare-Akoko	<i>Olusupare</i> palace, Supare-Akoko, Ondo State	7/6/2018
Adegoroye, Nurudeen (Oba)	80	The <i>Oloba</i> of Oba-Akoko	<i>Oloba</i> palace, Oba-Akoko, Ondo State	24/9/2015
Adewale, Timothy Afiwasaye I (Oba)	86	The <i>Olojo</i> of Ojo, Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Olojo</i> palace, Ojo town, Ajowa-Akoko, Ondo State	10/4/2018
Adewumi, Ojo Stephen (High Chief)	70	The <i>Ologotun-Igase</i>	Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State	12/4/2018
Adesugba, J.A. (High Chief)	n.g	<i>Eleho</i> of Oguo quarters,	Oguo, Arigidi-Akoko, Ondo State	6/4/2018
Adubiaro, Lawrence O. (High Chief)	50	Chartered Account and Tax Practitioner	Suite P12, CUDA Complex Opp. GtBank Alagbaka, Akure, Ondo State.	7/6/2018
Afe, Adedayo .E	47	Lectureship	Block U, plot 45, New Ilu-la Quarters, Akure, Ondo State	16/8/2015

Ajongolo, Ade	88	Retired civil servant	Iro Quarter, Ipesi-Akoko, Ondo State	01/03/2015.
Ajana, Omoniyi	52	Trader	Ikuba quarter, Ipesi-Akoko, Ondo State	10/03/ 2015.
Akande, Sunday	40	Palace staff	<i>Olisua's</i> palace, Isua-Akoko, Ondo State	18/5/2018
Alana, O.E	63	Lectureship/Professor of Religious Studies	Dean's Office, Faculty of Arts, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State.	20/7/2018
Alabi, J.I. (High Chief)		<i>Asupori</i> of Illepa Quarters	Illepa, Arigidi-Akoko, Ondo State	6/4/2018
Alabi, Francis Rotimi (High Chief)	50	<i>Edibo</i> of Ogo quarters	Ogo, Arigidi-Akoko.	6/4/2018
Aminu, C.O	92	Farmer/Community leader	Amo, Erusu-Akoko, Ondo State	6/4/2018
Aodu, Jimoh	90	Farmer/Community leader	Iwonrin, Oka-Akoko, Ondo State	1/8/2018
Arise, Michael Adefemi	80	Pensioner and community leader	Iwonrin, Oka-Akoko, Ondo State	1/8/2018
Ariyo, Otuga	43	Clergy	S/11 Aje, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State	12/04/2018
Ayesa Christopher,	60	Hotel manager	Imo, Arigidi-Akoko, Ondo State	6/4/2018
Edo, V.O.	47	Lectureship	Adekunle Ajasin University Main Campus, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State	28/06/2012
Elelela, Alhassan Adesina (Oba)	82	<i>Oloro</i> of Ora Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Oloro's</i> palace, Ora, Ajowa-Akoko, Ondo State	7/04/2018
Elelela, Busari	40	Civil servant/Heir to the throne of the <i>Oloro</i> of Ora	<i>Oloro's</i> palace	7/04/2018
Faboyede, Olusanya	50	Lectureship	At his personal office	20/07/2018
Ipaye, A.Y	79	Retired police officer and the	At his residence, Isiri, Korowa-Akoko, Ondo	2/8/2018

(High Chief)		<i>Olumogun</i> of Isiri quarters	State	
Ipinlaiye, A.E (Oba)	82	<i>Oloje</i> of Igashi-Akoko	Igashi-Akoko, Ondo State	14/04/2016
Ipinmoroti, Timothy (Oba)	70	<i>Oluro</i> of Uro Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Oluro's</i> palace, Ajowa-Akoko, Ondo State	7/04/2018
Jimoh, Clement Omo-Ola (Oba)	65	<i>Oloso</i> of Oso Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Oloso's</i> palace, Ajowa-Akoko, Ondo State	7/04/2018
Josiah, Kolawole (Oba)	87	<i>Elesuku</i> of Esuku, Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Elesuku's</i> palace, Esuku, Ajowa-Akoko, Ondo State	7/04/2018
Michael, Giwa	65	Farmer	Amo quarters, Erusu-Akoko, Ondo State	6/04/2018
Mogaji, Sunday Olaniyi, Imole I (Oba)	63	The <i>Osunla</i> of Erusu-Akoko	<i>Osunla's</i> palace, Erusu-Akoko, Ondo State	10/04/2018
Momoh, Saliu Akadiri, (Oba)	80	The <i>Olukare</i> of Ikare,	<i>Olukare's</i> palace, Ikare-Akoko, Ondo State	18/08/2016
Obada, Joseph, (High Chief)	76	The <i>Edibo</i> of Imo,	Imo, Arigidi-Akoko, Ondo State	6/4/2018
Obafemi, Sule (High Chief)	60	<i>Aro</i> of Owake	Owake, Oka-Odo, Oka-Akoko, Ondo State	26/7/2018
Obiyan, Sat	52	Lectureship/Professor of Political Science	At his personal office, Department of Political Science, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.	24/01/2018
Ogodo, Patrick	85	Community leader	Beside Asin palace, Oka-Odo, Oka-Akoko, Ondo State	30/7/2018
Ogunmodede,	40	Student/ heir to the throne of <i>Elefifa</i>	<i>Elefifa's</i> palace, Ajowa-Akoko, Ondo	7/04/2018

Ekuniyi		ofEfifa, Ajowa-Akoko	State	
Ogunmodede, Samuel Akintola (Oba)	90	<i>Elefifa</i> ofEfifa, Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Elefifa's</i> palace, Ajowa-Akoko, Ondo State	7/04/2018
Ogunode, R.A. (High Chief)	80	<i>Rotowa</i> of Ayepe Oka-Akoko.	Ayepe Oka-Akoko, Ondo State	14/06/2014.
Oguntimehin, Paul	76	Retired Principal,	C/36, Oke-Igbagbo Street, Ogbagi-Akoko, Ondo State	15/4/2017
Ogunyemi, Tunji	50	Lectureship	At his personal office, Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria	24/01/2018
Ojo, S.A,	58	Farmer/Public Relations Officer, Oka Day Planning Committee/farmer,	No 1, Shineshine Villa, Ikese Oka-Akoko, Ondo State.	30/7/2018
Okajare, S.T.	47	Lectureship	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.	05/05/2015
Oke, Tanimola	75	Farmer/community elder	Amo quarter, Erusu-Akoko, Ondo State	6/04/2018
Oke, Blessing	53	Farmer	Aje, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State	12/04/2018
Oladunjoye, Fajana (Oba)	70	The <i>Ajana</i> of Afa	<i>Ajana's</i> palace, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State	12/05/2015
Olaoba, O.B	57	Lectureship	Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria.	04/05/2015
Olagunju, Moses (High Chief)	65	<i>Olukosi</i> of Okesan	10/C33, Okesan, Erusu-Akoko, Ondo State	7/4/2018



Olanipekun, Aliu	50	Community leader	<i>Zaki's</i> of place, Arigidi-Akoko, Ondo State	6/04/2018
Olanipekun, Yisa Abu (Oba)	60	The <i>Zaki</i> of Arigidi-Akoko	<i>Zaki's</i> of place, Arigidi-Akoko, Ondo State	6/04/2018
Oloruntoba, Bello (Oba)	70	The <i>Ewi</i> of Aje,	<i>Aje's palace</i> , Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State	12/05/2015
Olorunsola Felix (High Chief)	57	The <i>Eli</i> Eegun, Ogbagi-Akoko	16 Araromi Street, Ogbagi-Akoko, Ondo State	15/04/2017
Oloba, D.F	58	Civil servant	MB/17, Imo quarters, Arigi-Akoko, Ondo State	6/04/2018
Oluborede, Bosede (High Chief)	57	The <i>Odu</i> of Ogbagi-Akoko	E/29, Loso Street, Ogbagi-Akoko, Ondo State	15/04/2016
Omosola, A.B	76	Farmer/ community leaders	Ewu Ikanmu, Oka-Akoko, Ondo State	30/7/2018
Onibalusi, Akinyemi (High Chief)	87	The <i>Oluparu</i> of Ogbagi-Akoko and Third in Command to the Owa of Ogbagi-Akoko.	GM/44 Ayetoro Streets, Ogbagi-Akoko, Ondo State	18/04/2017
Onipinla, Emmanuel Elegbelye	84	Clergy and community leader	S40A, Aje, Okeagbe-Akoko, Ondo State	12/4/2018
Osanyintuyi, M.O. (High Chief)	67	<i>Elejemo</i> of Irun-Akoko	<i>Elejemo's palace</i> , Irun-Akoko, Ondo State	16/06/2016.
Oyekan, George Olusegun (Oba)	57	<i>Gbiri</i> of Epimi-Akoko.	<i>Gbiri's palace</i> , Epimi-Akoko, Ondo State	7/6/2018

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*Letter from District Officer, Kabba to Resident, Ilorin*, 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1917

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Akokoland Traditional Rulers and their Titles

s/n	Towns	Titles
1	Aje, Okeagbe-Akoko	<i>Ewi</i>
2	Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko	<i>Ajana</i>
3	Afin-Akoko	<i>Alafin</i>
4	Arigidi-Akoko	<i>Zaki</i>
5	Auga-Akoko	<i>Alauga</i>
6	Akunu-Akoko	<i>Oluwade</i>
7	Akungba-Akoko	<i>Alale</i>
8	Ase-Akoko	<i>Alase</i>
9	Daja, Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Oludaja</i>
10	Efifa, Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Elefifa</i>
11	Epinmi-Akoko	<i>Gbiri</i>
12	Eriti-Akoko	<i>Eleriti</i>
13	Erusu-Akoko	<i>Osunla</i>
14	Ese-Akoko	<i>Elese</i>
15	Esuku, Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Elesuku</i>
16	Gedegede-Akoko	<i>Olugedegede</i>
17	Ibaram-Akoko	<i>Olubaram</i>
18	Iboropa-Akoko	<i>Oluboropa</i>

19	Ido-Akoko	<i>Oludo</i>
20	Igasi-Akoko	<i>Oloje</i>
21	Ikaram-Akoko	<i>Akala</i>
22	Ikare-Akoko	<i>Olukare</i>
23	Ikakumo-Akoko	<i>Olikakumo</i>
24	Ikun-Akoko	<i>Olukun</i>
25	Isua-Akoko	<i>Olisua</i>
26	Ifira-Akoko	<i>Olufira</i>
27	Ipesi-Akoko	<i>Olupesi</i>
28	Ipe-Akoko	<i>Olupe</i>
29	Iludotun, Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Oludotun</i>
30	Iye-Akoko	<i>Oliye</i>
31	Irun-Akoko	<i>Onirun</i>
32	Ise-Akoko	<i>Olise</i>
33	Iyani-Akoko	<i>Oluyani</i>
34	Oba-Akoko	<i>Oloba</i>
35	Ogbagi-Akoko	<i>Owa</i>
36	Oge, Okeagbe-Akoko	<i>Owage</i>
37	Ojo, Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Olojo</i>
38	Oke Oro-Akoko	<i>Oloro</i>
39	Oka-Akoko	<i>Olubaka</i>
40	Ora, Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Olora</i>



41	Oso, Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Oloso</i>
42	Oyin-Akoko	<i>Oloyin</i>
43	Ugbe-Akoko	<i>Olugbe</i>
44	Uro, Ajowa-Akoko	<i>Oluro</i>
45	Supare-Akoko	<i>Olusupare</i>
46	Sosan-Akoko	<i>Olisosan</i>

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2. Oral information garnered during interviews conducted across Akoko towns between 2014 and 2018.

## Appendix B



The oldest king by age in Akokoland: HRH Oba Ogunmodede, Samuel Akintola, 90, The *Elefifa* of Efifa, Ajowa-Akoko. Picture taken during an interview session with him at his palace on 7/04/2018

## Appendix C

### Selected Quotes of some Traditional Rulers in Akokoland

1. HRM Oba Adetona, Victor Ojo, Odagbaragaja III, The *Owa* of Ogbagi-Akoko.

*Ti a ba ma mu ni nu eru ati omo, o gbo do je ero agba meji* (if we must for whatever reason choose between a slave and a son, it must be with the consent of two elders). Ogbagi-Akoko was handed over to me as one and I will hand it over to the next *Oba* as one. I forbid that a bad history be made during my reign. I understand the intricacies of royal politics and with the support of my chiefs and the people, the management of the affairs of my domain have been effective and progressive.

**(His reaction on how to manage ambitious chiefs and stay in charge as the king)**

2. HRH Oba Adeleye Yusuf Adebiori, The *Olubaka* of Oka-Akoko.

Our position as traditional rulers is not as transient as that of elected politicians. Till date, we derive our powers from tradition and the people. A king can reign on the throne of his fathers for over four decades or more but the tenure of a political office holder is conditioned by the extant provisions of the constitution. The highest a politician can go is eight years for a political office and at times the political party platform on which he/she got elected may even collapse, in our own case, palaces may collapse but the kingship institution and the powers that come with it is an enduring one. The modern political elite should come to terms to this stark reality and accept us as viable and reliable partners in the quest for a better nation, good and safe for all to live.

**(His reaction on the continued relevance of the traditional political institution in the modern political space)**

3. HRH Oba Oloruntoba, Bello, The *Ewi* of Aje, Okeagbe-Akoko

Constitutional powers for the kings is not the real issue, there is the need for politicians and other interest groups to gradually reduce the idea of deliberately putting the traditional rulers at a disadvantageous position. Consulting the Obas and chiefs on sensitive community and national issues is a good step in the right direction, but compelling them to openly declare support for a particular individual or groups seeking elective positions or favour from government through tempting monetary inducement or threat of dethronement will definitely continue to impair the already

damaged relevance of the kingship institution. Politicians or government that neglects us do that at their peril. They need to come to the realisation that traditional political leadership must blend with modern governance to allow for inclusive growth and development of the society.

**(His response on the issue of constitutional roles for traditional rulers)**

4. HRH Oba Oladunjoye, Fajana, The *Ajana* of Afa, Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko

The kings shall continue to savour the beauty of the kingship institution at its pristine stage. You see in the old good days, the people took care of the Oba and it used to be an agrarian community where communal cohesion was prevalent and valued. The people regarded the Oba as the head and so collectively agreed that the head must be assisted with all works. Education has really turned the table around. In those days, a lot of us were farmers, so it was possible for the age grade to mobilise for the upkeep of the Oba.

**(His response when he reminisced on the historical antecedence of the kingship institution and the effect of modernity on it)**

5. High Chief Adewumi, Ojo Stephen, The *Ologotun-Igase*, Ogosi quarters, Afa, Okeagbe-Akoko

To allow the kingship institution to maintain its neutrality which will in no small way prevent the constant erosion of its relevance and the authority of its custodian, there should be checks and balances that will disallow whoever ascends the throne from unnecessary partisanship. What the institution currently needs is revival and redemption from pangs of controllers of machinery of state.

**(His response on how to salvage the kingship institution from total collapse)**

6. HRH Oba Sunday Olaniyi Mogaji, Imole I, *Osunla* of Erusu-Akoko

By the application of native wisdom, some dissenting voices were deliberately included among the kingmakers to allow for inclusive government as they see themselves as responsible community leaders and builders of the town. Some were also made to either head and belong to important committees. This method has helped to reduce tension in the town as administering the people was made easy due to the relative peace and stability enjoyed in the town.

**(His reaction on power politics as instrument of control and stability)**

## Appendix D

### Symbol of Monarchy in Akokoland



The **crown** represents royalty, the **brown wooden sword** represents the royal sword often held by the Oba at special traditional occasions and the **metal black handled sword** representing Akokoland military and hunting prowess. Other symbols of the royal office are the beaded sceptre, hand beads, beaded shoes and the beaded horse tail. While the shape and design of beaded crown vary from one town to another.

## Appendix E



One of the First Class kings in Akokoland, His Royal Majesty  
Oba (Alhaji) Yusuf Adebore Adeleye, the Olubaka of Oka Kingdom in his full royal regalia

**Source:** Oka Oba-in-Council, Oka Kingdom 2005 Almanac, Third Issue

