

FROM KINGDOMS TO KINGDOM: A HISTORICAL APPRAISAL OF THE CHIEFTAINCY INSTITUTION IN OKALAND SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

Sunday Abraham Ogunode, MPhil

Department of History and International Studies, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba,
Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria

Abstract:

The chieftaincy institution is one of the cultural assets and peculiarities of the Yoruba people, which constitutes important roots of relationship and co-existence among the Yoruba kingdoms, especially in the pre- colonial times. Chieftaincy is an indigenous system of governance with executive, judicial, and legislative powers. Since the pre-colonial times up till this present time, the chieftaincy institution has come to serve two major functions, which can conveniently be divided into statutory and non- statutory. While the statutory functions include settlement of chieftaincy disputes and the codification of customary laws, the non- statutory functions are reflected in their efforts towards the socio- economic development of the communities where such exist.

In pre-colonial Okaland, a form of village government headed by hereditary chiefs and elders and strengthened by the age grades was evolved in the fifteen quarters that make up the present day Oka kingdom. Families and lineages made up the quarters which occupied specific parts of the village. The family was the smallest unit of administration. By 1900, the traditional political structure of Oka was altered with the effect that the fifteen mini kingdoms that had hitherto enjoyed virtual independence under their respective traditional ruler were brought under one centralised administration. This period marked the emergence of the *Olubaka* as the paramount ruler of the Oka kingdom. Essentially, the paper seeks to argue that the emergence of the *Olubaka* marked the beginning of a comprehensive socio-political system that has endured and has continued to form the basis of validation.

Keywords: Kingdoms, historical appraisal, chieftaincy institution and Okaland

1. Introduction

Like all other human institutions, the traditional institution is dynamic. In dateless time, the institution emerged because of man's need for it¹

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.²

As observed above, chieftaincy institution is one of the cultural assets and peculiarities of the Yoruba people, which constitutes important roots of relationship and co-existence among the Yoruba kingdoms, especially in the pre- colonial times. The word chieftaincy ordinarily connotes the title, the position or the rank of a chieftain i.e. the leader or the ruler of a clan or a tribe. The concept of chieftaincy was first defined in Nigeria in the celebrated case of **Adanji v. Hunvoo** (1908) 1 NLR 74 as ... a mere dignity, a position of honour of primacy among a particular section of the native community.³ Section 2 of the Chiefs Law of Ondo State⁴ states that chief means person whose chieftaincy title is associated with a native community and includes a minor and a recognized chief. Recognized chiefs are now the traditional *Oba* within the contemplation of the law.⁵

Chieftaincy is an indigenous system of governance with executive, judicial, and legislative powers.⁶ Between 1850 and 1936 in Okaland, the chieftaincy institution served two major functions, which could conveniently be divided into statutory and non- statutory. While the statutory functions included settlement of chieftaincy disputes and the codification of customary laws, the non- statutory functions are reflected in their efforts towards the socio- economic development of the communities where such exist. Arhin Brempong and Mariano Pavanello, have argued that chiefs are the custodians of the resources within their various communities. In this light, they submitted by viewing the chiefs as agents of development since they mobilise the material and human resources of their various local and expatriate communities to provide basic socio-economic necessities.⁷

Before proceeding with the main thrust of this paper, it is considered germane to give a brief appraisal of Oka so as to situate discussions in proper perspective. Oka Akoko by tradition and oral history was of three different kingdoms until 1904.⁸ The various communities that made up the three mini-kingdoms in the pre-1904 Oka formed the chiefdoms under their respective chieftains. These kingdoms are *Ogbon Sirin*, *Ogbon Sirun*, and *Ogbon Sifa*.

Okaland is the territory of the town located in the far eastern corner of Yorubaland (the single largest) in Akokoland⁹, which existed before the colonial period in Ondo State

south-west Nigeria. Etymologically, Oka is said to have derived its name from three sources: from the wickedness (*ika*) of its earliest inhabitants, or the maize (*oka*) which its people tauntingly threw at the enemies who besieged it in the nineteenth century, while the third traces its origin to Ile-Ife by asserting that a “Junior Prince” of Ile-Ife who was asked to take a role of his elder brother that had dispersed to the Yoruba and Bini countries. The “Prince” was, therefore, dubbed *Onka* (one who counts) a name which was used to refer to him and his supporters.¹⁰ This area is now divided into fifteen identifiable quarters with two sub-groups referred to as *Siru* and *Sifa* located in the present Akoko South West local government area of Ondo State, Nigeria. The *Siru* sub-group, according to the custom and tradition of Okaland, is the senior. This statement of historical fact is clearly demonstrated by the *Olubaka* of Okaland during the New Yam festival of Oka Day celebration when *Siru* first takes its share of the new yam before *Sifa*¹¹ and this is done without rancour and bad feelings.

Chieftaincy institution in Okaland, to a large extent, is somehow complex in its entirety. The complexity in question has to do with the fact that Oka 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 which had the *Oba* as the grand head and controller of their political institution. The pre-colonial ruling houses in Okaland 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.

However, tradition has it that there were three leaders that led the present fifteen quarters that comprised Okaland. They are: Okikan, Asin, and Olusin who are beaded crown wearing kings.¹² In tracing the origin of their crowns, the pieces of relevant information gathered from the field collectively linked their crown to the source- Ife. These three personalities will serve as reference points to commence the proper discussion of chieftaincy institution in Okaland as they collectively and significantly contributed to the evolution and growth of the chieftaincy institution in Okaland. It should, however, be noted that as far as the undiluted traditional history of Oka is concerned, the Asin was until the imposition of the *Olubaka* as the prescribed authority or paramount ruler of Okaland through the usurpation of the then *Olubaka* of Ibaka (who was the Asin’s most trusted and loyal lieutenant),¹³ the traditionally recognised ruler of Okaland.

2. Okikan Ruling Houses in the Pre-colonial Times

Okikan led his group to Oka about a period over 300 years ago probably 1642 A.D. The group under him comprised Ibaka, Ikese, Korowa and they became known as *Sirin*, which means four.¹⁴ Okikan founded the Ibaka dynasty. He gave birth to nine children that eventually became the royal houses in Ibaka even till date. They are: Okemate, Ayinogbe, Odebakoko. Asikede, Odeasin, Odekate, Okeruba, Odoruwa and *Sirin*.¹⁵ Historical records have it that Okikan reigned over his people for many years and died at old age. He was succeeded by his son, Owasere.¹⁶ He was installed as the second *Olubaka* of Ibaka. He reigned for many years and joined his ancestors. He was succeeded by Kate who was coronated as the third *Olubaka*, but did not reign more than three months when he died, he was succeeded by Awolu.¹⁷ Awolu became the 4th *Olubaka* and was succeeded by Babaodeasin. Babaodeasin took the mantle of leadership from his predecessor and he reigned as the 5th *Olubaka*. He was succeeded by Obaakoko. Obaakoko ruled his people as the 6th *Olubaka* in line; he died and was succeeded by Iyodu. Iyodu reigned between 1878 and 1887. His period was a remarkable event in the political history of Okaland. *Oba* Iyodu was on the throne during the period of Nupe military incursions to Akokoland. History has it that during his reign, Oka was well organised militarily to repel the invasion of Nupe incursion¹⁸ and Oka remained the only community that was unconquered by Nupe militarism.¹⁹ Apart from his personality as a brave and uncompromising leader of his people, he equally benefitted greatly from the natural factor of the Oka rugged and strategic geographical location and terrain in repelling the Nupe invaders. *Oba* Iyodu was succeeded by *Oba* Orimolade who reigned between 1889 and 1904.

2.1 Ruling Houses under Asin in the Pre-colonial Times

The traditional accounts of Okaland have it that Asin is the father of the *Siru* group of Oka kingdom.²⁰ Thirteen Asin have been installed up till date after Akonye, the first Asin who led the then *Siru* group of community (i.e. Ebinrin, Okaodo, Owake, Iwonrin and Ebo) to Okaland.²¹ It is worthy of note that the first nine Asin hailed from the Ebinrin community of Oka i.e Akonye, Adannaogun, Agbonakan, Apore, Okoro, Akoro, Iyun, Atikaawa and Ogonja.²² *Oba* Ogonja was the last Asin from Ebinrin. *Oba* Ogonja had no prince to succeed him on the throne; this made him to give all the *Oba*'s regalia and crown as gifts to his last daughter who later married at Okela- sub-ward of Okaodo and this woman gave birth to Olugbagada, the first Asin to come from Okaodo community of *Siru*.²³ Olugbagada reigned

as the Asin between 1845 and 1902. He was the Asin on the throne during the arrival of the colonial government.²⁴

2.2 Olusin Ruling Houses in the Pre-colonial Times

Olusin is the leader of the *Sifa* group of community, (i.e. Owalusin, Agba, Ikanmu, Iboje, Owaase and Idofin).²⁵ The ancestor of Olusin left Ile-Ife at about 1412 AD.²⁶ History has it that on their first arrival they came to a place near Imesi and later Emure Ekiti where they settled for about 301 years that is between 1418 and 1719 AD. By 1637, Olusin died at the age of 251 years and he was deified as *Oba Owa* in 1640. Thus, he became an ancestral spirit being worshipped during the annual *Ore-Oba* (Ore-Olusin) festival up till date, the festival in which the Olusin must appear kingly in his regalia in line with the native law and custom.²⁷ In 1642, a grandson of Olusin named Orimo was traditionally coronated as the Olusin after the decision of Ifa oracle was determined. He reigned between 1642 and 1702 AD, thus known today as the first Olusin in title.

The next ruler to Orimo was *Oba Owa-Ikun* (The great). He was coronated as the second Olusin in 1706. Tradition has it that he led his people (Owalusin, Agba, Ikanmu, Iboje, Odekure and Isa) out of Emure in 1749 and finally settled them at the south west region of the Kukuruku hill in 1753, which is today known as Okaland. He allowed his relations whom he led from Emure through Ora-Akoko to settle differently, but he remained as their overlord.²⁸ In 1839, Prince Ogbo was appointed from Oke-Owa and subsequently coronated as the 3rd Olusin in title. He died in 1858.²⁹ In 1860, *Oba Elure I* was crowned as the 4th Olusin of Oka and he danced to meet his ancestors in 1870 and was later succeeded by his son *Oba Elure II* who was appointed after consultation from the Oracle, and was crowned as the 6th Olusin of Okarufe in 1881. His reign witnessed the reception of Osuru community and their merger with Owalusin community in 1884.³⁰ *Oba Elure II* died in 1891. Prince Apona was appointed and before his final coronation as the Olusin, he died in 1892. A prince and warrior named Ajamaiye was later appointed and coronated accordingly in line with the traditions in 1895 as the 7th Olusin in title.

3. Political Organisation under the Oka Confederacy

According to Akintunde Emiola:

In African societies, two types of society were and are still recognised. The first is cephalous societies ruled by Kings or central authorities. The second type consists of

acephalous societies without recognised head and had to operate through a collective leadership...³¹

Traditionally, in line with the ‘Ogbon’ system in operation, Oka Akoko can be classified as a cephalous society, but looking at it from the purview of the British it was an acephalous town.³² The customary law of Oka upholds a patri-lineal system of succession though contrary to the constitutional right of the female child.³³ In the words of Elias “whenever there is a community of people that has agreed to form a separate political territory and live together in a commonwealth, there necessarily must be a structure of government, however, rudimentary it might be”.³⁴

The population of Oka comprised the “autochthones” and “settlers”. Following the eventual settlement of migrants and absorption of the autochthones, there emerged fifteen distinct chiefdoms on the Oka plateau. It must however be mentioned, here that, the three leaders that led the various band of migrants to Oka formed three distinctive mini kingdoms with the communities under them existing as chiefdoms under their respective chieftains who were honoured with the kingly greeting of *kabiyesi* even though they were under their respective *Ogban* leader. Interestingly, these three leaders were in their respective domain revered as traditional Oba with the honorific kingly greeting- *kabiyesi*.

These chiefdoms, now called ‘quarters’ were sub-divided into two wards. These wards known as “*Ogban*”, was also referred to as “*Ogban Asin*” (better known as ‘*Siru*’) and ‘*Ogban Olusin*’ or *Sifa*. The first under Ebo and Ebinrin (which constituted the *Siru* sub-section of this ‘*Ogban*’) and Ibaka, Ikese, Korowa and Okia (the *Sirin* sub-section headed by the Olubaka of Ibaka). The second ‘*Ogban Olusin*’, comprised Iboje, Idofin, Owaase and Owalusin (in one sub-section under the headship of the Olusin), while Agba and Ikanmu formed another sub-section under the Alagba.³⁵ The overall leadership of the *Ogban* was vested on the Olusin of Owalusin.

The traditional explanation for these groupings is that chiefdoms or quarters in one ‘*Ogban*’ were the children of the same father, while children of the same mother formed the constituent subsections.³⁶ Given the diversity of origins of Oka people, this seems to be a rationalisation of relationships forged by co-migrations, geographical proximity and mere social interaction or shared vicissitudes. It is instructive that these groupings are named after the number of their members ‘*eerun*’ – or ‘*aarun*’ (five) in *Siru*, ‘*eerin*’ (four) in *Sirin*, and ‘*efa*’ (six) in *Sifa*.³⁷ However, the fact that the groupings have not been based on mere territorial contiguity has ensured that they are not divisive factors in Oka politics. Most of the fifteen chiefdoms or quarters of Oka in turn have subdivisions. Sometimes, as in Agba, Okia,

Ikanmu and Oka-Odo, the quarter chief was also the head of *Odoju* and the ‘*Olookia*’, the head of Isaba. The quarter chief was assisted in the administration by a Council of Elders (*ihare*) and the General Council of Youths, which comprised age-grades from 18 years to 60 years. The Council of Elders, which was headed by the eldest man in the community (*opan*) administered the chieftdom or quarter during an interregnum. The village assembly (*apejo*) provided a forum for discussing affairs of the community and its decisions were binding on the members. The age-grades (*etu or egbe*) executed such decisions, maintained law and order, constructed or cleared footpaths which led to other settlements and the farmlands and maintained the community’s sources of drinking water. The age-grade between 50 years and 60 years was the link between the younger ones and the *ihare*. It supervised the execution of communal decisions. It was known as *du* in Agba, *ela* in Ibaka, *akala* in Ikanmu and *egbe* in Iroho (Okia).

Administration at the level of the town was federal, with a large measure of autonomy at the level of the chieftdom. Indeed, the quarter chiefs were addressed as *kabiyesi*, the normal honorific for kings. Consequently, a council comprising the *Asin* of Oka-Odo, the quarter chiefs and, at critical times, co-opted community leaders administered Oka. The extent of the powers of the “leader” or paramount ruler is unknown, but apart from occasionally “raiding” the market, he did not exercise absolute or dictatorial powers. In any case, the council of chiefs, the elders and the *Ifa* oracle made the appointment of the ruler. The above is a pointer to the fact that before 1870, the *Asin* and the *Olusin* Chieftaincy were the most prominent in Okaland. By 1900, the *Olubaka* chieftaincy has become so great that it almost overwhelmed the former traditional chieftaincy of the different quarters that make up the pre-colonial Oka kingdoms, courtesy of the usurpation of the leadership of Oka, which was masterminded by the British in the 1890s. The beneficiary of this subtlety was Orimolade who displaced *Asin* Omorinbola II to become the last *Olubaka* of Ibaka and the first *Olubaka* Oka. With the emergence of the *Olubaka* as the paramount ruler of Oka, the old power structure was largely altered with the choking of the *Asin*’s chieftaincy by making his former second -in- command the *Olusin* the next in rank to the *Olubaka*. This accounted for the statement credited to the late *Olusin* Olugunagba II when he said *interlia* that:

The relationship between him (The *Olusin*) and the *Asin*, is the one that have changed to that of the *Olubaka* and him (The *Olusin*).³⁸

To further confirm the choking of the *Asin*’s chieftaincy, only the *Olubaka* and the *Olusin* were mainly recognised as the tax collectors for the colonial government.³⁹ In spite of the dichotomy in leadership structure in Oka even before 1904, the three traditional groups in

Oka still share the name- “*Okarufe*”, but with modification. Some now see themselves as ‘*Okarufe Omo Asin*’, some ‘*Okarufe Omowa- Olusin*’ etc. During colonialism, even though the *Olubaka* has been considered as the paramount ruler of Okaland in 1904, Oka still remain in two groups (the *Siru* and the *Sifa*) for administrative conveniences. For example, while the *Olubaka* is the live President of Oka Council of Chiefs, the *Olusin* remains the Chairman. It is interesting to note that the gradual transformation of Oka from the old three mini-kingdoms to one mega kingdom under the paramountcy of the *Olubaka* started in the 1890s when the colonial masters began to give the *Olubaka* undue attention and coupled with the selection of Ibaka as the headquarters of Oka colonial authority which was considered geographically suitable given its accessibility and nearness to Kabba the colonial provincial headquarters.

4. Ruling Houses in the Colonial Times

The period between 1900 and 1930 was a very eventful period in the political transition and transformation of Okaland, to what is today the fifteen quarters that made up Okaland, that were brought under the authority of one political ruler- The *Olubaka* of Okaland.⁴⁰ This was done to make the administration of Oka by the colonial government easier and more effective. At this period, Akoko was brought under Kabba and the District Officer was stationed at Okene.⁴¹ The District Officer sent his indigenous employees in advance to determine a suitable place for the sub-administrative officer, Ibaka was chosen as the most suitable place for the sub-administrative head office.⁴²

The choice of Ibaka was the best in the circumstance of that period. Taxes were required to be collected town by town and to be brought to the sub-head office at Ibaka by the head of each town. Tax rebates were paid as remuneration to the heads of the fifteen towns.⁴³ The taxes collected were used to finance the colonial projects and the day to day activities of the communities. The choice of Ibaka as the sub-administrative head office and the elevation of the *Olubaka* as the paramount *Oba* of Oka were remarkable landmarks in the emergence of Oka as a town under one ruler.⁴⁴

5. Recognition of Olubaka as the Paramount Ruler of Okaland and the Crisis of Relevance

Oba Orimolade was the first legally and officially recognised *Olubaka* of Okaland. He was presented with the staff of office by the then British government in 1904. Since then, successive *Olubaka* have always been playing prominent roles in the leadership of not only Akokoland but the entire Yorubaland in particular and Nigeria as a whole.⁴⁵ *Oba* Orimolade

reigned between 1889 and 1911 and was succeeded by *Oba* Odudu. He was crowned as the 11th *Olubaka* of Okaland. He reigned between 1911 and 1918 and was succeeded by *Oba* Samuel Ilegbusi.⁴⁶ Ilegbusi became the 12th *Olubaka*. He was a renowned and outstanding *Oba* that earned the appellation of “king of kings” *O soko Ekiti soko Akoko* (meaning having lordship over Ekiti and Akoko). He was the head of the largest of all the Ekiti and Akoko kingdoms. He spear-headed the creation of Akoko Division in 1933 and was unanimously elected as the president.⁴⁷ He died in 1936 and was succeeded by *Oba* Abraham Omowa (the *Obakoko* II) in the same year. The point should again be stressed at this point that, the official recognition of the *Olubaka* as the prescribed authority of Okaland did not automatically negate the kingly position of the *Asin* of Oka (with his palace at Oka-Odo) and the *Olusin* of Owalusin who are equally crown wearing *Oba*. Indeed, in the Yoruba tradition, the crown is an identity of an *Oba* as evident in the Yoruba wise saying: *Ade ori la fi n mo Oba, Ileke orun lafi n mo Ijoye*” (The crown is the *Oba*’s identity while the beads belong to the Chiefs).

The Supreme Court confirmation of the *Olubaka* paramountcy on the 18th of December 1998 attempted to put to rest the 94 years-old chieftaincy tussle. Prior to the time, attempt by the *Olubaka* to put an end to the *Asin*’s crown in his cross appeal at the Court of Appeal, Benin also failed. The Court and the Ondo State White Paper on *Asin* Chieftaincy posit that *Asin* should remain the *Asin* of Okaodo quarters in Iwaro-Oka with the liberty to wear his crown provided he recognized the superiority of the *Olubaka*, on the *Olusin* chieftaincy on the other hand, the State Government in 1983 in relying on the Justice Olayiwola Chieftaincy Review Commission Report on the *Olusin* Chieftaincy also posits that the *Olusin* should remain the *Olusin* of Owalusin and during his regency as the *Olusin* of Oka, though the Commission recognized his crowns as that of the *Oba* yet, it submitted that the *Olusin* is a chief:

Apart from the beaded crowns, none of the items can seriously be accepted as been attached to the institution of an *Oba* as paraphernalia of office...⁴⁸

The above evaluation of evidence by the Commission leaves only one big question: if apart from the beaded crowns, the Commission resolved that the *Olusin* was a chief; does he still remain a chief with the two beaded crowns tradition considered? Yet, the Government does not recognize either *Asin* or the *Olusin* as traditional *Oba* to which part II of the Chiefs Law will apply. This development in my honest opinion is considered as an attempt to rubbish the Yoruba sacred tradition and regal heritage for a beaded crown supposed

traditional Oba to be treated as a mere chief whereas the Asin and the Olusin if given Government recognition as Oba in their respective communities would not in any way affect the paramountcy of the Olubaka as upheld by the apex court of our land.

Since the imposition of the Olubaka as the paramount ruler in 1904, Okaland has been laced with one chieftaincy dispute or the other even though it has been resolved by the court and the necessary government white papers. The presence of two other beaded crowns wearing Oba has remained a matter of great concern for the Olubaka, but the more biting challenge of the Olubaka is his failure to secure the backing of law to reduce the Asin of Oka to a mere bead wearing chief.

6. Conclusion

It has been observed that Okaland prior to the introduction of colonial rule had evolved a unique political system, in line with their environmental peculiarities and traditions. At the turn of the 20th century, things, however, went awry following the introduction of colonial rule in the area. In pre-colonial Nigeria, traditional rulers were rulers in every sense of the word as they derived their executive, legislative and judicial functions from traditions long rooted, recognised and revered by the people of their respective areas of authority. This meant that the traditional rulers were the true representatives of their people in all ramifications. This underscores the relevance of the traditional rulers to the overall development of their areas of jurisdiction. In fact, it was the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo who in 1959 said: “The maintenance of law and order, peace, tranquility in this region (Western Region) would be seriously imperiled if chieftaincy institutions were to disappear or suffer serious impairment”.⁴⁹

Thus, the success of any government at the grassroots or local level depends on its relationship with the traditional institutions, particularly the *Oba* who is well respected and honoured by his subjects. There is, therefore, no basis for the abolition of the monarchy in Nigerian societies. According to Oguntomisin⁵⁰, traditional rulers in spite of the changes that have so far taken place in the country are still being looked upon in their various localities as the custodians of the tradition. Bello-Imam, observes that the traditional rulers being closer to the people than any state or federal government agents, they are veritable linkages between the people and the government as well as the translators and interpreters of government policies at the grass roots.⁵¹

From a progressive point of view, it is believed that a community is traditionally dead if it is isolated from its valued existing custom and tradition as this could amount to ethnocentrism and cultural genocide of the highest order. It is anti-people's culture contrary to the provisions of **Articles 3 and 7 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People**, which provides as follows:

...Indigenous people have the right of self-determination by virtue of that right; they can freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.⁵² Indigenous people have the collective and individual right not to be subjected to ethnocide and cultural genocide... (c) any form of assimilation or integration by their culture or ways of life imposed on them by legislative, administrative or other measures.⁵³

Despite the recognition of the Olubaka as the paramount ruler of the federated Oka kingdom and the demotion of the Asin to third in rank, he has never stopped wearing his beaded crown which confers on him the kingly title of the Oba as he is so looked upon and greeted by his people. In fact, the Asin crown is legally backed and recognised. The recognition of the Asin as a traditional Oba has been buttressed by the position of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in the case of **Ogundare v. Ogunlowo (1997) 6 NWLR pt. 509, page 360 at 369 paras A-C, 370-371 paras H-B** which asserted that: "There can be law de-recognizing a chieftaincy that is mainly for government purpose. It does not mean the chieftaincy does not exist because the community served by each chief does not necessarily cease to exist.... where a declaration exists in respect of a recognized chieftaincy, the reduction in rank of that chieftaincy to a minor one does not change the customary law as contained in the declaration relating to entitlement, selection and appointment of it. The provisions of such a declaration should prevail until it is amended"

The traditional quasi federal system now in place in Oka kingdom is unknown to Oka native laws and customs. 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.⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵ 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 chieftaincy institution forms the bedrock of tradition of the Yoruba communities and indeed that of Oka.

On a final note, the central message of this paper is anchored on the fact that chieftaincy institution has always been a potent pillar of cultural and traditional values, which had helped to sustain social order and communal harmony, between and among the various communities in Okaland. It therefore means that the emergence of the *Olubaka* as the paramount ruler of Okaland marked the beginning of a comprehensive socio-political system that has endured and has continued to form the basis of validation.

References:

- 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. 1989), p.69.
- G.O.I. Olomola, (1997). "Pre-Colonial Patterns of Inter –State Relations in Eastern Yorubaland". (Ph.D thesis, Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, May 1997). p.95.
- F.A. Apponbiede, "The Weeping Tiger (Undistorted Oral Tradition, Value and Culture of Oka Akoko): A Case Study of Integration and Disintegration". (Unpublished manuscript) p.42.
- See Kusamotu Gboyega, "Chieftaincy and the Law", (Ikirun: Gboyega Publisher, 1994), p.1.
- See Ogun State and Oyo State Chiefs Laws, 1978 Section 2; Obas and Chiefs Law of Lagos State, 1981.
- George M. Bob-Miller, "Chieftaincy, Diaspora, and Development: The Institution of Nk)suohene in Ghana, (Oxford: Journals of Social Sciences, African Affairs Volume 108, Issue 433 (2009): 541.
- Arhin Brempong and Mariano Pavanello, "Chiefs in Development in Ghana: Interviews with Four Paramount Chiefs in Ghana", (Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 2006), p.6.
- D.O. Kolawole, "A History of Oka", (Ibadan: Demman Consultancy & Printers, 2009), pp.7-14. See also "Essay in Honour of S.O. Ogunoye I www.owamilreehinmabo.webs.com" Accessed 20/6/2011.
- A.O. Olukoju, "The Siege of Oka, ca. 1878-84: A Study in the Resistance to Nupe Militarism in Northern Yorubaland", in "Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-colonial Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Robert Smith", ed. Toyin Falola and Robin Law, African Studies Projects, (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1989), p.107.

A.O. Olukoju, “Oka” in “Yoruba Towns and Cities”, ed. G.O. Oguntomisin Vol.1, (Ibadan: Bookshelf Resources Ltd, 2003), p.77.

D.O. Kolawole, “A History of Oka”, (Ibadan: Demman Consultancy & Printers, 2009), pp.20-21.

Abel Adejugbe Ogunode, 89 years, (oral interview held at No 12 Sokedile Street, Oke Oka, Ondo State, Nigeria, 23rd August, 2009). He was a respondent on the Okikan ruling houses.

Abel Adejugbe Ogunode, 89 years, (oral interview held at No 12 Sokedile Street, Oke Oka, Ondo State, Nigeria, 23rd August, 2009). He was a respondent on the Okikan ruling houses.

Friday Ogaleye, 31 years, (oral interview held opposite Central Mosque Ibaka Quarters on 19th July, 2009) a respondent on the chronology of the Okikan dynasty,

A.O Olukoju. “Oka” in Yoruba Towns and Cities, ed. G.O. Oguntomisin Vol.1, (Ibadan: Bookshelf, 2003), pp.78-79.

Ezekiel Folarin, 87 years, (oral interview held at Secretariat Road Iwonrin Oka, Ondo State, Nigeria, August 23rd, 2009). A respondent on the origin of migration and chronological history of Asin.

Ezekiel Folarin, 87 years, (oral interview held at Secretariat Road Iwonrin Oka, Ondo State, Nigeria, August 23rd, 2009). A respondent on the origin of migration and chronological history of Asin.

Felix Oki, 82 years, (oral interview held at College Road Iwaro Oka, Ondo State, Nigeria, 20th August, 2010). A respondent on the chronology of the Asin dynasty,

Felix Oki. (oral interview held at College Road Iwaro Oka, Ondo State, Nigeria, 20th August, 2010). A respondent on the chronology of the Asin dynasty,

D.O. Kolawole, “A History of Oka”, (Ibadan: Demman Consultancy & Printers, 2009). p.72.

Olumide John Olotu, “Kingship Evolution in Okaland from the Earliest Times to the Present A.D. 2000”, (Nigeria: Department of History and International Studies, B.A. Long Essay, 2010) p.26.

Olotu Olumide John, “Kingship Evolution in Okaland from the Earliest Times to the Present A.D. 2000”, (Nigeria: Department of History and International Studies, B.A. Long Essay 2010). p.26.

Olotu Olumide John, Kingship Evolution in Okaland from the Earliest Times to the Present A.D. 2000”, (Nigeria: Department of History and International Studies, B.A. Long Essay 2010). pp.7-11.

Olotu Olumide John, *Kingship Evolution in Okaland from the Earliest Times to the Present A.D. 2000*”, (Nigeria: Department of History and International Studies, B.A. Long Essay 2010). pp.11-12.

Olotu Olumide John, *Kingship Evolution in Okaland from the Earliest Times to the Present A.D. 2000*”, (Nigeria: Department of History and International Studies, B.A. Long Essay 2010). pp.12-13.

In his book: “*The Principles of African Customary Law*”, (Ogbomoso: Emiola Publisher, 1997). Cited in F.A Apondiede, “*Traditional Institutions: Chieftaincy System in the Confederated Okarufe 1822-1957*” (unpublished material), p.3.

This has been acknowledged by the Supreme Court of Nigeria in the decided case of H.H. Oba Omorinbola II (The Asin of Oka) v. The Military Governor of Ondo State & Others. Case No – SC. 158/1995. Delivered on 18th December, 1998.

F.A Apondiede, “*Traditional Institutions: Chieftaincy System in the Confederated Okarufe 1822-1957*” (unpublished material), p.4.

T.O. Elias, “*The Nature of African Customary Law*” (MUP: 1956), p.23.

A.O. Olukoju, “*The Siege of Oka, ca. 1878-84: A Study in the Resistance to Nupe Militarism in Northeastern Yorubaland*”, in *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-colonial Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Robert Smith*. eds. Toyin Falola and Robin Law, (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1989). p.103.

Motunrayo C Oki., “*The Slave Trade in Oka-Akoko in the 19th Century*”, (Nigeria: Department of History and International Studies, B.A. Long Essay, Adekunle Ajasin University, Ondo State, Nigeria, 2005). p.19.

Motunrayo C Oki., “*The Slave Trade in Oka-Akoko in the 19th Century*”, (Nigeria: Department of History and International Studies, B.A. Long Essay, Adekunle Ajasin University, Ondo State, Nigeria, 2005). p.20.

Motunrayo C Oki., “*The Slave Trade in Oka-Akoko in the 19th Century*”, (Nigeria: Department of History and International Studies, B.A. Long Essay, Adekunle Ajasin University, Ondo State, Nigeria, 2005). p.20.

A.O. Olukoju, “*Oka*”, in *Yoruba Towns and Cities*, ed. G.O. Oguntomisin Vol.1, (Ibadan: Bookshelf, 2003). p.81.

R.D Adewumi, (1977) “*Succession to Obaship among Oka- Yoruba: A Case Study in Political Conflict*” B.Sc. special project, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Oluwole Matthew, 90 years, (an oral communication held with the Shaba Olukanmu of Simerin Ikanmu Oka, at No. 1 Agbadotun Street Ayepe, Iwaro-Oka, Ondo State, Nigeria on the 9th September, 2009).

The Olubaka for the *Siru* group and the *Olusin* for the *Sifa* group.

D.O. Kolawole, “A History of Oka”, (Ibadan: Demman Consultancy and Partners, 2009). p.28.

D.O. Kolawole, “A History of Oka”, (Ibadan: Demman Consultancy and Partners, 2009). p.27.

D.O. Kolawole, “A History of Oka”, (Ibadan: Demman Consultancy and Partners, 2009). p.27.

Henry Oripeloye and Gbenga Sanni, A Biography of H.R.M Oba (Dr.) Yusuf Adebori Adeleye The Olubaka of Okaland. (Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 6A Polytechnic Road, Sango 2009). p.40.

Emmanuel Monday Akere, 71 years, (oral interview on the Okikon ruling houses, August, 2009).

D.O. Kolawole, A History of Oka, (Ibadan: Demman Consultancy and Partners, 2009). p.35.

See page 11 of the Justice Olayiwola Reports. See also F.A Aponbiede “Olayiwola Chieftaincy Report on the Olusin’s Chieftaincy: A Rape of Yoruba Valued Heritage”. Unpublished, p.2.

O. Awolowo. An address delivered at the (Fourth Oba’s Conference on 7th May, 1959 at Ibadan), p.7.

G.O. Oguntomisin, “Through the Changing Scenes: Traditional Rulers in Nigeria, (Olot: Journal of African Studies Vol. 2. No. 1, 1997). p.67.

G.O. Oguntomisin, “Through the Changing Scenes: Traditional Rulers in Nigeria”, (Olot: Journal of African Studies Vol. 2. No. 1, 1997), p.67.

F.A. Aponbiede, “Traditional Institutions: Chieftaincy System in the Confederated Okarufe 1822-1957” Unpublished material, p.9.

F.A. Aponbiede, “Traditional Institutions: Chieftaincy System in the, p.9.

Adegbola Abayomi, “Alarokun Chieftaincy House: History, Challenges, Travails and Triumph”, (Ibadan: Okerebiu Publishing House, 2008). p.35.

Adegbola Abayomi, Alarokun Chieftaincy House: History, Challenges, (Ibadan: Okerebiu Publishing House, 2008) p.37.

Adegbola Abayomi, “Alarokun Chieftaincy House: History, Challenges, Travails and Triumph (Ibadan: Okerebiu Publishing House, 2008). p.37.

Adegbola Abayomi, “Alarokun Chieftaincy House: History, Challenges, Travails and Triumph”, (Ibadan: Okerebiu Publishing House, 2008). p.35.

Adegbola Abayomi, “Alarokun Chieftaincy House: History, Challenges, Travails and Triumph”, (Ibadan: Okerebiu Publishing House, 2008). p.37.