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CONTESTATION AND SOCIAL DISORDER: CHIEFTAINCY CONTESTATION IN YORUBALAND, 1945 – 1956

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Abstract

By about the 1940s, chieftaincy disputes had increased tremendously. It created obvious social disorder in several towns in Yorubaland. Historical methodology will be adopted using essentially archival materials. Matters relating to chieftaincy and taxation resulted in riots in Iseyin in 1918, at Ilesa in 1941 and at Oyo in 1955 to mention just a few instances. The colonial administration responded to it decisively by sentencing the various culprits involved in the riots. All over Yorubaland, as elsewhere, chieftaincy contestations took a new dimension. It took the dimension of concerted efforts at forwarding correspondences, in form of petitions, to the colonial administration in respect of chieftaincy disputes. Also, the medium of Newspapers were used considerably to elicit public support for themselves in connection with particular chieftaincy disputes in question. The example of the Gbelegbuwa chieftaincy disputes is a case in point. Also, the Risawe chieftaincy disputes in Ilesa almost resulted into civil disturbance, but for the memory of what was done to the culprits of the 1941 riots. To all intents and purposes, quasi-administrative measures, the intervention of the police and the Chiefs' Law of 1955 contributed immensely in the process of resolving these chieftaincy disputes and prevented the possibility of escalating social disorder.

Key words: *Risawe, Dispute, Olowo, Alakenne, Chief's Law.*

Introduction

In Yorubaland, several chieftaincy disputes came up. Some of such disputes created series of problem in the entire Yorubaland. The importance of chieftaincy in colonial Nigeria made it to acquire the respect that it gained at that time. Those who were made chiefs were 'important' in their society. It was because of the significance placed on the institution of chieftaincy that made competition to become very rife when there was a vacant chieftaincy position. It has been argued that several factors seem to be responsible for the spate of chieftaincy disputes in Yorubaland. These factors are categorized as social, traditional, political and economic¹. In Yorubaland, chieftaincy succession procedure was not codified. Despite its unwritten nature, its principles were

expressed in proverbs and other aspects of tradition and culture of the people. Proliferation of ruling houses was another reason for chieftaincy disputes. Land matter has also been an important issue for dispute in respect of chieftaincy. In this study, we shall be examining three significant chieftaincy disputes in Yorubaland: the *Olowo* chieftaincy dispute in Owo, the *Risawe* chieftaincy dispute in Ilesa and the *Alakenne* chieftaincy dispute in Ikenne, all in South-Western Nigeria. We shall begin with the *Olowo* chieftaincy dispute.

***Olówò* Chieftaincy Dispute**

Owo is situated in southwestern Nigeria, at the southern edge of the Yoruba hills and at the inter-section of roads from Akure, Idanre, Kabba, Benin and Siluko. Its traditional ruler is known as the *Olowo*. The *Olówò* Chieftaincy dispute started in the early 1930. The dispute was about who was to become the 'new' *Olówò*. The trouble that the *Olówò* Chieftaincy dispute fomented had reached a climax by 1941². Prince Olayanju wrote a petition to the colonial government in respect of the process of the selection of a new *Olówò*. He argued that he was the next to become the *Olówò*. He claimed to have stepped-down for his elder brother in 1938 and that he could not step down again for his younger brother. Chief Sashere had used his good relationship with the District Officer to oppose the candidature of Prince Olayanju for that of Oladeteru, the fifth and the youngest of the *Omọ-Olówò* eligible to the throne³.

Another petition was sent to the Chief Commissioner, Western Province, to protest further about the support of the District Officer to upturn his candidature for Oladeteru. Chief Adafin of *Ọwò* and Chief Ajana wrote a separate petition to the District Officer (D.O.) protesting the action of the latter in dropping Prince Olayanju⁴. He confirmed that the *Ọjomọ* initially selected Prince Olayanju but was later dropped because of Chief Sashere's opposition to his choice. It was not long after several chiefs who had earlier supported the candidature of Prince Olayanju begun to give support to the *Ọjomọ*'s choice.

By February 1941, the choice of the *Omọ-Olówò* had changed from that of Oladeteru to Obanla⁵. There must be a reason why there was a sudden change of decision by the *Omọ-Olówò* from their initial choice of first, Olayanju and second, Oladeteru to Obanla. It was because Prince Olayanju was considerably older and they preferred the choice of a younger person on the throne of the *Olówò*. Again, it was also possible that he did not at anytime command the respect and support of any considerable group among the *Ọwò* society. On the 21st February, 1941 another petition was sent to the Resident⁶. This petition was written by Chief Aralepo and a group of others regarding the election of the *Olówò*. The procedure for the selection of the *Ọbanla* as the *Olówò* -elect was through the consultation of the *Ifá* Oracle. Traditionally, *Ifá* oracle was usually

consulted by the *Olóri-Èbí* and if the oracle was favourable, the candidate was presented by the *Olóri-Èbí* and other senior members of the *Ọmọ-Ọlówò*. The *Olóri-Èbí* had the responsibility to consult *Ifa* for the determination of who should be selected as the 'new' *Ọlówò*.⁷

Since there was confusion among the chiefs and the *Ọmọ-Ọlówò* about whether it was Ọbanla or Oladeteru that should finally be picked, the Governor was of the opinion that further time for consideration be allowed in order to produce complete unanimity of support for a particular candidate⁸. Four days after Chief Aralepo sent in his petition, Chief Ọjomọ openly approved the selection of Oladeteru as he was entitled to by custom. However, *Ifa* was consulted by the *Olóri-Èbí* and the lot fell on Oladeteru⁹. Prince Oladeteru's selection was opposed, particularly from his own royal family, being the youngest of the five male children from their father, *Ọlówò* Ogunoye. At the apex of this opposition was his brother, the second born of the five, J. Eyiolase Ọlágbégi. Again, Oladeteru had worked as an interpreter in the past for the government. He had worked hand in hand with the District Officer (D. O.), Ọwò, when the D. O. was posted to Ilaró, at Abèòkúta Division¹⁰. It had where was this noted? That in some situations or circumstances, the government would be bent on ensuring the installation of a man of its choice. Hence, on the 19th March, 1941, the Ọwò Council Chiefs unanimously wrote a letter to the D.O. about their choice of a date for the coronation ceremony of the *Ọlówò*-elect.¹¹

They suggested the 29th of March, 1941. The previous day, an Inspector of Police was sent to Ọwò to ensure peace at the purported installation ceremony of the following day. The Inspector sent for Prince Olayanju and warned him against his threat to shoot at his brother, the *Ọlówò* -elect, during the installation ceremonies¹². On the day of installation, a combined detachment of the Nigeria Police and that of the Native Authority Police were sent to maintain law and order. At the occasion, Major J. Wann, Resident, Ọndó Province, represented the Chief Commissioner, Western Province, on behalf of the government in recognizing J.K Ọlágbégi as the *Ọlówò* of Ọwò. The *Ọlówò*, therefore, took to himself the title of Ọlágbégi, II.¹³ It was not long that Ọlágbégi II became the *Ọlówò* that he fell out with the *Ọjomọ* of the Ìjèbú quarter. The position and title of the *Ọjomọ* chieftaincy in Ọwò, at the Ìjèbú quarter was created by *Ọlówò* Elewokun. The first *Ọjomọ* was *Ọlówò* Elewokun's brother, named Oludipe. The Ìjèbú quarter was the last of the five quarters in Ọwò. During the reign of *Ọlówò* Elewokun, the *Ọjomọ*, Oludipe became in-subordinate and was found to be full of intrigues and cunning devices.¹⁴

Consequently, *Ọlówò* Elewokun deposed him and declared his title null and void and sent him away from Ọwò to Ugbo Usugwe, a distance of about 20

miles from Òwò. The Òjomo, Oludipe died at Ugbo Usugwe, but his third son, Agunloye came back to Òwò to plead with the then *Olówò* Adara, who heeded his plea and allowed him to return to the town. Since the period of Agunloye, the Òjomo chieftaincy title at Òwò was resuscitated¹⁵. It must be noted that the strained relationship between the *Olówò* Olágbégi II and the Òjomo cannot be far from the controversy over the support that the Òjomo could not throw behind the *Olówò* Olágbégi II during his selection. It was the D.O. who made the Òjomo to realise that Olágbégi II was the popular choice in Òwò. The Òjomo could not but change his mind, particularly, because he was accused by the D.O. to have collected bribe from Chief Obanla for not being on the side of the majority. The threat of the D.O was what made Chief Òjomo to eventually agree to Oládéterú Olágbégi's choice. On the basis of the opposition of the Òjomo, Olágbégi could have felt very bad and determined to deal with the Òjomo when he became the *Olówò*¹⁶.

In order to resolve the dispute between *Olówò* Olágbégi II and Chief Òjomo, the Resident engaged one J.B Arifalo, a Provincial Member of the Western House of Assembly, but before Arifalo was contacted the D.O. had arranged for a private meeting between the *Olówò* and the Òjomo at his instance. By April, 1949, the dispute between the *Olówò* and the Òjomo had escalated. It must be noted that the acting D.O. during this period did not help matters. ¹⁷ In 1948, it was decided that an enquiry be set up when it was necessary to get at the root of any dispute. It was for this reason that a mediation committee was set up. This committee was made up of the *Qoni* of Ife, who was the chairman, the Ewì of Adó-Èkìtì and the *Òsé mòwé* of Òndó. ¹⁸ Though initially the *Olówò* disagreed and resisted the setting up of this mediation committee, the government insisted that the committee was the most viable body that could look into the dispute and proffer solution and recommendations for settlement.

***Rí sawè* Chieftaincy Dispute**

Ilesa is a town in southwestern Nigeria which is located 7.63 latitude and 4.74 longitudes, situated at an elevation of about 377 meters above the sea level. ¹⁹ Ilesa is the traditional headquarters of Ijesaland and its about 120 km from Ibadan and about 30 km from Osogbo, the capital of Osun State. ²⁰ The Owa Obokun of Ijesaland is at the apex of the traditional administration of Ilesa. The *Risawe* chieftaincy title is an important position in Ilesa traditional political system. His functions revolve around the palace. The *Risawe* belong to the *Are* line of chiefs in Ilesa, which perform different traditional functions and it is led by the *Odole*.

In 1952, the *Rí sawè* Chieftaincy Dispute came up in Ilèṣà. ²¹ The death of *Rí sawè* Turton at Ilèṣà, on the 15th May 1952 started the most controversial

chieftaincy dispute during the reign of *Ọwá Ajímọkọ II*. As soon as the vacancy was made known, two men in the town indicated their interest in the *Ríṣawẹ* Chieftaincy. They were Mr. M.G. Asogbe, a prominent trader in Ilẹ̀ṣà who had some good financial standing and Mr. S.O Adedeji, who was younger but was educated and had worked with the government for some time ²².

However, S.O Adedeji stood at an advantage because he was a descendant of *Ológidí*, a prominent *Ìjẹ̀ṣà* warrior and one of the earlier *Ríṣawẹ* whose line had been conferred with the title several times. The Adedeji family wrote a petition to the *Ọwá* about their disagreement of the choice of Asogbe. They claimed that Mr. M.G Asogbe was not a descendant of *Eganfiran*, the first *Ríṣawẹ* of Ilẹ̀ṣà²³. Besides the fact that Asogbe was disclaimed to have direct descent from *Eganfiran*, public opinion in the town, particularly those in support of Adedeji claimed that 'a literate element of good character and physical ability should fill the vacant stool²⁴. On the 24th of June 1952, the *Ọwá Ajímọkọ II* and his chiefs sent their decision to the D.O through a letter stating how their candidate, Asogbe was chosen. ²⁵ They believed that Asogbe had 'a very good and stainless character' and that the *Ìfá* oracle was favourably disposed to his candidature²⁶.

It is interesting to note that this dispute was enhanced by party politics. Strongly behind the choice of M.G. Asogbe was Hon. S. Akinola, who was a member of the Western House of Assembly. ²⁷ He rallied round the various quarters to solicit support of the Action Group (A.G.) in his favour. Several letters of petition got to the D.O and the Resident about the "obnoxious activities of Hon. Akinola." ²⁸ The *Ológidí* arm of the *Ríṣawẹ* chieftaincy family warned that the activities of Hon. Akinola could 'cause unrest in Ilẹ̀ṣà town' if it was not checked. ²⁹ The manner with which he spoke at various meetings was provocative and capable of causing chaos. Inflammatory and miss-leading statements were said to be made by him and his men about the dispute. The three prominent groups in Ilẹ̀ṣà were: members of the Action Group (A.G.), the Ilẹ̀ṣà Association of Tax Payers (A.T.P.) and Native Authority (N.A.) Councilors, who were supporters of S.O. Adedeji, incited the people against public peace. ²⁹

What occasioned the choice of Asogbe by *Ọwá Ajímọkọ II*? Three reasons can be adduced. One, perhaps the *Ọwá* and his chiefs might have preferred Asogbe to Adedeji because of their ages. Asogbe was considerably elderly while Adedeji was younger. Two, Asogbe had contested for the *Ríṣawẹ* title twice: in 1933 and 1943. Asogbe being elderly obviously may never again be able to contest, let alone be chosen if he lost out. Three, it was trouble that on the two occasions that Asogbe contested, he might have spent so much in terms of

perquisites given to the *Owá* and his chiefs. Again, the popularity of Adedeji with the Government could probably have been scaring to the *Owá* who would not want his authority to either be flouted or infringed upon by an experienced 'technocrat'. This was because Adedeji had worked for the colonial administration prior to that time.

As against personal connection and internal well being, party affiliation and education had become a factor for consideration for chiefly positions in Yorubaland.³⁰ Acquisition of western education which was a major factor of social change can be said to be a major motivation of this dispute. In other words, it was a contest of cultural conservatism and modernity which was obviously going to cause friction. A large number of youths had already received considerable level of education by the late 1940s. Some of them were on the N.A. council as councilors. By about 1951, the educated councilors were very few compared to the non-literate Chiefs on the council. For this, they felt that the *Ríṣawè* chieftaincy dispute presented an opportunity for them to put their feet on the ground for an educated *Ríṣawè*.

We ought to force them (the chiefs) on some important vital issues. The *Ríṣawè* chieftaincy case is such one. Although Mr. G. Asogbe may be educated yet such is not the type we require for modern work.³¹

How was this dispute resolved? The stalemate created by the *Ríṣawè* Chieftaincy dispute at the beginning of July, 1952 made the D.O. of Iléṣà Division to advise against the installation of any individual or nominee as the *Ríṣawè* until full enquiry was made. One of the requirements for resolving chieftaincy dispute in accordance with the provision of the Appointment and Deposition of Chiefs Ordinance, (Amendment) 1945, was to set up a committee to inquire into the dispute.³² This was also in consonance with the decision of the government that every Native Authority Council should draw up a procedure for settling chieftaincy disputes. This decision was to back up the desire of the government that chieftaincy cases should be precluded from the courts. Though several Native Authority Councils heeded this directive of the government, cases were still being brought into the former courts. Apart from this, the constituted committee of enquiry was at a point operating like a formal court³³. However, appeal cases, from administrative enquiry came before Administrative Officers who were dispensing them. The *Olómù* of Òmù chieftaincy dispute is a case in point. The details of this dispute shall be considered later. The confusion that was manifest in the colonial administration's instrument of control is noticeable in the operation of a committee of enquiry like a formal court. Again, it was the intention of the government to prevent lawyers from extorting the populace under the pretext of

advocating on their behalf.

To finally resolve the *Ríṣawẹ* chieftaincy dispute in Ilẹ̀ṣà, the Resident, Western Provinces, on his part, advised that the best course to take after a number of efforts had failed was to seek the Governor's sanction to amend the Native Law and Custom in respect of the Appointment of Chiefs.³⁴ In other words, any appointment to any vacant title in the future would be by majority vote of the Native Authority Council (N.A.C). Indeed, by this time, September, 1952, the Ijẹ̀ṣà Divisional Native Authority Council (I.D.N.A.C.) had already passed a resolution to this effect.³⁵ This option would have earned them a peaceful end to this dispute but for the determination and obstinacy of the *Ọwá* Ajímọ̀kọ II and his senior chiefs to maintain traditional methods of succession to chieftaincy positions.

Public opinion in Ilẹ̀ṣà was supportive of a voting procedure. The people argued that there had been a precedent to this mode before the same was adopted to install the incumbent *Léjòkà*, *Òdolé*, and *Ọbaodò*³⁶. The chiefs' refusal to adopt the majority vote method was because it was not going to serve their interests then. The Ijẹ̀ṣà Improvement Society (I.P.S) met with the *Ọwa* and pleaded with him to accept the option of majority vote, to which he later consented. A majority of 10 votes against 1 was cast in favour of S. O. Adedeji, during the Executive Committee meeting of the (I.D.N.A.) that was held on the 22nd January, 1953³⁷. Thus, S.O. Adedeji became the *Ríṣawẹ* of Ilẹ̀ṣà after a prolonged tussle. His appointment was confirmed by the Resident on 25th April, 1953 despite series of petition by Mr. S. A. K. Ilesanmi to stop the appointment. The resolution of this dispute was accepted by the people in Ilẹ̀ṣà because of their memory of the consequence of the 1941 riots in Ilẹ̀ṣà, when the suspects were arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

***Olómù* Chieftaincy Dispute in Òmù-Ijẹ̀bú**

The Ijebu inhabit the south-central part of Yorubaland, a territory that is bounded in the North by Ibadan, in the East by Ondo, Okitipupa and the West by Egbaland. The Southern fringe of Ijebuland is open to the sea with the coastlines of Epe, Ejirin and Ikorodu. Omu-Ijebu is one of the various segments that Ijebuland is divided. The *Olomu* is the traditional ruler of Omu-Ijebu, an important chieftaincy title in Ijebuland. The demise of the late Adékíyerí II, the *Olómù* of Òmù created a vacuum that had to be filled in 1952³⁸. Immediately, the *Olúwo* of the *Ọ̀ṣùgbó* was made to act as the Regent. A serious dispute came up as a result of the vacuum.

The dispute took a dimension that required careful consideration before anyone could be appointed as the *Olómù* of Òmù. By 1954, the Adetola Rámújà family

sent a petition to the Resident of Ijèbù Province³⁹. Hitherto, the *Awùjalè* had set up a commission of enquiry in August, 1953. The commission was set up to investigate the claims of the two ruling houses: the Adékíyerí and the Rámújà houses.⁴⁰ After several sittings the commission of enquiry, which was composed of the *Orimolusi* of Ijèbù- Igbó, the *Balogún Sòyè* of Ijèbù-Òde, the *Ajalorun* of Ijèbù-Ìfè, the *Likèn* of Ibèfun came up with some findings⁴¹. The *Awùjalè* who announced the findings, made it clear that the commission of enquiry came to the conclusion that the two houses; the Rámújà and the Adékíyerí, had equal rights and claims to the stool of the *Olómù*.⁴² He further said the stool should be occupied in rotation by the two families. The two families were instructed by the *Awùjalè* to go and consider the possibility of presenting a consensus candidate for recognition within two weeks.

In order to heed the order of the *Awùjalè* of Ijèbùland, the Rámújà house that was believed to be the next house to rule, presented Mr. S.A. Soile, a retired Accountant with the Post & Telegraph (P&T) Department, to the *Òsùgbó*, who were the kingmakers. The *Awùjalè* called on the *Òsùgbó* to confirm the appointment of Mr. S. A. Soile⁴³. This they did in conformity with native law and customs. The *Oluwo* tried to make the members of the Adékíyerí house understand that it was not yet their turn. It was possible that the Adékíyerí house did not succeed because the immediate past *Olómù* was from their house. Several petitions were sent to the *Awùjalè* against the choice of Mr. S. A. Soile by several sections of the Òmù community.⁴⁴ It was clear that the *Awùjalè* had made up his mind about the choice of Mr. S. A. Soile of the Rámújà family. Every entreaty by the other house could not make the *Awùjalè* change his mind. It was not long before the Adékíyerí family engaged the services of a team of legal practitioners, who wrote directly to the Resident, Ijèbù Province. In their letter, it was noted that if the title of *Olómù* of Òmù did carry with it membership of Ijèbù Divisional Council, it would be correct then that an official enquiry by the colonial government would be necessary other than that which was constituted by the *Awùjalè*⁴⁵. It must be mentioned that the constitution of the Commission of Enquiry by the *Awùjalè* was a contravention of the Appointment and Deposition of Chiefs Ordinance. This is perhaps because the Lt. Governor of Western Region was the sole judge in case of any appointment of a chief.

To show the confusion inherent in most instruments of the control of chieftaincy matters, the D. O. tried to explain that the *Olómù* of Òmù might have been a member of the old Divisional Native Authority but the appointment of that body was revoked by paragraph 2 of the Western Region Public Notice of 1953. According to the D.O., the Divisional Native Authority appointed by paragraph 3 of the Public Notice mentioned earlier, did not include the *Olómù* of Òmù.

Despite this explanation, Adékíyerí family went to court to file their case and did inform the Resident thus:

...A legislative action had been instituted and summons served on Mr. S. A. Soile on 19/4/55 and hearing fixed for 16/5/55 at Ibadan Supreme Court, Ibadan. Notwithstanding, the situations of gross provocation on his and supporters' part is becoming worse gradually and these may lead to confusion and disorder in the town.⁴⁶

At this stage, the government realised that peace would definitely be breached if the appointment of S.A. Soile as the *Olómù*, was upheld. Hence, it became clear that the appointment of S. A. Soile be deferred until such a time that action would be completed in accordance with the Western Regional Appointment and Recognition of Chiefs Law. (*Gazette* 7 June, 1956) It was then decided that a special committee of the Ìjẹ̀bù Southern District Council be constituted to meet on the *Olómù* of Òmù chieftaincy dispute. The committee resolved that Mr. S. A. Soile, the present holder of the *Olómù* of Òmù should be suspended from the traditional office of the *Olómù* pending recognition by the Western Regional Government. The D. O. was not in support of this resolution. The *Awùjalẹ̀* too was not in support of the resolution of the committee. He rather desired that Mr. S. A. Soile be granted 'permission to continue to be a traditional member of the council and also be recognised as a native court judge.'⁴⁷ On the 13th June, 1956, the Divisional Adviser (D. A.), Ìjẹ̀bù Division, Mr. Cooper, wrote to the Provincial Adviser, Ìjẹ̀bù Province, recommending that the council be advised by the Minister of Local Government to commence payment of Mr. S. Adebayo Soile's salary as the *Olómù* of Òmù.⁴⁸

He was also to be paid arrears of his salary for the period of his suspension by the council. Earlier on, a notice had been signed by the Acting Secretary to the Premier that the Governor-in-Council had approved and recognised the appointment of S. Adebayo Soile as the *Olómù* of Òmù.⁴⁹ This notice actually settled the question of opposition to the appointment of Mr. Soile as the *Olómù*. This dispute seemed to receive 'quick' settlement, perhaps because of the promulgation of the Chiefs' Law of 1955. This law was to provide for the appointment and approval of chiefs for the determination of certain chieftaincy disputes, for the suspension and deposition of chiefs and for purposes connected therewith. This law, also provided that the Governor may by order, designate a Local Government Council in respect of any chieftaincy dispute. It must be remembered that Section 4 sub-section 1 of that Law provided that:

...the committee of a competent council ...shall make a declaration in writing stating the

customary law which regulates the selection of a person to be the holder of recognized chieftaincy.
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The resolution of the dispute did not immediately bring the desired peace at Òmù-Ìjẹ̀bù, as one Adejuwon Odubote did not stop at anything to cause trouble because Soile was the one chosen.⁵¹ Mr. Adejuwon went as far as unlawfully posing as the *Olómù* of Òmù until he was contacted by the Police. He was warned to desist from presenting himself as the *Olómù* of Òmù. It was the composition of a special committee of the Ìjẹ̀bù Southern District Council constituted in consonance with the provision of the above quoted law that made the resolution of the *Olómù* of Òmù Chieftaincy dispute relatively easier.

***Alakenne* Chieftaincy Dispute**

Ikenne town is one of the various segments in Ijebuland such as Omu-Ijebu. It is a town after Sagamu and before Odogbolu, near Ilisan Remo. It is asserted that the present Ikenne, Irolu and Emuren took-off together from Ile-Ife at an unspecified date and time, probably about 100 BC. The name Ikenne was derived from the word "*Iken*" meaning "we have plenty of *Iken*" the traditional ruler in Ikenne is known as the *Alakenne*. The *Alakenne* of Ikenne stool became vacant as a result of the demise of *Alakenne* Orenowo, on the 4th June, 1949⁵². Almost immediately two candidates began to contest for the vacant title. There are four main ruling houses in Ikenne; namely, *Gbasemo*, *Ora*, *Orogbe* and *Moko*. Two candidates were put forward; Mr. Onafowokan and Mr. Awomuti. Neither party was prepared to withdraw, hence a dispute ensued. The Kingmakers of Ikenne, with the support of the *Ifa* priest, Chief Odumosu, the *Lisa* of *Ifa* cult of Ikenne was invited by Efunnuga, the *Oliwo* of Ikenne to consult *Ifa* on the choice of Mr. G. A. Onafowokan on the 7th July, 1949⁵³. The Kingmakers held that it was Onafowokan, from *Moko* ruling House that *Ifa* had chosen and that he should be installed. On the other hand, earlier in June 1949, Messers Shonneye Awomuti (Akindoyin's elder brother) and Elijah Akinsanya sent a letter to the *Oliwo* and the *Oshugbo* members informing them of Mr. Gilbert Akindoyin Awomuti's choice by the *Gbasemo* ruling house. The *Oliwo* promptly replied that the *Oshugbo* were the only traditional kingmakers of Ikenne and that in consonance with the divination of *Ifa* oracle, Onafowokan had been "elected" the new *Alakenne*.⁵⁴

Between the 9th and 17th July 1949, Mr. Obafemi Awolowo began to campaign for support for Mr. Gilbert Awomuti.⁵⁵ The *Oshugbo* cult had already been divided over who was to be chosen. Chief Obafemi Awolowo threw his weight behind Awomuti with the strong support of the *Akarigbo*. This situation created a lot of confusion in the town. Ikenne people believed that Chief Obafemi

Awolowo had come to create confusion because of his influence with the colonial administration. The Resident, Mr. Butcher, personally visited Ikenne on two occasions. First, he came to Ikenne on the 16th and 17th August, 1949. He went there again on the 19th Sept., to take evidence from both parties to the dispute⁵⁶. To Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Resident, Mr. Butcher, was bias in his enquiry. This made him to protest Butcher's role during the process of the enquiry. He published a number of Newspaper articles maligning the Resident of complicity.

The protest of Chief Obafemi Awolowo against the Resident, Mr. Butcher, resulted in his transfer from Ìjẹ̀bú Province and Mr. H. K. Robinson replaced him in 1950⁵⁷. It is obvious that the new Resident was aware that the protest and influence that Awolowo wield was responsible for the transfer of his predecessor. With this in mind, it was a posting that required a lot of caution on the part of Mr. Robinson. During Resident Butcher's enquiry he discovered that it was the *Oshugbo* society that was the accredited traditional body to select a successive candidate to the stool. The Resident, in his investigation found out that the election of the *Ewusi* of Makun Shagamu in 1939 and the election of the *Odemo* of Ishara in 1949 were evidences that the *Oshugbo* and not the *Oliwo* alone were the kingmakers in Ìjẹ̀bú-Remo. ⁵⁸ It was also found out that the *Moko* ruling house had been resuscitated by the late *Alakenne*, Mr. Orenowo, the Chiefs and the generality of the Ikenne people. The *Alakenne* Chieftaincy dispute took a new dimension when Chief Obafemi Awolowo, on the 2nd March, 1950, declared at the Ìjẹ̀bú-Remo Native Authority Council, that he would install his own candidate on the 5th Match, 1950 ⁵⁹.

In flagrant defiance to the Resident and Chief Commissioner's "warning and ruling" that no installation should take place until the Resident had concluded his enquiry, the Chief Obafemi Awolowo's group went ahead with the support and cooperation of Mr. Efunnuga, the *Oliwo*, went ahead to install Mr. Gilbert Akindoyin Awomuti. The group went to the traditional *Iledi* of Ikenne, the installation groove. They "broke into the *Iledi* groove and forcibly entered" it and "performed the unconstitutional ceremony of installation". ⁶⁰ This was seen by the Onafowokan group as "an act which constitutes a serious crime in pre-British advent punishable by death penalty in those days." It must be noted that the flagrant abuse of tradition and custom by the Awolowo group, further rubbished any serious claim to traditional law and custom before the colonial administration. In reaction to this incidence, several petitions were sent to the government in protest to the installation of Mr. Gilbert Akindoyin Awomuti as the new *Alakenne* of Ikenne. After a close examination of Mr. Butcher's notes and discussion with many of the leading citizens of Ikenne, the Acting Resident, Mr. Robinson, came to the conclusion that the requirements of section 2(2) of

cap 12 regarding due enquiry had been properly carried out.⁶¹ In Ikenne, a decision at the earliest possible time was essential and the Acting Resident made his decision and recognised Mr. Gilbert Akindoyin Awomuti as the *Alakenne* of Ikenne. The generality of the people wanted the Governor to intervene and possibly revoke the decision of the Resident. The whole town of Ikenne was thrown into confusion, but the government was able to calm down the tension there with the involvement of the police.

Conclusion

Chieftaincy title as an important social institution in Yorubaland operated as a rallying force that binds the people together⁶². The chiefs were seen as instrument of local administration because of the crucial role they played in pre-colonial Yorubaland⁶³. It was this role that continued to increase the tendency of trouble any time there was a vacant chieftaincy position. We have seen how chieftaincy disputes caused serious problems in almost every part of Yorubaland. Several efforts at resolving chieftaincy disputes resulted in new ones. This was because of the inability of Colonial Officers to properly interpret the essence of the Appointment and Deposition of Chiefs Ordinance in the course of its implementation. By about the 1930s, chieftaincy disputes had changed dimension. Administrative measures that were put in place failed considerably, as we saw in the cases discussed above. Despite the fact that the administration tried to prevent chieftaincy cases from the court, they were eventually brought there for adjudication, except a few. The role of the police must also be mentioned as we have seen in the case of the *Olomu* of Omu, where it intervened to prevent social disorder at Omu Ijebu. Administrative measure also paid off, to resolve the *Risawe* Chieftaincy dispute, as we have seen, the Executive committee of the Ijesa Divisional Native Council that resolved to settle the contest by conducting an election between the two contestants' supporters. For the *Olowo* of Owo dispute, it was a special mediation mission that sat to resolve the dispute. This was a somewhat quasi-administrative measure taken to settle the dispute. The stature and caliber of the persons at the mediation mission was to ensure compliance after the matter was settled. The mission was headed by the *Oni* of Ife while the *Ewi* of Ado Ekiti and the *Osemawe* of Ondo were members. The provisions of the chiefs' Law that was promulgated in 1955 contributed immensely to proffering solution to the impending crises of chieftaincy contestations in Yorubaland during the period under study.

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