

**CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN BENIN MONARCHY FROM
1979-2019**

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**BEING A RESEARCH SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT
OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES FACULTY
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FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B. A) DEGREE
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CERTIFICATION

I, **Osasumwen Nicholas**, Mat. No. **ART1601158**, hereby certify that apart from references made to other people's works as duly acknowledged herein, this entire project is the product of my personal research, and has neither in part nor in whole been presented for another degree elsewhere.

Osasumwen Nicholas,

APPROVAL

We certify that this project work was completed by **Osasumwen Nicholas**, Mat. No. **ART1601158** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Bachelor of Arts (B.A) Degree of the University of Benin.

Mrs. Mary Isibor Osunde
(Project Supervisor)

.....
Signature & Date

Dr. Frank Ikponmwosa
(Ag. Head of Department)

.....
Signature & Date

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty for his mercies and protection all through my stay in University of Benin. May his name be praised.

Also, it is dedicated to my sweet mother, Mrs. Justina Osasumwen Ogboghodo. Also, to my late Grandfather, Patrick Airhuoyo Ogboghodo. This research work is also dedicated to Omo N'Oba Erediauwa *CFR* of blessed memory. The last but not the least, i want to dedicate this research work to History and International Studies ICON, late Prof. Philip Aigbona Igbafe. May your soul rest in peace sir. Amen.

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the first and only lecturer i have had a close interaction with and I am immensely grateful for your selflessness and fatherly love towards class of EMISSARY'20. Thank you sir for everything. May the good Lord bless you abundantly.

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CHAPTER ONE

Background To The Study

Introduction

This research work attempts to examine the monarchical Change and Continuity of the Benin kingdom. Historians throughout human history believe in the inevitability of change. Some people also believe that change is not mono-causal but multi-causal.¹ The concept of change and continuity is as fast as the

whole wide world; for changes are taken place in all parts and facets of the world society as arrangements, organizations, institutions and management continue to transform year in year out.²

Benin kingdom was located in the thick equatorial rain forest zone of present-day southern Nigeria with rich vegetation which supports agriculture and provides most materials for craft industries. The kingdom was probably one of the oldest, most remarkable, famous and at one time, one of the most powerful kingdoms of the forest region of West Africa.³ Pre-colonial Benin was made up of a single and powerful kingdom which was headed by the Oba (king) who was assisted by different categories of chiefs which included the palace chiefs (eghaevbo n'ogbe) and town chiefs (eghaevbo n'ore).⁴ It was one of the oldest and best known kingdoms in the south central Nigeria. Benin City, the metropolitan headquarters of former Benin kingdom, is now the administration headquarters of Edo State of Nigeria. The former Benin kingdom has also now been constituted into seven local government areas of Edo State namely; Egor, Ikpoba-Okha, Oredo, Orhionmwon, Ovia East, Ovia West and Uhumwode.⁵

The idea of change and continuity in the context of this research shows through available evidence that change, growth or development is fundamental to any group or society whether traditional or modern. However, these changes maybe be facilitated and nourished by external agencies. Changes

should therefore be viewed as belonging naturally or dawn from within and outside that society. In this regard, in the case of Benin monarchy, continuity and change here signify that some Economic and Socio-political activities have continued to exist in their pre-colonial forms despite colonial, contemporary time and other external influences that introduced significant changes in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Also Benin was one of the major kingdoms that thrived in the forest region of West Africa from about c.900 to 1897 when she was conquered by the British expeditionary forces and integrated into the protectorate of Southern Nigeria.⁶ The residence and sustenance of the kingdom and get monarchy for this long period has been attributed to several factors such as the successive line of capable and effective Oba (Kings) and her trade with the Europeans, Portuguese, Dutch and British- which enabled get to acquire arms and ammunitions for the defense and expansion of her territories. However, the vital role played by the changes and continuity of the monarchy of the Benin kingdom had not been given proper attention.⁷

In addition, Benin was also famous as a result of her powerful monarchy with the centralized system of government with in-built checks and balances go promoting healthy competition among the Political institutions which ensured enduring stability. The monarch regulated the Economic and Socio-political

activities not only for his own benefit but that of the general well-being of the people of the kingdom.⁸ In this respect, it is not unimaginable to argue that the strength of the monarchy and its lasting stability was bolstered partly but importantly, by the activities of Benin professionals and craftsmen, who ensured that the needs of the monarchy were adequately and promptly met. Although there is no doubt that some of the crafts that later constituted the guilds in Benin predated the monarchical system, various studies on Benin guilds have revealed that Benin arts or crafts grew and developed under the aegis of guilds of Craftsman. Therefore, if it is possible to ascribe any one factor for the emergence of the people of pre-colonial Benin as one of the most artistic in West Africa, it is the establishment, growth and development of the guild system.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the change and continuity of the monarchical activities of Benin Kingdom.

The objectives of this study are as follows;

1. To examine the origin of the Benin people.
2. To examine the economic and Socio-political institutions of pre-colonial Benin Kingdom before colonial rule.

3. To examine the nature, operational mode and manifestation of Benin monarchical system from pre-colonial to Contemporary time.
4. To examine the British conquest and colonization of Benin kingdom and its changes in the Political institutions of Benin Kingdom.
5. To interrogate the changes and continuity in the monarchical institutions of Benin kingdom from ancient time to Contemporary time.

Scope of study

The study covers the most interesting part of Benin history especially as it relates to the changes and Continuity in the monarchical system. The scope of this study is the period of the changes and Continuity in the monarchical institution of Benin kingdom from ancient time to Contemporary time (1979 to 2019). The focus is on the impact of colonial rule in on the monarchical instructions of the palace administration in Benin kingdom.

Research Methodology

In the course of research for this thesis, relevant materials were obtained from two source. These were primary and secondary sources.

1) Primary Sources:

Primary sources which were utilized in the course of research for this research were of two categories, archival materials and oral interview.

Materials will be consulted at the National Museum at Ring Road Benin City. Oral interviews will be conducted with the experienced individual such as opinion leaders, Palace traditional chiefs, bronze caster at Igun street and civil servants.

2) **Secondary Sources :**

Secondary sources such as text books , journals, thesis, and dissertation will be consulted in some University of Benin Library. Information obtained from these sources will help to guide and supplement the materials obtained from primary sources. These sources provided data for a historical analysis of the change and Continuity of the monarchical activities of Benin kingdom.

Literature Review

There are a lot of literature/works on Benin kingdom and the Political institutions from pre-colonial time to this Contemporary time. However, only a few works discuss the history of the changes and Continuity in the monarchical institution of Benin kingdom from ancient time to this contemporary time. Somebody such literature that focused on Benin monarchical system and the changes of colonial rule is P.A Igbafe's book titled, "*Benin Under British Administration.*"⁹ The book discussed the background of Being and then the fall of Benin which was preceded the conquest of the British in Benin and the

consolidation of British rule in Benin and also the consolidation of British administrative system and institutions in Benin. Although it did not deal well on topics regarding the development of Western education of British, it however gives a good background knowledge on events that led to the establishment of British political rule and economic system in the Benin region of pre-colonial Nigeria.¹⁰

Another relevant book for this research by Prof. Osarhiemen Benson Osadolor, titled, "Cradle of Ideas: A Compendium of Speeches and Writings of Omo N'Oba Erediawa of Great Benin". This book has the compilation of the speeches of Omo N'Oba Erediawa *CFR* during his reign as the 39th Oba of Benin. The exemplary life of Oba Erediauwa and some significant events that occurred during his reign are completely documented in this book. It emphasizes on the role and relevance of tradition institutions from pre-colonial time to this day modernization.¹¹

Another book that was researched for this work is "Edaiken N'Uselu: Centuries of Unbroken Heritage" by Egua-Edaiken Youth Association and Obazenu Joseph. This will examine the rich cultural heritage of one of the greatest kingdom in West Africa. It narrates the the evolution of primordial stages of Odionwere system to Ogoja eras, then to the Obaship era. Also from the republican to primogeniture system, the kingdom has evolved to one of the strongest and noblest form of government.¹²

Another book for this work is N.O. Omozusi's book titled, "The Benin Kingdom. A century after British invasion".¹³ This book really on the origin of Benin and the pre-colonial organization of Benin. It also went further to discuss the relationship between Benin and the British and what led to the fall of the Benin Empire. However, the aspect discussed in the book which is the most relevant to this study is the impact of the British Administration in Benin particularly the area of Western education. Although the book also did not delve into the origin of Western education in the Benin Province, it however throws light on its impact in Benin. The establishment of some schools in Benin and the rise of educated elites which gave room to several developments and among which is the introduction of paid labor in public work. As exposed by this book, Western education further absorbed the Benin nation into the Nigerian state and British as a result; the Oba (who had already acquired Western education) had to rule according to the dictates of the British as well as executing their policies. Another important book to consider is R.E Bradbury's book titled, "The Benin kingdom and the Edo speaking peoples of South-Western Nigeria."¹⁴ The relevance of this book to this study is that it gives an insight into the area or concentration in this book, that is, Benin Province. Although the main focus of this book is the pre-colonial framework or structure of what later became known as Benin Province during colonial times, it however gives a broad understanding of the existing social, political and economic structures and activities that took

place in this area as well as their boundaries.¹⁵ An understanding of this will enable us appreciate better the impact of the development of Western education in the area especially how it affected the political, social as well as economic structure and well-being of the people.

Dmitri M. Bondarenko article titled “The Benin kingdom 13th- 19th centuries) as a Megacommunity,”¹⁶. The author provides an anthropological analysis of the Socio-political system of the Benin Kingdom from coming to power of the One dynasty till the British conquest. He also reiterated the course of this system formation and its basic characteristics features are outlined. He later argued that the Benin kingdom between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries was a super complex society but not a state, as it was not based on Suprakin (territorial) Social ties and there was no professional (bureaucratic) administration in it.¹⁷

Dmitri Bondarenko article titled “Ancient Benin: Where Did the First Monarchs Come From?”¹⁸. The author argue that the Ogiso could come (and bring the monarchy as a form of supra-chiefdom political organization to Biniland) from the Yoruba town of Ife. Not Benin City, but the settlement of Udo situated on the way from Ife to Benin could well be the first capital of the country that is the seat if the founder of the Ogiso dynasty and the Benin kingdom. He further interrogate that the time of the so called “1st (Ogiso) Dynasty”- probably the early 10th – first half of 12th centuries, was one of the

most mysterious pages in Benin's history. The sources on this period are not abundant.¹⁹

Jacob U. Egharevba's book titled "A Short History of Benin,"²⁰ where he writes that many years ago, the Bonus came all the way from Egypt to find a more secured shelter in this part of the world and after a short stay in Sudan and Ile-Ife which the Benin people called "Uhe". He also examined the inter-group relationship between the Bonus and her neighbours during the pre-colonial era. The book is centered on how the ancient rulers of Benin kingdom called (Oba) led the Bonus to become one of the prosperous kingdoms in the pre-colonial era.²¹

Another work to be examined is R.E Bradbury the 'Benin and the Edo speaking people of South Western Nigeria'.²² He wrote that Benin City is called Edo by its inhabitants and in certain contexts individual from all part of the kingdom will refer to them as Oviedo (child of Edo) or Ovbioba (Oba's subject). He also writes that in contrast with all other Edo speaking areas, there are many villages in the Benin kingdom whose inhabitants have no tradition that their ancestors came from elsewhere and some informant speak of a general migration from the East and others trace everything back to Ife tendency which may simply follow from the fact that Ife is the accepted Origin of the present ruling dynasty.²³

Alan Ryder, in his book, Benin and The Europeans -1485-1897,²⁴ dwelt more on the relations between Benin Kingdom and the Europeans. According

bro him, some of the bonds between Benin and its vassals were in truth as light as air, demanding little more than a formal attitude thereafter.²⁵ Within such a system, disruption at the centre led to a loosening and a lapse in the performance of customary obligations rather than a sudden rebellion or a wholesale repudiation of link with the Benin. But the book did not treat the Impact of Europeans' social life in Benin which is this work intends to examine.

Also in this category is P.A Igbofe's work titled, 'Benin in Pre-colonial Era'.²⁶ He takes an historical analysis of the entity or state called Benin in her pre-colonial era and how Benin expanded their Kingdom before the pre-colonial era. This book also examined how the Benin expanded their Kingdom by conquering her neighbouring state before the coming of the European into Benin Kingdom. The author also took a critical analysis on her (Benin) social political life which centered on the Oba to the people who were very popular for their art work.²⁷

Another work to be examined is an article by J I Osagie titled, 'Nigeria History and Peoples of Southern Nigeria'²⁸ where he discusses the pre-colonial history and the people of Southern Nigeria. The period according to the author was when major empires like Oyo, Benin and Igbo states emerged in the area, he also discusses that Benin more than any other ethnic group has played major roles in the history of Nigeria, he also examined the socio-economic activities of the Benin Empire in the pre-colonial era.²⁹

In as much as we agree, that these contributions and views have their own merits towards understanding the change and Continuity of the people of Benin. But we must also agree that they have not been able to give a total study of the monarchical changes and continuity of the Benin kingdom. All the books, articles and theses reviewed have been able to cover only some parts of this research. Therefore, this proves to a reasonable extent that a proper study has not been carried out on the Change and continuity in the monarchical institution of Benin Kingdom from ancient time to our contemporary time. This research seeks to fill that vacuum that has been created for a long while by various scholars.





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CHAPTER TWO

TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN OF BENIN KINGDOM

Introduction

In his lecture at the University of Benin in 1982 titled “Tradition in the Service of Modern Society in the Nigerian Context”, the Omo N’Oba *Erediauwa CFR* of blessed memory quoted a statement by Winston Churchill on tradition. Sir Winston Churchill said in one of his books, “I must confess myself to be a great admirer of tradition. The longer you can look back, the farther you can look forward. This is not a philosophical or political argument- any occultist will tell you this is the sense of duty in the individual men and women...”.¹This study explores the traditions, origin and development of Benin kingdom before the 15th century. The people and kingdom of Benin thrived and had a long and glorious history and established both diplomatic and commercial contact with the Europeans particularly the Portuguese as early as the 15th century. This contact among other developments such as the emergence of charismatic and warrior Kings, the kingdom got to its peak in the period between the 15th and 17th century and expanded to far flunked areas.

Geographical Location and boundaries

The Ancient Benin was a pre-colonial state that was located in what is now Southern Nigeria. It should however not be confused with the modern day country called 'Benin' formerly Dahomey.² The name 'Edo' was given by the people of Benin Kingdom as well as their language. However, the territorial and ethnic composition varied overtime as the empire expanded and contrasted depending on the character of the ruling king. Consequently, it is difficult to determine the exact boundaries of Benin Kingdom which according to Igbafe consisted of areas which came directly under Benin political suzerainty, which some just have strong sentimental attachment and religious ties which generated an acknowledgement of the Oba's spiritual over lordship.³

However, the area we shall be referring in this study is as much smaller one bounded by Asaba and Ishan division on the East, Warri, Western Urhobo and Aboh division in the Southern and South East; Owo and Okiti-Pupa division in the North and West respectively. This according to possess a remarkable political cohesion based on kingship, an almost uniform language and culture and a long history of subordination and allegiance to the Oba.⁴

The area lies latitude 6' 12' North and longitude 5' 45' East. It is about 11.4km (73,000miles) inland from the North of Benin river which flows into the Gulf of Guinea; it is on a fairly flat terrain with a few hills to the East and to the

North-East and in some 78.64 meters above sea level.⁵ The city lies in the thick equatorial rain forest belt with rich vegetation.⁶ This geographical location was to shape profoundly, the history of Benin particularly the economy and military in terms of defense.

The origin of the people that occupied the geographical areas described above is by no means certain and could actually be said to be lost in myth and antiquity of the distant past from which survives different tradition of origin. In other words, the origin of Benin people just like their counterpart in Nigeria has not conclusively ascertain, and there have been several debates and arguments among scholars about this. Thus; Ryder concluded that... much ink has been squandered in the vexed question of the origin of the people and their rulers....

In the case of the Benin people, there is the snail shell hypothesis which tried to explain the origin of the Benin people from mythical perspective. There is also the theory that the people of Benin have been in their present location and therefore, migrated from nowhere.⁷

These theories all have some major shortcomings and lacunas and cannot explain sufficiently the origin of the people. For instance, the snail shell theory or hypothesis which claim mythical Origin cannot be sufficiently proven, nor could the theory that the people migrated from Egypt be ascertained. For of the people migrated from Egypt from where did the Egyptians migrate?. However, on the

whole, it may be that the people already settled it in Benin for a long time before the Ogiso era. But migration from different places perhaps including those from Egypt, middle belt and Ile-Ife rapidly increased the population in Benin and by the 15th and 16th century the kingdom has gotten to its peak with complex socio-political and economic organizations.

The origin of Benin Monarchy dates back to the era of Ogiso-Igodo; the first monarch of the Benin. During the Ogiso era, they employed the Odionwere system. With time different isolated villages came together to solve their communal problems which was the aggression by common enemies. This led to Edionweres of adjoining communities coming together to deliberate on important matters and provide solutions to issues of shared interest. This was how the Iko-Edionwere was instituted as a new feature of the Odionwere system. It was from here the Ogieship or Kingship evolved.⁸ This system eventually produced the first Ogiso named Ogiso Igodo who emerged from Evbuoto community, and imposed himself as Ogie in about 40BC.⁹ The age of the Edo people settlement in this area is over 6000 years. The much revered position of the Benin Monarchy tends to suggest that the people found themselves inseparable from their king makes it difficult to say who comes first; the people or the king? Thus it is believe of the Edo people that God sent them to the World along with their King. Benin Kings are therefore assumed to be born and not created. Hence, it is said in Benin;

“Aise Agbonri Oba”.¹⁰ The Ogiso dynasty which ended with Ogiso Owodo being the last of the dynasty was followed by Oba dynasty which has lasted till date.

Territorial Expansion of Benin before 15th Century

It should be noted that until 15th century, Benin empire as restricted to the core Edo speaking people dominated by powerful and influential chiefs which sometimes overshadows the person of the Oba. The 15th and 16th century introduced a wave of territorial expansion and consolidation of Benin influence. The century has been rightly described by historians as the golden age of Benin Kingdom. This is reflected and proven to be true when compared to its size and status in the period proceeding the 15th and 16th centuries.¹¹

Before the 15th century what is known as Benin Kingdom was very small. Benin Empire was a strangling collection of villages enclosed by the Oguola moat. But the dint of Ewuare's effort, Benin City into inner and outer parts.¹² It is evident therefore, that from the 15th century, the kingdom began to expand in size and influence. The kingdom Indeed owed much to its early Obas or rulers, especially those of the 15th and 16th century.

Before this century, the palace which did not have a permanent site in previous reign was constructed in the 15th and 16th century on a massive scale

covering several acres of land at its present location and turned into a behaved of activities and the political and spiritual nerve center of the vast Benin Kingdom.¹³

It should be recalled that the Portuguese first visited Benin in the 15th century before the period Benin was sank in deep pagan practices. Records states that Oba Ewedo recognizing the importance of religion as a unifying force in the Kingdom, Ewedo appointed a high priest through whom he influenced the religious belief of his people.¹⁴ They looked upon the Oba as a Demigod whose person as position was revered. Because of his promotion of religion, many historians referred to him as the “idolator”.¹⁵

From the 15th century, political conflict has degenerated the state to a situation of crisis and hostility. The magnitude of Change in the form of government subsequently carried through by Ewuare might be interpreted as evidence of a new wave of foreign influence.¹⁶ While it may not be an external invasion; there is evidence from Benin tradition to prove or demonstrate that power struggle led to conflict and crisis that wrecked damages in the state. In the end, Ewuare who also claim Ife Origin from the line of Eweka I dynasty emerged victorious.¹⁷

It would be obviously misleading to give the impression that Benin before the early 15th century was a powerful kingdom.¹⁸ Before this time, although Benin had temporarily subjugated Udo; the settlement situated about 24km to the

North-West of Benin City which was her most violent rival for many centuries,¹⁹ some version of the oral tradition suggests that Udo was probably the original former territory over land borders. Also, the dynastic crisis Ana palace intrigue also led to the exile of Ogun, the heir apparent to the throne of Benin, and his brother Uwaifiokun from Benin City. This was followed by another civil war in Benin which led to the assassination of Uwaifiokun and the ascension of Ogun as Oba Ewuare.²⁰

It is however probable to say that before the fifteenth century Benin had an organized formidable military force. Prof O.B Osadolor of the University of Benin holds the view that;

...it is doubtful If Benin had a well discipline and formidable army

In the early fifteenth century for expansionist program in the Pursuit of a foreign policy for the coercion of the other states.

What was at the disposal of the Oba was a Civic militia.

Contingent of the Ighele “ age group which were subject to military service. The contingents were grouped according to military administrative units of the village or federation of villages. The affairs of each military administrative unit of the village were by a council of elders which included the war leaders (Okakuo). The strong central control from Benin City

probably laid the foundations of the means of strengthening the

power of the Oba in mobilizing them for war. The incentives for a Benin soldier was honour and the qualities which had developed

in the warrior was a sacrifice, courage loyalty and group spirit...²¹

These qualities paved way for immediate operational commitment. European sources have rightly stated that Oba could mobilize thousands of soldiers in a matter of days. In fact, Olfert Dapper supported this view. He asserted thus;

...the king of Benin can in a single day make 20,000 men ready for war, but if need be, 180,000 and because of this , he was great influence

among all the surrounding people.... His authority stretches over many cities and

towns and villages. There is no king therefore who, in the possession of so many

many beautiful cuties and towns is his equal.²²

Infact until introduction of guns in the 15th century, tradition weapons like Spears and short swords and bow held sway. Efforts were made to reorganize a local guild of blacksmiths in the 18th century to manufacture light fire arms. But dependence on imports was still very heavy. Before the coming of guns, guilds of blacksmiths were charged with war production particularly swords and iron spearheads.

Economically, Benin exercise enormous influence over trade in the 15th and 16th centuries. The position and monopoly enjoyed by the Oba not only trade

within Benin territory, but also far flung territories especially those who have been conquered and brought under Benin control. Although the 15th and 16th century saw the increase in economic activities following the contact with the Europeans, (Portuguese). In the years of preceding the 15th century, through trade between Benin and her neighbors was in effect. It was restricted to local African communities and kingdoms. Benin economy was dependent in varying degree on agriculture, craft and trade. Trade was both internal and external. External trading between Benin and her neighbours notably the Yorubas, the Itsekiris and Nupes.²³

Slave trade across the Atlantic did not feature in Benin economic activities before the 15th century. “Benin Empire reached its zenith during the reign of Oba Ehengbuda c.1578AD the last of the warrior kings even before the empire was brought into the trade on humans.²⁴

Holistically, the political institution in Pre-colonial Benin comprised the Oba, the “Enigies” (singular-Enogie) and chiefs. While the Oba was in charge of the entire kingdom, at the district and village level, he was assisted by the “Enogies” (Dukes). Just as the titled chiefs' have different functions assigned to them. Pre-colonial Benin had two types of Enigies- the Ogie Isi or royal dukes and the Ogie- Okanaba who were non royal dukes.²⁵ While the Ogie-Isi was appointed by the Oba from among the sons of the past Oba, the second category was appointed among people who may have exhibited heroic exploit in War, or

rendered useful services to the Oba who appointed them.²⁶ It is important to note that while the area under the control of the Enogie-Isi was the village or group of villages at their demise, succession was based on hereditary patrilineal primogeniture.²⁷ The case of the Enogie-Okanaba was not so.

There were other districts titles such as the Ekhaemwen, Ohenor priest and Okaevbo or village heads. This class of administrators were either appointed or confirm their positions in accordance with the tradition of the land.²⁸ In his book, E.B Eweka on the evolution of Benin chieftaincy titles categorized the Benin chieftaincy titles into two; hereditary and non-hereditary. The first category was inherited by the eldest surviving son of their holder occasioned by death while non-hereditary titles in Benin was confirmed by the Oba. The rights and privileges were attached to those chieftaincy titles in pre-colonial Benin. For example, owners of hereditary titles upon successful completion of traditional rites gains right of succession and enjoyed the privilege of becoming members of the house of chiefs, but for the non-hereditary titles, without confirmation, such chiefs could not receive the Oba's Traditional gifts, share in title fees paid, enjoyed the share from Izakhue which was normally performed at the demise of a deceased chief and including the gifts bestowed by the Oba.²⁹

Benin pre-colonial institution thus compromise that of the Oba who was at the helm of affair, assisted at the village and district level by the offices

mentioned above. The cohesion of Benin society was ensured by this office. Like other states in Nigeria Benin had a social institutions that held the society together before the coming of colonialism. According to Agahama Omoruyi, he stated that for many years of Benin was a powerful kingdom with amazing culture but by 1897 the artistic wealth came to ruins. These social institution included marriage, witchcraft, murder, theft, and inheritance. However, it is difficult to separate in analysis social institution from political and economic institution because at some point, they collapse into each other.³⁰

Marriage custom almost the same as other Edo speaking people. Investigation reveals that in pre-colonial times, parents got suitors for their children through match making. This was against the background behaviour and the need to extend family ties, hard work and fame. The most important was the issue of virginity and circumcision. A young girl to be married went through premarital training under the guardianship of her own mother and mother-in-law. This period offered opportunity for the girl to be properly schooled in domestic duties until she was married because there was no clear-cut age for marriage. For the male, there was also, no specific age too. The institution of witchcraft and wizardry also existed too in pre-colonial Benin. This was associated with confession. Such confession was brought to the office of the Oba who was the custodian of traditions and values.³¹

Inheritance on the other hand was part of the social structure. By primogeniture, succession rights to property, hereditary titles and ritual duties passed to the eldest son. At the death of a Bini man, the eldest son performed the funeral rites or ceremony of the deceased father and it was upon this that he inherited the house traditionally known as “Igiogbe” and land cultivated by his father. Other children of the deceased (the junior sons) moved to other lands to build their own houses in attainment of full age. However, such junior son could inherit were the eldest neglected or failed to perform his duties.³² This arrangement could be noted was a restriction and oppression of persons who were not eldest children, rather it was a tradition and such persons could still acquire titles that were not hereditary.³³

Conclusion

In the aforementioned on this chapter, the origin of the Benin Kingdom was traced to the period when communities merged for the purpose of shared interest against aggression from neighbouring towns. These communities practiced a system of administration called the Odionwere system. The Edionweres saw the need to have a traditional ruler who will pilot the affairs of these communities. This was how the Ogieship/Ogiso dynasty started. Consequently, the Ogiso era ended and through the great grandson of Ogiso Owodo; Oba Eweka I started a new era called the Oba dynasty.³⁴ With time, the Kingdom of Benin started

expanding due to prosperous economy which was internal and external, and military might led acquisition of territories by conquest by Oba Ewuare I. It became an empire in the 15th century.

Furthermore, there was an evidence of economic and socio-political evolution during this Oba era. The political institution underwent a new dimension; chiefdom was established. It is either hereditary or non-hereditary. Economically, Benin was engaged in internal and external trade. Internal trade was among themselves and external trade was with the Europeans such as the Dutch, Portuguese, and British. Also, socially, there was a system of inheritance, and witchcraft and wizardry was in practice. This was the origin of Benin Kingdom from ancient times to colonial times.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MANIFESTATIONS OF BENIN

MONARCHY

The Pre-Dynastic Era

In its earliest times, Benin was administered as a conglomeration of villages. The village community was the expression of sovereignty as each village was free from any outside control of its political life.¹ A Benin village was the aggregate of households, farming groups, families and different lineage which reflected a settlement pattern of either blood tie or lineal descent. The family or extended family unit played a vital role in the conception of authority, which was manifested in the structures and processes of village administration.²

The basis of the administration structure seems to have been a social system in which the male population was ranked in two classes or grades. The first class is the Iroghae (youths), 15-30 years and Ighele (Adults), about 30 years and above depending on the individual fitness. The second class comprised the Edion (Elders) and the Edionne (the most senior four males).³ The movement from the Iroghae to the Ighele grade in the first class was by age. There were principles that guide the movement of a member of the Ighele to the Edion grade. They perform the burial

rites of as deceased parent, killing a wide animal or any other act of valour and proof of manhood normally qualifies the candidate.⁴

Philip Igbafe holds that a latter innovation made it possible to acquire this status by purchase.⁵ Once qualified, the candidate is initiated into the grade. The mentally detailed, imbecile or any make that is not able to prove his manhood was not usually allowed into the Edion grade and a member of the grade cannot be demoted.⁶

Political authority rested on the most senior member of the Edionne known as the Odionwere or Okaevbo, the other three were his deputies.⁷ Furthermore, Osariemen Benson Osadolor identifies a special feature of this Pre-Dynastic system of administration in Benin as the lack of any military idea was the age-grade. Rather, the Ighelewere the workforce responsible for implementing and executing the decisions of the community.⁸ The first expression of military idea was the move by one “Odionwere in creating Odibo-Odionwere, which was a group of reliable and conscientious assistants as private guard.”⁹ It was this group that aided the unification of the Benin village groups under the authority of a single Odionwere who became the first King of Benin.

There are indeed some indications that Benin grew out of a number of small settlements and that the village nucleic might, and have, under certain circumstances come together in groups, lineage and chiefdom; and the single

village could multiply its wards by attracting settlers as well as by the natural growth of its own population.¹⁰

There are indeed some indications that Benin City was not the only Edo settlement to advance towards urban development at a relatively early date; Udo, now only a large village, is said to have rivaled the capital during the first reigns of the present dynasty, and to have fallen into decay only after a long struggle.¹¹

Whatever may be the initial impulse towards a new form of organization, it seems clear that Benin City grew from a cluster of settlements on the site of the present town. A survey of the City walls by Graham Connah has revealed that most of them are in fact linear earthworks surround areas of bush and an earthen record of a long process of fusion of semi-dispersed communities.¹² Either from necessity, or following some foreign example, these communities evolved institutions which at once coped with the problem raised by a larger association and made possible a further expansion.

The most famous Odionwere in the Pre-Dynastic period was Igodo. The Odibo-Odionwere of Igodo was also the strongest group at the time. Osarenren Omoregie avers that “when Igodo open his mouth to speak in the mist of his peers, every other mouth will shut up. Igodo took advantage of this towering situation to change the philosophy of his ascendancy as the leader of the people.”¹³ The

legitimacy of his authority as king was the link with the Sky God. Hence he adopted the title of Ogiso, king with authority from above or the sky.¹⁴

The Origin of the Monarchy

The emergence of Kingship and the integration of a cluster of villages which latter constitute the capital of the emerging Kingdom was due to the political insight of Odionwere Igodo of Ugbeku village who was able to unit a group of villages under his leadership. His authority to “govern was now based on the basis of a new line of royal family with political power from the sky or above.”¹⁵ Igodo accepted the tradition of the Edionwere system as the foundation of his government.

Philip Igbafe support the view that the monarchical principle implied in the Ogiso rule emanated from the Odionwere system which existed before the establishment of the Benin Kingdom.¹⁶ Igodo was a product of gerontocratic political culture of the Odionwere system and credited with the establishment of the Benin Kingdom and remembered in the Benin tradition for his leadership qualities.

The institution of Edionnisen (five elders) was created by this first Ogiso. Until the creation of this political institution the Edionnene (four elders) was the main institution of governance which supported the Odionwere in the pre-Ogiso

era which existed in Benin village administrations. This means that the first Ogiso added one to the original number in an effort to build a support base for the new monarchy. The five elders were Oliha, Edohen, Ero, Ezomo and EholoN'ire. During the reign of the Ogiso Ere, the second king who succeeded Igodo declared the chieftaincy titles and positions of Oliha, Edohen, Ero and EholoN'ire became hereditary. The position of Ezomo was not made hereditary but reserved for the most powerful warrior in the kingdom, and had responsibility for the security and military matters; perhaps, the idea of a warrior chief became necessary because of the rivalry with Udo.¹⁷

The Ogiso dynasty ruled Benin till the thirteenth century A.D. The most famous Ogiso is Ogiso Ere. He was very zealous in the management of affairs of the kingdom and was a lover of peace and concord. For instance, if there was fighting or quarreling among his people a crier would be sent by him to announce to the fighters the term "Awua ne Ere" meaning "quarrelling is forbidden for Ere" and at once peace would be restored.¹⁸

Ere is seen as the greatest ruler of the Benin history, and is regarded in particular as the most important founder of royal institutions and paraphernalia. There were many improvements during the reign of Ere. He founded many villages such as Ego and Erua and the groups of craftsmen known as Owina and

Igbesanmwan. The former are the traditional carpenters and the latter the carvers in wood and ivory.

It was Ere who introduced the royal throne (ekete), the chief's rectangular still (agba), the round leather fan (ezuzu), the round box (ekpokin) made of bark and leather, the swords of authority (ada and even), beaded anklets (eguen) and collars (odigba), and a simple, undercoated form of crown. He also introduced such domestic articles as wooden plates and bowls, mortars and pestles, which were carved by the Owina and the wooden heads, carved by the Igbesanmwan, which are placed on ancestral shrines. Ere died peacefully after a successful reign.¹⁸ There were about Thirty One Ogisos which were; Ogiso Igodo (40BC-16AD), Ogiso Ere (16AD-66AD), Ogiso Orire (66AD-100AD), Ogiso Odia (100AD-385AD), Ogiso Ighido (400AD-414AD), Ogiso Evbubo (414AD-432AD), Ogiso Ogbide (432AD-447AD), Ogiso Emehe (447AD-466AD), Ogiso Ekpigho (466AD-482AD), Ogiso Akhuankhuan (482AD-494AD), Ogiso Ifeseke (494AD-508AD), Ogiso Irudia (508AD-522AD), Ogiso Orria (522AD-537AD), Ogiso Imarhan (537AD-548AD), Ogiso Etebowe (548AD-567AD), Ogiso Odion (567AD-584AD), Ogiso Emose (584AD-600AD), Ogiso Ororo (600AD-618AD), Ogiso Erebo (618AD-632AD), Ogiso Ogbomo (632AD-647AD), Ogiso Agbonzeke (647AD-665AD), Ogiso Ediae (665AD-688AD), Ogiso Orriagba (688AD-712AD), Ogiso Odoligie (712AD-768AD), Ogiso Uwa (767AD-821AD), Ogiso Eheneden (821AD-871AD), Ogiso Ukhuede (871AD-917AD), Ogiso

Oduwa (917AD-967AD), Ogiso Obioye (967AD-1012AD), Ogiso Arigho (1012AD-1059AD), and Ogiso Owodo (1059AD-1100AD). There were two administrators of the palace who were not Ogiso ; Evian and Irebor Ogiamien.¹⁹ The last of the Ogiso, Owodo misrule and cruelties and the high-handedness of his only son and heir made him unpopular. The reign of Owodo, the last Ogiso, was a long course of misrule, failure and anxiety. For instance it used to be said to him “Ogisomaminemwen e fi agba”, meaning “Ogiso never convened a meeting except in times of troubles and crisis,”²⁰ Domestic worries added to his weakness. He had numerous wives but only one bore him a son. Due to conspiracy from one of his wives, he banished his son to Ughoton in the South-West of the Kingdom, where he established himself as the founder of a new dynasty.²¹ Some time ago, Ogiso Owodo was removed and banished from the town after he killed a pregnant wife of one of the palace chief. He sought refuge at Ihinmwinrin where he died very miserably. Thereafter, the chiefs determined to have nothing to do with the Ogiso lineage.²² They adopted a republican system of government, electing one of their members to the rulership of the kingdom. This brief experimentation with republicanism was, however, complete failure. Though the new system was meant to be non-hereditary and elective, one leader attempted surreptitiously to ensure the selection of his son succeed him.²³

The chiefs, after frustrating this subversion on the part of the ruler, were unable to agree on an alternative candidate among themselves for the throne.

Describing this, Joseph Egharevba hold that “for some years after the banishment of Owodo, the last Ogiso, there was an interregnum and the following leaders of the people, Ere, Orire, Akhuankhuan, Ekpigho, Orria, Emose, Ororo, Obioye, Arigho, Evian and his son Ogiamen administered a republican form of government.”²⁴

The Oba Dynasty

There are three eras of Obaship which has existed. First, is the pre-colonial Obas which started from Oba Eweka I. The second; the colonial Obas which started from Oba Ewuare I and the third, the post colonial Obas which started from Oba Eweka II.²⁵ The origin of the Oba dynasty is connected with the Yoruba Kingdom of Ife. There are two versions of Oral traditions on the nature of this connection. They first asserts that the Administration of the republican rulers, especially that of Evian and his son Ogiamen, who was highly unsatisfactory. “Things were going from bad to worse, and the people saw that there was a great need for a capable ruler. Ambassador were therefore dispatched to Uhe (Ile-Ife) by the elders, requesting that a wise prince be sent to be their ruler.”²⁶

The prayers of the people had the desired effect and subsequently Prince Oranmiyan was sent and he took up his abode in the palace built for him at Usama by the elders and married a beautiful lady, Erinmwide, and daughter of Ogie-ego, by whom he had a son. He was brought up at Useh, “ where he won the celebrated

game of Akhue. In the excitement of winning the game, he made his first utterance “Owomika” translated “I succeeded which has been corrupted into Eweka”. Which became his name and he later ascended the throne as the first Oba of Benin Kingdom.

The second version claims that prince Ekaladerhan was banish from Benin Kingdom and he went to Ife where he became prosperous and was made the head of the community. Then he started immediately to establish some structure of kingship such as he was used to at home.²⁷ This version argues that Ogiso Ekaladerhan had bought the Kingship from Benin City to Ife and not vice versa. According to Edebiri, the kingdom of Benin antedated both those of Ife and the other Yoruba states. Air Iyare also emphasizes this theory even more strongly by saying that, at the arrival of Ekaladerhan, Ife was no more than a village without any importance, a place, whose inhabitants “were said to used to constants riots and vandalism”.²⁸

According to this version Ogiso Prince Ekaladerhan's deep and perfect knowledge of governmental organization and military logistics, magical powers and authoritative utterances, kingly bearing and princely paraphernalia soon won the hearts of the natives of Ife who do not only regarded him with wonders and awe but thought that he was directly sent to them from heaven to lead them.

He was declared the king and ruler of Uhe by the natives who looked towards him to establish a stable government and save them from the constant vandalism from their nearer neighbours. On his installation day as the first Oba Ife, Prince Ekaladerhan exclaimed to his audience in a Benin language, “Ikpomwosa! Izoduwa,” meaning “ I thank God, I have chosen the path to greatness. The last word, “Izoduwa” was polluted to “Oduduwa” by the Yorubas.²⁹ During the republican era, there was always conflict on who becomes head of governance and the people sent for their banished Prince Ekaladerhan but he could not live in Benin because he does not like the smell of the place. Before he left, he married a beautiful a lady, called Erinmwide, and a daughter of Ogisogego, by whom he had a son that because Oba Eweka, the first King of the Oba dynasty of Benin Kingdom.

A lot of innovation was made in the early epoch of the Oba dynastic in the kingdom, for instance, the reign of Ewedo marked the beginning of the consolidation of royal paramount in Benin history. The Oba ceased to be merely primus inter pares in relation to the chiefs. He became a more powerful monarch and relegated the chiefs to subordinate positions. He compelled them to remain standing in his presence instead of being seated.

The chiefs were henceforth prohibited from possessing or using the sword of state known as Ada or conferring titles to their subordinates.³⁰ To further

establish his difference from the chiefs, Oba Ewedo built an extensive new palace and instituted an elaborate system of place organization and a hierarchy of chiefs to serve the palace. The Oba became the embodiment of the tradition and culture of the people.

Describing the special position of the Oba, Philip Aigbona Igbafe holds that “the kingdom was dominated by the special position of the Oba, who was the pivot around which everything revolved and the supreme religious as well as the civil authority in the land.³¹ While R. E Bradbury asserts that “the sacred kingdom is the focal point of the Benin political system”.³²

He is the head of the Nation and his person is held sacred. He was and still is the source of customary law and spiritual head. He exercised legislative, judicial and executive powers. As a result of the position of the Oba, Benin was divided into main parts: the place of the Oba and the town, which surrounds it. The kingdom of Benin was comprised at the city and its outlying villages.

Benin City was fortified by three large moats I ditches (Iya). The first and second moats were dug by Oba Oguola about 1280 and 1290 A.D respectively as a military strategy to keep off Invaders in time of war. By the order of the Oba Oguola who was also a warrior all the important towns and villages in the kingdom copied Benin city and dug similar moats or ditches round their villages to serve as ramparts against their enemies.³³ The third moat , located in the heart

of the city was dug by Oba Ewuare I about 1460 A.D at the time the city was in the mourning over the death of Oba's two sons (Kuoboyuwa and Ezuwarha), they had poisoned each other and died on the same day.³⁴

The social organization of Benin during the pre-colonial years has been noted to be dominated by the special position occupied by the Oba, who had the expression of separating his place of settlement or palace (Eguae Oba) and those who were dependent on him on connected to him by special ties from the rest of the town and people.³⁵

The Oba was by tradition the front of honour and giver of titles, his position being surrounded by an aura of sacrosanctity on account of his priestly function and as a representative of the long line of ancestors who had held the reins of power over the land before him.³⁶ The early non-formal government in Benin before the emergence of Ogiso dynasty was the rule of elders with the “Odionwere” or “Okaevbo”, as the highest political authority in the village. This Pre-Dynastic development was known as gerontocracy.

The Benin society was classified into two distinct classes, the nobility (Adesotu) and the commoners (Ivbiotu). The nobility were organized into three groups of titles. These were the Uzama, the Eghaevbo N' Ogbe (palace chiefs) and Eghaevbo N' Ore (town chiefs).³⁷ The Uzamawere is the highest ranking state officials in the kingdom and formed a distinct branch of government. They were

initially six in number; the Oliha, Edohen, Ezomo, Ero, Eholor and Oloton. Oba Ewuare later added Edaiken (crown prince) to their number. The Uzama were heads of different quarters and villages within and outside the City.³⁸



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CHAPTER FOUR
CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN MONARCHICAL RULE IN BENIN
FROM 1979-2019

Introduction

This research explores the economic and socio-political institutions in the post colonial Oba era which started from Oba Eweka II.¹ There is one inevitable thing that keeps facilitating development in the world ‘Change’. A lot of African societies such as the Great Benin Kingdom is also a victim of it. The emergence of events such as Revolution, colonization and globalization in Contemporary time had facilitated the Change and Continuity of the economic and Socio-political institutions that existed in Benin kingdom from 1979 to 2019.² Benin Kingdom is traced to the present day Benin City, which has a unique economic and socio-political institutions that centered on the monarchy of Benin Kingdom. According to Igbafe in 1974, ”the Oba was the pivot around which the Socio-political system revolve”.³ Thus, Change and Continuity of the monarchical activities of Benin Kingdom are still very sacrosanct in Contemporary Benin City to the extent that the views and instructions from the palace administration are being obeyed and respected with total loyalty without questions.⁴ It is believed till today they are sacred extra ordinary institutions.

However, it should be noted that Oba Akenzua II of blessed memory cannot be exempted because he was a product of Westernization during his reign

from 1933 to 1978 . The change in economic and socio-political institutions started during his reign as an Oba.⁵ However, the political power of the Oba during this period was undermined by the influence of British Colonial rule which was restored in 1914 by the British due to the deteriorating nature of the kingdom. After the British Invasion of 1897 in Benin Kingdom, there was political evolution in Benin from the reign of Oba Eweka II and Oba Akenzua II who were immediate Benin monarchs after the invasion, changed the absolute status of Benin monarchy to a constitutional monarchy, which saw them as mere ceremonial heads of the kingdom.⁶ Furthermore, Oba Akenzua II also championed the creation of the Mid-West Region in 1962 and he established the Benin national museum in 1973.⁷ Also, there was evidence of traditional rulers taking part in Political affairs in their respective region.⁸ Oba Akenzua II started the motion for the repatriation of the looted Benin artifacts. The British government in 1937, in appreciation of his services to his people, saw it fit to return to Oba Akenzua II some of the royal regalia removed during the reign of his grandfather (Oba Ovonramwen) in 1897. Some years later, in 1945, the British Government awarded him the CMG again for his services to his people.⁹ He also promoted education during his reign from 1930s, he was later appointed the Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University in 1966 and later awarded honorary Doctor of laws of the University of Benin in 1972.¹⁰ However, it should be understood that these development started in the second Oba dynasty, Oba Eweka

II in post-colonial times. The establishment and power of the Federal, State and Local government reduced the influence and power of the Benin monarchy. These changes in economic and socio-political institutions kicked off during this period of time in Benin history.

The Significance of Palace Administration in Pre-Colonial Benin

According to Winston Churchill in one of his quotes in his books, “I must confess myself to be a great admirer of tradition. The longer you can look back, the farther you can look forward. This is not philosophical or political argument—any occultist will tell you this is true. The wider the span, the longer the continuity, the greater is the sense of duty in individual men and women...”¹¹

First of all we need to understand the traditional institutions from the administrative heads of the palace from pre-colonial to post-colonial time. According to Omo N'Oba Erediauwa *CFR*, of blessed memory in one of his lectures at the University of Ibadan titled “The Role of Traditional Rulers in the Government of Nigeria” examined the position of traditional rulers in pre-colonial times. Whether monarchical or gerontocratic, he divided the functions and institutions into five. Firstly, *The Kingly or Presidential* functions are most evident in headships, which are more monarchical than segmentary (or gerontocratic) in nature. They are in charge of bestowing chieftaincy titles, which, occurs, for instance, in the traditional system of Benin Kingdom. Secondly, *The Religious or Priestly* functions constitute a vital part of the traditional role. They

have the ability to control or call upon divine or supernatural forces, which, in the past is the source of Traditional rulers source of power and authority.¹² it is either the title holder (king) sacred or divine, or he is the chief priest or proprietor of the major deities in his area of authority. He ensures the general well-being of the people. These religious duties include the fixing of dates for various festivals, which form an important part of the life of the people, e.g. the new yam and new years festivals. Thirdly, *The legislative* functions include in the making of new laws and regulations, normally with the consent of a traditional council.¹³ The fourth, *Administrative and Executive* function headings are given the duty of maintaining law and order, acting as chief custodian of communal lands. The fifth, *Judicial* functions of the headship is to play the role as an acting judicial authority and chief arbitrator in minor disputes.¹⁴ These were the role and institutions of traditional rulers in pre-colonial.

Change and continuity in Monarchical rule in Benin Kingdom from 1979-2019

With the constitutional development and its impact on Benin monarchy in post colonial time, Benin palace administration has fall short of its economic and socio-political powers which was now vested on the constitutional government of Nigeria.¹⁵ In other words, all the economic and socio-political activities that was carried in Benin in the post-colonial time was subjected to the government of the state of which the palace play a mere ceremonial role.¹⁶ However, this palace

administrators have been relevant in both economic and socio-political aspect in contemporary Nigeria, and Benin in particular.¹⁷

There are two Benin monarchs we will look at during this period of study which is His Royal Majesty Omo N'Oba Erediauwa *CFR*, (1979-2016) of blessed memory and, His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba Ewuare II Ogidigan (2016 till date). Thus, we will closely examine the economic and socio-political institutions and activities during monarchical rule in Benin from 1979 to 2019.

Politically, Omo N'Oba Erediauwa *CFR* is a pacifist and a father to all. During his reign, he by all means assisted the state government from 1979 to 2016 in making sure that there is peace in;

- i. Benin Kingdom that is within Benin-City.
- ii. Edo state

As a monarch, the Oba, in his capacity can control and oversee the affairs in the Benin sphere due to what is demanded by customs and traditions. While at the state level, his power is limited due to the constitutional development in the country. Also, the monarch (Oba) has contributed immensely to the dispensation of Justice between warring communities within the kingdom e.g. Land disputes, boundary disputes and making sure that the ascension to thrones in dukedoms across the Kingdom are peacefully done.¹⁸ In addition to that, the Oba's subjects consult him about family feuds and community disputes. The inertia of the Nigerian justice system – the average length of a court case is four to 10 years –

turns the relatively quick arbitration by traditional rulers into a welcome alternative form of justice. That explains part of the Oba's popularity in the modern Benin City society. Their function is not to give the conflict a chance to escalate into any hostility. Unfortunately, land conflicts are still often in rural areas. In this situation, the rulers try to be the guarantors of peace and solve the disputes in the most peaceful way. Although not a politician, Oba Erediauwa was known for his political sagacity. He has acted as a peacemaker and mediator between politicians, religious leaders and other royal families from other parts of Nigeria. For example, Oba Erediauwa intervened in a dispute between Abia state governor Orji Uzor and Chief Tony Anenih who was the chairman of the Board of Trustees of people's Democratic party, and the Oba resolved another dispute involving Anenih and former Edo State governor Lucky Igbinedion .¹⁹

Furthermore, Oba Erediauwa was highly respected so his words were law in Benin Kingdom, and he exercised power within and outside the state. Consequently, he also put pressure on federal government to fix roads such as the Benin-Lagos road, public markets and schools.²⁰ Another political activity under his reign was that he fought for the return of Benin Artifacts stolen by the British in 1897. On June 22, 2014 his agitation paid off when he received two bronze artifacts looted by the British from Dr. Andre Walker, the great grandson of Captain Philip Walker. ²¹ Under the constitutional functions, the palace administration provides royal presence for local government chairman, governors,

president for their events. Despite the relevance of constitutional leaders, the palace administrators are then respected and seen as a royal father to the constitutional personnel especially on national events such as independent celebration, marriage anniversary, birthday and other official programme.²²

Presently, Oba Ewuare II upon his ascension to the throne introduced some remarkable policies that has played a viable role in the peaceful co-existence of the people within the Kingdom, and the general socio development of the Kingdom. For example, the banishment of Community Development Association (CDA) in the Kingdom.²³ Edo State Governor Godwin Obaseki has signed into law a bill prohibiting forceful and illegal occupation of landed property by Community Development Associations (CDAs) in Edo. He later proceeded to the palace of the Oba of Benin, Oba Ewuare II, to present a copy of the law to him; presenting the bill to the governor for his signature, the Speaker of the Edo House of Assembly, Justin Okonoboh, said the new law was not only about prohibiting CDAs activities in the state, but also about prohibiting forceful entry into people's landed property and protecting widows' rights to their husbands' property. Oba Ewuare II, in his coronation speech, had decried the land grabbing that had characterised the CDAs, which had also affected land acquisition and development by citizens and investors in the state. He then called for the move to scrap out their activities in the state. The governor, while he met with the Oba, said the bill was historical and would make the state more receptive

to investors and set it on course for more development. The governor said “My administration believes that the way to sustainable development is to unleash and nurture our productive energy and that of investors. Investment will not thrive in a lawless environment, it is a thing of pride that we signed this bill into law. ” Obaseki also commended the Oba for his support in making the law a success, saying: “Our land tenure system before and during the colonial era was rated as the best, but it had been turned around by some nefarious activities of CDAs. It was therefore a thing of joy during your coronation that you undertook the task to pull down the CDA structure.” He, therefore, urged the Chief Judge of the state and security agencies to support implementation of law in the state, adding that a task force chaired by a retired Inspector-General of Police, Solomon Arase, had been constituted to drive the enforcement of the law and supervise all matters related to the law.²⁴

Also, he assisted the federal, state and the foreign government on the successful campaign against human trafficking, illegal migration, child labour, and prostitution which has no small measure redress the name and reputation of the Benin people. Oba Ewuare II laid a curse on anybody from Benin that will be involved in these acts.²⁵

The palace monarch is seen as a symbol of royalty that must be respected and reverence, this is the reason why politicians during campaign usually visit the palace administration (palace) for spiritual blessings and a sign of respect that

they are the fathers of their government.²⁶ Also, Benin monarchs has often given advice to modern politicians in such questions as economic policy, security, culture and customs, and general well being of the citizens. Because of long experience of the dynasties, the monarchs and kings often has the ability to give wise advice in many questions related to the ruling.²⁷ Every traditional leaders such as the Benin monarchs builds his relationships with people on the basis of traditions that were developed for centuries. This experience sometimes is very helpful for modern politicians.²⁸ As it turned out this role is very important for the development of democracy in the country. Outstanding members of society helps to support moral directions in the society, often traditional leaders are considered role models for the community.²⁹

The Oba of Benin Kingdom is impartial and incorruptible that is why cases are being taken to Eguae which is the palace customary court. It is very quick and cheaper unlike constitutional courts in Nigeria that take years and money to process. The verdict of the Oba is final and irreversible in any other traditional court but not in the case of courts that are under the constitution.³⁰ As a lawyer, Aigbe explains how the Oba's authority relates to Nigerian law. "In our legal system we recognise traditional law, as long as it is not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience." Simply put: the constitution recognises customary law, and as long as he remains within the boundaries of the law, the Oba's voice still counts for something. He can mediate, but not adjudicate.³¹

It also should be noted that the Odionwere system is still very practicable in communities today. The installation of Odionwere (community elder) is no longer conflictual which in most cases are escalated by CDAs chairmen who appoint the Odionwere themselves. The banishment of CDAs has guaranteed peaceful installation of Odionwere in communities. But now, we have gone back to the age of once it is your turn to be the Odionwere, nobody will stop you. You don't even need to ask the oracle who should be the Odionwere because it is outlined in the culture and custom of our people how it should be; we all know our age groups.³² It is also evident that the Oba Ewuare II has given back community markets to Odionweres. It should be noted that the wives of chairmen were responsible for the markets in Benin Kingdom. However, the Oba traditionally gave that responsibility to the community elders.³³

In terms of economics, despite the emergence of Constitutional government in Benin, the palace administration still has economic relevance especially as it relate to community economic institutions. The Oredo local government carries out the government taxation and other economic and commercial regulation within Emu community.³⁴ In fact special traditional artifact are sometime captured as tourist attraction for revenue generation by the local government. Also, the Oba of Benin carry out certain economic functions such as the leasing out of community lands to private institutions and organization, and to indigenes as well.³⁵ The palace administration in Benin also help in promoting

and generating revenue for government through community (traditional) markets, annual festivals, and other traditional events/institutions that was created initially by the throne in pre-colonial time. The Benin palace administrators encourage the constitutionality of government in our post- colonial time. This can be attributed to the meeting that was held by various palace administrators who also call on local government officials, state government and federal government to look into the present constitution and proffer more ways on how the palace administrators can be effectively involved in the constitutional government of our present Nigeria.³⁶

Another important economic institution of Benin monarchy is the revenue generated through festivals and historical artifact of the community which in most time used as tourist and Africa legacy in Nigeria. For example, in 2013 CNN news did a documentary on the historical artifact and traditional legacy of Benin culture and custom, during the interview the CNN journalist could not interview the personnel from the local head quarter in Oredo, it the palace administration that provided all the documentary information used for the programme. This promoted and generated the revenue for the palace of Benin Kingdom.³⁷

Another major economic relevance of Benin palace in post-colonial is the revenue they generated from conflict resolution, land development, land dispute, marital dispute, widow hood dispute and witch-craft dispute.³⁸ Under land development, the palace administrator collects certain levies from those who want

to build their house and office complex. This levy is tagged community development levy” which covered numbering of the house, connecting of light and other land ownership levy.³⁹ The palace administration in Oredo today has helped government in protecting the cultural heritage which serves as tourist activities thereby creating revenue for government. In the time of independent Nigeria, the role of traditional rulers in Benin has become even more evolved. Traditional rulers are still highly respected in many communities and states and have considerable economic and political influence in the country although they have no formal power in the democratic structure.⁴⁰ The rulers play a significant role in the communication between people and state government. Order and peace are the vital conditions for the economic development of any country. Government administration relies on local traditional leaders who can support order and peace in their domains. He also set up a seven-man committee for the purpose of ensuring that agricultural produce are sold at low prices in a market to hold only on Sundays and warned against rich men hijacking the process by buying up the produce and reselling them.⁴¹

In terms of social, as it turned out this role is very important for the development of democracy in the country. Outstanding members of society helps to support moral directions in the society, often traditional leaders such as Benin monarchs who are respected within and outside the country are considered role models for the community. It plays an essential role in the formation of

communities of good citizens. Often local traditional rulers are considered a spiritual leaders. They are the keepers of traditional religions and customs. This is a very important role in the time of globalization and in the process forgetting traditions.⁴²

Oba Ewuare II, ascension to the throne, also employ other viable and efficient institutions such as the Oba Ewuare II foundation for scholarship to the indigenous people of Benin and to an extent to non Binis as well. On Oba Ewuare II's welfare programs, the palace chief said, "Oba Ewuare II Foundation has given scholarships to several people, children, not just indigenes, but also people from outside Benin. We have two people from northern Nigeria who have benefitted. We are grateful to God for giving us Oba Ewuare II,"⁴³ Other initiatives was put in place to promote and preserve the history, heritage and culture of the Benin people. For example, the monarch, Oba Erediauwa tried to revive the traditional norms and culture of Benin major annual festivals such as Igue festival and the Guild system that spoke volume and contributed immensely to the expansion, and the economic prowess of the Kingdom before the invasion of the Benin Kingdom by the British in 1897.⁴⁴ Presently, the annual Igue festival is one of the biggest festivals on Nigeria's calendar of high profile festivals and is held in high esteem by Edo people all over the world because of its significance. Oba Ewuare II has called on all Edo sons and daughters in Diaspora to mobilise themselves to actively participate in the Annual Igue Festival in Benin Kingdom. While urging

them to continue to promote the rich culture and tradition of Benin Kingdom, the Omo N’Oba said at the appropriate time he would visit Europe, as part of his post-Coronation tour, and enjoined them to be prepared to receive him.⁴⁵

The Benin monarch told them to key into the vision of the palace, especially the establishment of Oba Ewuare II Satellite Town in Uhumwode Local Government Area, which the Oba said was meant to create jobs and development. He advised them to woo international investors to help develop the Satellite Town which has provisions for schools, hospital, recreational center, market, among other facilities.⁴⁶ As part of the activities to mark the anniversary, Oba Ewuare inaugurated the Committee for the Oba Erediauwa annual lecture series in memory of his father, Oba Erediauwa. Members of the committee are Mr. Leemon Ikpea, Prof. Benson Osadolor, Austin Alegeh (SAN) Chief Oseni Elamah and Prince Aghatise Erediauwa among others.⁴⁷ In other ways the monarchy does appear to affect society positively. The high degree of education and development of the royal family – the late Oba attended Cambridge University, his son the crown prince was an ambassador in several countries including Sweden and Angola – serves as an example to the Bini, who are known in Nigeria for their thirst for book learning and high levels of formal education.⁴⁸ “His emphasis on the speaking of the Benin language, emphasis on peace and harmony which are the ethos of the Benin man is commendable. “His many travels did not impede his understanding of the Benin culture and tradition; it has rather embellished his

understanding and getting our culture properly repositioned”.⁴⁹ Also, a school was established in the palace for the promotion of Benin of culture and preservation of the history.⁵⁰

During the time of Oba Erediauwa, the gate of the Benin Royal palace were opened to Media houses. The Benin monarch today are still media friendly which normalised communication with the Oba’s subjects through quarterly press conference are held in the palace by the invitation of the Benin traditional council. Omo N’Oba Erediauwa of blessed memory and Omo N’Oba Ewuare II Ogidigan , through media increased fame and engagement of the Benin Royal family in Nigeria within Benin City.⁵¹

Although, media houses has been heavily criticised for their sheer ignorance on Benin traditions especially during the ‘White chalk had broken’. According to Benin tradition, it is a taboo to use such term as ‘Deceased’, ‘Dead’, and ‘Late’. The position of an Oba in the hearts of a true bini person is sacrosanct. The Oba is not a person; but an institution, a god king who has taken physical human royalty and crown. The proper thing to say is “Oto ri orhue” or “the white chalk had broken”.⁵²

Furthermore, the Edaiken N’Urelu (crown prince) will ascend the throne after he has undergo several traditional ceremonies. A major ceremony to the heir apparent to the Benin throne which is initiated by the Royal palace chamber of Iwebo in conformity with the Bini custom⁵³

Conclusion

Base on the analysis above, Oba Erediauwa pointed out five traditional functions and institutions in pre-colonial time which is still very evident in today's Benin monarchy irrespective of the constitutional development and evolution since the colonial time. For example the primogeniture tradition and gerontocracy is still practiced In this post-colonial time, it is true that political and constitutional development has reduced and limited the power of the Oba in State and National level, but it is also true that the Benin monarchs from 1979 to 2019 has played a significant and vital role in the development of Nigeria. They used their monarchical positions and traditional institutions; economic and socio-political institutions to assist the government in ensuring and promoting progress and peace in both federal and state level. Although, there are changes in the Benin monarchical system which at first, is now constitutional not absolute, also they are not completely autonomous even in communal level. Also, the cultural heritage and traditions are not completely embraced by all Binis who claim to be modern.

However, for a society to understand themselves and have a common identity, they should understand their culture and roots. That is why Benin monarchs are highly respected by his people and outside Nigeria due to their remarkable achievement, selflessness, impartiality and non partisan in politics. There is call for Nigerian government to emulate Benin monarchs (Obas).

Irrespective of the short comings and changes, the Benin monarchy will still retain her status as one of the most unique monarchy in the world.



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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Therefore, base on the research and analysis carried out in the previous chapters, it is safe to assert that the Origin and traditions of the Benin Kingdom is traced down to pre-dynastic period in the form of gerontocracy before evolving to the first and second dynasty in Benin history called the Ogiso and Oba dynasty. Also it should be noted that during this pre-colonial time; there were some traditional institutions and activities that were embedded and centered on Benin monarchy which are still evident today in post-colonial Benin Kingdom. The succession to the throne of Benin is still base on primogeniture, the Odionwere system is still very practiced, the Oba of Benin is still regarded as the religious (spiritual) and political head of Benin Kingdom. He is also responsible for giving out of chieftaincy titles in Benin. The five functions of traditional institutions on economic and socio-political functions are still very much practiced in Benin Kingdom.

However, the emergence of revolution, colonization and globalization in post-colonial Nigeria has changed the socio-political status of Benin Monarchy from Absolute to constitutional. The power and influence of the Benin monarchy (Oba) has being reduced to some level (state and federal) within Nigeria. The constitution only grant them that autonomy in their jurisdiction which is Benin City. Irrespective of this, the throne has collectively work with the government in

ensuring progress and peace in Edo state and to Nigeria at large. Thus, traditions is posited as primitive and hindrance to modernity but ironically, traditions has led to development, using the Benin monarchical system as a case study.

Government should work with Traditional rulers since they are closer to the people and they are more loyal and devoted to him. No wonder Winston Churchill in one of his quotes in his book supported traditions. Benin monarchy in this research is one of the most respected in the world due to the nature of primogeniture and, its socio-political and economic institutions which has led to the development of post-colonial Nigeria.





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S/N	NAME	AG E	OCCUPATION	PLACE OF INTERVIEW	DATE OF INTERVIEW
1.	Bamidele Ayadi	50	Traditional Palace Chief	Joromi, Benin-City, Edo State	20/07/21
2.	Daniel Orobator	55	Historian, Lecturer at the University of Benin	UNIBEN	19/07/21
3.	Eghosa Omoruyi	54	Traditional Chief	Okoghohon Village	26/02/21
4.	Elizabeth Owakina	74	Herb Doctor	Ehor village	28/02/21
5.	Itohan Ferdinand Iguma	25	Enogie of NUBS, Entrepreneur	Ekosodin	20/07/21
6.	Justina Osasumwen Ogboghodo	47	Trader	Evbuotubu Market	21/07/21
7.	Monday Osasumwen Ogboghodo	63	Business Man	Ringroad	24/07/21
8.	Obanor Igieva	67	Traditional	Ere, Benin-City, Edo	21/05/21

			Chief	State	
9.	Solomon Nomayo Okungbowa	73	Retired Civil Servant	Benin-City	26/02/21
10.	Steven Eghobamien	26	Entrepreneur	Ekosodin	22/07/21
11.	Taiwo Osahu Endurance	25	Entrepreneur, Palace Art performer	Uselu	20/5/21

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