

**THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN PRE-COLONIAL BENIN
KINGDOM: A CASE STUDY OF QUEEN IDIA**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
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CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this research work to the best of our knowledge was carried out by **JENNIFER IYONAWAN OSAZEMWINDE** in the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

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Ag. Head of Department

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Date: _____

DEDICATION

This project is dedicate to Almighty God, the creator of Heaven and Earth who made it possible for me to successfully complete this work and for the knowledge and understanding he gave me throughout the cause of my academic pursuit in the University of Benin.

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Most importantly I wish to appreciate parents Mrs. Grace Osazemwinde for your immense supports and prayers. By God's grace the time of harvest will be sweet for us all. I want to say thank you all for giving me this life.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The study of the place of women in the socio-political and economic life of the society from the early period to the present has aroused a wide range of interests amongst scholars and writers in recent times. Also, the position of women in the society in relation to men and the subordination, oppression and marginalization of women has attracted the attention of scholars, activists, feminists, and development workers for a very long time, and it is of my opinion that this upsurge is as a result of the awareness created by the movement known as Feminism.¹ A great deal of emphasis has been placed on the men folk neglecting the fact that women are the inherent part of our society and they cannot be neglected due to their less power.² It is against this backdrop, this study examines the influence of women in the politics of pre-colonial Benin kingdom in particular focus to Queen Idia.

Leaders of polities tended to dedicate their lives, make and implement strategies and policies for the betterment of their state. The means of achieving these vary from one leader to another. The end result is a powerful, secure and self-sufficient state. History presents us with a plethora of such political leader, women who dedicated their lives for their nation, According to Attoe, the modern city of Zaria, was founded in the first half of the 16th century by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku, she also had a daughter called Amina who subsequently succeeded her as queen.³ Queen Amina according to many

literatures as well as oral accounts was well known as a great and powerful warrior. It is said that she went to wars and in many cases won. Attoe in his paper notes that Queen Amina amongst other things built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and also extended the boundaries to her territory beyond Bauchi. In all, she turned Zaria into not just an ordinary powerful city but also a prominent commercial centre.⁴ In recognition for her achievements, the people of Kano and Kaduna the neighbouring territories paid tribute to her. Moremi on the other hand, was also a powerful woman who according to oral tradition allowed herself to be captured by their enemies in order to gain information so as to defeat them. Accounts show that these women were independently powerful and they are still looked upon as sources of inspiration for women today.⁵

In other kingdoms also, women participated in decision making by forming part of the King's cabinet either as the ladies of the palace or as priestesses or diviners who advised the king. In general, one can say that women in this era were an integral part of the political set up of their communities, although they assumed responsibilities different from those of men; in most cases these responsibilities were complementary to that of the men.⁶

Idia was the mother of Oba Esigie (r.1504–1550c.e.) of the old Benin Empire. She lived between the late 15th and early 16th century in Benin, south-south, Nigeria. She was an energetic, formidable, strategic and military warrior at the time. She fought before and during the reign of Oba Esigie her son. At the end of the 15th century B.C., Oba Ozolua,

the preceding king died and left the throne for two powerful sons who were Esigie and Arhuan, the two sons engaged in the dispute of succession.⁷ Esigie was based in Benin while Arhuan was located in Udo an important city which was about twenty miles away from Benin. For the purpose of ensuring that her son, Esigie secured the throne and became the 16th Oba of the Benin Empire, Idia raised an army for Esigie.⁸ Consequently, this power tussle between the sons caused chaos in the kingdom of Benin and undermined the place of the Benin as the political and cultural centre of the kingdom. Esigie eventually defeated his brother and became the next Oba. He succeeded through the help of Idia.⁹

This research seeks to address under representation and marginalization of women's contributions in historical narrative and the limited understanding of their actual role in shaping political development. Much of African historiography has traditionally emphasized male-dominated narratives, often sidelining the contributions of women. This creates a skewed understanding of leadership and governance in traditional societies. Although Queen Idia's legacy has been preserved through art and oral tradition, there is still a lack of comprehensive academic attention on her political influence and the broader impact of women in pre-colonial Benin politics. It also seek to address this gap by examining how Queen Idia influenced governance, military strategy, and institutional development in the Benin Kingdom, thereby contributing to a more balanced and inclusive historical narrative.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of women and politics in pre-colonial Benin kingdom with reference to Queen Idia. The specific objectives of this research are:

1. To examine the political structure of the pre-colonial Benin kingdom
2. To examine the political roles of women in the pre-colonial Benin Kingdom.
3. To analyze the life and influence of Queen Idia in governance and warfare.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the pre-colonial era of the Benin Kingdom, It centers on Queen Idia as a case study, examining her role in political, military, and spiritual spheres. The research will also briefly cover the pre-colonial Benin (15th-17th century). Limitations may include the availability of written records, as much of the history was preserved through oral tradition.

Research Methodology

This research work adopted historical research methodology. Therefore primary and secondary data were used in gathering, analyzing and interpreting data to achieve the aim and objective of the research work.

Primary Sources: where collected from archival documents and oral interviews from local historians and custodians in Benin City and those at the Oba palace in Benin city.

Secondary Sources: Secondary sources were also consulted during this research and they include: textbooks, journals, as well as other documented materials that helped to

develop this work and supplemented the information obtained from the primary source, which were gotten from both private and public libraries such as John Harris Library, and other personal libraries. Also, information relevant to this research was gotten from the internet.

Literature Review

Ebuka-Onuoha P. I. article titled “*Queen Iden and the Benin Kingdom*,”¹⁰ examines the life of Iden, her prowess, personality, strength and the unusual sacrifice she made to keep the Benin nation together. It tries to give Iden her rightful place in the history of Benin kingdom by focusing on her roles in saving the nation from collapse and in the establishment of the system of primogeniture. The paper concludes that present day Nigerian women, especially those in politics and wives of political leaders should take a cue from the contributions and sacrifices of Iden to the Benin Kingdom. It contends that Nigeria will be a better nation if wives of political leaders can forget their selfish interests and be ready to make significant sacrifices for the nation like Iden did in her era. The nation has continued to suffer from the excesses of greedy women in politics who have become a source of shame to womanhood and the entire nation. He posits that the ancient Benin kingdom exemplified a sophisticated socio-political culture and a peculiar system of government with an intimidating aura of monarchy, coupled with a distinct artistic triumph. The Benin Kingdom according R.E Bradbury (1986) was the largest and longest lived kingdom among the West African forest states. Its institution of monarchy had been sustained for several centuries because of its peculiar rule of primogeniture. The

role of women in the sustainance and maintenance of Benin's unique political system cannot be overemphasized. Queen Iden is arguably the most remarkable woman in the remembered history of Benin City. She represents love and loyalty. Her personality could be described as, courageous, selflessness, humble and patient.¹¹

Monica O. Aneni, article titled "*Politics and Power in the Courts of Two Queens: Cleopatra of Egypt and Idia of the Old Benin Kingdom,*"¹² examines the character, personality, intrigues involved in the power and politics of two different female principalities who existed and reigned in two distinct epochs. Queen Cleopatra of Egypt exhibited skills which surpassed those of her predecessors and secured her position as Pharaoh in Egypt. Queen Idia of the old Benin Kingdom was a powerful political figure who, during her incumbency, sustained her son, Oba Esigie on the throne. The author contends that both female leaders believed in their capacity to rule, therefore, they exuded strong political strategies for the greater good of their interest. The author also discovers that both queens who were indeed brave utilized what they possessed to achieve what they desired. Consequently, Queen Cleopatra won the support and love of Julius Caesar first and then Mark Anthony. The title of Iyioba, (King's mother) was bestowed on Queen Idia by her son the Oba (king) of Benin. Studies that may interrogate political strategies of some leaders in both ancient Rome and Benin Empire are recommended.¹³

In Uyilawa Usuanlele work titled "*Women Don't Go To War. Except Idia Mother of Oba Esigie,*"¹⁴ Women and War in the Culture and History of Benin Kingdom,"

asserts that global survey war and the military have shown the universal absence of large-scale involvement of women with the exception of Dahomey Kingdom in west Africa which had all female regiments. However, a few women are known to have participated in military affairs and wars in exceptional cases and were motivated either by the need to safeguard their personal interest or inspired by some religious beliefs and powers. The Benin Kingdom in West Africa was no exception to this general universal trend and the people even memorialized it in the song and proverb which says that “Okhuo ghi yo okuo, sokpan idia n Iye Esigie n’Oba. “Women don’t go to war, except Idia mother of Oba Esigie.”¹⁵

Jacob U. Egharevba’s (1876) book titled *A Short History of Benin*¹⁶ where he writes that many years ago, the Binis 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 Binis and her neighbours during the pre-colonial era. The book is centered on how the ancient rulers of Benin kingdom called (Oba) led the Binis to become one of the prosperous kingdoms in the pre-colonial era.¹⁷

Also in this category is P. A. Igbofe’s (1974) work titled “*Benin in Pre-Colonial Era*”¹⁸ he offers a historical analysis of the entity or state called Bini in her pre-colonial era and how the empire became a kingdom before the pre-colonial era. The book also examined how the Binis expanded their kingdom by conquering her neighboring state before the coming of the European to the to the 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.¹⁹

Another literature is the book by P. A. Igbafe (1987) titled, *Benin under British Administration*,²⁰ where he explain how the white men came to Benin and publicly declared that Ovoranmen is no longer the King of Benin. The book discuss an attempt to strip the Oba of his erstwhile political influence which was to be rounded off by Moor's calculated plan of a one year tour with Oba Ovoranmen and two other Benin Chiefs to old Calabar, Lagos and some parts of Yoruba land.²¹

Another work to be examined is R. E. Bradbury (1986) "*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 will all other Edo speaking areas, there many are villages in the Benin Kingdom whose inhabitants have no tradition that their ancestors came from elsewhere and some informat 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

Idahosa Samuel Igue work titled "*Benin Women in Contemporary Society: Challenges And Prospects*,"²⁴ focused mainly on the challenges facing Benin women as it relates to women emancipation and the prospects. The author equally ascertained the level of progress made from pre-colonial era till date. The objective was to bring to the

open the challenges or factors militating against Benin women with a view to proffering solutions and lends a voice to the already existing materials on women emancipation. In the course of this work, phenomenological, analytical, evaluative and historical methods were adopted as well as primary and secondary sources. During the research, the author discovered that women who were considered inferior or not capable of handling responsibilities have contributed greatly to the development of the country and they are still contributing. In conclusion, the emancipation of women from the strong grip of customs and societal dictates that subordinate them to inhuman treatment is not for the benefit of women alone but for the society at large.²⁵

Etim Ekpenyong Mfon, (2017) article titled *“The Marginalization of Women in Governance in Edo State Nigeria, With a Focus on the Coronation Ceremony of an Oba in the Benin Kingdom,”*²⁶ highlight the roles women play in the coronation of an Oba in Benin Kingdom despite their gender-based marginalization. Asserts coronation is a complex and sacred ritual, a process that warrants an assemblage of both physical and spiritual components. It involves a set of rites performed by a select few; hence, parts of it are not public knowledge. Women have also been exempted or restricted from partaking in some activities during the coronation of an Oba because of actual or potential ritual pollution occasioned by their monthly flow. Many African cultures have relegated women to the background for this reason. Even in present day politics in Nigeria and indeed Africa, women are still being marginalized in the political arena at all levels. However, women have been pivotal to the success of many great kingdoms and

nations. In Benin's rich historical traditions, women such as Queen Idia and Emotan rendered selfless services towards the peace, progress, and sustainability of the Kingdom.²⁷

Ebuka-Onuoha Pat Iziengbe, "*Women and Sexuality in Pre-Colonial Benin*,"²⁸ posits that the history of Benin kingdom has been well documented. However, the role and place of women have not been properly analyzed. Benin women were only mentioned in different historical studies, but their lives, impacts and even sexuality has not been given adequate attention. In recent time, the history of African sexuality have become very relevant as feminist discuss had reached its peak. Moreso, sexuality study has become very relevant among Benin women as a result of her new identity as the "leaders of international sex trade" in the present day Nigeria. Some scholars have posited that Benin women are highly promiscuous while others claim that there were evident of prostitution in pre-colonial Benin. In pre-colonial Benin, women sexuality was never a subject to be discussed openly or expressed publicly.²⁹

In as much as we agree, that these contributions and views have their own merits towards understanding the changing roles and activities of women from pre-colonial Nigeria, but we must also agree that they have not been able to give a total study of the influence of women and politics in pre-colonial Benin kingdom n particular focus to Queen Idia. All the books, articles and theses reviewed have been able to cover only some parts of my research. This research seeks to fill that vacuum that has been created for a long while by various scholars

Endnotes

1. Uyilawa Usuanlele, "Women Don't Go To War. Except Idia Mother of Oba Esigie:" *Journal of Culture and Development*, 6(2), 2004, p.82.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. Etim Ekpenyong Mfon, "The Marginalization of Women in Governance in Edo State Nigeria, With a Focus on the Coronation Ceremony of an Oba in the Benin Kingdom" *International Journal of Research*, 7(4) 2027, p.457.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Ebuka-Onuoha Pat Iziengbe, "Women and Sexuality in Pre-Colonial Benin," *Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences*, 20(9), 2015, p.22.
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13. *Ibid.*
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15. *Ibid.*
16. Jacob U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, (Ibadan: Ibadan University 1876), p.16.
17. *Ibid.*
18. P. A. Igbafe, "Benin in Pre-Colonial Era" *Tarikh*, (5)1, 1974, p.56.
19. *Ibid.*

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21. *Ibid.*
22. E. Bradbury “*The Benin and the Edo Speaking People of South Western Nigeria*, London: International African institute, 1986, p.90.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Idahosa Samuel Igue “Benin Women in Contemporary Society: Challenges and Prospects,” *Benin Historical Journal*, (2)1, 2000, p.89.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Etim Ekpenyong Mfon, “The Marginalization of Women in Governance in Edo State Nigeria, With a Focus on the Coronation Ceremony of an Oba in the Benin Kingdom” *International Journal of Research*, 7(4) 2027, p.457.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Ebuka-Onuoha Pat Iziengbe, “Women and Sexuality in Pre-Colonial Benin,” *Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences*, 20(9), 2015, p.22.
29. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER TWO

PRE-COLONIAL BENIN KINGDOM: A HISTORY

Introduction

There are various versions on the origin of the Binis and their kingdom. Some writers claimed that the people migrated from Egypt. Notably amongst them is Jacob Egharevba who suggests that the Binis came all the way from Egypt to found a more secure shelter in this part of the world after a short stay in the Sudan and at Ile-Ife, which the Benin people call Uhe.¹ He went further to say that traditions affirm that they met some people who were in the land before their arrival. These people are said to have come originally from Nupe and the Sudan in waves of migration.²

The historical kingdom of Benin was established in the forested region of West Africa in the 1200s C.E. According to history, the Edo people of southern Nigeria founded Benin. They no longer wanted to be ruled by their kings, known as the *ogisos*. They asked a prince from Ife, an important West African kingdom, to take control. The first *oba*, or king, in Benin was Eweka. He was the son of the prince from Ife. he kingdom reached its greatest power and size under Oba Ewuare the Great. He expanded the kingdom and improved the capital, present-day Benin City; the city was defined by massive walls. The height of power for Benin's monarchs began during this period. To honor the powerful *obas*, the people of Benin participated in many rituals that expressed their devotion and loyalty, including human sacrifices.³

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. 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.⁴

The basis of the administrative 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 Edionene (the most senior four males). 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. Correctly performing the burial rites of a deceased parent, killing a wild animal or any other act of valour and proof of manhood normally qualifies the candidate.⁵ Philip Igbafe holds that a latter innovation made it possible to acquire this status by purchase.⁶ Once qualified, the candidate is initiated into the Grade. The mentally deranged, imbecile or any male 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.⁷ At the death of a member of Edionene, the most senior member of the Edion Grade (the

first among them to receive the title) usually move to become a member of the Edionene as he is now the fourth citizen.

Political authority rested on the most senior member of the Edionene known as the Odionwere or Okaevbo, the other three were his deputies. Osarhiemen Benson Osadolor identifies a special feature of this Pre-dynastic system of administration in Benin as the lack of any military element organized in 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 nuclei might, and have, under certain circumstances come together in groups, lineages and chiefdoms; 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 rivalled the capital during the first reigns of the present dynasty, and to have fallen into decay only after a long struggle. Whatever may have been 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. Either from necessity, or following some foreign example, these communities evolved institutions which at once coped with the problems raised by a larger association and made possible a further expansion.¹¹

The most famous Odionwere in the pre-dynastic period was Igodo. The 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.” 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.¹²

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 unite 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.”¹³ Igodo accepted the tradition of the Odionwere 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.¹⁴ Igodo was a

product of the Gerontocratic political culture of the Odionwere system and credited with the establishment of the Benin Kingdom and remembered in 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 and which still 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 Ogiso Ere, the second king who succeeded Igodo, the positions of Oliha, Edohen, Ero and EholoN'ire became hereditary chieftaincy titles. The position of Ezomo was not made hereditary but reserved for the most powerful warrior in the kingdom, and had responsibility for security and military matters; perhaps, the idea of a warrior chief became necessary because of the rivalry with Udo.¹⁵

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 quarrelling among his people a crier would be sent out 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.¹⁶

The Oba Dynasty

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. The first asserts that the administration of the republican rulers, especially that of Evian and his son Ogianmwe, was highly unsatisfactory. “Things were going from bad to worse, and the people saw that there was a great need for a capable ruler. Ambassadors were therefore dispatched to Uhe (Ile Ife) by the elders, requesting that a wise prince be sent to be their ruler.”¹⁷

The prayers of the people had the desired effect and subsequently Prince Oranmiyam 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 Use, “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,”¹⁸ Which becomes his name and he later became the first king of the *Oba* dynasty 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.²¹ This version argues that *Ogiso* Ekaladerhan had brought 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 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 be used to constants riots and vandalism.”²²

According to this version *Ogiso* prince Ekaladerthan’s deep and perfect knowledge of governmental organization and military logistics, magical power and authoritative utterances, kingly bearing and princely paraphernalia soon won the hearts of the natives of Ife who not only regarded him with wonders and awe but thought that he was directly sent to them from heave to lead them.²³ 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* of Ife, Prince Ikaladerhan exclaimed to his audience in a Benin Language, “*Ikpomosa! Izoduwa,*” meaning “*I thank God, I have chosen the path to greatness.*” The last word, “*Izoduwa*” was polluted to “*Oduduwa*” by the Yorubas.”²⁴ During the Republican era, there was always conflict on who becomes the head of governance and the people sent for their banished Prince Ikaladerhan but he could not live in Benin because He does not like the smell of the place. Before he left, he married a beautiful lady, Erinmwide, and daughter of Ogie-ego, by whom he had a son that became *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.²⁵ The chiefs were henceforth prohibited from possessing or using the swords of state known as *ada* or conferring titles to their subordinates.²⁶ 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 AigbonaIgbafe 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 land²⁷ while R. E. Bradbury asserts that “the sacred kingship is the focal point of the Benin political system.”²⁸ 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 two 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 or ditches (*Iya*). The first and second moats were dug by *Oba* Oguola about 1280 and 1290 A.D. respectively as military strategy to keep off invaders in time of war. “By 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.”²⁹ The third moat, located in the heart of the city was dug by *Oba* Ewuare about 1460 A.D. at that 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”³⁰

Economic Features of the Economy of Pre-Colonial Benin Kingdom

Land Usage;

Benin society before the advent of colonial rule was pre-industrial and predominantly agrarian. Since agrarian production depended on land, the ownership and control of the land is of primary importance in the examination of the means of production. Land in pre-colonial Benin society was communally owned and private ownership was absent. However, the right over land basically for farming was in theory vested in the *Oba*, who in turn vested it on his representatives in all the communities. This right could not be denied to any *Ovien Oba*(law abiding subject) arbitrarily.³¹ In Benin City, the grant of land usufruct was obtained from the *Oba*, who ordered the *Okao-Avbiogbe* (leader of the allocation guild) and the ward or guild quarter heads to determine the nature of the land before allocation. The ward or guild collected a fixed fee, which was used for the customary sacrificial ritual to *Oto*- the earth deity, planting the *Ikhimwin* (*Newbouldia* leave tree) was its symbol and for land demarcation and the *Edion-Idumwen* –ward –quarter accestors.³²

The inhabitants of Benin City had the right to cultivate, hunt or build in any part of the kingdom. This was done with the consent of the *Enogie*, hereditary village or clan chief, or *Ohen* (priestly village or clan head) or *Odionwere* or *Okao-Evbogerontocratic*

village head to whom the Oba delegated his authority of control over land usufruct. The inhabitants of the villages needed no formal permission and paid no fee to acquire usufruct rights over farm lands, as long as it was not being used or signified for use by someone else in their villages. Usufruct (right to land) was granted only to individual adult male members of the community, not family lineage or kingroup, formed the basis of land ownership and only the village unit could therefore banish offending members from the community.³³ In the case of strangers, usufruct rights can only be granted to them on the ground that their background has been investigated. In recognition of this commercial ownership of land, the stranger gave a fixed part of his annual produce to the village head, until he accepts full membership of the community with all the benefits, responsibilities and obligations. Except for the strangers who paid rent to the Oba for the use and exploitation of the streams and rivers. The uninhabited forest and swamp lands were under the control of the communities.³⁴

Agriculture

Farming was the dominant production activity of the people. There was no customarily defined production unit because it varied from one household to another. While some household had both nuclear- consisting of a single family; and joint family- consisting of many families, constituted a production unit, others constituted many production units on the basis of individual nuclear families. Thus, Bradbury asserted that production units revolved around an adult male and one or more adult female, which in some cases and not in all cases.³⁵

Agricultural production centred around the production of yams (regarded as the chief of crops which was the primary responsibility of males and the production of plantain, maize, beans, cocoyam, melon, okro, pumpkin, garden eggs, pepper and other vegetables were the responsibilities of females.³⁶ Farming was based on shifting cultivation method due to the soil condition and the level of development of production forces which necessitated the long fallow period between ten and twenty years. Average farm size varied from about two to ten acres depending on the size of the production unit and an average crop of yams was reported to yield between one and two tons per acre.³⁷

In addition to farming, some animals like dwarf-cattle, goats, sheep, dogs, chicken and duck were kept as livestock. But they were left on their own to roam the community without much labour being expended on their breeding. Hunting supplemented the livestock meat and was organised at both the individual and communal basis using guns, spears, bows and arrows, cutlass, hunting dogs and snares. There were also commissioned hunters like the Oba's elephant hunters at Oregbeni quarters as well as his Leopold handlers. Fishing was not well organised production activity, but people who lived close to rivers were to dig canals during the raining season to enable them to trap some fish. The rivers and streams were also exploited by the Ijo and Itsekiri fishermen on payment of rent to the Oba to service the lucrative fish trade, exported into the hinterlands.³⁸

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CHAPTER THREE

QUEEN IDIA IN PRE-COLONIAL BENIN KINGDOM

Introduction

Since women have been perceived by men as 'weaker vessels' and patriarchy presumed to have dominated the political sphere, discovering the existence of matriarchs in the pre-colonial era of Nigeria changed the historical narrative. Extant literature shows that women were not excluded from the political sphere, but rather, that they featured prominently in the political evolution of their societies.¹ The overarching argument of this Chapter is that despite the patriarchal nature of political institutions in most African societies, some roles were assigned to and/or reserved for women. It is on this backdrop, this chapter examines the role of Queen Idia in pre-colonial Benin Kingdom.

In history, Queen Idia was known to be a noble warrior in Benin history. Her fame even goes beyond the walls of Benin, she is seen as a national heroine, so much so that her image has become an icon that represents Nigeria internationally. Thus during the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture in 1977 (FESTAC '77), an ivory mask of her head was used as the emblem of the global festival.²

The Concept of Queen Mother

Queen mother (also Queenmother) is a term used to describe certain female traditional rulers in African cultures. Though there is no general description of a "queen mother", as their roles have varied by society, political context, and culture, they generally play an important role in local government and "wield social power and influence."³ The Kingdom of Benin did not have queen mothers until after the end of the fifteenth century when there was a conflict for the throne. During the conflict, women gained power and the first of their number, Queen Idia, became a queen mother. Queen mothers in the Benin tradition are, like those in Western monarchies, the literal mothers of the kings. The classical queen mothers of Benin, each known as an *Iyoba*, had a great deal of power and were venerated as the protectors of the kings. They are thus an important part of social, political, and cultural institutions across the African continent: the Akan, for example, recognize them as important local political actors and often trace inheritance through them in a matrilineal fashion; whereas in Uganda, the term may be used to describe women who ruled outright.⁴ The amount of power queen mothers currently hold has been diminished since pre-colonial times, though the 21st century has seen their influence grow in certain contexts. Many are members of the African Queens and Women Cultural Leaders Network, a voluntary organization.⁵

Queen mothers were once important political figures who commanded respect prior to the colonial era. However, the delegation of roles to these figures varied: in some instances, they were considered to be autonomous rulers, in others, they had specific

jurisdiction over "women's" issues (or issues that involved both men and women together, such as rape, adultery and marital conflict), in others still, they were simply the literal mothers of prominent figures, and afforded all the status therein. Colonists from Europe, due to their own sexism, negotiated only with titled men in the areas that they operated in. Queen mothers in Africa, essentially, were not recognized as important and were often referred to in colonial/missionary historical documents as "sisters" of the men in power. The denial of status these women faced facilitated their titles' losses of power - hence, under colonial rule, queen mothers, like other women on the continent, lost "social, religious, constitutional, and political privileges and rights."⁶

Post-colonial governments "continued with policies that undermined women's traditional authority": In 1957, as an example, Ghana's independence leaders did not include queen mothers in their affairs, choosing instead to only work with the male chiefs. Women's absence in politics and, particularly, traditional institutions has created and worsened an unequal distribution of power and resulted in women's "concerns and rights not being adequately addressed."⁷ In 1988, the Ashanti Queen Mother Association was formed. It now has around forty-four women leaders from the Ashanti region as members. The group attends to issues relating to women. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana included Article 277 which defines chieftaincy. Article 277 defines a chief as a person who has been properly nominated from the correct lineage and "enstooled, enskinned or installed as a Chief or a Queen Mother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage."⁸ In the summer of 2010, the National House of Chiefs in

Ghana announced the inclusion of 20 queen mothers. Queen mothers are appointed to the house for four-year terms. In 2006, the United Nations Children's Fund started working with queen mothers to help support welfare efforts for women and children in different parts of West Africa.⁹

Queen Idia and her Impact in Benin Kingdom

Idia was a woman of great beauty and special qualities. Due to her selfless nature and sacrificial life, she can never be forgotten in the history of the Benin kingdom. To me, she is supposed to have been recognised as the most honoured woman in Benin kingdom. Queen Idia is arguably the most remarkable woman in the remembered history of Benin City.¹⁰ She represent love and loyalty, her personality could be described with some few words such as, courageous, selflessness, humility and loyalty.

Iden Nokpokhuo (Idia the great woman) was the royal bride and beauty Queen of Oba Ewuakpe. She lived in the first decade of the eighteen century` (c 1700 A.D). She was said to have hailed from Oka village, now part of the present day Upper Sokponba in Ikpoba Okha local governmentxi. Born from a humble background, later became one of the dearest wives of Oba Ewauakpe.¹¹ Her life depicts loyalty, commitment and dedication to the Kingdom and her husband. She became relevant and honoured in Benin Kingdom due to the sacrifice she made for her husband and the empire.¹²

Oba Ewuakpe was the twenty-seventh Oba of Benin, According to Asien, when Ewuakpe became Oba, he was saddled with two major disadvantages which made him unable to handle and manage absolute power to his own advantage and that of his subjects. He was young and lacked patience that goes with age; some scholars describe him as a very hot tempered man. Secondly, he was not born an Oba. He was thrust into the office by his father, Akennuzama, who declined to be Oba when he was offered the crown, by selection.¹³ This was because he was already very old. Oba Ore-Oghene died without a child and the Ihogbe decided that Akennuzama his cousin would be next Oba. Akennuzama on the other hand passed the responsibility and honour to his son, Idova, who was hurriedly re-named Enennegha. During the reign of Oba Ewuare, he prophesied that when an Oba named Idova becomes Oba, he will make some drastic change in the kingdom either for good or bad in the people. As a Ehennegha he was presented by the Ihogbe to the Uzama and crowned the Oba of Benin with the titular name Ewuakpe.¹⁴

At the beginning of his reign, for the first time, an Oba of Benin had a living father. As soon as Ewuakpe began to reign he started to manifest highhandedness and making anti-people laws. His mother constantly warned him to reduce his hardness toward his subject so that they would not rebel against his

authority and command. She also made him understand that there was something about his destiny that was not too good and that was why they had to change his name before he was made Oba in order to avert his ill fate. He did not listen to his mother's plea and warnings.¹⁵

The whole saga that brought Idia to limelight began when Oba Ewuakpe lost his mother, Ewebonoza. The death of the Queen mother at Uselu brought so much sorrow to Ewuakpe who had very deep love and commitment to her. She was actually his guide against misrule and the misfortune that would have long befalling him.¹⁶ Queen Ewebonoza was from Ikoka village in Ugolo quarters and her people truly mourned her for seven days due to her contribution to the development of Ikoka. No soothing word could calm the Oba. It is said that at her funeral, he made great number of human sacrifices to escort the soul of his mother home. This notorious history of human sacrifice in Benin can be traced to Oba Ewuare, who is said to have introduced it. He introduced the sacrifice of twelve human beings at the annual propitiation of the Oba's ancestor.¹⁷ This disdainful and extravagant expenditure of resources of such priceless worth as human being was calculated by him, to further enhance the awe in which the palace was held by the people.

In Oba Ewuakpe's case, he did not only sacrifice slaves with his mother, he also murdered titled chiefs who came to mourn with him during his mother's burial. He claimed that they were spotted on white while coming to the palace to mourn his dearly beloved mother. To him, they should have worn black to show they were really Mourning.¹⁸ During the massacre, some chiefs, however, escaped for their lives and told the others the situation at the palace. Ewuakpe did not stop there, some emissaries were sent to him from Ikoka, his mother's village to mourn with him and represent Ikoka at the final burial of his mother. Oba Ewuakpe asked his guides to slaughter them because they were on white instead of black, which was the official colour for mourning the dead in Benin. He forgot that there was a law that prohibits people from entering the palace on black. Tradition has it that he left one of the emissaries sent from Ikoka with half leg to return to Ikoka and tell the sad story to his people.¹⁹ These unfortunate incidents resulted to anger and bitterness towards the Oba from Benin and Ikoka.

During the rebellion, Ewuapke was on a journey to Uselu to perform some sacrifice at his mother's shrine, before he returned from Uselu disaster was awaiting him at the palace. The Iyase and other member of his cabinet went with both young and old to the palace and drove away all the remaining loyal servants of the monarch. His numerous wives and children were also given the freedom to

leave the palace.²⁰ They all gladly left due to the already sad situation at the palace as the people had rejected the Oba. Only Queen Idia remained at the palace, though she was persuaded by the Iyase to leave as the others had done, she refused saying that once one is married to the Oba, she never returns home.²¹

According to the story told by Peddie Okao, The Iyase was actually in love with Iden before she became one of the wives of Ewuakpe. Iden asked him to go and pay her bride price and he continued to delay it and when he was now ready to pay, the Oba had already seen Iden and he immediately married her. This incident that took place many years earlier, led to inbuilt bitterness in the Iyase toward Ewuakpe. He vowed to make sure Oba Ewuakpe pay for the way he took Iden from him. This is the reason he gladly used the rebellion of the people as an opportunity to pay Ewuakpe back for taking his beloved Iden.²²

At the return of Ewuakpe, he met an empty palace with only Iden waiting for him. She welcomed him and narrated the atrocity committed by the Iyase and his cohort against the monarch. This was the beginning of Ewuakpe's suffering and agony. The Oba became a mere man as the people that made him king had total rejected his lordship. They refused him food, clothing, homage and labour. He suffered from so much humiliation and rejection. He then asked Queen Iden to also join the other women and leave him to die alone in the palace since he ca no

longer provide for her, she bluntly refused and rejected the offer as she choose to suffer with the oba and continue to love him forever.²³ A story was told by Egharevba on how he climbed up one rainy day to put right a place in the roof that was bad. He fell and was injured, though he cried no one came to rescue him. Throughout this period, Queen Iden whose life depicts loyalty and courage remained the only one who stood by Oba Ewuakpe in his trying moments Queen.²⁴

Manifestations of Queen Idia

Queen Idia was a wife of Oba Ozulua, whose reign of the Benin Kingdom took place in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; Queen Idia became the first Iyoba (queen mother) of the polity. She stands out among the other queens and queen mothers of West Africa because of her great exploits on behalf of the kingdom, playing a very significant role in the rise and reign of her son, Oba Esigie.²⁵ Iyoba Idia was a famous warrior who became even more popular after the Benin-Idah War because she led the victorious army. As well as being renowned as a warrior queen, Iyoba Idia was a skilful and astute administrator.²⁶

Idia's title as the first Iyoba was bestowed upon her when her son created the position as gratitude to her for securing his position as the sixteenth Oba of the Old Benin Kingdom. This son, Prince Osawe, who later became Oba Esigie, was given birth a few hours after another prince had been born. One of her co-wives

had given birth to the giant prince, Prince Arhuanhuan, but did not notify the palace on time because the baby did not cry. It was a tradition that when a child was born, the palace would be notified immediately; this was for record-keeping, because the Oba's pregnant wives were usually taken out of the palace, even the capital, to villages where they received care until the baby's birth.²⁷ Queen Idia reported the birth of her son first and he thereby became heir to the throne. As a result of this, Prince Arhuanhuan and his mother engaged in a series of disputes which eventually led to a war for the crown. Iyoba Idia ensured that her son won the war by raising an army for him and rumoured to have wielded unusual supernatural powers to defeat her enemies.²⁸

Before Oba Esigie ascended the throne, it was forbidden by tradition for the mother of the Oba to be alive while her son became a king. It was believed that the queen mother would command the same authority as the Oba, so she was murdered in order to prevent any competition. However, Oba Esigie abolished the tradition for his mother's sake and because of the sacrifices she had made for him.²⁹ Instead, he built a palace for her at Uselu and bestowed upon her the first-class chieftaincy title of Iyoba (Queen Mother). She was the first woman to be given this title. She enjoyed the exclusive privileges of recommending her choice of chiefs to the Oba, who conferred a title on them thereafter.³⁰

She had the right to a throne, the right to wear special ornaments and coral beads, the right to adorn herself with a distinctive dress made of a special cloth and the right to bear a sword of office. Since then, other queen mothers have enjoyed the same privileges. These rights were previously ascribed to only men who were chiefs in society. In the military sphere, Iyoba Idia led her troops in the Benin-Idah War of 1515-1516, said to have been caused by the unfaithfulness of a woman influenced by beads. On one faithful day, the Oliha, the leader of the seven councillors or kingmakers, bragged to the king that he had the most beautiful and faithful wife in the kingdom.³¹ Oba Esigie, wishing to prove her unworthiness, asked one of his messengers to entice her with agate and coral beads. She fell for it and had a relationship with him for weeks. The message was related to the Oliha and his wife confirmed it. Out of anger, he ordered her to be strangled. To revenge himself on Oba Esigie, the Oliha sent a servant to the Igala king at Idah, the capital city of Igala Kingdom, with the message that Oba Esigie was preparing to invade Idah. He also sent another servant to inform the Oba that the Igala warriors were marching to Benin.³² War ensued.

Disguised as a man, Iyoba Idia bravely fought alongside her son. During this war, she is said to have employed the mystical tactic of making dummies look like real Benin soldiers. When the Igala soldiers attacked them, the pseudo-

warriors of Benin responded, leading to some Igala soldiers fleeing out of fear. Amid the confusion, Benin soldiers came out of their hiding spots and opened fire on the confused Igala soldiers, defeating them. Iyoba Idia also killed the chief native doctor of Igala Kingdom, who had been sent to spy on the Benin kingdom.³³

As well as supporting her society militarily, Iyoba Idia introduced artistic features to the Benin culture. For example, she created the Ukpe Okhue or the Parrot's Beak Iyoba's cap. It was curved, conical and covered with a network of beads. She also introduced the Ekasa, a special dance which forms part of the royal ceremonies to date. After her demise, her son instructed brass casters and ivory carvers to produce an ivory mask in memory of his mother. The Nigerian government also used her face as the emblem for the Second Black Festival of Arts and Culture, FESTAC'77, hosted in Lagos in 1977. Her tomb is located at Egua Iyoba, Uselu, Benin City.³⁴

Influence of Queen Idia in Governance and Warfare

Iyoba Idia's love for her son, Oba Esigie, enabled him to ascend the throne of the Benin Kingdom and remain there. Apart from assisting her son to be victorious in his accession to the throne, she made giant strides in the development of the kingdom during her son's reign. Firstly, she helped to consolidate the power and influence of Benin Kingdom as one of the most powerful kingdoms in the rainforest region of West Africa.³⁵

Secondly, she participated in the Benin-Idah war by raising an army for her son, leading her own regiment and employing supernatural powers to ensure her son's victory. It is believed that war was won spiritually before it even began physically. The victory over Igala not only eliminated a potential threat but enabled the Benin kingdom to consolidate its imperial power in the north-south Niger river trade, which stretched as far as the Songhai empire and the Atlantic Ocean.³⁶

After Idia, other women began to accompany their husbands to the battlefield. For example, Iyoba Idia was said to have tutored Queen Elaba, the wife of Oba Esigie, on military strategy and magical powers, supporting Elaba's accompaniment of the Oba to the battlefield. In addition, Idia's life ended the age-long tradition of killing the mother of an Oba before his coronation. This was a huge victory for royal women, as they now had the right to live and enjoy their sons' reigns. She also brought respect to the title Queen Mother. After Idia, Queen Mothers came to be considered as instrumental for the protection, well-being, and survival of the Oba and his kingdom. This belief and the title Iyoba has continued to the present time in Benin's political institutions.³⁷

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contributed greatly to the political, economic, and military development of the Benin kingdom. Her stories support a growing awareness that in the pre-colonial political history of Nigerian societies, women were not excluded from the political sphere. Rather, they featured prominently in the political evolution and development of their societies.³⁸

Queen Idia's portrait adorns the main VIP entrance to the building, forming a centrepiece of the bronze frieze that encloses the structure (the Nigerian coat of arms is positioned above Iyoba). This was the work of local artist Erhabor Emokpae, who also made freestanding replicas of the hip mask.³⁹ With her crown of mudfish-like Portuguese faces intact, Iyoba's presence is now part of a mythology of new nationalism that claims Benin traditions as part of its pantheon. Emokpae emphasises her planetary role by including rays emanating from her visage and a map of the globe on either side (with the left depicting the Americas and the right Africa and Europe).⁴⁰ Iyoba's naturalism jars with the cartographic aesthetic, emphasizing how the frieze moves abruptly across different stylistic modes to also represent a Ghanaian Akuaba doll and the sacking of Benin. Queen Idia's portrait still links to earth, sea, and sky, but the frieze, as a whole, produces a collaged effect. In an echo of Iyoba's stylistic dissonance, the building she adorns is at odds with its environment.⁴¹

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CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Summary

This study has examined the influence of women and politics in pre-colonial Benin kingdom with reference to Queen Idia and Queen Iden. This study examined the involvement of women in Benin Kingdom's political and military organization and showed that though they were marginal in the organization, they still performed critical roles that contributed to the successes of the Kingdom. The study also surveys the character, personality, intrigues involved in the power and politics of two different female principalities who existed and reigned in two distinct epochs. Queen Idia of the old Benin Kingdom was a powerful political figure who, during her incumbency, sustained her son, Oba Esigie on the throne.

The study also captured the various versions on the origin of the Binis and their kingdom. Some writers claimed that the people migrated from Egypt. Notably amongst them is Jacob Egharevba who suggests that the Binis came all the way from Egypt to found a more secure shelter in this part of the world after a short stay in the Sudan and at Ile-Ife, which the Benin people call Uhe. He went further to say that traditions affirm that they met some people who were in the land before their arrival. These people are said to have come originally from Nupe and the Sudan in waves of migration.

Conclusion

The study discovered that both queens who were indeed brave utilized what they possessed to achieve what they desired. There were various factors which tended to exclude women from participation in political and military matters of which the most important was the physiological issue of menstruation which was believed to neutralize medicines and rituals that ensures the wellbeing of the community victory in war. But in spite of this, various circumstances forced some women into direct some women direct participation and involvement in military and war matters in both the early period and later period under the Oba dynasty in Benin history. These women were exceptionally versed in mystical and spiritual arts as accomplished sorcerers and would have been in their post-menopausal stage of life as demonstrated by the few examples. The study concludes that few women who participated in the wars were as valiant as men and it was largely though expertise in the use of mystical powers that they were able to participate. However, the use of mystical powers was not exceptional to the women as it was widely relied on by the men.

With Queen Idia, her motivating factor was probably the mother's instinct or drive and the fact that she enjoyed power, even spiritual power which she exploited to a considerable degree for the progress of her son Oba Esigie and the Benin Empire. A mother's instinct is that behaviour that is "automatic, irresistible and triggered by something in the environment." It was also an instinct for survival too. This was an era when a heir or a supposed heir to the throne wanted the throne at all cost. Queen Idia was

prepared to install her son on the throne, therefore she sourced other spiritual means to achieve her aim. She succeeded and to a large extent became the king, for Oba Esigie performed his kingly duties with the counsel of his mother. Queen Idia understood where her strength laid and she exploited it fully. She became invincible; she even went to battle with the troops where her success against the enemy of the empire at the time was recorded.

She had become so powerful that although she was a woman and the king's mother, she had her own court where she heard cases and settled disputes. This motherly instinct drove her to such an extent that the desire for more power multiplied even as she continued to protect her son and eventually elevated herself to a high status, the status of Iyi Oba. As a result of her power and influence, the title of Iyi Oba continued to be awarded to the woman, who anatomically, bore the Oba.

Finally, Queens Idia's emergence as strong and effective leaders in their eras demonstrates that it is important to understand and utilize strategies that aids in promoting a leader and his state. Both queens adopted strategies that placed them on a high pedestal even until death. For Queen Idia, it was her feline attributes and for Queen Idia, her motherly instincts and her dependence on spiritual or juju powers that placed them on their thrones.

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Isoken Osamuyi,	66yrs	Market Women,	Uselu market	20/09/2025
Obasuyi Osamede,	54yrs,	Traditional Palace in Uselu,	Edaiken Uselu	23/09/2025
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