

**TRANSFORMATION AND CHALLENGES OF *PELUPELU*  
INSTITUTION IN EKITILAND 1900-2000**

**By**

**Kayode Joseph ONIPEDE**

**Matric. Number: 154900**

**B.A., M.A. (Ilorin)**

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## **Certification**

I certify that this work was carried out by Mr. Kayode Joseph Onipede (Matric. No. 154900) in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, under my supervision.

-----  
**Date**

-----  
**Supervisor**  
**Dr. O.B. Olaoba,**  
**B.A., M.A., PhD (University of Ibadan)**  
**Reader**  
**Institute of African Studies,**  
**University of Ibadan,**  
**Ibadan. Nigeria.**

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my late mother, Mrs Bosede Margaret Onipede. I had hoped that she would live to see the fruit of what she had laboured so hard. The only solace is in the fact that, being my ancestor she will continue to guide me in all my future endeavours as she had done in the process of this study. To my wife and children who have so admiringly borne the challenge of my busy schedule and absence from home.

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**Kayode Joseph ONIPEDE**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MOBEL-----Majority *oba* of Ekitiland

N. A. I..... National Archives Ibadan

N. A. O..... Native Authority Ordinance



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## GLOSSARY

***Pelupelu***: is a combination of four morphemes, that is *pe*, *elu* and *olu* joined together to form *Pelupelu*. *Pe* literally means to call, while *elu* is a symbol and insignia of deities in Ekitiland, kept in the custody of priests who are called *elu*. *Olu* is the head and king of a kingdom. *Pelupelu* therefore means the calling of the priest head of kingdoms, the gods and the vicegerent of the Supreme Being.

***Olojamerindinlogun***; head of sixteen classical market towns

***Alademerindinlogun***: Sixteen crown kings, representing the sixteen divisions of Ekiti.

***Olodumare***: this is a Yoruba name for God, the Supreme Being.

***Oba***: king

***Bale***: is the head of a small town, normally under the tutelage of the king/*oba* of the kingdom in Yorubaland.

***Baale***: head of the extended family or clan

***Oloja***; head of a classical town in Ekitiland

***Owa***; prince and it is also used as an acronym for the king in some Ekiti town

***Ifa***: Divinity or divination

***Odu***: Verses of *Ifa corpus*

***Oloriebi***; lineage or clan head

***Omiye***; sibling

***Ebi***; Family, Clan or lineage

## ABSTRACT

The colonial authorities created the *pelupelu* (kingship council) in 1900 for administrative purpose of Ekitiland. Existing studies on kingship traditions have focused largely on social and political developments during the colonial and post-colonial period, while the *pelupelu*, which embodies the people's tradition and culture, has not attracted scholarly attention. This study, therefore investigated the *pelupelu* institution, it examined its transformation and challenges from 1900-2000.

Historical research design, based on primary and secondary sources of data was adopted for the study. The primary sources included 32 key-informant interviews conducted with 24 kings, four high chiefs and four chief priests. Archival documents such as minutes of meetings, and colonial correspondence, including photographs were sourced from the National Archives in Ibadan. Secondary sources comprised newspapers, journal articles and books on kingship. Data were analysed using descriptive method of historical interpretations.

Two types of kingship institution existed in Ekiti society by 1900 namely, *elu* (priest king) and the *olu* (crown head). Though, co-equal, and independent of each other, they were constituted as *pelupelu* by colonial authority in 1900. The taboo of seclusion prior to 1900 refrained the kings from attending *pelupelu* meeting. In 1913 the Native Authority Ordinance reversed the centralised administration and made the kings independent as president of the native authorities and courts in their respective administrative district. The introduction of tax in 1919 reduced the kings' economic power but introduced salary based on revenue from their districts. Consequently, the kings were ready to federate and work for the colonial authorities, but the merger destroyed kingship culture and affected their traditional functions. Between 1920 and 1940, *pelupelu* was reconstituted to play civic roles. Problem of hierarchy and authority to wear crown became the order and dependent on colonial authority, which significantly disrupted the kings' relationship. Ekiti Superior Native Authority proposed in 1940 fractured *pelupelu* rank but became functional from August 1944 as a miniature advisory council until 1952, when it was merged with the erroneously labelled Western House of Chiefs. In 1955, Ekiti society was re-organised into eight districts and the kings became unofficial members. From 1960 to 1975, the political elite subjected the kings to democratic principles and classified them in order of seniority; the 1976 Land Use Decree stripped them of their power over land. While their interaction has enabled them to have wider opinion on issues affecting Ekiti society, their structure into hierarchy during the colonial and classification in the post-colonial period created problem of competition, power politics, leadership struggle among the oba and between the traditional and the political elite. The selection of king is at the order of the state government against the tradition and culture of kingship.

The colonial authorities took cognisance of cultural basis of development and involved the *pelupelu* institution in the administration of the Ekiti society. These endangered Ekiti kingship culture but facilitated social development. Government acknowledgement of the diversity of traditions and cultures as basis of development can further assist the government within the framework of national development.

**Key words:** Colonial influence, *Pelupelu* institution, Kings, Political transformation, Ekitiland  
**Word count:** 496

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background to the study

*Pelupelu* is a socio-political institution which once stood as the ‘*Ekiti Council*’ in the colonial period. When the term became a denotative reference to a category of Kings, their meetings or concerts remained obscure. But the historical evidence available reveals that *pelupelu* became popular after the joint conference of paramount rulers from the North-eastern Yorubaland, in Oke-umo, Ilesa, in June 1900<sup>1</sup> which includes *Ekiti oba* at the inception of the colonial rule. Those at the meeting were paramount *oba* from *Ekiti*, Ijesa, Akure and parts of Akoko. They were the leading *oba* from *Ekiti* and were mostly those who actively participated in the *Ekitiparapo* war. The Oke-umo meeting was a political meeting initiated to address issues raised by colonialism. However, the meeting continued in the post-colonial period, but to that category of *oba* referred to as ‘paramount’ rulers of Ekitiland, but who are now subsumed within the *Ekiti Traditional Council*.

The *pelupelu* was, specifically, organised by the colonial government as a system of authority. It was a means of ruling the people indirectly. It was, for them as colonial officer, an instrument of having full grip of control over the people, using the paramount rulers, particularly their cultural position and authority as means of exerting authority and power indirectly within their respective domain. Fundamentally, an *oba*’s role and function, by nature of its traditional responsibilities, was akin to that of western administrative style of government, except that their activities were not regulated by written laws. They were accountable to the people, particularly through the use of customs and native laws that were later abrogated to entrench colonial rule in a volatile environment as the Ekitiland. Without this step taken, a direct socio-political interaction and the rule over ‘*Ekiti natives*’ might have been difficult, considering the challenges of human and material resources needed to reach their domains and persuade them. The imperative of indirect rule was the need to modify the existing traditional political structure in favour of British colonial administrative interest, so that the Queen will still hold sway as the political head of the British Empire. Thus, the colonial authority created a unified council of

kings that will take directives from the colonial government and faithfully implement the directives at the local level on their behalf.

From the outset of the establishment of the *pelupelu* institution, “the council was designed to see the chiefs and *oba* as allies in administering the colonies, to support traditional institutions ... considered advantageous to British interest”<sup>2</sup> However, to achieve British interest, Major Tucker, the first travelling commissioner in *Ekiti* area, invited the kings to a meeting on June 21, 1900<sup>3</sup> at Oke-umo, *Ilesa* as “Ilesa Council”. Present at the inaugural meeting were a few *oba*, while some sent representatives.<sup>4</sup>The kings from Ekitiland include the *Ajero* of Ijero, *oba Okeruku*; the *Oore* of Otun, *Oba Adifala*; the *Olojudo* Odundun; the *Elekole* Agbabiojusanmo; *Alaaye* of Efon, *Oba Atewogboye*; *Olojaoke* of Imesi-Igbodo, *Oba Aniyeboye*; the *Ogoga* of Ikere, *Oba Alowolodu*; the *Arinjale* sent his representative, being under detention at the period, the *Atta* of *Ayede*, *Oba Omotoso* was there as an observer, so also was the *Baale* of Emure. The meeting was chaired by the convener, Major Reeve-Tucker and the interpreter for the meeting was an *Ijebu* man named Gbangbalasa.

This became the first known *pelupelu*. It laid the foundation for other *pelupelu* meetings that would be held in several other towns.

Among the reasons for the inauguration of *pelupelu*, apart from the one stated above, was alleviating the burden of the colonial administrative staff, as well as addressing the various developmental challenges that had made it difficult for the colonial masters initially, to administer Ekitiland successfully. Because the traditional rulers had their own conception of the ‘state’, its cosmos, and their relevance in it, as the *Elegbo* of Oye articulated that “the *oba* was lord in his domain before colonial government, when however, the colonial government came, they realized the need to use the *oba* to achieve their aim, but sensing that this might be difficult to achieve, they had to impress the *oba* with gifts and cleverly but subtly dispossessed them of their position through their invitation to the *pelupelu* meetings”.<sup>5</sup>

The implication of the above statement is that the kings were bound to offer resistance to a foreign ideology and practice. It was necessary for the colonial governments, therefore, to develop an institution like *pelupelu* that could indirectly assist in their control of the natives as subjects, and in a manner that could expedite the entrenchment of colonial interest. By bringing the kings together, it was easier to break their individual interest and co-opt them into their

administration, to work with them, and make them partners in actualising progress, in their own way.

According to oral traditions, there were sixteen crowns in Ekitiland, but the origin and correct number of crowns in Ekitiland has remained controversial. Scholars had given different numbers at different times, based on their readings of colonial records. But what is clear and essential for this discourse, as insight into administrative structure and processes, is that, up to the convocation of the first *pelupelu*, the *Ekiti oba* acted independently and only necessarily related on matters of social interest stemming from kinship and family relationship. By and large they acted as independent units. They were not subservient to one another, but then one could be “senior” to another on the basis of kinship tradition. Tradition suggests for instance, the *Oloye*, Onire, *Oloja* Egosi (now Ilupeju) and *Ejisun* of Arigidi (now Ayegbaju) are believed to have conceived and established the *Oye* Kingdom on the basis of maternal relationship.<sup>6</sup> The *oba* of these four towns were said to have the same mother, named Yeye-Aiye. In a letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1935, the *Onirun* of Irun said he was a younger brother of *Onimesi-Lasigidi* in the Ado Kingdom.<sup>7</sup>

Also pertinent is that oral tradition claims that, the *Ewi*, *Ajero* and *Elekole* were brothers of the same mother, a certain Yeyemode.<sup>8</sup> *Odu Ifa*'s account expositions lead to the view that *Alara*, *Ajero*, *Orangun* are also of the same mother named Omotinuwe.<sup>9</sup> The main thrust of our thoughts, on these issues is that the kings may have been related according to some genealogical rules, but would the composition of *pelupelu* have been according to some kinship relations? Considering the view that the kings were not the founders of their kingdoms, but were princes that later became kings, since they were born by the same woman, they must have been siblings, and this could have impacted on how they construed their relationship, and those of the kingdoms. This claim, though contentious, suggests that many towns had existed before the supposed marriage or birth of the children who later became kings as contemporaries, and for some maternal reasons, may still have to relate with one another, in spite of some daunting prescriptions. Nevertheless, evidences available indicated the *pelupelu* was a political organisation constituted for political reasons, hence social relations was not an issue to the colonial authority in midwifing the *pelupelu*. Because, *Ekiti* tradition did not permit the *oba* to move around, or to see one another, or to cross certain rivers, they were invited to meetings, which they felt compelled to attend. They had to veil their faces while passing through those

places which they were not expected to see.<sup>10</sup> Each community was virtually on its own. There was no centralised authority in Ekitiland. Each kingdom was sovereign and independent of the other until the late 19th century, when the British colonial authority formally took over the administration of their kingdoms. Therefore it might not be true, as Samuel Johnson claimed, that the *Alaafin* of Oyo was, at a time, the superior leader of the Yoruba kingdom. There are no strong evidences that Oyo kingdom did at anytime have political influence over some cluster of states in what is today known as Ekitiland. Understandably, *Alaafin* could have exercised control over some territories, for instance, Ede, in the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of *Alaafin Kori*,<sup>11</sup> and it was to protect the territorial integrity of the Oyo Empire, and put an end to the Ijesa menace. But evidently, the Oyo Empire did not extend to cover the Ijesa societies and many of the communities that still retain their independence, culture and social organisation.

In this study, we reckon with the fact that, the organisation and social structure of Ekitiland was significantly different from those of other Yoruba Kingdoms. The Old Oyo had a structured military organisation, comprising a standing army (the palace guards, the *Basorun* within the metropolis and the general army headed by the *Kakanfo*). The *Ekiti* did not. Instead they mobilised the age grades for war<sup>12</sup> when necessary. This is not usual in Old Oyo. The *Alaafin* could be removed if he acted contrary to the dictates and customs of his kingdom.<sup>13</sup> In Ekitiland, the option available was for the chiefs to refuse meeting the king in the palace. The people could stone his palace. They could decide to burn it as a show of rejection. Ekitiland had a monarchical system of government; each kingdom was headed by the *oloja*, the *owa* or *elu*. Historically, at one point of the trajectory, there existed no *oba* or crown in Ekitiland. The lineage or clan was the basic structure in *Ekiti* social organisation until the arrival of the *Oduduwa* dynasty.<sup>14</sup> Unlike in the Old *Oyo* and the *Ijebu* Yoruba, where the *Alaafin* and the *Awujale* were paramount heads over vast areas of towns and villages themselves, headed by an *oba* or *bale*, the system was quite different in Ekitiland. It was a development centred around the family, lineage or clan. It was headed by the *Oloriebi* who was usually a priest king.<sup>15</sup> It was institutionalised on matrilineal -*Omiye*.<sup>16</sup> Whatever happened in regard to colonial administration of Old *Oyo* or *Ijebu* may, therefore, not happen in the historical experiences of *Ekiti oba*. More importantly, in a society that acknowledges genealogical link in the wider administration of the territory, there was every possibility of the success of *pelupelu* as inclusive system, as there were already social parameters to work with. A community could rise to a mini-state as a group or



groups of lineage/clans, and be structurally independent of the other, yet they are obliged to come together for national festivals and rituals or ceremonies at the mother town.

In addition, the controversy raised on the number of those participating in the *pelupelu* also suggests the need for this research. The issue of composition is another major issue this research takes cognisance of. This study, therefore, is a critical insight into the phenomenon, *pelupelu* in Ekitiland. It has become necessary to study *pelupelu* not only because scholars on *Ekiti* history have continually made only passing remarks to it, but also because, that they have not adequately historicised it in a larger context of public administration of conflict and consensus. This gap in literature has challenged us to prove that *Pelupelu* is an institution that has ramifications for *Ekiti* social order, community organisation, state development, and social mobility, particularly for those directly concerned with governance and chieftaincy. It, therefore, cannot be treated just as a historical issue, or as a form of historical consciousness, but also as a form of activism with serious implications for self and collective perceptions of *Ekiti* people as a race.

The study is, therefore, set within the socio-political developments, particularly in the *Ekiti* kingdoms before the first *Pelupelu* of June 21, 1900. The intent is to expose the extent of the institution's social and political implications for diplomacy, social integration, intra-group relationship and kingship institution in Ekitiland before, during and after colonial administration in 1960. What is germane to this discourse is the basic understanding of the transformation and challenges of traditional institutions in the *Ekiti* kingdoms since the first *pelupelu* in 1900.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The kings in pre-colonial Yorubaland did not only reign, they ruled as the *alase ekeji orisa*- the second only to the deities. The *oba's* palace was the highest court in pre-colonial Yorubaland. It was also a symbol of its royal majesty, the people's heritage and a sign to the prosperity of the community. He represents the power of *Olodumare*, and the ancestors to his people. From installation to coronation, he is elevated by the kingship traditions above ordinary men, and connected by the royal rites of kingship to his ancestors. Consequently, he shares the characteristics of the god, whom he serves as vicegerent. By this endowment, he is sacred among the people, and commands their respect as a divine authority. In every sense of power, he demonstrated the phenomenon of *kabiyesi*, one that nobody dares question. He owns the land,

controls the factors of production and cannot play second fiddle to anyone. Indeed, Atanda reveals that “prior to colonial rule our kings were paramount in their respective domain. But the colonial rule and subsequent governments after independence continues to trample upon the institution, and thus eroded their paramountcy”.<sup>17</sup>

The kingship institution within the 1976 local government reforms became subservient to the state, as one that “shall continue to be recognized, retained, respected, and protected by the government, but it should be completely insulated from partisan politics”.<sup>18</sup> Governments, till date, therefore, stress the need to control the institution at any time, as an institution subordinated to them by rules, thereby systematically stripping them of their voices, public presence and authority. Consequently, the institution has been a victim of series of attacks, orchestrated and real, on their persons, administration and relevance. For instance, the 1976 land use decree completely striped their authority over land.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, as the *Elegbo* of *Oye* would note, from the colonial era, through subsequent military and civilian rule, their authority had been curtailed, so that an *Oba*, as the *Oba* in Ekitiland today has to take permission from the local government chairman before he can do any civic action. Ironic though it may look, the *Oba* must now play second fiddle, even though they are still addressed as being second to the gods.

The Traditional Council of *Oba* in *Ekiti* State now operates under state governments that also finance the institution. The government also sorted them individually into status categories. For example, Governor Adeniyi Adebayo<sup>20</sup> when reviewing the traditional council law of the state in 2000, made a policy that divided the *Oba* into three categories of 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades. He limited the number of the first class grade *Oba* in each local government to four. But then, he elevated several *Owa* and *Oloja* against the hitherto practised principle of seniority among the kings. It was a divide and rule situation, as with any government policy, there were often opposing camps; those in favour and those against. Today, they are divided along class-line and are structured into a political hierarchy, done without due reverence to traditional parameters for creating and asserting status. The disenchantments among the kings to this development have been quite equivocal; an attitude of rejection when they are not favoured.

There are other grudges as well. For instance, Samuel Johnson and *Ooni* of *Ife*'s classifications of Yoruba kings, well favoured in official circles, especially the classification of *Ekiti* kings, have stirred ripples among the kings. Their classifications acknowledged eight crowns (kings) in Ekitiland as against the traditionally acknowledged sixteen crowns that was

and has remained the basis for various governmental policies on hierarchical grading of kings, particularly regarding the determination of leadership among the kings in Ekitiland. It is also on record that the *Deji* Adesida I, of Akure, pulled out of the *Ekiti* Council, due to what he considered to be the recalcitrant attitude of the *Alaaye of Efon, Oba* Samuel Adeniran, towards him as a senior *oba*.<sup>21</sup> The *Deji* thought he should be respected as a senior *oba*. This kind of feud among the *oba*, and the attempt to use history for justification, led to the emergence of two different and paralleled bodies of the Council of Kings in Ekitiland. The majority *oba* in *Ekiti* constituted one group (*MOBEL*), representing those that were excluded from the *pelupelu*. They comprise those seeking recognition and autonomy, like the *Ejiyan of Ipoti* and *Orun of Igbimo* within the Ado kingdom. The second group were the “*Pelupelu*”. The *Onire* of Ire was excluded from this group by the Governor Adeniyi Adebayo policy in 2001. He has continued to agitate for his reinstatement back to the *pelupelu* class on the basis that he had been a member since 1900. But, the *pelupelu* group is insisting that he was not a paramount *oba* and could not be a member. This development equally paved the way to intense rivalry for seniority in a context of power politics, even among the *pelupelu* kings. There were other rifts between Ado kingdom and Osi, Ilawe, and Igbara-Odo, and also that between *Oye* and *Ire*. The *Elekole’s* claim of supremacy over other *Ekiti oba* came to the fore in the 1921 *pelupelu* meeting.<sup>22</sup>

These conflicts, as noted, are outcomes of the emergence of a centralised Council of Kings, in seeming contravention of the traditions of brotherhood and equality that promoted the spirit of unity in the pre-colonial period. The problem of seniority has led to serious animosity and distrust among the *oba*, not only within Ekitiland but also in Yorubaland at large. A notable example is the conflict between the *Alaafin of Oyo* and the *Ooni of Ife*, both of whom have engaged in rivalry of supremacy. In the same vein, there was disharmony between the *Alake of Egba* as against the other *oba* in the *Egba* confederacy, like the *Olowu of Owu*. The two are neck deep in rivalry for supremacy. Undoubtedly, the bond of unity among the Yoruba kings is under trial, as we also recall the arbitrary deposition and imposition of kings, under various political dispensations, promoting contestation and protest against the dictates of the government. Those who have been negatively affected include, *Oloye Owoyomi*<sup>23</sup> (1901, 1923, and 1940), *Alaafin Adeniran Adeyemi* 11<sup>24</sup> (1954), *Olagbegi of Owo*<sup>25</sup> (1966) and the *Oloba of Oba-Ile, Oba Gabriel Ilesanmi Orioye*<sup>26</sup> (1980). At one time or the other, they had been detained, deposed or exiled by the governments or their people for various reasons. *Ewi Aladesanmi*<sup>27</sup> was deposed by

his people in 1940. The king makers had completed the coronation rites on Daniel Adejugbe, but the colonial administration turned this down. In fact, the *oba* were removed from the administration of their kingdoms through the Native Authority Ordinance implemented in 1916.<sup>28</sup> They subsequently became civil servants and freelance tax collectors. Their maintenance depended on the amount of tax accruing from their districts. The amount of taxes collected within their domains determined their monthly stipends (salary).

The colonial authority eroded traditional mores further by undermining their power to appoint chiefs and *bale* in their domains and to determine their seniors. Within the colonial dispensation, they had to consult the resident and the district officers before they could take decisions on matters affecting their people.<sup>29</sup> With this development, expectedly, reverence and allegiance shifted from the kings to the British Colonial Officer, and the kings became mere official decision implementers. When the *Ekiti* Council was reconstituted in 1945, as *Ekiti* Superior Native Authority, it included both the junior and the senior chiefs under the supervision of the district officer. This was to preserve the supremacy of Her Majesty, the Queen of England, as the Head of the British Empire, and was in line with the saying that two masters cannot be in a boat. But clearly, as Sir Ralph Moor in 1897, after the conquest of Benin, had asserted, "...the white man is the only king in this country and to him only service is due".<sup>30</sup>

Obviously, the impact of colonial rule on the structure and functions of kings in Yorubaland need further investigations. Equally obvious were the various and varied reactions to government policies on kingship. Their post-colonial experiences did not fare any better. The kings were marginalised, arbitrarily classified into groups and badly treated. Some of the reactions of the various administrations were caused by the kings themselves using selective memory and historical records. However, this was because they have developed a sense of rivalry and competition for honour and position.

This thesis contends that studies on *Ekiti* kingship in particular, to the best of our knowledge, appear to have overlooked the importance of the challenges faced by the kingship institution. We, therefore, contend in the light of the foregoing review, that there is an urgent necessity to document and articulate the transformation and challenges, the kingship institution, as *pelupelu* institution has been experiencing, with a view to comprehensively appreciating the dynamics of political culture in Ekitiland.

In this wise, we seek to interrogate and answer the following research questions that give direction to our research purpose.

- When and how did *Pelupelu* originate in Ekitiland?
- What are the socio-political structures of the *Pelupelu* institution?
- How did *Ekiti* Kings interact before the *Pelupelu* institution?
- What is the significance of the *Pelupelu* to the development of Ekitiland?
- What are the challenges of the *Pelupelu* institution in Ekitiland?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The aim of the study is to investigate the transformation and challenges of *pelupelu* institution from 1900 to 2000. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- unearth the origin of *Pelupelu* in Ekitiland;
- investigate the intra-political relationship among Ekiti Kings before and within *Pelupelu* institution;
- examine the social and political structure of *Pelupelu* institution in Ekitiland from 1900 to 2000;
- identify the social and economic challenges of *pelupelu*; and
- identify the contributions of *Pelupelu* to the socio-political and economic development of Ekitiland.

### **1.5. Significance of the study**

This study is significant in many respects. First, it is an elaborate exposition on kingship institution in Ekitiland, and it will help the state government, in particular, to have a clearer perspective to, and a better understanding of, how *Pelupelu* was convoked, and of what socio-political relevance it was to the society. Second, this study when it eventually filters into public discussions of the kingship institution, may lead to the Ekiti people appreciating the council all the more, particularly through a grasp of the challenges they have faced and have overcome, as an object of value and a means to an end. Finally, the study will lay a foundation for a greater attention to the various ramifications of the *pelupelu*- kingship institution in political development, generally, and in Ekitiland, in particular, and the discernment of ensuing discourses in the world of scholarship. The kingship imbroglio within the Yoruba nation, in

general, and Ekitiland, in particular, when addressed by policy makers, familiar with this study, can address the genuine concerns of the people better, particularly in modern governance.

### **1.6. Scope of the study**

This study covers a period of one hundred years (1900-2000), which is the first hundred years of a federated council of *Ekiti* kings, otherwise called the *pelupelu*. The historic period covered are the colonial rule, the military and democratic governance in Nigeria, and their dynamics in nation building. The main focus of the present study is Ekitiland, which includes part of the present day *Kwara* and *Ondo* states (see fig. I for details). Ekitiland has, at present, roughly, one hundred and thirty towns (130). It lies within thick forest, and is surrounded by hills and valleys that restricted the outsiders from gaining entry into it in the remote past. It is located between longitudes  $4.51^{\circ}$  and  $5.451^{\circ}$  East of the Greenwich meridian and latitudes  $7.151^{\circ}$  and  $8.51^{\circ}$  north of the Equator.<sup>31</sup> It lies south of *Kwara* and *Kogi* State, East of *Osun* State. It is bounded by *Ondo* State in the East and in the south (fig.1). The estimated population of *Ekiti* in 1931<sup>32</sup> was 200,143, and by 1952,<sup>33</sup> it was 327,363. It rose to 1,418,114 in 1963<sup>34</sup> and in 1991, was estimated to be 1, 628, 603.<sup>35</sup> *Ekiti* was 1,647,822 in 1996 and by 2006<sup>36</sup> it had risen to 2, 384, 212.

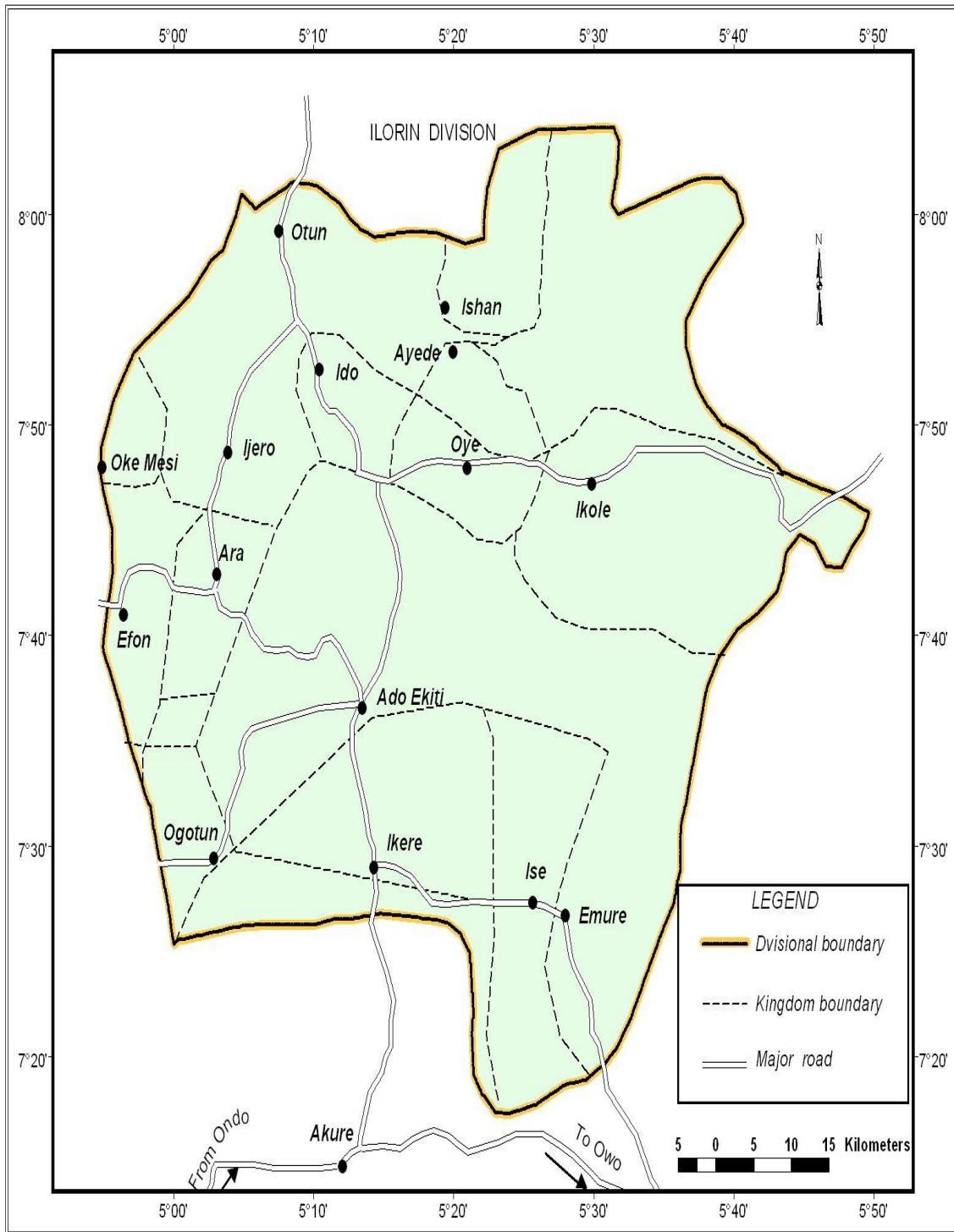
### **1.7 Limitations of the study**

A serious limitation of the study is its limited access to historical data, due largely to the poor management of documentation and maintenance of the national archives consulted, the falsification of facts in oral sources, and the distortions in well popularised views stemming from political considerations. This challenge created serious impediments to the reconstruction of fieldwork experiences. Equally notable for reckoning is that the place and position of the kings within the *Ekiti* culture seriously restricted access to information and created some challenges in sourcing for data for this work. The reason is that some of the kings interviewed tried to politicise their challenges to gain some advantages over others. Nevertheless, there were others who were objective in their input. Many were keenly interested in the study, but some did not show any interest at all. There were instances, in consequence, of times when we had to wait a whole day without the opportunity of seeing the king, even on his own invitation.

The non-availability of a consummate traditional *oba* who understand the tradition of kingship in pre-colonial Ekitiland on the one hand, and that of the *Pelupelu oba* of the colonial

era on the other hand to shed light on *pelupelu* traditions and activities was a great limitation to the study. The kings who participated in *pelupelu* were all dead. This and other challenges, however, became the catalyst that spurred us on to the completion of the project. We had to develop the tolerance to tread on the land of the ‘spirits’ of the kings.

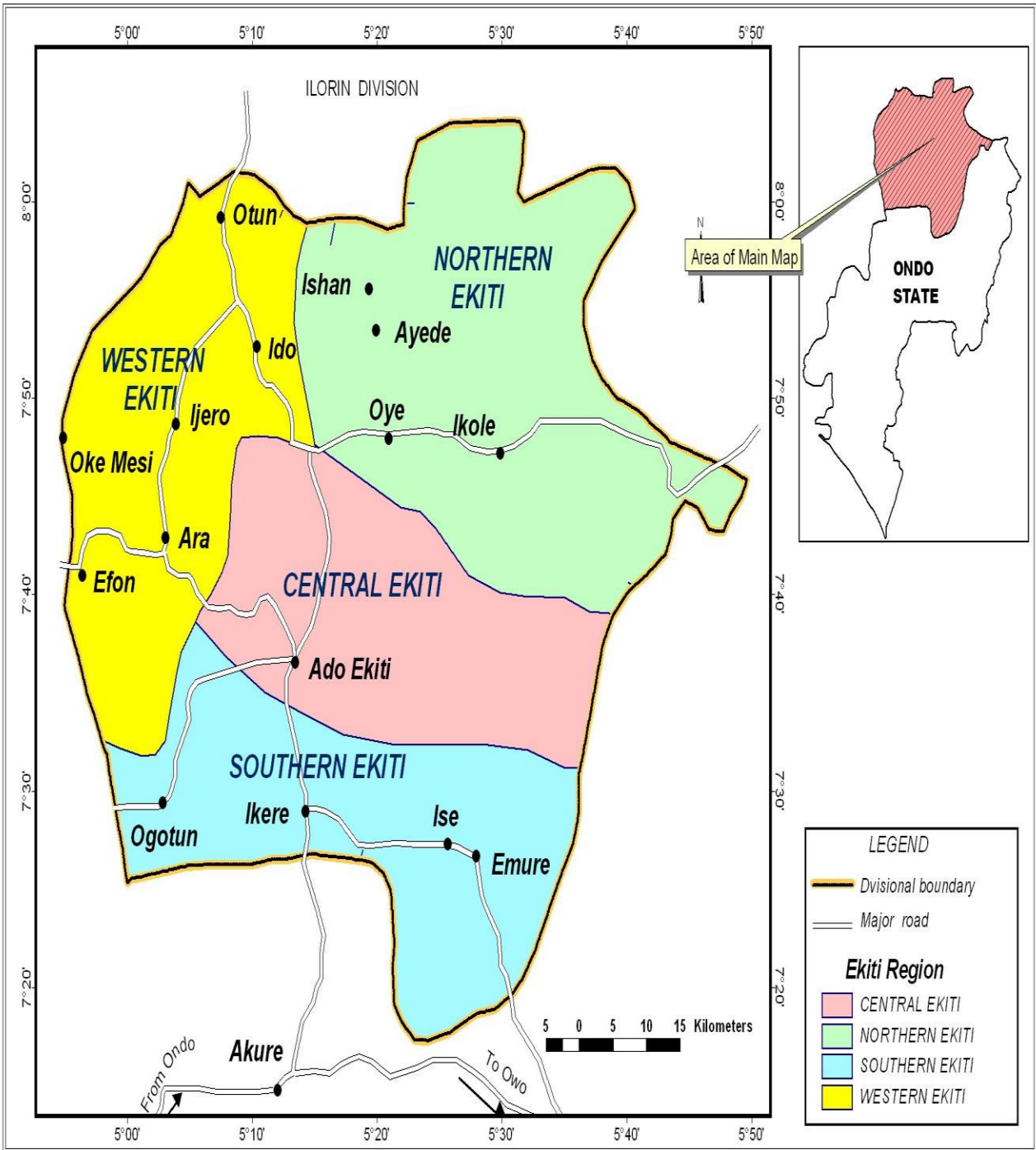
**FIG I: MAP OF EKITI KINGDOMS IN 1934**



**Source; Department of Geography, University of Ibadan**



**FIG II: MAP OF EKITI KINGDOMS AFTER 1958**



Source; Department of Geography, University of Ibadan

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> A. Folayan (1967), The 'PELUPELU' (the periodic meetings of Ekiti *Obas*) 1900-1958, B.A project. Dept of History. University of Ife, Ile-Ife. vii+37.
- <sup>2</sup> K. J. Olupona. 2011. *City of 201 Gods Ile-Ife in time, space, and the imagination*. university of California. USA. 81.
- <sup>3</sup> S. A. Akintoye. 1971. *Obas of Ekiti confederacy since the advent of British*. west african chiefs: their changing status under colonial rule and independence. Crowther and *Obaro* Ikime. Eds. Ile-Ife university press. 255-270.
- <sup>4</sup> N. A. I. Ekiti federal native authority. File no 391/11; 976.
- <sup>5</sup> Oral interview. Chief Elegbo of Oye, (82yrs) 06/05/2012
- <sup>6</sup> N. A. I. Swayne, R. C. C. 1936. Intelligent report on Oye district of Ekiti division. 2-34.
- <sup>7</sup> S. A. Akintoye. 1971. *Revolution and power politics in Yorubaland* 1840-1893, Longman, Ibadan. 5.
- <sup>8</sup> N. A. I. Weir, N. A. C. 1934. Intelligent report on the Ado district of the Ekiti division,
- <sup>9</sup> Oral Interview; Chief Babalola, the Oloriawo of Okemesi. 60+yrs
- <sup>10</sup> O. B. Olaoba. 2002. Yoruba kings in concert: the tradition of seclusion and its violation. *Readings in Nigerian history and culture*. Oguntomisin, G.O. and Ademola, S. A. Eds. Hope Publications, Ibadan. 86-105.
- <sup>11</sup> S. Johnson. 1921. *History of the Yorubas*, CMS Bookshop, Lagos. Nigeria. 185.
- <sup>12</sup> A. Oguntuyi. 1979. *History of Ekiti*, (from the beginning to 1939) Bisi Books, Ibadan. 39-41.
- <sup>13</sup> S. Johnson. 1921. *History of the Yorubas*, CMS Bookshop, Lagos. 59.
- <sup>14</sup> A. Oguntuyi. 1979. *History of Ekiti*, (from the beginning to 1939) Bisi Books, Ibadan. 39-41.
- <sup>15</sup> N. A. I. Intelligence report on the Ado district of the Ekiti division Ondo province. Cso 26: 50-51.
- <sup>16</sup> G. O. I. Olomola. 1977. Pre-colonial patterns of inter-state relations in eastern Yorubaland. PhD Thesis. University of Ife. Ile-Ife. 85.
- <sup>17</sup> J.A Atanda. 1991. Kings in Nigerian society through ages, unpublished, University of Ibadan. 5
- <sup>18</sup> H. A. Sanni. 1992. Local and urban administration in Nigeria, Government Printer, Ilorin, 111-132
- <sup>19</sup> H. A. Sanni. 1992. *Local and urban administration in Nigeria*. 67.
- <sup>20</sup> Oral Interview, the Onire of Ire Ekiti, *Oba* Adebobajo gave this information on the 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2012.
- <sup>21</sup> M. O. Falase. 1982. Chieftaincy disputes in Yorubaland and their socio political impact: a case of Ire Ekiti. B.A. Dissertation, Dept. of history. University of Ibadan. vii+47.
- <sup>22</sup> M. O. Falase. 1982. Chieftaincy disputes in Yorubaland and their Socio Political Impact: a case of Ire Ekiti. B.A. Dissertation. Dept. of history. University of Ibadan. vii+45
- <sup>23</sup> O. B. Olaoba. 2002. Yoruba kings in concert: the tradition of seclusion and its violation. *Readings in Nigerian history and culture*. Oguntomisin, G.O. and Ademola, S. A. Eds. Hope Publications, Ibadan. 86-105.
- <sup>24</sup> *Oba* Adeyemi 11, the Alaafin of Oyo was deposed and banished to Ilesa in 1954. He was said to have instigated anti tax protest against the action group (AG) led government.
- <sup>25</sup> On June, 1966, General Adekunle Fajuyi suspended the Olowo, *Oba* Olagbegi Olateru for six months, the suspension order on the monarch was revoked by December 15 1966. his request for security escorts to return to his domain was turned down by Brigadier Robert Adeyinka Adebayo, who did not want

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- his administration to be seen as imposing the estranged *Oba* on his people. On February 8, 1968, *Oba* Olagbegi, was deposed by General Adeyinka Adebayo and banished to Okitipupa.
- <sup>26</sup> *Oba* Gabriel Ilesanmi Orioye 11 was deposed by the Adekunle Ajasin government in May 1980. He was accused of always drinking to stupor and fighting even in the public; an act not expected of a king.
- <sup>27</sup> N. A. I. Ado disturbances and complaints against Aladesanmi 11. F/N 554. Vol. II. 239.
- <sup>28</sup> Anonymous, 1966. Native administration in Ekiti division, 1916-1951. B.A. Dissertation, Dept. of History. University of Ife. vii+39.
- <sup>29</sup> A. Folayan. 1967. The '*PELUPELU*' (the Periodic Meetings of Ekiti *Obas*) 1900-1958, Dept. of History. University of Ife. Ile-Ife. vii+37.
- <sup>30</sup> J.A. Atanda. 1991. Kings in Nigeria in Nigerian Society through Ages. inaugural lecture, University of Ibadan. 5.
- <sup>31</sup> A. Folayan. 1967. The '*PELUPELU*' (The Periodic Meetings of Ekiti *Obas*) 1900-1958, Dept. of History. University of Ife. Ile-Ife. vii+37.
- <sup>32</sup> A. Folayan. 1967. The '*PELUPELU*' (The Periodic Meetings of Ekiti *Obas*) 1900-1958, Dept. of History. University of Ife. Ile-Ife. vii+37.
- <sup>33</sup> Ekiti state government official web-page. June, 2011. Ekiti population in 1952, retrieved 01/06/2011 from [www.ekitistate.gov.ng](http://www.ekitistate.gov.ng), at 18; 17pm GMT.
- <sup>34</sup> Ekiti state government official web-page. June, 2011. Ekiti population in 1963, retrieved 01/06/2011 from [www.ekitistate.gov.ng](http://www.ekitistate.gov.ng), at 18; 17pm GMT.
- <sup>35</sup> Ekiti state government official web-page. June, 2011. Ekiti population in 1991, retrieved 01/06/2011 from [www.ekitistate.gov.ng](http://www.ekitistate.gov.ng), at 18; 17pm GMT
- <sup>36</sup> Ministry of information. 2006. National population commission document. Ado-Ekiti. 1-26.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter begins with a historical framework for the study of *pelupelu* institution in *Ekitiland*. The framework situates the study within the larger context of historiographical exploration, ethnic identity and development studies. It sets out issues considered; define the extent of work already done on the subject, and the relevance to the varied discourses on the subject of kingship, governance, social and political development. It, importantly, reveals the lacuna that give rise to the present study. The chapter has four parts, discussed in the following order;

- i. Historical Framework of the Study,
- ii. *Ekiti* people and their origin,
- iii. Kingship tradition in pre-colonial *Ekitiland*, and
- iv. Social and Political Transformations in *Ekitiland* by 1900.

#### 2.1 Historical framework and conceptual clarification of the study

The introductory chapter suggests that *pelupelu* is an institution of administration in colonial *Ekitiland*. It was inaugurated by Major Reeve Tucker in 1900. Thus, it signals the transformation of *Ekiti* kingship culture and tradition to a formal and modernised system by the colonial authority. However, the tradition and the culture created around the transformation was that of *Ekiti* people. The tradition started in the pre-colonial times, and came as far as the twenty first century, as an enterprise in structuring *Ekiti* worldview on their environment, and specifically, their kingship system. It is an item of serious contemplation and reflection in the people's experience, especially, because kingship culture is situated within the context of development. The critical pivot of *pelupelu*, are kinship structures of the *omiye* and *ebi* social system of relationship. They have served customarily and ideologically to distinguish the

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priesthood and the political system inherent in kingship. This started right from the outset of *Ekiti* communities as farm settlement, villages and towns.<sup>36</sup> In Ekitiland, the *oloriebi* or the clan head that could be called the *Baale* serves as the family priest. He, in the pre-colonial times, performed the roles of the head of a farm settlement, village or town consisting of conglomerations of clans and lineages of extended kin. He mediated the relationships between the people and the lineage through oracle tutelary, acting as a representative of the ancestor and the progenitor of the lineage. On his roles as the *oloriebi* or the *Baale*, Ajisafe said that:

“Every *bale* (head of a compound house) is responsible to the authorities for the conduct of the inmates of his compound. He must be respected and obeyed by the inmates of his house. He must be conversant with all the secrets in the compound. He has power to judge and decide cases affecting his own inmates, provided such cases are not connected with an outsider or with the authority. He may punish (...) any of the inmates who is guilty of misconduct. He is also bound to protect and help his inmates against ill or unfair treatment.”<sup>36</sup>

He performed his roles in a context of a community usually divided into quarters, made up of family lineages. The head of the lineages served as the quarter chief. For, each clan/lineage had its own deity, the *Oloriebi* also served as priest. The *Oloriebi* idea, most probably began between 2nd and 1st millennium B.C<sup>36</sup> and lasted up to the 7th century<sup>36</sup> when the Ife idea of kingship began through migrant settlers. In regard to *Ekiti* worldview, particularly in regard to *Ekiti* cosmology, the local deities were organised into a patriarchal ordering. The *Ubarisa* or *Edumare* is the creator and father of all beings. *Ubarisa* or *Abarisa/Edumare* is the name for *Olodumare* or God. The head of the lineage/clan that made sacrifices to the gods was the head or *Oloriebi* referred to as *Elu*. In other words, *Elu* was embodied in the status of *Oloriebi*. He was revered *ebo afin*, as the *baale* and priest with ritual roles. In the words of *Oke*, “the anchorage of *Ekiti* kingship on the personality of the *Aoro* or the *Elu* (that is the priest) constitutes a unique cultural feature, which marks *Ekiti* apart from other Yoruba people”<sup>36</sup>. It appears, in fact, that Ile-Ife might have had similar cultural design and practice before *Oduduwa*, the acclaimed Yoruba leader, appeared on the spot<sup>36</sup>.

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The periods from 7th century to 18th century were the stages of state formation in Ekitiland. It started with the positions of the lineage priest refers to as the *elu*, later the *oloja* or the *owa*; but at these periods, their positions were played down since the main duty is welfare of their people.<sup>36</sup> Within these periods also, migrants from Ife arrived in *Ekiti* area, with claims of being *Oduduwa* descents and to possess the authority (crown) to become kings by their antecedents. With the emergence of Ile-Ife migrants, there evolved a new socio-political system, which super-imposed an *oba* over the indigenous people (the dynastic system). Scholars like I.A. Akinjogbin,<sup>36</sup> Ade *Obayemi*<sup>36</sup> and J.A Atanda<sup>36</sup> have variously validated this development, showing that the development of the new kingship system eclipsed the extant indigenous village political structure.

Then as now, the typical *Ekiti* king's palace was, in fact, adorned with the shrine of various traditional deities, set side by side, in most cases, with that of the acclaimed founder of the town. In addition, market is usually physically situated right in the front of the king's palace, and as one who oversees the various activities in the market transactional space. But then, he also rises up the significance and importance of market to the evolving polity. As a matter of fact, he influences the market price of goods and services by his direct or indirect patronage. The *Owa Oloyin-bi-oyinbo* confirmed this when he stated, "our crowns are given to us by *Olodumare*"<sup>36</sup> meaning that the kings derived their authority patrilineally as well as spiritually. They are divine kings having derived their authority and sovereignty from their ancestors, the divinities and *Olodumare*; thus, their jurisdiction of authority covers the whole universe.

The foregoing is to place in context the sacredness of kingship institution in pre-colonial *Ekiti*. The kings were seen by the people to represent their ancestors, and the divinities. They were the vicegerent of *Olodumare*, they embodied his spirit to rule the universe through ritual sanctions and must be obeyed. The *Oba* undergoes installation rites, to assume a sacred position in a secular order. They must adhere to various taboos in order to protect their authority. Henceforth, and according to tradition, he was forbidden to meet another *oba* or cross a river. Thus, the concept of seclusion which was in operation in the pre-colonial period, because they did not have to meet under a more embracing social political platform, until they were brought together by the colonial authority under the *pelupelu* in 1900.

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It has become imperative at this juncture to clarify the word *Pelupelu*, which is significant to our thesis. The word *Pelupelu*, ordinarily, is a combination of four morphemes, ‘*pe*’, ‘*elu*’ and ‘*pe*’ ‘*olu*’. Joined together, they form *Pe-elu* or *pe-olu*, and may now be pronounced as *pelupelu*. *Pe* literarily means to call or invite, while an *elu*, as we have argued, is *Oloriebi*, *baale* or a family ritual priest. He possesses the power and he is the symbol of the ancestral-deity that he represents. He automatically transfers this privilege to his successor whenever he passes on. The *olu* is the political head of kingdoms, signifying an authority. It is an idea of kingship that later came in interpreting their roles as the one that controls or leads. Thus, *pelupelu* aggregates two forces, that of the priest and that of the king, and one can call or refer to each interchangeably. In other words, *pelupelu* could literally be an account of a priest that has an unchallenged control over his people. There is indeed a justification for this theoretical position.

The highest traditional cult in *Oye, Ijan, Ado, Ido* kingdom is the *Ereju* cult. The chief priest of the cult is *elu-ereju*. By tradition, he represents the ancestors and must not see the king eye to eye from the day of his investiture. This, probably, suggests that there is tension between the two, as one would experience in the transition of the *elu* to the *olu*, a kind of contestations that was initially present between the institution of priesthood and kingship. Both personnel are authorities with equal power, and are autonomous in their own way and practices. Since two authorities cannot co-exist in the same community without serious consequences to the stability of the polity, we do not think the two institutions co-existed for long. Rather, one lost out completely for the other. In some communities, the *Elu* became king-makers,<sup>36</sup> and in some other communities, the rivalry continues where the *Olu* cannot completely subdue the *Elu*<sup>36</sup>. The polemic is that one of them was prior, that was the priest and the other came when the *Oduduwa* structure came to existence.

Traditions noted that the initial authorities in *Ekitiland* were the *Olojamerindinlogun*. The term ‘*Olo*’ implies ownership or control. The market is physically linked to the palace, the seat of power. In this regard of the term is a reference to sixteen kings and their different sixteen markets. Their functions included overseeing of the people’s welfare by making sacrifices to the ancestors and deities for good harvest. These were the practices in *Ekitiland* before the introduction of beaded crown by arrivals from *Ile-Ife*, sometime around the 7th and 8th century.

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It survived in some part of *Ekitiland* where the *oduduwa* hegemony was ward-off to the 19th century when the Yoruba civil wars broke out and the colonial authority emerged in 1900. This development subsequently transformed the kingship institution in favour of beaded crown -the “*Olu*”. Upon this, the priestly tradition was rendered inferior.

By 1913, the Native Authority Ordinance made the kings president in their respective political domains tagged native councils. The transformation challenged their political authority, because it reduced their political relevance and influence by restricting their areas of political operation and function, even within their political territory. In fact, as early as 1901, there were edicts like the forestry ordinances, called the ‘right freedom’ restricted the activities of the kings on felling of timber without licence from the colonial authority.<sup>36</sup> Also in 1930, the chieftaincy ordinance was passed. The ordinance among others ruled against the appointment of kings or chiefs without recourse to the colonial authority.<sup>36</sup> In 1955,<sup>36</sup> an act was enacted by the colonial government that merged the old sixteen councils of the paramount *oba* to eight. Indirectly, a leadership struggle was initiated among the *oba* and it lasted several years after. The struggle created two lines of tension, which attested to two broad forms of rivalries. One was the determination of membership and another was the order of seniority. Significantly, at a time whoever is selected by the *Oba* would represent *Ekiti Oba* in the new western Nigeria Council of Chiefs at Ibadan.

The challenges created by native ordinances and colonial laws became more pronounced after independence in 1960. Initially, an *Oba* occupied an enviable position in the community and was very powerful within the new colonial arrangement as ‘president’. However, the *elite* in the vanguard of the struggle for independence, sooner eclipsed them in visibility and authority, and when they became the new state rulers, they were not favourably disposed to the inferiorised authority of the kings. This resulted in several critical exchanges that challenged the administrative capacity of the kings and led to occasional deposition of some *Oba*.

In 1976, Ondo state was created. The creation introduced ethnic nationality consciousness. Fundamentally, the “clandestine plans of the non-*Ekiti* section in government to wipe off the majority advantage of *Ekiti*...the number of local governments in each zone with regard to its bearing on the allocation of resources”<sup>36</sup> did not go down well with the people.



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Hence, the *Ekiti* parliamentarians in the state and federal house met first in Akure to find solution to the perceived marginalisation of *Ekiti* people within Ondo State. They converged in Ado-*Ekiti* at another time where it was agreed that delegation be sent to Chief *Obafemi* Awolowo to sensitize him on the plight of *Ekiti* within the UPN structure of government under Chief Adekunle Ajasin. The delegation was led by Chief J.E. Babalola<sup>36</sup>. Chief Awolowo and the leadership of UPN was not favourable to their demands, such that it led to divisions within the state and the party. Indeed, the struggle was along the dimension of political and spatial considerations and did persist until *Ekiti* state was created in 1996. It must be noted, however that from 1992, the people led by the *pelupelu* class of *Ekiti Oba* became the arrowhead in the struggle for the creation and political emancipation of *Ekitiland*. We made bold to say that within these periods (1960-1996) there were civilian, military and post-military civilian eras of governance in Nigeria. But regrettably, the kingship institution's challenges in these eras were not adequately historicised and documented. This is the gap the present study fills.

The justification for the periodisation, 1900-2000, is that this was the period that witnessed rapid transformation and development in *Ekitiland*, and that many challenges confronted the *pelupelu* institution. Whereas, some *Ekiti* kings, with consideration to social system and traditional structure of matrilineal and patrilineal had been relating before 1900;<sup>36</sup> for instance, the *Elekole*, gave out one of his daughters in marriage to the *Oore* probably as a mark of diplomatic or social relation.<sup>36</sup> Traditions record that before 1900, there were periodic exchanges of messages and gifts between kings during installations and state festivals or celebrations or as a mark of allegiance. But 'state' visits were rare due, largely, to the traditions of seclusion. Information from *Olojudo* reveals that the *Oloye* and the *Olojudo* of Ido Faboro had to make sacrifices before they could meet at their border town. Nonetheless, its convocation as a central body of authority and as a political institution on June 21st, 1900 marked its foundation as a formal, modern and organised administrative body. Equally of note is that during festivals, the celebrating kings received messages, royal emissaries and gifts from all over *Ekiti*. These were paid back later as mark of friendship. Most *Ekiti* kingdoms had great festivals, which were widely acknowledged and celebrated annually. These include the *Olosunta* festival in *Ikere*, *Alile* in *Ise*, *Ode* in *Oye*, and in *Efon*, *Ido*, *Ado*, *Ikole* and *Otun* among others. These festivals attracted crowds far and wide.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, formal relations were not institutionalised.

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In stories predicating the tradition of *pelupelu*, the *Ewi* of *Ado*, *Elekole* of *Ikole* and the *Ajero* of *Ijero*, were, according to oral traditions, offspring of Eyemode,<sup>36</sup> who was said to have been married, at different times, to kings of these three kingdoms. Her children were contemporaries, and when they became kings, they interacted on the basis of their shared maternity. In the same way, the *Oloye* and *Onire* were said to be the children of Yeye-aye, and related to each other as siblings. Similar relationships were found in, *Ikere* and *Ado*<sup>36</sup>, *Oye*, *Ikole*, *Ara* and *Ijero*<sup>36</sup>. There were features of conflict among them, but they were resolved on the basis of kinship.

Between 1923 and 1945, the *pelupelu* institution was transformed into an administrative institution, performing advisory and Judiciary role, and serving as a consultative body though without legal status<sup>36</sup>. From 1923 to 1946, the institution was enmeshed in wars of supremacy among her ranks, particularly with the establishment of council of chiefs in Western Region, Nigeria, and the introduction of Superior Native Authority with an enlarged group of enlightened representatives.<sup>36</sup> In 1946, *Akure*<sup>36</sup> broke off from the council just as the Superior Native Authority was granted a legal status of an advisory body. In the same year, *Ado* which had agitated for separation from the council was re-admitted, after the *Ewi* Anirare Aladesanmi apologised to the colonial authority and the kings. The colonial authority honoured the claims of independence by *Osi*, *Ilawe* and *Igbara-odo*, with the *Olojudo* of *Ido-Irapa* (formerly *Ido-Ajinnare* and now *Ido-Ile*). With their inclusion, *pelupelu* membership was increased to twenty in 1950, at the meeting held in *Isan*<sup>36</sup>.

On the 21st June, 1950, the institution marked its 50th anniversary. This was held at *Isan-Ekiti*. It was marked by the opening of the institution to include all *Ekiti* sons and daughters, purposely to draw support/strength from the educated *elite*. The institution was thereby transformed from playing administrative and advisory role to a political organ, meant to engineer the social development of *Ekitiland*. Basically, then, the first part of this research is to examine the evolution of *pelupelu* from 1900 to 1960, because this was a period of social and political cleavages and tension among the kings. The development at this period, essentially, culminated in the abandonment of traditions and taboos associated with kingship institution in *Ekitiland*. The second part covers 1960 to 2000, and is noted for the development of new but foreign administrative system, the scheming out of the traditional rulers from their traditional positions,

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and the origination of new official roles. Against this background, the study unfolds the nature of kingship tradition within the context of peculiar historiographical situation. It highlights the political culture, which enshrines kingship culture, and focuses on *pelupelu* as a mirror of historical markers.

## 2.2 *Ekiti* people and their origin

Scholars have divergent opinions on the term *Ekiti*; hence, it is difficult to ascertain its real meaning. Coupled with this is the fact that there are different myths of origin and migration of the *Ekiti* people. But when subjected to critical analysis, it becomes very difficult to state when the first man settled in *Ekitiland*. However, what is common to all the account is the claim that, *Ekiti* emigrated from Ile-Ife. There are, equally, strong evidence in favour of aboriginal or autochthonous groups in *Oye* and *Ouku*, around *Ijero*,<sup>36</sup> who might have settled in *Ekiti* as hunter-gatherers, before the coming of the Ife group around 1000 AD,<sup>36</sup> before the coming of the Ile-Ife groups. Scholars have opined that the colonisation by Ife group was done either through persuasions or coercion force. In the case of *Ado*, the *Elesun* of *Ado* was dislodged by the *Ewi* by coercion. In *Ikere*, the *Ogoga* of *Ikere*, who was said to have come at the instance of *Olukere* himself, was dislodged by the *Ogoga* who happened to be a blood relation of the *Deji* of *Akure*. In *Odo-Ora*, Oloyemoyin tried to lord himself on the people of *Odo-Ora* but failed because he could not match them militarily. The people moved from *Odo-ora* to *Oye-Ipole* and overwhelmed *Apota*, the priest king. *Olouku* in *Ijero* was dispossessed of his crown by the *Ajero*. There are but few insights into the historical confrontations between leaders of the migrating settlers and the aboriginals. In some towns, ceremonies are organised to attest to their historical origin<sup>36</sup>. Between *Ikere* and *Ado*, where the *Elesun* and the *Olukere* were autochthones,<sup>36</sup> there was rivalry which created space for external interference and the result was that both towns were taken over by foreign elements. At a later date, some *Ekiti* towns like *Afao* and *Are*, probably because of weak military strength, had to look to *Ikere*, *Ado* or other towns for protection. Indeed, a section of *Are* people, moved to *Ikere* in 1815, and this is said to have been done voluntarily in order to secure protection under the Benin army.<sup>36</sup>

An aspect of the tradition of origin of *Akure*<sup>36</sup> claim that *Ogoga* was the son of *Oba Imoluwode*, who lost the stool to his brother *Deji, Oja-Iyara*, and as a result moved to settle

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between *Igbara-Odo* and *Ikere* called *Igamo*, where he later became their king. R.C.C. Law<sup>36</sup>, writing on the origin of *Ogoga* asserts that King *Ewuare* installed *Ogoga* as the king of *Ikere*, having supplanted the *Olukere*. The presence of Benin around *Ekiti* was so overwhelming that Benin culture became dominant around *Akure*, *Ikere* and *Ado* kingdom, particularly from the time the *Olukere*'s position was changed and *Ikere* was taken over by the *Ogoga*, a Benin chief. It is, however, unlikely that *Ikere* invited *Ogoga* to deal with a recalcitrant chief, and was later short changed by the *Ogoga*, because the 11th *Deji* of *Akure*, named *Ogoga*, is said to have come from *Ikere* to assume the position of *Deji* around C.1313-1364 A.D.<sup>36</sup>. It is possible that the *Ogoga* was a Benin warrior around *Ekiti* if viewed against his installation in *Ikere* by King *Ewuare* and his kingship in *Akure*. This was probably a means of maintaining Benin imperialism in the area.

Oral traditions<sup>36</sup> in *Akure* and *Ikere* confirm that *Ogoga* and *Ojo Iyara* were brothers and that the *Ogoga* reigned as *Oba* in both towns. Secondly, a courtyard in the *Deji*'s palace is called *Ua Ogoga*, probably named after *Ogoga* and in remembrance of his escapades in *Akure*. In addition is the fact that *Deji* and *Ogoga* share the same *Oriki* of *Oyemekun*<sup>36</sup>.

In the case of *Egosi/Eshetta* (now *Ilupeju*) and *Ire-Ekiti*, the immigrant groups took over these towns, following the fall of Oyo kingdom and the Ilorin expansionist programmes in *Ekitiland*. The invaders installed their leader as the head of government.

In *Egosi/Eshetta*, now *Ilupeju*, migrants from *Itaji*, *Ikole*, *Ido*, *Ijero* and *Ilorin* among other areas in *Ekitiland* and beyond came together to settle.<sup>36</sup> *Ayede* has its own history being a confederation of many towns and villages including *Iye*, *Alu*, *Iyagba*, *Opin*, *Ileje* and *Otunja*.<sup>36</sup> *Esubiyi*, who was made the Balogun *Ekiti* by Ibadan,<sup>36</sup> settled in *Ayede* and because of his military prowess attracted many displaced people into *Ayede*. He became the *Atta* of *Ayede*. The Ire people was said to have settled first at *Iremogun*, before moving to their present site, where "Ogunlire, a powerful traveller, after beheading anyone he could see because he was dissatisfied with his reception, sank into the ground" where his people thus settled to worship him.<sup>36</sup> *Ijero* witnessed the inflow of migrants from south-east Oyo, *Ilorin* and *Igbomina*, to mention a few. Refugees also came from *Iyagba*, *Owe*, *Abunu* and *oworo*. They were fleeing the *Nupe* wars and

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came into *Ekiti* and *Akoko* to settle.<sup>36</sup> Wherever the migrants sojourned, they influenced the extant political structure and imposed their own leadership on the autochthones.

Oguntuyi indicated that migrant groups came into *Ekiti* around the 16th century from Ile-Ife. This does not agree with the date stated for the dispersal at *Ita-Ijero*, Ile-Ife, which Ayandele and Akinjogbin variously put at 8th and 9th century,<sup>36</sup> with the opinion held by P. C. Lloyd that *Ekiti* people were migrants from the Benue area.<sup>36</sup> R.C. Abraham and Rev. Johnson, on the contrary, believed that *Ekitiland* was peopled by migrants from *Ile-Ife*, Benin and *Ijebu-Ode*.<sup>36</sup> Rev. Johnson indicated that the aboriginals were conquered by invaders from the east, but *Biobaku* differed. In *Biobaku's* opinion, the invaders came in two groups from Ile-Ife and Benin, in the 16th and 17th century, respectively.<sup>36</sup> Although the time of arrival of the migrants is not clear, what is clear is that there was a cultural link between the autochthones and others. That is, immigrant settlers came from different places at different times and settled among the aboriginal host. The effect of the mixed up of people, from different backgrounds' into *Ekitiland*, must have accounted for the linguistic differences among the *Ekiti* people. Like other ethnic groups in Nigeria, *Ekiti* people are defined by a common culture, which has greatly impacted on their 'evolutionary' process, as a people and as a nation within the Nigeria nation-hood. This consciousness assisted their independence as a group and provides the ground for evaluation of their human possibilities, in the light of peculiarly cultivated values which, to a large extent, distinguished the *Ekiti* from the other Yoruba sub-groups like *Oyo*, *Ijebu*, *Egba*, *Awori*, among others. Their world views define them as longsuffering, diligent, respectful, trusting, and accommodating. They are considered by their neighbours as aggressive when faced with challenges to their integrity and honesty. In fact, the *Oloponakusupona* and *Kiriji* wars testify to the will of the people to stand against any attempt to infringe on their right.

The typical *Ekiti* man can be distinguished by facial and body marks that regrettably have gone into extinction being abandoned for western values. The commonest facial marks among the *Ekiti* people in the past are *pele*, *katimole*, and *teoboju*. Their body marks include *bomodagba* and tattoos. Many of these facial marks can be found in *Aramoko*, *Efon-Alaaye*, *Okemesi*, *Igbara-Odo*, *Ikere*, *Ilawe*, *Ogotun*, *Ikole*, *Oye*, *Ido*, *Itaji*, *Isan*, *Ijero* and *Ayetoro*. Also peculiar is the splitting of the two front teeth as distinctive physical feature, even up till the 1940s.<sup>36</sup>

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The peoples' culture includes a distinctive belief system, rule of conduct, language, rituals, political and economic ideologies, and deep respect for elders and superiors. Oral traditions have it that there were sixteen kingdoms. Each of them was independent of the other, at least up to the end of the 19th century. The sixteen kingdoms are located in the eastern part of Yorubaland. The people presently claim traditions of origin from Ile-Ife, even though it is now obvious that not all the people inhabiting *Ekitiland* migrated from Ile-Ife<sup>36</sup>.

The myth of Ife origin has attracted various criticisms from scholars. Ulli Bier described it as “attempts to claim legitimacy and paramountcy by the kings and to validate and legalise their entitlement to wear *ade ileke*, a beaded crown... and wield sovereign power of life and death over subjects”<sup>36</sup> sub-ordinate towns and villages. Each of the sixteen kingdoms, up till 1900, wielded political authority over some number of villages and small settlements, using their matrilineal and patrilineal relationship.<sup>36</sup> They developed mutually intelligible language, as the means of identity, idea-nationality and ethnic consciousness.

Writing on the peculiarity of *Ekiti* culture, in language, religion, marriage, occupation, commerce, crafts, industries, arts and domestic life, Olomola<sup>36</sup> is of the opinion that *Ekiti* dialect has seven variants; that is, the western *Ekiti* dialect with *Ijesa* influence, spoken around *Efon-Alaaye, Okemesi, Ipole-Iloro, Ogotun, Igbara-Odo* and *Ilawe*, including *Ikogosi, Erinjiyan, Erio, Ido Ajinare* and *Aramoko* with a less or intermediate ascent. There is also the north-western dialect, spoken in, *Ijero, Ikoro, Odo-Owa, Ipoti, Ijurin Iyapa* (now *Ayetoro*) and *Moba towns* and *Ilejemeje*. There is the language of the northern *Ekiti* with *Iyagba* influence in *Oye, Ire, Egosi* and *Eseta* (now *Ilupeju*), *Itaji, Isan, Ayede* and *Obbo, Itapa and Egbe-Oba* towns of *Ipao, Oke-Ako* and *Ilemeso*. He also noted the north-eastern group and the central group. The problem with Olomola language classification is in the grouping. Within his grouping of *Oye, Ire, Arigidi, Egosi and Eseta* with *Itaji, Isan, Ayede, Obbo* and *Egbe-Oba* towns where *Iyagba's* influence are more prominent, unlike in *Oye* towns of *Ire, Arigidi (Ayegbaju), Egosi* and *Eseta (Ilupeju)*, whose dialects have close affinity with the *Ile-Ife* area. These peculiarities aside, their dialects are somehow homogenous.

Ade Obayemi<sup>36</sup>, relying on “Greenberg’s classification of the languages of Africa,” resolved that the languages spoken around the Niger-Benue confluence, namely, the Yoruba

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(dialects), *Igala*, *Agatu*, *Gade*, *Idoma* (and dialects), *Igbirra*, *Gbari* (*Gwari*), *Nupe* (and dialects) constitute different clusters; thus, they could be said to be speaking one language of the *kwa* group of Yoruba dialects. The slight differences in their language in *Ekitiland* could be the consequence of place of origin and migration into *Ekitiland*. This has resulted in the mixture of languages and the mutual differences known in some parts of *Ekiti*. Thus, it is easier to differentiate Oyo migrants from the *Iyagba*.

There is, presently, the ‘assumption’ that all the kingdoms that make up the Yoruba nation today are from a common ancestor named *Oduduwa* and from a location called Ile-Ife. Nevertheless, some scholars of Yoruba history would highlight the language difference more as a factor of local identity. In their opinion, language “is the most important determinant factor in considering a group as a distinct, ethnic entity, for it makes communication, culture evolution and culture transmission possible within a group”<sup>36</sup>. If we juxtapose this with the newly discovered lexico-statistics and glottochronology analysis of history, it is possible that the ancestors of the Nigerian ethnic groups had formed a proto-group and later separated into various regions, which amount to the various dialects or languages spoken. There may be need for further clarifications here. But so far linguists have opined that, Yoruba, *Edo*, *Ibo*, *Yala*, *Anago*, and *Igala* are of common ancestry<sup>36</sup>. Armstrong has postulated a time of 6000 to 2000 as the years of separation, but what this new approach to African historiography signifies is the need for investigation, which may at the end, give a clue to the darkest past of *Ekiti*, in particular, and Nigeria, generally, specifically as to the time of separation and the social de-linking among Nigerian ethnic groups.

Furthermore, Oke Kolawole depicts religion as the most potent basis for formal aggregation of family in *Ekitiland*. He argued that religion produced the first set of rulers in all the villages of *Ekiti*, who were priests. In *Ekiti* cosmogony, God is conceived as dwelling in heaven and is the father of all, with many wives and children. The people believed that the wives and children of *Ubarisa* took on various responsibilities as divinities in the world created by God, (*Ubarisa* in *Ekiti* language). *Ekiti* concept and worldview is deep in the belief that “*Ubarisa* or *Abarisa* is immanent being, the lord of the universe, who cannot be approached directly. He has to be approached through the wives and children that have been deified.” Thus God, that is *Ubarisa*, is approached and appeased through divinities which perform basic functions that

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encourage their being adopted by the generality of *Ekiti* people. Specifically, each divinity was specially worshipped by various lineages, before they became universal gods, worshipped regularly through festivals, sacrifices and votive offerings<sup>36</sup>.

In all, “*Ekiti* people are peaceful and law abiding... They are lovers of rural life and are well endowed with farm lands, and as such, land disputes are rare”.<sup>36</sup> Also in the opinion of Swayne,<sup>36</sup> “it is refreshing to know that there is a marked absence of intrigue and of striving for power among these people, which is sometimes a prominent feature in native life in place not far distant.”

*Ekitiland* up till 1900 include *Otun* kingdom (*Mobaland*) and all towns in the present *Ekiti* local government area of *Kwara* State, *Igbara-oke*, *Akure* and the adjoining towns like *Ilaromokin* in the present *Ondo* State, and all the towns in the present *Ekiti* State created in 1996. In all, *Ekiti* towns and villages were about one hundred and fifty (150) towns by 1900.<sup>36</sup> They had mutually intelligible dialects and were never part of the *Oyo* kingdom.

Thawstan Shaw’s<sup>36</sup> work at *Isarun* near *Iwo-Eleru* in 1959, and the *Oba-Ile* myth of origin claimed that, life in these towns predates *Ile-Ife*; and if this is correct, then life in *Ekitiland* could predate *Ife*, due to the proximity of *Iwo-Eleru* to *Ekitiland*.

### **2.3 Kingship tradition in pre-colonial *Ekitiland***

Many scholarly works exist on the kingship institution in Yorubaland. They were written by historians, sociologists, anthropologists, archaeologists and social scientists among others. J.A. Atanda,<sup>36</sup> A.I Asiwaju,<sup>36</sup> P.C.Lloyd,<sup>36</sup> S. Afolayan,<sup>36</sup> O.B. Olaoba<sup>36</sup> and Insa Nolte.<sup>36</sup> Studies on kingship institution in Yorubaland emphasise the importance, relevance and influence of kings in the administration of pre-colonial Yorubaland. Scholars averred that *Oba* of pre-colonial Yorubaland reigned and ruled as *alase*, *ekeji orisa*. They conclude that they are vicegerents of the gods, in all its ramifications and represent *Olodumare* and the ancestors from the day of their initiation and coronation as king. They became the symbol of the gods, having being elevated, ritually, above ordinary men, through the rites of kingship. They, thus, assume the status of divinities, inviolable, sovereign and sacred. This sacred status accords them divine respect, since their sovereignty and authority is believed to have emanated from *Olodumare* and,



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as a result, nobody dare question their authority. They became the *kabiyesi* who controlled all the factors of production within their territory. In fact, the king neither toiled nor laboured. Rather his sustenance depended largely on the people who, as a matter of priority, must supply his basic needs. This was the situation until the end of the 19th century, when the Yoruba country formally became a colony of Britain and the kingship institution was subjected to her imperial government. The subjection denied them certain privileges formerly associated with kingship.

Like other Yoruba sub-groups, kingship institution in *Ekitiland* has its origin in the culture of the people. First was the formation of households, and then emerged a unique system of government under the *Baale*, head of the family. Later, there was the *Oloriebi* (in the extended or kinship stage). He is revered and mandated to offer prayers, daily, on behalf of the family to *Ubarisa*, through their ancestors and the tutelary divinity of the family. The offering is for sustenance and guidance in their endeavours, particularly as farmers, their major occupation. During planting and harvesting seasons, the gods and the divinities are venerated by leaders of each clan (*Baale*). The *Baale*, who is also the priest, is an important institution in the societal social structure. His word, usually, is final in major decisions of the family. He is the adjudicator and the extended family administrator. His success rests on the co-operations of the members of the lineage. The clan in a wider political framework aggregates to become a village; in this regard there is either the *Oloja* or the *Owa*, as the head of the village and or community. This was the nature of political authority in primordial *Ekitiland*, until the influx of migrants into the area.

Prominent among the migrants into *Ekitiland* were those from Ile-Ife. They claim to come with *Ade-Ileke*, as descendants of *Oduduwa*<sup>36</sup>. The *Ekiti oba*, was until their arrival the priest king, with the propensity to celebrate religious rather than political leadership. With the foreign elements, however, he was relegated to the second place because he seemed contended with the priesthood. As a matter of fact, the *Ekiti* people's relationship with the *Olodumare* is embodied in their everyday life, such that *Olodumare* is revered before work and after. In the words of Oguntuyi, "beaded crown was so invaluable in *Ekiti*... (but) the wearer had to prove that he was a descendant of 'Oduduwa' and that he came from Ife and that he was invited to govern".<sup>36</sup> But Ade Obayemi,<sup>36</sup> Thurstan Shaw<sup>36</sup> and Ulli Bier<sup>36</sup> have differently challenged Ife political

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primacy on the account of their various discoveries in some Yoruba towns, of *Ife-Ijumu*, and *Oba-Ile* among as having political undertone.

It would appear from the account of kingship in *Ekitiland*, that the *Ekiti Oba*, until the influx and influence of Ile-Ife migrants, was not as influential and powerful as was the case in such Yoruba kingdoms as Oyo and *Ijebu*, where the *Oba's* influence were beyond questioning. This notwithstanding, an *Ekiti Oba* is accorded respect, and not feared or demeaned. His settlement was on its own, autonomous from others, and there was no reason to engage in competition for supremacy. As Ile Ife influence permeated all aspects of the kingship culture, the *Oba* started to become autocratic, wielding the power of life and death over his subjects. He rarely came out of the palace unless occasion demanded. This is done behind the veil, thus concealing his identity from public glare, as the representative of the ancestors. When he speaks, an interpreter has to pass the messages to his subjects, for it was a taboo for the king to be seen in public or meet eye to eye with any other king.<sup>36</sup>

The *Oba* governed his subjects according to the norms and customs of the land laid down by the ancestors.<sup>36</sup> The aboriginal's system of administration in *Ekiti* was theocratic,<sup>36</sup> being a system under the influence of religion and the ancestors. But this, as Ade *Obayemi* said, was at a period of state formation in Yorubaland when there was no political cooperation between "the mini-states," that is, the settlements that were predominantly peasantry. It extended and enjoyed a relationship based on both matrilineality and patrilineality, to a clan, lineage, village group or town.<sup>36</sup>

The influx of migrants into *Ekitiland*, particularly from *Ile-Ife*, introduced the "mega township system" and a highly centralised political system. The mega town exerted the authority through central administration, as the head town, that ascribed to itself a kingdom status and with a headquarters. In this wise, there were several towns that can claim to be independent kingdoms in *Ekitiland*, although oral tradition gave the number of traditionally recognised mega-states as sixteen. Because scholars have not been able to identify these traditional sixteen kingdoms, the issue has remained a subject of controversy, even among the kings.

From the foregoing, we suggest that there were two types of political authority in pre-colonial *Ekitiland*. The first, which was a local derivative, was led by the priest-*Oba*. The second

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group was headed by the beaded crown *Oba*. The priest king antedated the beaded kingship. The latter was introduced by the immigrants who came into Ekitiland at different times. Going by the views expressed by Ade Obayemi<sup>36</sup> and Atanda,<sup>36</sup> it is seen that the existence of beaded crown has spanned a little more than a thousand years, based on the time of departure of migrants from Ile-Ife, which Akinjogbin and Ayandele<sup>36</sup> said began around the 8th and 9th century. It is to be assumed that because these classes of kings were invited to *Oke-Imo* in 1900, hence the term *pe-elu* and *pe-olu*, ‘call the priest’ and ‘call the king’ that became *pelupelu*. A clarification of the concept *pelupelu* in the light of the above might be necessary for our understanding of the concept as indigenous to *Ekiti* kingship system, as the alternative to that which relies on the nature of the invitation to the first *pelupelu*.

For emphasis, this study has posited that *Pelupelu* is a combination of four morphemes, that is, *pe*, *olu* and *pe*, *elu* joined together to form *Pelupelu*. *Pe* literally means to call or invite. *Olu* refers to political head of towns or kingdoms. *Elu* is the personality of the priest, the embodiment of spirituality. They are called and identified by their role-play; serving the gods.

There are other thoughts on the subject as well. Oguntuyi, conceptualising *pelupelu*, had opined that, *Pelupelu* could mean ‘the calling of the lords’. But an interpretation that is similar to our own, and based on the literal translation of the concept, is that of Folayan. He believes that ‘the term is a double compound word in Yoruba language’ made up of *pe* which means to call, while *Olu* means an *Oba*, who is head of a kingdom. With this, he identifies only one class of authority, the kingdom *Oba*. He went further to state that *pe-olu*, which means to call the *Oba*, is shortened to mean *pelu* and that *pelupelu*, therefore, meant ‘the summoning of *Oba* to a general conference,’ an interpretation suggesting that ‘*elu*’ stands for a gathering or meeting. However, some kings did not accept any of these two versions. They stated that it is *olu-pe-olu*, that is, *Oba pe oba* (king-call-king),<sup>36</sup> which means that one king (nature not specified) called another king (nature not specified). These opinions seem not to differ markedly. The critical issue is, What does *elu* stand for? The stress on the *oba* could be more understood in the peculiarity of *Ekiti* cultures, and its two types of authorities, namely, the *Elu* that is priesthood and the *Olu*, the kingship. The fact is that *Olu* and the *Elu* are lords in their respective areas of operation, functions and authority. The *Olu* is the political head that has responsibility to govern the people. The *Elu* has a responsibility to perform priesthood on behalf of the ancestors and the gods; as

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such the two types of authorities are sacred. What we discovered is that in *Oye, Ijan, Ise, Ikere, Ijero*, among other kingdoms of *Ekiti*, the two are co-equals. They must have stood for different era in development processes, and must have been co-running at some point in time, each, most probably exercising a sense of difference.

Again, our position is that the extended invitation to local authorities in 1900 was to the two parallel systems of authorities. *Pelupelu* is the attempt at bringing them together under the control of the colonial government, to become an institution of government responsible for the day to day running of local authorities, regulated by the Native Authority Ordinance of 1913.

## **2.4 Social-political transformations of Ekitiland; *Pelupelu* as a political and administrative institution**

Kingship institution has remained relevant to governance at various times in Yorubaland. This study has noted that kingship is a development process initiated, first in the family. It assumes greater complexity with various ramifications of extended family. The aggregation of families into lineages led to distribution of roles among lineages and the challenges of production and consumption among a wide public aggregating gradually into farm settlements,<sup>36</sup> mini-towns and mega-states.<sup>36</sup> In this evolution, there are three distinct phases; first, the transformation of family into *ilu*, towns; second, the reflection on the incorporation of religious belief system of control, that brought in the *elu* concept; and third, the need to organise the town to defend itself through military organisation, that the *Olu* concept represented. As we have noted, a town which grows as a market becomes popular, is well patronised, and the people settle there to take advantage of the productions. That early commodities grew around the market is suggested by naming the ruler '*oloja*' or '*owa*'.

Unlike the *elu*, leadership in an *Oja* was based on agreement and not on any esoteric force. However, as classes emerged, due to wealth accumulation, the need for symbolic markers grew, and so the relevance of the *oba-alade*, in *ilu-alade*, who were mostly foreigners coming from Ile-Ife and claiming loyalty to *Oduduwa*.

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The *Ekitiparapo* war again offers another opportunity for the towns and kingdoms to unite against external enemy, the Ibadan. But unlike the past aggregation of towns that was a total merger, these towns only contributed resources for the prosecution of the war at a different location through the informal involvement of the kings and the chiefs, except for the war generals at the camps. The association that climaxed as *Ekitiparapo* was never at any time an institution, located within a systemic organ of general administration. It lacked any judicial power or diplomatic aura to negotiate with external forces. Therefore, *Ekitiparapo* was never an institution. It was only saddled with the responsibility of prosecuting the war against Ibadan, with no judicial function. It will, therefore, be proper to state that there was no *pelupelu* until 1900, when it was inaugurated by Major Reeve-Tucker at *Oke-Imo*. The inauguration of *Ekiti* Council in 1900 broke the tradition of separate township authorities and political institutions and ushered in a centralised system of the administration of *Ekitiland* as a whole. The council became an appendage of colonial government, as a native authority institution, overseeing the administration of *Ekitiland*. The *pelupelu* council was empowered to function, in all its ramifications, as an institution of government, and had executive, legislative and judicial powers. As a matter of fact, *pelupelu*, from 1919, took decisions on taxation, building of schools and road networks and settled judicial cases.

#### **2.4:1 *Pelupelu*: a missing gap in historical literature of Ekitiland**

Major W.R.Reeve-Tucker<sup>36</sup> was made the first commissioner in charge of the North-Eastern District, comprising *Ekiti*, *Ijesha* and *Ondo* areas in 1899. On assumption of office he embarked on familiarization tour of *Ekitiland* for three months.<sup>36</sup> In his letter to the then Honourable Colonial Secretary in Britain, on the 26th of February, 1900, he wrote that,

“I have called in all the tributary villages to the capitals of the several kingdoms and have placed the *Bales* securely under their kings. The *Bales* who were endeavouring to make themselves independent ..., old wars and disputes, I have effectively placed under their proper kings”  
(sic)<sup>36</sup>

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Basically, Major W.R. Reeve-Tucker restructured the institution by bringing all the *oba* together to form the *Ekiti* Council in 1900, which the people equated with the traditional *pelupelu*.

Adeyemi Folayan's work offers an insightful framework for which this study could advance its interrogations. He pioneered the research study on the *pelupelu* institution, but did not examine the order of hierarchy in the *pelupelu* administrative system. His study covered a time period extending to 1958. In addition was his attempt to clarify the meaning of *pelupelu*, as 'the summoning of *Oba* to a general conference.' These are valuable contributions that this study takes note of, but some of the proposals are contested because they are contestable. We disagree with his position on age, as the determinant of hierarchy among the *Ekiti* kings, and note that this position has been consistently challenged by other members of the *pelupelu* council. What we discovered from the work is that, he only noted the hierarchy based on colonial report<sup>36</sup> and not on traditional means of asserting status. This is the gap the present study fills.

Olaoba's<sup>36</sup> scholarly work on kingship institution in Yorubaland is another important study that has direct relevance to this study on *pelupelu*. The study discusses the 'changes and the continuity in royal institutions in colonial Yorubaland, particularly the 'tempo and dimensions of secrecy in the royal institution before colonial government'. The relevance of this study could be seen in the identification of the transformation from the tradition of seclusion to one of 'participation and socialisation', featuring feasting and festivals or carnivals at the expense of their autonomy and political authority shortly after the transformation. As such, the *oba* is now seen and can be involved in conferences outside his domain. But how did the 'participation and socialisation' rock the boat of traditional hegemony, and even thereafter, the system as a whole?

A pertinent scholarly work is also that of Deji Ogunremi and Biodun Adediran. These scholars assert that Mr. McCullum, the governor of Lagos and its protectorate in 1897, ordered the establishment of council of chiefs, in an attempt to lessen the duties of the British officials in the interiors. They went further to highlight the traditional political system of the Yoruba people, "which was not alien to Yorubaland that had been, hitherto, governed by an *Oba*, and assisted by a council of chiefs"<sup>36</sup>. It must be stated here that the traditional political system that was referred to is alien to *Ekiti* where independence and autonomy of towns and villages is sacrosanct. The

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major contribution of their study, however, is providing the reason for the creation of council of chiefs, and how it was created variously in Ibadan in 1897, in Abeokuta and Oyo in 1818, and between 1898 and 1900, those of *Ijebu-Ode*, *Ijebu-Remo*, *Ondo* districts, *Ijesa* and *Ekiti* in 1900. *Ekiti* council included the *Owa* of *Ilesa*, and other fifteen kings from *Ekiti*. The work only makes passing reference to *pelupelu* .

E.K. Faluyi<sup>36</sup> explained the various challenges of political institutions in pre-colonial Yorubaland, particularly the period of the civil wars between the various Yoruba sub-ethnic groups up till the ascendancy of Ibadan. Although this work was a historical account of the economic activities of the *Ekiti* people, it particularly focused on commercial activities of the people and highlighted the major trading routes of the south to the northern highway, that is, from Benin through *Akure*, *Ado*, *Oye*, *Ifaki*, *Obbo*, *Otun*, *Igbomina* to all *Ekiti* towns and *Nupe* to the old Oyo town of *Ijaye*. He also focused on what went on in Ibadan to the period of Ibadan expansionist programme that finally led to the *Kiriji* war. This scholarly work contributes immensely to our understanding of the roles of the kings in pre-colonial economy and politics of *Ekitiland*. It offers an insight into the pre-colonial Africa economy that depended largely on the activities of the kings; and significantly the role of the kings in the pre-colonial Yorubaland, as one in total control of the markets. Indeed, the markets were and are still always located within the vicinity of the king, and their *Oba* were referred to as *oja-oba* vis-à-vis *oloja*, that is, the owner of the market and other commercial activities. In fact, the colonial government in an attempt to introduce taxation, had to seek the support of the kings before poll tax could be introduced in *Ekitiland*.<sup>36</sup>

Bolanle Awe,<sup>36</sup> illustrating the political evolution of Ibadan, particularly the wars of conquest and Ibadan hegemony over *Ekiti* kingdoms, offered insights into the introduction of the *Ajele* system. The subsequent *Ajele* and Fabunmi crisis at *Imesi Igbo-odo* (now *Okemesi*), gave rise to the revolt by the *Ekiti* kingdoms and the subsequent alliances, among the *Ekiti* and the *Ijesa*, forming the *Ekitiparapo* confederacy. This crisis culminated in the *Kiriji* war, which started in August 1878<sup>36</sup>, and marked the first time the *Ekiti oba* converged for a common purpose and cause outside their territories to draw support for the *Ekiti* soldiers and the war and shake off Ibadan hegemony. This study, apart from acknowledging the contributions of the kings to the process of the *Ekitiparapo* Ibadan war, made no remarks on *pelupelu*.

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Similarly, Isola Olomola's<sup>36</sup> work gave an insight into the *Ekiti*-Ibadan war and how it happened. He gave a detailed account of the socio-cultural organisation of *Ekitiland* by illustrating the role of the *Oba* in the war between *Ekiti* and Ibadan. For instance, he stated that *Oore* Okinbaloye of *Otun* invited all *Ekiti* kings for a meeting in *Otun (Moba)*, against the Ibadan. The meeting was also attended by all *Ekiti* war chiefs (i.e Balogun) because, of the taboo of unseen, *Ekiti* kings do not see each other, and were represented by their war chiefs, who could contribute meaningfully to the discourse on war strategy. He highlighted the presence of *Owa* Agunloye of *Ilesa* at the camp in *Esa-Egure* (now *Esa-Odo*), the *Oore* Okinbaloye, *Ajero* Oyiyoṣaye and *Olojudo* Eyeowa who stayed at *Imesi Ipole*<sup>36</sup>. They never met face to face. The *Elekole* was the oldest *Oba* in *Ekiti* at the time and had made his way to *Ijero* before he was asked to return home due to old age.<sup>36</sup>

Specifically, Olomola's work discussed the culture of the people, their population, and the origin of *Ekiti Parapo*. He wrote on the people's dialect, belief systems and practices, music and dance, the struggle for liberation from Ibadan between 1878 and 1893, as well as the establishment of colonial domination up till December 1912. The work, moreover, discussed the creation in January 1913, of the separate colonial district for *Ekiti* with headquarters in *Ado-Ekiti*. He examined the incorporation of *Ekiti* into the colonial economy, and into the western styled money economy system. The work was an in-depth study of politics, economies and religion of the *Ekiti* up to 2004, with space given to developments in Education, *Ekiti Parapo* Unions, Party Politics, *Ekiti* Students' Unions, but the attention on *pelupelu* institution was not elaborate enough with regard to its importance in *Ekiti* socio-political life that we discussed shortly.

J.F.A. Ajayi and S.A. Akintoye<sup>36</sup> gave graphic details of the intense changes and political challenges of the 20th century in Yorubaland. The study analysed the various dislocations occasioned by the Yoruba civil wars, due to the disintegration of the old Oyo kingdom. It noted the various attacks from the neighbouring Benin kingdoms, and from the south-western frontiers, the problem in Ilorin and the establishment of Fulani emirate in *Ekiti* part of Yorubaland. These scholars noted that "it is not very clear from the traditions whether they were ever one kingdom (i.e Yoruba) that broke into several kingdoms ...the kingdom was a unit of political power"<sup>36</sup> with competitions among themselves, at some time over land and rivalry for precedence or dominance, sometimes, leading to war as was in the case between *Ekiti*



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and Ibadan. This study confirmed, among others, that some Yoruba kingdoms were independent of Oyo, against Samuel Johnson's claim.

The various scholarly works consulted provide a summary of events in Yorubaland up to 1893, starting with the collapse of old Oyo Empire, the conflicts between *Owu* and *Ile-Ife*, the developments in *Ijebu*, and the creation of new towns like *Ijebu-Igbo*, *Ago-Iwoye*, *Odogbolu*, by refugees from *Oyo* and *Ijebu* towns. They also gave insight into the rise of Ibadan, the establishment of new Oyo by *Alaafin* Atiba, due to the disintegration of old Oyo, and the establishment of Abeokuta by the *Egba* and *Owu* refugees. The literatures highlighted the British activities in Lagos and the subsequent intervention in Yoruba politics. They, indeed, enhanced our knowledge of the politics and culture of the Yoruba people, in general, and that of *Ekiti*, in particular. Suffice to say however, that there is still a wide gap to be filled, in a full consideration of '*pelupelu*' as an instrument of administration, an element in political strategy, and a factor in the promotion of culture and values relevant to development.

#### **2.4:2 Existing gaps in scholarly works**

In all, the task to situate the present study within the available historical records, led us to read the works of scholars like Bascom<sup>36</sup>, Atanda<sup>36</sup>, Lloyd<sup>36</sup>, Asiwaju<sup>36</sup> and Robert Thompson<sup>36</sup>, all of which provided outlines on the nature and importance of kingship in Yoruba kingdoms in general. Asiwaju related the importance of royal symbols to legitimacy of kingship institution in Yorubaland in the pre-colonial period, which the colonial authority and post colonial governments, have continually manipulated to either mobilise or cause disaffection among the kings, and thus the challenges within the institution. For instance, the colonial authority's 'insistence on pre-nineteen century kingship institution... led to the protest, merging and emigration of disgruntled princes and their sympathisers and the setting up of independent states, the head of each arrogates to himself the right to wear a beaded crown'. Also in the post colonial periods, elevation of the status of *Oloja*, *Owa* and *Baale* to *Oba* and the classification of kings into grades or classes has remained the order of the day. In addition to this was the demotion and imposition of kings by the government on the people, which was against the traditional order of selection. This development, according to scholars, became very rampant in the colonial period. But, ironically, studies on *Ekiti* history have not made it a point of duty to document this as a

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challenge to the *pelupelu* institution. The present study is focused on the challenges within the kingship institution. It documents these challenges as an extension of the various studies and a repository of kingship institution in *Ekitiland*.

In the content of the above named scholarly works, the history of Yorubaland and *Ekitiland* can be grouped into three broad categories. The first are those written by anthropologists, the missionaries and historians such as Rev. Samuel Johnson and P.A Talbot. Secondly are those written by the early scholars who were differently interested in documenting Yoruba history and in correcting the impression that ‘without written records there can be no History’ like Prof. Ade Ajayi, Ayandele, Aderibigbe, among others. The third category are scholars who followed the trends such as Atanda, J. A, Adediran, Olomola, Ojo, J. D and actually documented the past by historicising the various sectors of the traditional societies and system in science, arts and government. These scholars however, have divergent views, particularly regarding the origin and peopling of *Ekitiland*. Nevertheless, there is a shared opinion that the people could have migrated from different areas of Yorubaland and non-Yoruba speaking areas to *Ekitiland* at different times. This movement and fusion into the aboriginal elements possibly started from the 7th century and lasted till the 19th century. The immigrants from Ile-Ife were believed to have introduced beaded crown to *Ekitiland*. However, there is no agreement among scholars on the number of beaded crown *Oba* of *Ekiti*. Each of the scholars gave a different number, without differentiating the aboriginals from the Ife groups. Rev. Johnson<sup>36</sup> gave sixteen names, Akintoye<sup>36</sup> and Oguntuyi<sup>36</sup> gave seventeen, some gave twenty one. Ajigbotifa<sup>36</sup> interpreting the *odumerindinlogun* as it relates to *Ekiti* mentioned only sixteen kings, which did not include the *Atta* of Ayede, *Oore* of *Otun*, *Deji* of *Akure* and *Ogoga* of *Ikere*. This confusion has made it all the more difficult to ascertain the original *Alademerindinlogun* of *Ekitiland*. The present study will hopefully give a clue to the numerical problem.

A notable point that can hardly be ignored in extant studies is the consensus among scholars about the varying status of the kings. They variously posited that there have been considerable changes from the period of Ibadan imperialism, (1850s to 1870s) resulting in Ibadan<sup>36</sup>, Ilorin<sup>36</sup> hegemony and the challenges of the *Ekitiparapo* war. Adeyemi Folayan<sup>36</sup> S.A.Akintoye<sup>36</sup>, Oguntuyi<sup>36</sup> and Olomola<sup>36</sup> emphasised that the kings’ authority and position

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were undermined by the Ibadan warlords through the *Ajele* system, and at a later date by the British Authority's empowerment of district officers as authority in charge of *Ekiti* division. The abrogation of the traditional authority challenged the existence of autonomy of the kingdoms and created a crisis of confidence in the relationship of the supposed inferior-superior kings and major towns.

The present study, to re-emphasise is an attempt to bridge the existing gap in our knowledge of *pelupelu* institution. Significantly, the analytical period covers different phases of Nigeria's history and political development. Therefore, considering the political challenges and changing status of the kings shortly after independence, the roles of the kings in governance, particularly during the first and the second republic and under the military regimes need to be documented. It is significant to note that Afolayan and Akintoye who devoted much scholarly attention to kingship institution in *Ekitiland* did not explain the relationship among the kings at different periods. And to this end, the present study has raised some pertinent questions to give direction to and the basis for the study: Firstly, how did the *Ekiti Oba* relate before 1900? Secondly, what was the reaction of *Ekiti Oba* to British attempt to form a central authority, with a defined hierarchical order? Thirdly, what was the impact of this central authority on *Ekitiland* politics? What are the challenges of the *pelupelu* within the framework of politics under the colonial government, civilian, military administrations and democratic systems of governance? These questions require scholarly answers to strengthen historical scholarship on *Ekiti* historiography, since the contributions of scholars to *Ekiti* history did not give clue to the issues raised. This study, therefore, has taken a bold step to making pertinent historical truth regarding the *pelupelu* institution in *Ekitiland*.

## **End Notes**

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## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The nature of the problem of this study necessitates a multidisciplinary approach to data collection. This is because, the emphasis is on cultural history, politics and social developmental issues that cut across the social science disciplines and the humanities. More importantly, *pelupelu* as a kingship institution is an embodiment of tradition and a culture that may not be globalised. However, it will be worthwhile to employ related disciplines to advance, cross check, supplement and corroborate data on the transformation and challenges of *pelupelu* institution. It, therefore, has to embrace the social science insights from anthropology, ethnography and history and their methods of data collection. Therefore, in agreement with Albert, we recognise the challenge of relying only on historical data for the reconstruction of African history and would join him in stressing that:

African cultural history is a contemporary reconstruction and interpretation of the peculiar ways of Africa in the past... if African cultural history must be grasped... historian studying African culture, must employ the assistance of the work of an ethnographer who interprets the work of the archaeologist.<sup>36</sup>

In the same vein, Adewoye avers:

Anthropology is an essential auxiliary science for the historian of Africa because no historian can effectively explore the past of a culture without knowing it thoroughly as it is...anthropologists also make it possible to place written or oral sources in their historical context and to estimate the impact of social factors on oral traditions and the distortions or degradation which inevitably result...the relationship between history and anthropology is so close because both disciplines study culture and societies.<sup>36</sup>

The study takes note of the above quoted views to define its orientation, since such views as exposed by these historians' challenge to a data collection and interpretation within a broad frame of constructing the 'truth'. Hence, as in the view of E.E Evans-Pritchard,<sup>36</sup> we see "social

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anthropology as a special kind of historiography,” a tool relevant to history making and discussing, in “a society produced by continuous contradiction of history and not a static society’’.<sup>36</sup> Considering the contradictions and the changing status of kingship institutions that we have highlighted in our literature review, particularly on *pelupelu*, we have adopted a multidisciplinary research methodology that is of paramount importance to achieving the targeted aim and objectives of this study.

### **3.1 Study population**

The population for this study consists of the paramount rulers that are part of the *pelupelu* phenomenon from 1900. These are twenty-four (24) kings from the acclaimed major towns of Ekitiland. Though Ekiti has about one hundred and thirty (130) towns, yet for this study which employs purposive sampling techniques, only the towns and kings that are directly and indirectly involved in the colonial administration of Ekitiland as part of the *Ekiti* council form the study population. The *Oba*, the *Oloja*, the *Owa* and the *Elu* of these towns have been classified into A, B, and C classes of grades by the various governments, particularly since the creation of Western House of Chiefs and based on colonial antecedents. In the year 2000, the Ekiti State government reclassified the *oba* and restructured the grading system by classifying the first grade *oba* to include the *pelupelu* group, also called *Alademerindinlogun*, or the paramount rulers of Ekitiland. Though, the first class *oba* are presently thirty-one (31) yet the *pelupelu* group within that class are just twenty-one (21), and they constitute the kernel of the study population.

### **3.2 Target population**

The twenty-one *oba* in the *pelupelu* group of the first class *oba* and three from grade B were the target population. The three in the group B were chosen for interview, based on their indirect relationship with the *pelupelu* group. Their voices were needed to corroborate or reject some facts on the structures, processes, and history of *pelupelu*. Five other *Oba* in grades B, and C, based on their classifications by the state government, and depending on their perceived grievances with the government, also received our attention. An ex-commissioner and a director of local governments in *Ondo* and *Ekiti* States, respectively, were interviewed because they were formerly under one political administration. This was done in order to know the position of the different state on issues affecting the kingship institution and the challenges in creating *Ekiti*

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State during the period of study. The six chiefs, one regent, four palace diviners/Ifa priests were also interviewed. For instance, three important chiefs in *Ado-Ekiti*, namely, Chief Alex Olu Ajayi, the *Odoba* of *Ado*, Chief *Odole* and Chief *Oisa* of *Ado* were interviewed. The regent of *Ayede* could not be located, but information relating to the *Atta* was given by the *Ayede* high chief. In *Oye-Ekiti*, Chief *Elegbo* was interviewed. In *Okemesi-Ekiti*, the *Oloriawo*, Chief Babalola, and the *Ejemu*, Chief Adeyanju were interviewed. The *Alawin* was interviewed in *Efon-Alaaye*. They submitted themselves willingly for interview.

### 3.3 Instrument of data collection

The instruments used for the study were drawn from various sources. They can be classified into primary and secondary sources of information. They included unstructured interviews, oral traditions and history, archival documents, private papers and photographs from the kings' palaces, particularly the collections on *pelupelu* meetings in such palaces. These instruments revealed to us insights on what were of interest to each *Oba*, and to those who had possession of the instruments.

In addition, oral history data were obtained from the kings that had acted in the capacity of the chairman of *pelupelu* in council. The "oral history is the study of recent past by means of life histories or personal recollections, where informants speak about their own experiences".<sup>36</sup> Relevant documents were obtained from the office of the state high court, and the chieftaincy affairs department of the ministry of local government and chieftaincy matters in *Ekiti* State. These documents formed the body of raw materials relevant to the present study. In fact, they provided the vital insights into the recent development and challenges within the *pelupelu* institution.

The importance of colonial records found at the national archives cannot be overstated. The documents at the archives in Ibadan formed an invaluable source of material for the reconstruction of the history of *pelupelu* in Ekitiland.

Other data sources included participant observation, unstructured interviews and photography. These methods fall within the methodology of anthropology. They are very important sources useful for synthesizing secondary source, in an attempt to reveal the

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authenticity of other sources of information, on the past and the present. In addition, photography was an integral part of our method, not because it is not subjective to manipulation, since it stems from the view and concept of the user, but for its apparent objectivity of historical values, particularly in the understanding of the process of social political change and transformation. In fact, photography is significant, if systematically used to explain valuable information on class development or popular culture through date. The present study employed photography in a historical and representative context, as data on human relations in a particular time and space.

### **3.4 Method of data collection**

The contemporary nature of the study makes oral interviews an important source of data. These were elicited from the kings and other members of the *pelupelu* council in Ekitiland. What was gathered through them, indeed, form the bulk of data presented in this study. In the course of the research, the researcher visited several palaces, attended several ceremonies, including funerals of the relations of some of the kings, and recorded festivals and rituals in the palace courts. The oral traditions were video and tape recorded. Moreover, in some towns or villages, the priests were interviewed, as the custodians of their people's culture, using electronic gadgets, particularly video camera. The traditions of origin of some of the towns and kingdoms could not be grasped without recourse to the *Ifa corpus* and their praise names and poetry. The *ifa* corpus and praise poetry, as recited by palace diviners, among others, was taped and video recorded. Photographs were taken wherever permitted. R. Papsten has drawn historians' attention to the values of photographs in the process of historical reconstruction and documentations,<sup>36</sup> and we took serious note of the observations he made in the reconstruction of the transformations and challenges of *pelupelu* institution in Ekitiland.

### **3.5 Method of data analysis**

Data obtained from the field study were documented, described and interpreted for understanding the transformation stages and the challenges of the *pelupelu* institution. The data were sieved qualitatively according to pre-selected categories of issues, and then articulated into the narrative form of this essay.

### **3.6 Problem of Data Collection**

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A major challenge of reconstructing Yoruba history is the non-availability of written documents. This is available, to some extent, as regards the *pelupelu* institution in Ekitiland, but those on kings before the colonial creation were not readily available and accessible. The *Oba*, who are primary to the study, were also not readily available and accessible. In case of accessibility, palace protocol was a major problem, especially because the *Oba* still occupies an enviable position in Ekitiland. They sit in the palace courts to attend to cases, which are brought to them by their subjects on a daily basis. In *Oye, Ise, Ado, Isan* and *Itaji* there were court sittings on fixed days of the week to treat various cases, such as market disputes, criminal cases, landlord-tenant problems, husband and wife related matters. Thus, it is only to be expected that one will encounter a difficulty before actually seating an *Oba* down for an interview, not to talk of dealing with over twenty-five *Oba*. In fact, booking an appointment with an *Oba* took days. In some instances, appointments were rescheduled at the last moments. The various activities of the kings sometimes weigh them down, and being tired, they are not normally available for long discussions.

As to written documents, we used only those available from selected south western Universities. Specifically, undergraduate research dissertations and term papers were consulted. However, some of these research works had been eaten up by termites; some are perforated or locked up in different departmental libraries of the universities in southwest Nigeria. For example, at the Department of History, University of Ibadan, most of the undergraduate long essays could not be located or found at the departmental library. It was the same story at the Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University. Information in these schools would have assisted in the area of data gathering, because they were pioneering schools of history, particularly, of Yoruba history. But the problem of maintaining these historical documents has probably overwhelmed the departments.

The above challenges notwithstanding, the study was able to make use of the available materials in private collections of notable *Oba* in Ekitiland. This greatly facilitated the progress of the study. It is, however, hoped that future studies on *pelupelu* will draw from the wealth of resources provided by the present study to further advance the knowledge of kingship institution in Ekitiland, in particular, and Yorubaland in general.



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Furthermore, the other challenges to this study included missing documents from the archive, as well as poorly documented materials. The fact is that, available documents are not kept in good conditions. They are often torn into pieces. All these constitute problems for historiography in Africa.

Finally, during the researcher's field trips to some palaces, some of the informants were suspicious, while some demanded for the researcher's identity card before they could divulge vital information. Generally, though many of the kings were a great resource, behaving in the true spirit of an *Oba* by rendering all necessary assistance towards the success of this research. We appreciate them.

## **Endnotes**

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**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**TRANSFORMATION AND CHALLENGES OF PELUPELU**  
**INSTITUTIONS IN EKITILAND**

**4.1 Political Institutions in pre-colonial Ekitiland**

Traditional political institutions are those institutions charged with governmental responsibilities in pre-colonial Ekitiland. These institutions differ from society to society and are structured in accordance with the customs and traditions of the people, for the purpose of promoting, sustaining and enhancing peaceful co-existence. They are, also, designed to preserve the customs, laws and traditions of the people, such that those in offices act inevitably as the custodians of the people's cultural norms and traditions. These institutions are a product of the interactions between the people and their *habitat*. Environmental challenges could be seen, in peculiarity of each community's adaptations to its environment. Such adaptation grows the philosophy upon which the structures of the different organs of government are eventually situated. Oke Kolawole's<sup>36</sup> scholarly work on Ekitiland has indicated that the indigenous political system of government is designed to protect the people's occupation that is the farm products, particularly its arable products like yam. This, according to him, informed the introduction of priesthood system, to observe the production rites and to maintain the taboos associated with planting and harvesting of agricultural products, particularly yam, in Ekitiland. As a matter of fact, new yam festivals are still celebrated in Ekitiland with fanfare till date.

The agricultural settlements, according to Akintoye, are mostly "village groups" called *elu*.<sup>36</sup> *Elu* later became villages and towns (*Ilu*) that were referred to by Ade-Obayemi as mini states<sup>36</sup>. What can be deduced from this scholarly work is that, each town (*ilu*) is an amalgam of clans into village groups. Oral interviews confirm that *elu* was the head and priest of a "village group". As a matter of fact, *Ire*, *Oye*, *Ado* and *Ijan* were in scattered "village groups" up to the middle of the 20th century (*Ire* formally merged her settlement in 1925; *Oye* in 1928 and 1947).

The attempts to overcome environmental challenges imposed on these village groups some tradition and culture, that served as the conscience of the people's rights, privileges, laws, and customs. Studies among the different Yoruba communities support the view that political authority emerged from the nuclear family,<sup>36</sup> and, from it, there were other social extensions. Akinjogbin<sup>36</sup> and Akiwowo<sup>36</sup> anchored these extensions in the *ebi* system. Ade Obayemi<sup>36</sup>

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extended the lineage formation to the concept of *ilu*, as the stage of mini-state; *ilu* as a point in a process of community development, when most settlements were chiefly of lineage, purely agrarian and the leadership was vested in the *oloriebi* (*Bale*). The *Bale* was saddled with the responsibility of over-seeing the well-being of the lineage. The *Bale*, as the *elu* held administrative, judicial and spiritual control of their lineage and oversaw their affairs, settled disputes and offered sacrifices to the family tutelary for peace and progress of the lineage, when the need demanded. Their word was law, being the representatives of the progenitors and ancestors of the family, and, by extension, of *Olodumare*. Their success depended largely on the cooperation of the members of the lineage, which, according to customs and traditions of the Yoruba, cannot be negotiated. In fact, they must be respected and honoured, being the most elderly within the family, as dictated by tradition. The political system that the *elu* operated was basically gerontocratic theocracy.<sup>36</sup>

The aggregation of the lineages resulted in the formation of bigger communities and a much more structured system that allowed for compromise, relationship, security and peaceful coexistence. At one stage of development, rather than the *elu*, the *oloja*, and *owa* became the head of the political unit. An *oloja* was assisted by the *elu*, who automatically became a chief in the new structure and a member of the council of elders or council of chiefs as a representative of his clan. The position of the *elu* is not rotational; it is primarily rooted in blood relationship and gerontocratic principles. He is the family priest and the head of its quarters within the larger town (*ilu*). But at some communities, the *elu* did not merge with other village groups. Thus, he was politically independent of the various aggregations around her. For instance, in *Ire*, *Egosi*, *Eshetta* and *Arigidi*, there was no merger with *Oye*, but they all related on the basis of kinship. Each *elu* participated in matters of common interest like hegemonic festival.

The *Obatala* traditions of governance are a system of government rooted in agricultural development and belief systems, unlike the *Oduduwa* hegemonic rule that is fundamentally an expansionist ideology. The government was theocratic but structurally monarchical. Historical evidence pointed to this line of *elu* -Priesthood development in several Yoruba areas, including Ile-Ife, which had *Obatala* as the spiritual and political head until *Oduduwa* bifurcated the two roles. *Obatala* subsequently became the chief priest, while *Oduduwa* assumed political leadership.

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Studies from Northeastern Yorubaland by Biobaku,<sup>36</sup> Lloyd<sup>36</sup> and Ade Obayemi,<sup>36</sup> particularly from Niger-Benue confluence in the present *Ekiti*, *Ondo* and *Kogi* states also reveal priestly kingship that was indigenous to these areas; thus, suggesting that the priest-king probably preceded *Oduduwa* dynasty. If we agree with oral traditions,<sup>36</sup> *Ulesun*, *Ikole*, *Oye*, *Aramoko*, *Ijero*, *Ouku*, *Apa*, *Agbahun*, *Ukere* and *Ise* in the present *Ekiti* State, might be older communities where the priest held absolute sway. They have priest-kings, whose existence probably predated *Oduduwa* dynasty and community administration was confined to the priesthood position.<sup>36</sup> The priests were more or less kings and were probably overthrown by the migrant *Oduduwa* groups that later came in as was done in Ile-Ife.<sup>36</sup> As priests, they invoked the spirit of their forefathers' for the blessing of the land.<sup>36</sup>

Oral tradition established that *Ilemure*, *Ilesa*, *Akogun* and *Itaji* around *Ilesa* are ancient towns with developed monarchical system of government before *Oduduwa*.<sup>36</sup> Also, *Ulesun*, *Ikole*, *Oye*, and *Ikere* had numerous deities, re-enacted in ceremonies that have same liturgy as in Ile-Ife, indicating that these towns were established probably during the *Obatala* era because, their priests claimed to be the aboriginals of their towns. Oral interviews from these communities strongly suggest a greater reverence to *Obatala*, who is believed to have been charged with the completion and government of the world<sup>36</sup> within the Yoruba cosmogony.

Supporting the above was Akinjogbin, who established the fact that pre-*Oduduwa* settlements were later in time subservient to *Obatala*, who was the head of government and was the custodian of the *Ade-Are* called *Ade Isese*, the foundation crown<sup>36</sup>. He went further to state that original settlements were highly organised and had *Obatala* as the head priest.<sup>36</sup> Also relevant here are the kingdoms of *Aramoko*, *Ido*, *Ise*, *Oye*, *Ikole*, *Ijero*, *Ire*, *Ikere*, *Ulesun*, whose traditions of origin affirmed a connection with *Obatala* but not *Oduduwa*. Their departure from Ile-Ife however, predates establishment of *Oduduwa* hegemony. Same perspective is raised by Obayemi<sup>36</sup> and Ulli Beier.<sup>36</sup> According to these scholars, emigrations from Ile-Ife were in phases, and the first phase started from around the 3rd millennium to the 7th century. Their works led to the understanding that the first migrants left Ife on the order of *Obatala*. This was corroborated by the *odu ifa* account.<sup>36</sup> The second group left Ife in protest against *Oduduwa*'s takeover of Ife.<sup>36</sup> Others which became the popular that is the *Oduduwa* group left Ife due to famine and the inability of the government to support the large population.<sup>36</sup> This study shared

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this view based on available evidences to support the views of the scholars. Traditions of origin from most *Ekiti* towns reveal some sort of separation of power and clear demarcations of roles between the priest and the king. They were not subservient to one another. Generally, in Ekitiland, it is a taboo for the chief priest and the king to even meet from the day of the kings' coronation. *Olojudo, Oba* Faboro, asserts that this resulted from the struggle for kingship position. According to him, Ido-Iyapa founder, an Ido indigene, contested for a chieftaincy but lost to another contestant and, thus decided to leave the town. He swore not to come back to Ido. Also between *Ewi* and *Elesun*, there was a strong contest that ended in favour of *Ewi*. The re-enactment of the conflict is observed in ceremony to commemorate this till date in *Ado*.

Those who moved from Ile-Ife in the latter phase were not only the children of *Oduduwa* but of different heritages. The consensus among scholars is that the *Oduduwa* groups, who were chiefly in the last group of migrants, replicated what *Oduduwa* did in Ile-Ife in the Yoruba towns. The earlier groups created villages patterned after *Obatala's* regime and have settlement founded on lineage aggregations. But, the 2nd and 3rd waves of migrations transformed the former political arrangement from that of priesthood kingship to constitutional monarchism, with clear separation of power and functions, particularly between the king and the priest.

*Biobaku*<sup>36</sup>, *Lawuyi*<sup>36</sup>, *Ulli Beir*<sup>36</sup>, *Ade Obayemi*<sup>36</sup> noted that formation or creation of mega state in Yorubaland began from the 7th through to 10th century when the indigenous Yoruba groups headed by *Obatala* were conquered, by the migrating *Oduduwa* group, that were more advanced in technology and possessed a high level of political sophistication. *Akinjogbin*<sup>36</sup> stated that the process of establishing the *Oduduwa* type of monarchy began around the 9th century and continued until about the 15th century. The implication is that, the establishments of *Oduduwa* dynasties were not coordinated. The migrants either took over political power from *Obatala* people or allowed him to function as the chief priest, or they were completely submerged under a more formidable *oba* as the head. The *oba* became the lord and god in their territory. He became *Kabiyesi*, "one that cannot be questioned".<sup>36</sup>

When *Obatala* group came, the ideology was "*enia a ba laba ni baba*" the one we met in the hut/village is the senior. But when the *Oduduwa* group came later, they operated the ideology of *ebi* system.<sup>36</sup> *Akinjogbin* and *Ayandele*, as well as *Akintoye*<sup>36</sup> linked the source of this *ebi* relationship to Ile-Ife, to *Ita-Ijero* tradition (place of discussion and consultation).

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According to these scholars, “Ile-Ife was hit by a prolonged drought ... causing famine and decimation. No one knew precisely how to solve the problem... one *Agirilogbon* a *Babalawo* of *Oke Itase* in Ile-Ife counselled emigration” which *Oduduwa* accepted, and thus, asked his sons to lead the various groups in the emigration from Ife. But before their departure, the elders of the migrating groups were said to have met at *Ita-Ijero* where an oath of cordiality was taken, among which is to honour Ife as the *orirun* of Yoruba and to maintain future contacts with one another after departure.<sup>36</sup> This became the genesis of the *ebi* theory. Those who journeyed north-westwards and south-westwards separated at *Ita Marun* in Ipetumodu from where they proceeded to establish various kingdoms among which were the kingdoms of Ekiti, Ijesa (except *Owa Obokun of Ilesa*)<sup>36</sup> and the *Okun* Yoruba, that is, the *Owe*, *Yagba*, *Oworo* and *Ijumu*.<sup>36</sup> Those who migrated eastward settled in Benin, Ondo, Owo and, probably, Akure but the Ewi, according to the tradition, first settled in Benin from where he went back to *Ado* to displace *Elesun*.<sup>36</sup> In this way, the struggle for beaded crown and the legitimacy of wearing it became a struggle for supremacy between autochthonous communities representing *Obatala* and the *Oduduwa* group. What was paramount, however, was ‘Ife primacy’. There was no reason, ideologically, to engage each other in a battle of supremacy until 1900, when the colonial government introduced the indirect rule system, and emphasised beaded crown as symbol of political authority and governmental, recognition, thereby, directly or indirectly, placing the kings against each other.<sup>36</sup>

The first to feel the impact of the political relevance of the crown in the colonial dispensation was the *Elepe* of Epe in the Ikorodu District in 1902.<sup>36</sup> Precisely, the *Akarigbo* of Remo reported *Elepe* to the District council for wearing a crown, which he was not entitled to wear and in the attempt to resolve the issue, the *Awujale* of Ijebu was contacted but he directed them to the *Ooni*, stating that only the *Ooni* has the last say on the matter. The *Ooni* Olubuse 11 was contacted by the colonial authority and a meeting was convened that was chaired, on the 24th February 1903, by the Governor of Lagos, Sir Williams MacGregor. In attendance, were the *Akarigbo* and the *Elepe*. The *Ooni* told the Governor that *Elepe* had no right to a crown. There and then the *Elepe* crown was confiscated.<sup>36</sup> The *Ooni* after the *Elepe* and *Akarigbo* episode was said to have removed his crown and placed it on the table requesting that Governor MacGregor placed it back on his head. He also pleaded that the Governor assists in restoring the glory of Ife

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to its pre-colonial status.<sup>36</sup> Paradoxically, the supremacy of the *Ooni* became legitimatised by this event and, consequently, in other disputes on such matters, the *Ooni's* voice became paramount. Another instance was the invitation of the *Ooni* to Ekiti in 1930s on the crisis between the *Ewi*, *Olosi* and *Alawe*, which brought to the fore again, in the colonial period, *Oduduwa* supremacy. The colonial policy on the crown became an instrument that entrenched *Oduduwa* dynasty on kingdoms that had defended its sovereignty to wear crown. There were several challenges and altercations on another front as to seniority and superiority of an *oba*, the *Elekole* of Ikole, the *Ewi* of Ado and the *Oore* of Otun in Ekitland.<sup>36</sup> The polemic is that there were three groups within the *Oduduwa* dynasty; the *Ooni* group, the original *Oduduwa* sons and grandsons, and, thirdly, the *Oore* kingdom, which does not belong to any of the previous two. The *Ooni* of *Ife* stool itself has been contested by the *Alaafin* of *Oyo* and the *Owa Obokun* of *Ilesa* as really not that of *Oduduwa*. They challenged the authority of *Ooni* as one that is not a “blood son of *Oduduwa*,” quoting Johnson in support. But Akintoye has argued against the slave lineage of the *Ooni* postulated by Johnson. In his view, and based on the principle of seniority and inheritance in Yorubaland, the *Ooni* that ruled after *Oduduwa* must have been a relation of *Oduduwa* without which, he could not have assumed the position of leadership.<sup>36</sup> Other traditions claimed that *Ogun*, who was a contemporary of *Oduduwa* reigned after *Oduduwa*. The situation in Ekitiland has been in line with the above pattern of conflicts. Oral interview from the *Ewi* of Ado, the *Elekole* of Ikole and the *Alaaye* of Efon avers that the *Oore* was not the son of *Oduduwa* or member of *Oduduwa* house, and as a result cannot claim to be the leader of Ekiti *oba*. They further argued that being the friend of the ‘house’ does not make him superior to the son. A friend may oversee the sharing of his friend’s property after death, but cannot share from it.<sup>36</sup> To the kings, *Oore's* claim is against Yoruba principles of inheritance. Nevertheless, what was common to the two groups, that is the *Ooni* and the *Oduduwa* group, was a system of government which was not slightly different in pattern. It was fundamentally monarchical.<sup>36</sup> Only the *oba* was entitled to wear crown with beads and fringes (*ade-ileke*), as the symbol of royalty and political authority. The subordinate towns and villages ruled by *owa* or *oloja* can only wear coronet (*akoro or orikogbofo*).<sup>36</sup>

The age grade institution was an important social institution in the traditional *Ekiti* political system. Their duties included clearing of bush paths, fetching woods for the aged,

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participating in security and defending their towns during war. Among the *Ijesa* and *Ekiti*, the age grades were structured in accordance with the needs for development and peaceful relationship among various social groups. The younger group takes care of domestic chores like cleaning brooks, clearing foot paths, digging wells, fetching fire woods, building houses, constructing markets, etc while the older groups are responsible for security and defence<sup>36</sup>.

In addition, the *Oro* cult was prominent in Ekitiland. It was variously called the *Ebora*, *Imole* and *Egigun*. These cults played important roles in the administration of social justice. The rules and regulations governing the societies were considered immutable. They were, therefore, observed religiously. Although, when Oyo influence grew in around the 14th to 16th century, the ‘cults,’ particularly among the *Ijebu* and the *Egba*, the *Ogboni*, became very active in the judicial system. But, their influences were down played in some parts of Yorubaland, except where the Oyo political authority and influence were not paramount.

In Yorubaland, in general, the political institutions were partly hereditary. For instance, all the male sons of the ruling family were entitled to the throne. But, in some instances the female children became kings, e.g. *Ado* kingdom, *Ijesa* kingdom, *Ondo* kingdom and even in *Ife*. The tradition was, however, reviewed much later to accommodate some challenges perceived to be inimical to peaceful transitions and installations of kings. In *Ado* and *Oyo*, for example, the *abilagba*<sup>36</sup> and the *Aremo*<sup>36</sup> were first sons, respectively, and were, at some period, denied the right to succeed their father. The principle of primogeniture was forbidden in *Ado* Kingdom at a time,<sup>36</sup> but, this has been reviewed to accommodate change and continuity.<sup>36</sup>

The selections of kings were done by special quarter chiefs, mostly six or seven in number, constituting the council of king makers. The number and nomenclature varied from kingdom to kingdom, they were the *Iwarefa* in *Ise* and *Okemesi Ekiti*. They were *Alabebe* in *Ogotun*, *Olori Marun*, *Ihare marun* in *Ado and Elu* in *Ijan-Ekiti*, *Iyare* in *Ikere*. Anyone chosen by the king makers to be king must be confirmed by the *Ifa* oracle. *Ifa* guided the selections of kings and was the final say on their choice. This indicates the importance of *Orunmila* to kingship tradition in Ekitiland and in other places. The king could be deposed if his actions ran contrary to the wishes of the people. In *Oyo*, he was asked to open the calabash, but among the *Ekiti* and *Ijesa*, the chiefs and the elders simply refused to congregate or meet in his palace. Once



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anybody is elevated to the status of a king, he was no longer regarded as an ordinary man. His deposition means that he should go on exile or take his own life.<sup>36</sup>

Significantly, governance in pre-colonial Yorubaland was open, and participatory, featuring the old and the young. Every member of the community played one role or the other. Days were usually set aside for group meetings in township quarters to decide on matters affecting the wellbeing of the members and the society within the jurisdiction of their offices. Major offences, particularly those of grave importance to social order, were handled by the king's council, which comprised both the king and the chiefs. But in Oyo and Ijebuland, criminal cases and cases that involved death were handled by the *Alaafin* and the *Awujale* personally.

The pattern of administration in pre-colonial Yorubaland up to 1900 can be grouped into two broad categories, namely, confederacy<sup>36</sup> and parliamentary system<sup>36</sup>. Confederacy is well pronounced among the *Ekiti*, *Ife*, *Egba* and *Ijebu*. It was designed to protect the sovereignty of the constitutive kingdoms, promote cooperation and political diplomacy. However, in Oyo, the Empire system was the parliamentary. The vassal towns were controlled and administered through the *baale*,<sup>36</sup> the representative of the empire. The extension of the parliamentary system over Ekitiland by Ibadan, after the fall of Oyo Empire in the middle of the 19th century changed the traditional pattern of authority in their political system. Consequent upon this change was the famous *Ekitiparapo/Kiriji* war against Ibadan hegemony. The war lasted for sixteen years, i.e. 1878-1893<sup>36</sup> when the British government intervened to bring it to a close. The signing of peace treaties by the kings to end the war with kings culminated in the imposition of British rule on Yorubaland in 1900.<sup>36</sup>

What is obvious in our consideration so far is that pre-colonial Ekitiland had two types of governance. The first and the primordial was the *elu*, and the second was the *oba (olu)* that was associated with *ilu* (large assemblage). If there was an *Ooni* impact at the earliest stage, such appeared rather insignificant. There were initially more *elu* than *olu*, because many towns had the former. But as each *elu* succumbed to the authority of the *olu*, the latter became more visible and known. We are not sure of how many *olu* eventually emerged, but we know that they are distinguished by wearing beaded crowns with fringes and beads. The *elu* did not, though they also had their own head gear. Many communities without *olu* had *elu* as the chief authority.

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## 4.2 Transformation of traditional institutions in colonial Ekitiland; 1900-1960

Change is ubiquitous in any society, particularly in that which strives to fulfil human needs.<sup>36</sup> Traditional institutions in Ekitiland, as we have argued, have witnessed series of transformation since the emergence of settlements in the territory. There has been the shift from family authority to lineage, to village, and finally to mini-state formations. The transition from the family phase to lineage and mega states administration is echoed in Kenneth Dike and Ade Ajayi's write up<sup>36</sup> in African Historiography. They averred that:

Each (African) community-family, clan, village town or state-however large or small had an established tradition concerning its origins. The community might split up migrate, and assimilate new elements, or be conquered by others and absorbed by new immigrants. At each stage of transformation, the tradition was re-crystallized to accommodate changed conditions, and a new tradition became the core of the community's view of history.

The creation of a political institution is an evolutionary process that may not be completed. The social change and the transformation of the 20th century impacted on the preceding events, significantly the Yoruba civil wars of the 19th century, and the cultural formations thereafter. The transformation rooted out the *elu* from the scheme of authority and completely transformed the philosophy and system of government from the traditional to the modern. The power of the *Elu* became subjected to, and was curtailed under *olu (oba)*. That of *olu* was also curtailed by the resident officer in the colonial administration.

In 1886, the British authority intervened in the *Ekitiparapo* war and caused the signing of the peace treaty. The kings did not *probably* know that they were signing out their independence to the British. When they did realise the intention of the treaty, they had a shock, as revealed by the *Owa of Ilesa* in July 1904. In their petition of 20th July 1904, the *Owa* and chiefs of *Ilesa*, after the imprisonment of two *Ijesa* chiefs by the colonial authority, argued, that

the tendency of captain Ambrose the resident has been to depart from the understanding by which the council was reconstructed and has gone beyond the jurisdiction of an adviser...the treatment meted out to the *Oba Odo* and Chief

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*Loro* make us all feel that each any of us is likely to be treated in the same way...the degradation to which we thus become opposed destroys all prestige for government, which becomes a mockery when those who are supposed to govern are liable at any moment to be treated as common felons. The people are filled with fear and dismay throughout the country.<sup>36</sup>

This was an indication that the king might not have understood the terms of the treaty signed with the British. That was why, they averred that the colonial master ‘go beyond the jurisdiction of adviser.’ Hence, they complaint that colonial action violated the spirit and letter of the treaty of 1886, which promised the kings’ power over existing native centres of authority against the total restructuring of the kingship institution. The establishment of council of chiefs in the protectorate in 1897, with a travelling commissioner appointed to oversee the affairs soon introduced a new system of government which, apart from tasking the intelligent and administrative skill of the traditional *oba*, further relegated their statuses in the polity. The *oba* came next in hierarchy to the resident officer, the “*numero uno*” and *de facto* ruler. When the resident talked, the *oba* had no voice or idea of what to say as his contribution as could be gathered from the report below:

At the times, people attending the ...meetings were not keen enough to ask questions on points not sufficiently understood. They hardly took part in the discussions, the D.Os did most of the talk, whilst the *obas* and the other members of the council assumed the role of passive listeners<sup>36</sup> (*sic*)

The colonial administration took over the authority of the *oba* and severally toyed with the people’s tradition of kingship.

In 1900, Major Reeve Tucker, the first travelling commissioner in charge of *Ekiti*, called in the representative of *Ilesa* and surrounding villages and instructed the *Owa* to

explain to them that I was commissioner for *Ilesa* and they were to take orders from me ... gave instruction to the *Owa* that he was to issue a proclamation that when the commissioner passed his people should raise their caps and a small penalty fixed in case this order be disobeyed.<sup>36</sup>

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On Saturday March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1904, Governor Egerton visited *Ilesa* and was welcomed by the *Owa* and the chiefs in the company of Captain Ambrose before he departed to *Oke-imo*, the colonial official residence. When he had settled down, he sent out messages inviting the *Owa* to come and see him at *Oke-imo*, his residence. The king declined the invitation on the ground that it would breach the tradition of kingship of the '*Ijesa* country'. But the governor insisted that *Owa* must honour his invitation. After consultations with the chiefs, the king departed to *Oke-imo* on Friday 17<sup>th</sup>, with gifts to honour the Governor's invitation. There and then, he was briefed by the governor that he would have to accompany him to Benin. When his subject heard this, they pleaded for the king not to follow the governor, explaining the taboos that are associated with kingship traditions in Yorubaland, which is that the *oba* is incommunicado and cannot be seen by the general public. The Governor bluntly refused the plea.

Consequently, on 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1904, four soldiers with hammock were sent to *Owa's* palace to forcefully remove him to Benin for 60 days<sup>36</sup>. In a show of solidarity, more than five hundred people followed the *oba* up to *Ijebu-jesa*, before they were forced to return home by the colonial forces. The *Owa* trekked to Benin on the pretext that he will be accompanying Governor Egerton, who was carried by men on hammock to Benin. In this way, the colonial authorities forcefully subverted the monarchical tradition. The transformation subverted and affected the dignity, power, status and the influence of rulers; particularly, when they were made to understand that the colonial government had come to stay, and that it is the final authority in the land.<sup>36</sup>

The new colonial structure and authority was established on order of hierarchical administration. Therefore, there was the need to harmonise the position of each *oba* in the new central system. Doing this meant loss of sovereignty to the British colonial authority, and introduction of a new value system. The challenge could not be easily resolved until the introduction of the 1913 Native Authority Ordinance. The ordinance introduced the principle of indirect rule, and regarded "the native chiefs as an integral part of the machinery of government with well defined powers and functions recognized by laws".<sup>36</sup> With this disposition, the new administrative set up resolved the problem of inadequate British officials to serve in the hinterland, and as well, reduced the cost of public administration which was growing by the day. The system 'made use of Africans in governing, subjugating and coercing Africans' to obey the

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new government. The *oba* was a key official in the native administration. He controlled the key components of the native authority system as judge and president in the native and appeal court. He also supervised the native treasury, as one in charge of taxation. But he was no doubt acting in a subordinate capacity, functioning more or less as a tax collector, to be paid a monthly salary.

The *oba* became a mere puppet and a political tool as road contractor and supervisor through the indirect rule system, “the policy of governing on the cheap.” The inauguration of *pelupelu* at Ilesa in June 21st, 1900, under the British commissioner further entrenched British authority over *Ekiti* kings by directly placing the kings under the authority of the district commissioner, who usually called them to meetings at his own discretion. At every *pelupelu* meeting, discussions were subject to the district officers’ dictates and approval.

The *oba*’s sovereignty, as well as authority, had already been transferred to her majesty, the queen of England, as noted, as far back as 1897, by Sir Ralph Moor.<sup>36</sup> According to Moor, after the conquest of Benin, “...the white man is the only king in this country, and to him, only service is due”. It, therefore, appeared that the inauguration of *pelupelu* in Ekitiland was just to crown Sir Raph’s assertion. Under the new administrative system, *oba* now reigns, but cannot rule. Between 1914 and 1933, which is popularly referred to as the golden age,<sup>36</sup> when the kings played prominent roles in government, significantly as the key officials in the native administration. The *oba* lost their power over life and death through a reduction in their executive power. For instance, in 1895 when *Alaafin* had not realised the power and position of the British, Oyo was bombarded by colonial forces and in the process, *Alaafin* was wounded. He had to flee to the bush to save his life. In the same way, *Olubadan* was deposed in the first half of the 19th century.<sup>36</sup>

The colonial authority interfered and undermined the tradition of appointment of kings and chiefs by preferring men that were loyal to British administration against those loyal to the people. Initially, “the method of selecting an *oba* was governed by Native Law and Customs ..., nowadays contrary to traditional custom, the rising generation and the government were interfering unduly in the appointment of *oba*”<sup>36</sup> The governor defended this position in 1933 when Daniel *Adesanya* was wrongfully appointed as the *Awujale*. He asserted that “native law and custom cannot be regarded as immutable but as subject to modification, if necessary, to meet circumstances of a more advanced and enlightened age”.<sup>36</sup> The new administrative system

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caused further problem by raising the status and power of some *oba* beyond what they were in the pre-colonial period. The *Alaafin*, for instance, became so powerful when he, immediately, re-aligned with the British authority. From 1906-1931, he exerted claims of authority over more towns than hitherto and enjoyed a wider power of making and enforcing laws that enabled him to depose three subordinate kings. In *Ijebu* and *Ekiti*,<sup>36</sup> the *Awujale* and some *oba* in Ekitiland also enjoyed unparalleled privilege. The *Ewi* of *Ado*, *Ajero* of *Ijero* and the *Olojudo* insisted that *Olosi* had lost his right to beaded crown, and, as such, do not have any right to crown. The *Oloye*, *Onisan* and *Atta* of *Ayede* refused *Onire* the right to wear crown and were supported by the colonial authority. Under this dispensation, the chiefs became subordinated to the kings and could no longer act as check to the excesses of the *oba*, who now enjoyed the backing and support of the colonial authority. The loss of kingship power, authority and influence translated to the loss of personal revenue, on which the kings had initially depended, such as war booties, tolls and tributes. Significantly too, the *oba* became pro-government, rather than pro-people. The king makes sure that he pleased the resident for him to remain in office. The appointment of kings, also, rather than being a tradition, became the prerogative of the colonial authority as a matter of policy. "Arising out of the discussions on the subject of chieftaincy disputes, the council at *Ijero*, in 1950, frowned at the method of effecting settlements of chieftaincy disputes against native laws and customs which was in existence before (*sic*) the advent of western civilisation"<sup>36</sup>

From 1933 to 1945, the native authority was transformed and re-organised to play a positive role in the government of Ekitiland. The kings enjoyed the status of Sole Native Authority, an important organ of government.

In 1951, the political developments in Nigeria, particularly the formation of the Action Group that eventually formed the regional government in western Nigeria, brought to the fore, the rivalry between the *oba* and the emerging modern elites in their domains. A parliamentary system was in place, and so was the house of assembly with elected members and the house of chiefs with ceremonial powers. But actual political power resided not with the kings, but with those in the house of chiefs and the elected members of the house, notably the *Odemo* of *Ishara*, *Oba*, *S. Akinsanya*, the *Ooni* of *Ife*, *Oba Adesoji Aderemi* and the *Olowo* of *Owo*, *Oba Olateru Olagbegi* who were appointed ministers.<sup>36</sup> This did create leverage for the kings at the regional

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level, but at the local level, they were ceremonial president of the native administrative councils starting from 1952. The 1952 local government ordinance subjected the kings to power politics. The participation of the kings in local government was based on selection, such that the participation of the kings in the council affairs depended largely on invitation by the elected members. In 1959, the law was reviewed, and it completely striped the kings from any position of authority, particularly the chairman of the native authority. The inability of the kings to grapple with the new reality led to the deposition of *Alaafin* of *Oyo*, *Oba Adeniran Adeyemi* in 1954<sup>36</sup> and the *Olowo* of *Owo*, *Oba Olateru Olagbegi* in 1968. There were testimonies to the power struggle between the ruling elites. The inevitable compromise was for the *oba* to romance with the political elites. The wise kings knew what to do, because by 1958, only one out of the fifty four chiefs in the House of Chiefs belonged to a party, the NCNC that was not in power.

The administrative transformation opened up a new vista for how to develop consciousness of social integration, despite their shifting socio-political affiliations. In 1920, and even when there were reforms in 1930, 1940 and the 1950s, such transformation eroded their power, authority and influence. They found themselves destabilised by various social developments brought about by the newly imposed political system. They were forced to turn their attention to upgrading social agencies of self development, such as building of schools, hospitals, and construction of roads. The agenda of social transformation became the rallying point for an *oba's* social capital among his people, and politics became the important avenue to court friendship with successive governments. In order to survive, they struggled to maintain their relevance as custodian of the people's heritage and tradition up till independence in 1960.

#### **4.3 *Pelupelu* institution in Ekitiland, 1900-1958**

The convening of formal meetings as *pelupelu*, started in June 21, 1900 under the auspices of Major Reeve-Tucker, the first travelling commissioner in charge of North-eastern Yorubaland, of which *Ekiti* division, that included *Ilesa* was a part. The meeting was attended by representatives of seventeen<sup>36</sup> kings that included the *Owa* of *Ilesa*, who was made the leader.<sup>36</sup> This was in line with the spirit of *Ekitiparapo* confederacy during the *Ekitiparapo* war, when the *Owa* of *Ilesa* and *Ogedengbe* were participants, as allied of *Ekiti*, and not as indigene of Ekitiland in the war. This is more so, since, the colonial authority had no relevant information on

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the structure of government and kingship relationship of *Ekiti*, and thus, employed the structure of the “*Ekiti* confederacy,” as enacted during the *Ekitiparapo* war as the framework for the administration of *Ekiti* districts, and so, included *Ilesa*. In fact, the colonial authority relied so much upon the confederate structure for their various political and administrative policies in the *Ekiti* district in the early 1900s, that it even thought it wise to legitimatise the council by launching the *Ekitiparapo* council in 1919<sup>36</sup>. Major W.R. Reeve-Tucker emphasised this much in the phrase, “the kings had been organised the exact form in which the *Ekitiparapo* was organized during the *kiriji* war”.<sup>36</sup> The structure of the confederacy and the role played by *Ogedengbe* of *Ilesa* informed the selection of *Ilesa* as the headquarters of the North-Eastern district in 1899.

But before the confederacy, *Ekiti* kings had not met on an organised platform. They may have met as kins but not at kingship status, since it was a taboo for kings to meet. But by the middle of the 18th century, the nature of their meetings was dictated by the considerations of how to deal with the Ibadan hegemony. The idea behind the meetings started from kinship to encompass all *Ekiti oba*. Moreover, between 1886<sup>36</sup> and 1899<sup>36</sup> when Ekitiland became a British enclave, the kings met in 1899 at the instance of the *Oore* of *Otun* to discuss issues regarding the treaty of 1888 and the seizure of *Olosi*’s crown.<sup>36</sup> At the 1899 meeting, the *oba* agreed to return *Olosi* crown, but for *Olosi* request for the return of his vassal towns that could not be entertained, the crown was eventually withheld.

Of note here is the June 21st 1900s meeting. Through available documents, we know that the *pelupelu* meetings were structured. Some kings vehemently challenged the structure and opposed the inauguration and composition. They based their challenge on the culture and tradition of kingship in Ekitiland, even though the meeting was attended by proxy with only a few kings in attendance. The ground of protest continued till the *pelupelu* meeting of December 19 and 20, 1950, when the council noted the continued agitation:

Government’s policy whereby certain *obas* in the country have been graded 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> class chiefs had no traditional antecedents... before the advent of the British system in this country ... there was no grading of chiefs: all *obas* were equal in status although their respective districts or towns might vary in size and population<sup>36</sup>(*sic*)



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The kings that were favoured by the new structure embraced the re-organisation. Those who did, claimed that they were independent and autonomous kingdoms up to the *Ekitiparapo* war and argued that the fact that they did not take active part in signing the 1886 peace treaty was not enough to relegate them or their kingdom to a second class status, and thereby making them vassal towns to those who were chosen based on ‘agreement’ to lead the war and eventually signed the treaty with the British.

Apparently, many had construed the first meeting as meant for senior *oba*, who are those who signed the 1886 peace treaty. However, the thrust of their argument was that they were co-equal partners before the war, and in the war against Ibadan, having contributed militarily to the success of the war, and therefore, noted that, the subjection of hitherto autonomous villages and towns to a ‘supposed’ superior *oba*, as a leader, lacked any precedence in Ekitiland. For another group, they were being excluded because they were not an *olu* (‘*oba*’- without crowns). In which case, *pelupelu* should be a meeting of both class of *oba*-the crown and coronet *oba*, the *olu* and the *elu oba*. For instance, *Olosi* and *Alawe* of Ilawe claimed to have migrated like other crowned kings from *Ile-Ife*. The *Olosi* claimed he first settled close to *Ilesa* with his crown before his kingdom was attacked by the *Ijesa* army and that this forced him to relocate to Ekitiland with his people. For many years, he had lived amicably with his neighbouring *Ido*, *Ado* and *Ijero* kingdoms, until another *Olosi*, years later, incurred the wrath of these neighbours. Specifically, the said *Olosi* was accused of making *Oduduwa* type of *Agere* drum, which he also used to abuse the neighbouring *oba*. This angered the three kings to the degree that they had to enlist the support of other *Ekiti* kings to wage war against the *Olosi*. In the process, *Osi* kingdom was attacked by these kings, and their supporters. In the war, *Osi* was destroyed. The defeat, in principle, meant a loss of sovereignty. His crown was confiscated and his kingdom was divided among the three kingdoms of *Ido*, *Ijero* and *Ado*. Hence, at the twilight of *Ekitiparapo* war, *Osi* could not claim to be independent, having lost its autonomy. She was to remain under the *Ewi*, with some of his communities shared among the *Ajero* and *Olojudo*. At the end of the *Ekitiparapo* war, the centralisation of the kingship institution seemed an avenue for these categories of kings to reassert their independence from these kingdoms, but they were rather further subjected to their domination.

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The realisation of kingship as a political power was, also, directly or indirectly, opportunities for Olosi to, again, decide to wear beaded crown and assert his independence which the *Ewi* of Ado could not stand. Basically, for him, the *Olosi* is not one of them. Hence, *Ewi* petitioned the colonial authority. The *Ooni Olubuse* was invited to clarify the issue. He, the *Ooni*, argued in support of *Ewi* and stated that “the *Olosi*’s ancestor could be said to have lost the right to wear beaded crown since the *Ilesa-Osi* war”<sup>36</sup>. *Ooni* made this assertion due to pressure from the *Ekiti* kings who believed that if *Osi* was granted the permission and his crown returned, other kings who had suffered the same fate, and even other communities, might follow the step of *Olosi*, and assert their independence<sup>36</sup>. It was also believed that *Olosi* himself might request for the return of the communities that had been seized and shared, and declare himself free of the *Ewi* of Ado.

Again, one would understand the position of *Ooni* against the *Olosi*’s making of *Agere* drum in the likeness of the *Ooni Agere*, which indicated *Olosi*’s attempt to equate himself to the *Ooni*, something that was tantamount to pride, insult or aberration. In any case, usually, defeat in a war automatically subjects the victim to the authority of the victorious. Paradoxically too, one would expect that since *Olosi* could trace his root to Ile-Ife, he should be allowed to wear the crown, but he was denied the opportunity. Though his agitation continued, the colonial authorities remained adamant, maintaining that they had enough information on *Ekiti* to arrange the *oba* in the order of precedence established.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the colonial authority noted that they deliberately removed *Olosi*’s name from the *Ooni*’s list due to the hostility of other kings who were already in possession of the towns seized from him. In pursuant of these precedents, the colonial authority became intolerant to *Olosi* and other kings or *baale* that rejected the new political arrangements. They were compelled to compliance, and were even forcefully made to pay obeisance to whoever was considered superior or senior *oba*. In this wise, “the *Olosi* of *Osi*, who claimed to be independent of the *Ewi* of Ado, was forced to visit the *Ewi* in January 1900. He did, but refused to prostrate for *Ewi* as a mark of respect. He was, subsequently, fined five pounds for failing to prostrate before the *Ewi*”<sup>36</sup>. Another *oba* treated in this form included the *Onire* of Ire. He was banned from wearing beaded crown except the ritual *Ogun* crown<sup>36</sup>. His crown was seized by the *Oloye*<sup>36</sup>

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Returning to the main issue, the first *pelupelu* meeting started under the colonial government on June 21st 1900, and lasted for two days, that is, till June 23 1900. The meeting agenda centred on two issues. The first was the order of hierarchy, and the second was the issuance of licenses. These items were only read to the kings' representatives. The second meeting of August, 1900, discussed, among others, social developmental issues, which included the construction of road networks and the plan for the building of roads from *Otun, Iyapa* (now *Ayetoro*), *Ido, Ifaki, Ado, Ikere, Akure, Ilara, Igbara Oke* to *Ilesa*. The colonial authority maintained that road construction was a civic responsibility; and requested that each king should provide men for five days to work on the road. The government provided the engineers to direct the work. The institution was also briefed about the regulations for licensing liquor and 'minerals'<sup>36</sup>. This was read to the institution for information<sup>36</sup> as an indication that the institution had no role either as adviser or as representative of the people. They therefore could not contribute to the various decisions of government<sup>36</sup>.

It is *probable* that the way the first *pelupelu* was organised and conducted sowed the seed of discord among the kings, for, as a result of this encounter, formal *pelupelu* meeting was not held until August 4, 1915, when the kings were invited again to *Otun* by the *Oore*<sup>36</sup>. The interregnum period, 1902-1915, fell within the time when the colonial authorities were trying to entrench their rule in Nigeria. As a consequence, other important things took their attention, prominent among which was the boundary dispute between Northern Nigeria and Lagos that was not resolved until 1909<sup>36</sup>. Even when Captain Ambrose<sup>36</sup> tried to convene *pelupelu* in 1902, he was not successful, *probably* due to communication gap and the unwillingness of the kings to operate under a central authority, coupled with Ambrose's high-handedness. The kings, on the other hand, had no power or reason to call for *pelupelu* meetings. Even, if this had been done, it perhaps would have opened up old wounds, and caused further schism among them. *Pelupelu* was always convened at the instance of the district commissioner who also financed it, and when the colonial authority had a lean purse, during the First World War period, it was difficult to convene *pelupelu*. When *pelupelu* was reconstituted in 1919, it was to engineer preparation for revenue mobilisation in Ekitiland, particularly the introduction of poll tax in 1920.<sup>36</sup>

Another important thing that affected the *pelupelu* institution during the period 1900-1960, was boundary adjustments, which dismembered the institution. Specifically in 1901, Sir

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Fredrick Lugard and William Macgregor decided to maintain the 1894 boundary between the Northern Nigerian province and Lagos province. Thus, *Obo*, *Otun* and *Isan* were removed to Ilorin province, and *Akure* was transferred to *Ondo* province of Eastern district. This development was protested by the kings. They, in any case, had no say in decision making. Therefore, their protest yielded no result until 1909 when the *Ekiti* Division was created. In 1913, *Ekiti* was merged with the *Ijebu* province. *Isan* was transferred to *Ekiti* from Ilorin province and *Akure* in 1914. In 1915 *Ondo* province was created, *Ekiti* Division was again transferred to *Ondo* province, but *Otun* remained in Ilorin province until July 1936<sup>36</sup>. These divisions challenged that destabilised the institution by constantly dividing *Ekiti* and re-assigning them to different territories. Even within the *Ekiti* districts itself, there were various boundary problems between one district and another. Notably, there was one between *Emure-Ekiti* and *Eporo-Owo* district and the *Akure-Ekiti* district. There were also boundary disputes between *Ikere-Ado-Ogotun*, and *Ikere-Iju-Itaogbolu*.

On August 4th 1915,<sup>36</sup> at the instance of the *Oore* of *Otun*, who was then in the Ilorin province, another *pelupelu* meeting was held. It was attended by a few *oba*;<sup>36</sup> many of them sent representatives. The main agenda at the meeting was the building of roads and the question of tolls which was recommended to the colonial authority. The colonial authority did not attend to the various proposals made by the *Pelupelu*. But in 1917, the sixteen kingdoms were constituted into Native Authorities, with each king as the district head. The kings, having been empowered by the colonial authority in their respective domain, through the 1917 native authority ordinance, once again breathed the air of independence. Although they were still subservient to colonial authority, they could perform their hitherto traditional roles of adjudicator, particularly on traditional matters. Their experiences came up for consideration when another *pelupelu* meeting was called in 1919<sup>36</sup> at *Ado Ekiti* that was to discuss the proposals on taxation and enumeration. But only ten *oba* were present.<sup>36</sup> The next *pelupelu* was convened by the colonial government in Ado on March 4, 1920, again in due recognition of the importance of the kings to any successful administration of Ekitiland. At the meeting, the *Ekiti* council (*Pelupelu*) was transformed into *Ekiti* Native Administration Council<sup>36</sup> with a pseudo legal status, which remained until 1945, when Mr. G.H. Finlay took over, and made *pelupelu* meeting a matter of policy in the administration of Ekitiland. *Pelupelu* began to be held at specific intervals besides emergency

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meetings<sup>36</sup>. With these meetings, *pelupelu* was becoming more an advisory and consultative body to the government. It functioned in this capacity without any legal status, although, it was recognised as an invaluable body whose voice had become important due to ‘their position as real administrative units in the native administration system’.<sup>36</sup> In August 1923, the *Ekiti* judicial council was constituted and became a sort of court of appeal to customary courts, because under the Native ordinance act of 1915, the *oba* were to preside over local courts and were to be assisted by the leading chiefs in their district. They heard appeals on cases involving land disputes because of their versed knowledge in native laws and customs.

Another important development that affected *pelupelu* was the 1920 taxation policy which introduced a common treasury for *Ekiti*, as well as a common estimate. The introduction of common treasury was perceived by some kings as an attempt to lord certain kings over the other *oba*. The disadvantaged group was more suspicious of any intent especially that, in the 1917 Native Authority Ordinance, they had been given full dignity in their separate kingdoms, and were not ready to lose it. In fact, the 1917 act strengthened their unwillingness to have a common treasury, and by extension, a common leader. They would rather have separate estimates and treasuries, since the kings’ salaries now depend on the amount of tax collected in their domains. In addition, some of the kings believed that the smaller district would be feeding fat on the bigger ones. The central treasury was viewed as an aim to further centralise public administration to the detriment of self independence and autonomy. In fact, no district was in favour of a centralised administration for *Ekiti*. So, by 1934, the common treasury and estimates were abolished in nearly all the entire districts, except for *Ayede*, *Isan* and *Itaji*<sup>36</sup> that were the smallest districts. Apart from the challenges of centralisation were the various tax agitations in the districts, notably in *Ijero*, *Akure*, *Ido*, *Otun*, among others<sup>36</sup>. The agitations, which started at *Ido-Ekiti*, led to the *Ogun Okuta* riot in *Akure*<sup>36</sup>

In 1936, the Northern and Southern Provinces were reorganised. The *Oore of Otun* then rejoined the *pelupelu* council. The re-organisation affected the structure of the *pelupelu* council in two ways. Firstly, the leadership was changed and the number increased from sixteen members to seventeen. Secondly, the *Elekole* who was the president during the absence of *Oore* moved back to the second position and *Ewi* occupied the third place in line with Major Reeve-Tucker’s structure. Both decisions had serious implications for the concept of

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*Alademerindinlogun*, a sixteen (16) membership formation, widely believed to speak to pre-colonial kings in Ekitiland. The question then is Who are the *Alademerindinlogun* or the sixteen kingdoms of Ekitiland? Why is sixteen (16) recurring as an instrument of identification, authority and power?

According to Lawuyi, and Alade<sup>36</sup> the issue of sixteen in Yorubaland is linked with tradition. It stems from Yoruba worldview, and of the role of the symbolism of number in creating structure and function. The idea of the symbolic sixteen (16) could be traced to the *Obatala*, a pre-*Oduduwa* era. They asserted that sixteen in Yoruba world view may probably indicate perfection or completion, a blend of forces and the integrity of completeness. Olomola differs as he avers that, numbers are instruments of diplomatic language in Yorubaland.<sup>36</sup> Available evidences, supported by the present study indicate that there are more than sixteen kingdoms in Ekitiland at one time of the historic trajectory. There was evidence in support of indigenous *oba*, the *Oloja*. Some kings also, left Ife in the *Obatala* era to settle in Ekiti and other kings came from Ile-Ife at the instance of *Oduduwa*. From available traditions, and based on the record of *Ooni* Olubuse 11 and Aderemi Adesoji in 1903 and 1931, respectively, about eight of the present *pelupelu oba* belonged to *Oduduwa* or the *Ooni* dynasty, with more than eight in the *Obatala* group, which was another migrant group as stated above. If we choose to accept the opinion of Lawuyi, Alade, Elebuibon and Olomola, then, it is possible to read the constitution of the group as power politics, an attempt to alienate certain *Obatala* or Orunmila group members from the *Alademerindinlogun* phenomenon. But then, the issue of the significance of sixteen (16) would still remain problematic. Such discussion lays the ground for the continuous challenge of manners of composition, particularly as to the determinants of doing so. These explanations set out two lines broad lines of opinions. Firstly that *erindinlogun*, otherwise referred to as *ifa*, is the symbol of authority and the means of identifying those who are the members of *alademerindinlogun*. Secondly, since sixteen was the basis of Yoruba social political system, it becomes imperative that it was adopted by all migrants from Ife. The second argument would, therefore, suggest that the *Obatala* and *Oduduwa* groups adopted such structure as recourse to tradition and principle of inheritance, imperative to strike political balance. However, the inability of the colonial authority to identify the significance of the symbolism of numbers

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among the Yoruba people created the problem of hierarchy, coupled with the struggle for social political relevance and the inability of the *oba* to have any impute in the structuring of *pelupelu*.

The foregoing, notwithstanding, on several occasions, the *oba* queried the structural imbalance of the composition. The structure was challenged by Akure and Ado, such that both towns seek independence from the council, as a protest against the hierarchy. In fact, records from the *Deji's* palace revealed that *Deji* Adesida, the first, pulled out of the Ekiti confederacy due to the recalcitrant attitude of the *Alaaye* of Efon, *Oba* Samuel Adeniran, whom the *Deji* believed should respect him as a senior *Oba*.<sup>36</sup>

Basically, *pelupelu* institution by 1942 could be classified into two phases. The first phase was from 1900 to 1919, and the second from 1919 to 1958. During the first phase, the meetings were attended by proxy, with the *Oba* sending delegates, and the meetings were infrequent. There were only three *pelupelu* between 1900 and 1919, excluding Mr. Ambrose's attempt in 1902. The second phase was from 1919-1958, when the *Oba* met regularly, roughly every six months, in an advisory and consultative capacity and on rotational bases. Between 1939 and 1942, the pace of the meeting increased and within the three years *pelupelu* meetings were held fifteen times, at an average of four times annually in each of the main *Ekiti* towns (Fig. II). Significantly, the later periods could be regarded as the peak of *pelupelu* meetings. However, the attempt to transform the institution to a Superior Native Authority in 1940 almost destroyed the spirit of comradeship and brotherhood, which existed within the institution. The proposal was to enlarge the institution and make it more democratic, to include the participation of educated *elite* and councillors based on the population of each district. The proposals were rebuffed by the kings and the elites. Leading the resentment was Akure and Ado with threats of secession, because of the assumption that the superior authority will create a superior *oba* like in *Oyo* and *Ijebu*. In these crises, Akure was able to have its way and formally seceded in 1946. This spurred other towns to seek dissolution of *pelupelu*. In fact, Mr O.V. Lee, who was in charge of the re-organisation, recommended dissolution for the council in 1943. The council was, however, saved by those who believed in the spirit and strength of brotherhood, such that by 1944 the superior native council was constituted. In August 1944, it held its inaugural meetings and was also granted a legal recognition by the colonial authority. With its legal status, the superior authority became the governing body for *Ekiti* Division

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Between 1945 and 1955, the reconstitution further reduced the power of the kings and their chiefs, particularly with the appointment of and preference for elected members, many of whom had little respect for traditions or for the institution of kingship, since they (elected members) were elites with a different understanding of reality and were wealthier than most kings. Thus, an avenue had been created for rancour between the kings and their subjects, which later manifested in the 1950s. By 1950, four *baale* had been successful in their claim to wear beaded crown and be independent. This increased the number of *pelupelu* to twenty<sup>36</sup>. Although, the kings remained the principal personalities of the council, which the people also referred to as *pelupelu*, the colonial authority saw it as just the *Ekiti* council.

In 1955, Ekitiland was re-organised into eight district councils as against the initial seventeen Native Authorities. The colonial authority reasoning from the antecedents of the kings' dispositions to earlier formations decided to preserve the *pelupelu* institution and the spirit of the unity, and thus, created a Divisional Council. Though, the district and the divisional council were controlled by the elected councillors, the district head was the *oba* and he retained the position of the president of the council. However, in reality, and under the new system, the *oba* was nothing but a figurehead. The real authority lied with the elected chairman and councillors. In this way the kings were cleverly marginalised, and by 1958, the *Ekiti* Divisional Council-*Pelupelu* was abolished after its meeting in *Ise-Ekiti*.

Oral interview<sup>36</sup> confirmed that the *pelupelu* meetings were merely a show, promoted by competitions among the kings. An informant, who could not actually remember when *pelupelu* meeting was held in *Oye-Ekiti*, was able to give the account of how the *Ogoga* of Ikere outplayed other *oba* at the meeting with his entourage and trumpeters. Available records from *Oloye* and *Ewi's* palaces also indicate that the meetings always attracted Ekiti sons and daughters from all walks of life, particularly to the hosting towns. Arrivals were usually a day before *pelupelu*, and the *oba's* arrivals were usually announced by trumpeters with dance and merry-making. Normally, the meetings were held for two days, the precedence having been set at the first *pelupelu*. In addition, people from other districts visited the host community to watch the *pelupelu* as spectators. They lined up the road to catch a glimpse of their *oba*. The fact was that the *oba*, having got their autonomy and supposed independence through the Native Administration Ordinance of 1917, were ready to socialise. They gradually turned *pelupelu*



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meetings to social gatherings and to ‘festivals, featuring big dress competition, pomp, colour and music’<sup>36</sup>. Among those things that could be remembered about *pelupelu* meetings, the shows have remained in the memory of those who witnessed them.

#### **4.4 Challenges of *Pelupelu* Institution in Colonial Ekitiland, 1900-1960: Politics of the Crown**

The thrust of our position has been that Ekitiland had an autochthonous group; and later had the *Obatala* group that introduced priest-kings. The autochthonous group was firmly rooted in kinship ideology.<sup>36</sup> The *Obatala* group introduced priesthood system and this changed the pattern of leadership, such that *Ifa* became the basis of selection, and the ideology of kinship and gerontocracy gave way for divination. Later came the *Oduduwa* groups that seized power and laid claim to superior technology and material ideology. Their allegiances were more to Ife, at least, initially, than to their people. They raised the townships to mini-states, having independent, autonomous, political frame. There was no sense of hierarchy. And relationships were more basically informal, expedient and protective; more in the spirit of ‘*Alajobi*’ a further elaboration on kinship ideology already established by the autochthonous group but also incorporating other groups from Ife. Somewhere along the line of this historical trajectory, the concept of *Alademerindinlogun* was introduced. The concept, to be valid for and relevant to relationships must imply, at least, literarily, the recognition of a certain form of bonding, and a form of empowerment and authority, and a notion of originality. This concept, some *oba* have insisted, must serve as the critical term for inclusion into the *pelupelu*. In other words, they are insisting that there should be a sixteen (16) membership institutions. Some had the notion that they should be those represented in the colonial government as paramount rulers, the ones entitled to crown wearing in Ekitiland. By this notion of difference, the *pelupelu oba* equally suggests that they are the most senior (in historic term) *oba* within Ekitiland. Their argument is grounded on the symbolism of the number sixteen, *ademerindinlogun*, in creating value and defining authority. The question, therefore, is what is figure sixteen to the Yoruba people, in general, and *Ekiti* people, in particular? When, and how did, the number sixteen become applicable to the crown or governance in Ekitiland? Of what relevance is the number to seniority and traditional governance?

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Oral interviews<sup>36</sup> confirm that numbers are used as symbolic languages in Yoruba religion and culture. Traditions<sup>36</sup> also aver that each Yoruba religious cult has peculiar numbers, which are symbolic and peculiar to them. The ideology of number sixteen, *erindinlogun* is associated with both *Ifa* religion which, *Orunmila* founded in Ile-Ife. Oral traditions associate the number with the myth of creation associated in the *Obatala* era. The myth accorded the creation of mother earth to the works of *agbamerindinlogun* headed by *Obatala*, who became the head of the initial government in Ile-Ife. He was assisted by other divinities in the social and political ordering of the Yoruba cosmology. When the ideology was used in the structure of *Obatala* government, *Orunmila* was a leader in the government, and *Esu* was the Judge or the arbiter.<sup>36</sup> The duos are represented in the *Ifa* cast, as *Orunmila* on the right and *Esu* on the left. According to the *Ifa* tradition, both *Orunmila* and *Esu* have the same mark or signature of eight. Their complementarily represents perfection/agreement or balance of power<sup>36</sup>. The arrangement is further reflected in the *Ifa* sixteen verses of sixteen *Odu* and the sixteen *Ikin* used for divination. They account primarily for Yoruba myth of creation, already associated with the *agbamerindinlogun*.<sup>36</sup>

From inception of the concept-*merindinlogun*, it was obviously, associated with establishing political order. Though, it later became deeply rooted in the religion of the Yoruba, particularly in their worldviews of cosmos. Also, since these ‘agba’, elders, are worshipped, there is a religious connotation affirming the role of priesthood. In any case, there is also an *Ifa* claim that *Orunmila* had eight (*sic*) children all of who became rulers in Yorubaland. In Ekitiland, there were about five of them namely, *Alara*, *Ajero*, *Oloye-moyin*, *Elejelu-mope*, and *Elekole*. Others include *Alakegi*, *Olowo*, *Owarangun*, and *Owa* Ilesa presently in *Osun*, and *Ondo* states. The tradition also stated that *Orunmila* had followers, as apostles, who later became kings in their various settlements. This claim clearly links Ekitiland with Yoruba primordality, and with political institutions based on priesthood. But then, we ought to remember that an *Ooni* had claimed that there were only eight (8) *Oduduwa oba*. So, if we have five of the *Orunmila/Obatala*, how do we account for sixteen (16) crowns- *alademerindinlogun*?

Numbers are of course, a form of figurative language, which carries important meanings decoded at various situations. As *Olomola* noted, numbers could be a specialised language of relationship and morality... the way Yoruba counted influenced the significance attached to

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numbers'.<sup>36</sup> For instance, “to give a person one thing is as if you gave him nothing... to give a man three things is equivalent to saying I hate you”<sup>36</sup> Major Reeve Tucker reported that among the Ekiti and Ijesa, three cowries strung together announced the parting of ways between the sender and the receiver; four cowries, strung together, conveyed the sender’s rejection of the proposal, which originally emanated from the receiver; eight cowries strung together showed agreement ... and nine cowries similarly strung together was a confirmation of a proposition.<sup>36</sup> Here, the argument is more about counting system in Yorubaland. Figures four (*merin*), eight (*mejo*), sixteen (*erindinlogun*) and eighteen (*ejidinlogun*) are numbers that often surface in the *Orunmila* cult. In fact, *erindinlogun*, (16) and *erin* (4) have deep connotations in *Orunmila* cult. The figure four represents the four pillars of the house, according to their tradition. Four cowries when stuck together with *ebire* vegetable indicate that the issue at stake is foundational and needed to be settled amicably, without which, the foundation of either a town or family involved is endangered.<sup>36</sup> These figures, when indicated, are practically not in line with the conventional figures. They come in pairs of either two or three.

It is, therefore, important at this junction to state that numbers in Yorubaland are symbolic languages. In Yorubaland, numbers are being used as expression of ideas. They are esoteric languages carrying symbolic meanings. Denet<sup>36</sup> noted the importance of pairing in counting among the Yoruba, by stating that:

to give a man three things is equivalent to saying I hate you.  
For the same reason you must ignore five as an odd number  
and hurry with two more set of pairs so that you have ten.  
Again you must go on counting until you reach twenty, or four  
times five or twice ten...20-5 or 15 is a very interesting stage,  
which starts a new period, 12, 15 to 24, in which 16 (or 20 less 4),  
20 and 24 are the most interesting numbers...16 is the number of  
the sacred palm nuts with which the priests of *Ifa* do their divinity.  
17 is the odd one that goes with 16.

What the above suggests is that figures, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 17 or any odd number does have connotations in the Yoruba counting system. As a convention among the Yoruba, *erindinlogun* (sixteen) is associated with sacredness in line with the order of creation based on Yoruba myth of

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origin, like the Jews that have maintained the tradition of the twelve tribes of Israel. The number sixteen in Yorubaland, generally, and among the *Ekiti* people, in particular has to do with existence, and second, but more importantly, with “belonging”. A group of sixteen (16) *Oba*, therefore, means that there is something which unites them, which could be religious, political or economical. In the first ever reference to the figure in the Yoruba myth of origin, however, it was associated with *Orunmila* and the sixteen elders assigned by *Olodumare* to create orderliness on the young earth.

Indeed, the other name for *Orunmila* is *erindinlogun* and his priests/worshippers are called *elerindinlogun*. Field study actually confirmed that for any *oba* to be a part of the *alademerindinlogun*, he must have *erindinlogun* in his palace and he must consult it on daily basis.<sup>36</sup> Since every society has its way of looking at existence, *Ifa* or *erindinlogun* is pivotal to Yoruba daily life, such that it assumed a religion and political statute. This had shaped and given Yoruba its social organisation and conditions its political life.<sup>36</sup> An examination of what is referred to as *erindinlogun* establishes the fact that sixteen in Yoruba is a contextual figure. We would, therefore, want to conclude that sixteen was though an initial number that began the process and structure of leadership in Ile-Ife. But, at the moment of dispersal from Ile-Ife to other Yoruba areas, the principle of inheritance became a model for crown possession. Oral tradition stated that *Oduduwa* gave crowns to some prince and princes; others were acclaimed to have stolen it.<sup>36</sup> For instance, the *Owa-Ooye* of *Okemesi* claimed that his mother was a princess and that his mother took a crown and hid it in her wrapper when living Ife with her children.<sup>36</sup> The crown later made him one of the *alademerindinlogun* even when it was clear that the people of *Okemesi* had migrated from *Imesi-Ile*. The possession of a crown has become the symbol of authority through which authorities midwives their administrations into social recognition in Yorubaland.

In addition were other development from 1900 to 1950 that bordered on administrative conducts. For instance, in 1900, the colonial authority re-organised Ekitiland, and placed under Ado-Ekiti suzerainty. This was rejected by the Ilawe people. In the struggle to claim independence from Ado-Ekiti, the *Oba* of Ilawe, *Oba Afunbiokin Ademileka I*, was deported to Abeokuta on 17th June, 1925 where he later died on 22nd May, 1929. On 20th July, 1929, his son Akinola Adefolalu was installed as the next *oba*, but was arrested on the 26th July, 1929, six

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days after coronation. He was tried in *Ado Ekiti* and was subsequently imprisoned on the 19th of August for six months in *Ado-Ekiti*.<sup>36</sup>

Apart from the above, there were the interventions by the colonial authority in various land disputes, which ordinarily could have been resolved amicably through the tradition. For instance, the 1936 land dispute between *Ikoyi*, an *Ikole* town and *Igbimo* an Ado town,<sup>36</sup> was demarcated without recourse to the people's tradition. The same happened to *Otun*, *Isan*, *Obbo*, *Ekan-Meje* and *Omuo* that were separated from Ekiti in 1909, and gazetted in 1910.<sup>36</sup> Captain Ambrose stopped *Olosi* from wearing a beaded crown in 1901, and intervened in the land dispute between *Olosi* and *Olojudo*, which later became a strife between the *Osi* and *Ido* people, such that *Ajero* and *Olojido* in Nov. 1901 forbade their men to attend *Osi* market. It took the intervention of the *Ewi* of *Ado*, *Oba Ajimudaoro*, in 1904, to restore the relationship between the two kingdoms to normalcy. In addition, *Ekiti* and *Akoko* countries that have seen themselves as brothers were demarcated in June 1902, against the protest of *Onimesi* that *Imesi* was *Ado's* cousin and as such want to remain in Ekitiland. In fact, at the demarcation was *Onimesi* himself, *Oba Ola Ibiyemi*, and other *Ekiti Oba* like *Elekole* of *Ikole*, *Oba Adeleye I*, *Olode* of *Ode*, the *Ewi Ado* and *Elegbe* of *Egbe*. Similarly, in 1908, *Olode* and *Onimesi* were exiled to Oyo by Mr. Humphrey for not honouring the *Ewi* for five and six years, respectively. The *Onire* of *Ire*, *Oba Arinmooye*, was summoned to *Oke-umo* by the colonial authority in 1905 on the report that he obstructed a vaccinator from performing his lawful duty and was fined 50 pounds, which he was prevented from paying by a certain Chief *Farinako*. His crown was seized and he was subjected to the *Oloye* on the pretext that he was not at *Odo-otin* to sign the peace treaty in 1893 and as such was not entitled to wear crown. In this way, *Oloye* and *Onire* were brought into conflict.<sup>36</sup> And not until 1964 when *Oba Adeyeye* became the *Onire* did *Onire* become independent of *Oloye*.

*Oye* and *Ire* traditions stress their maternal relationship as sons of one *Yeye-Aye*, but while *Ire* agreed with this relationship in principle, they maintained that they came directly from *Ile-Ife* and were led by *Ogun*, the patron god of the Yoruba. On the other hand, *Oye* claimed that *Arokinsona*, the younger brother of *Oloye*, was the founder of *Ire* and the first ruler of *Ire*. The *Ire* account claimed *Odundun-Okun* to be the first ruler of *Ire*. What can be deduced in their accounts, however, was that *Odundun-Okun* was probably in the company of *Ogun*, the warrior

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god, as the early settlers before Arokinsona. Arokinsona must have settled in a separate quarters, based on the account that Ire was in five settlements until 1925.

Ironically, on the 27th November, 1924, the *Ekiti* judicial council, an organ of *pelupelu*, invited the *Alawe*, *Onire* and other *oba* seeking autonomy to *Ado-Ekiti*, where they were persuaded to accept the re-organisation. At the judicial council meeting was the *Elekole*, *Ewi* of *Ado*, the *Alara*, *Deji* of *Akure*, *Alaaye* of *Efon*, *Olojudo*, *Oloye*, *Ogoga*, and *Atta* of *Ayede*, and the District Officer, Captain A. P. Pullen with his assistance, W. J. W. Norcott. When the *Alawe* entered the council hall, he refused to greet the other *oba*. When he was reminded to do so, he refused and said “I am not your equal, you are small boys and villagers,”<sup>36</sup> He was said to have said a more demeaning word to the *Ewi* of *Ado* in previous meetings. For example, he told the *Ewi* in 1923, that

you are a small boy, I am an old man, it was I who brought you up from childhood, I am not under you, I am an *oba* myself... I am a district head and not subordinate to anyone...the *Ewi* thinks I am his slave, he deceives himself- I am the head of all *Ekiti obas*<sup>36</sup>

This was typical of the situation and level of relationship among the *oba* in the colonial era. The nine *Ekiti oba* at the judiciary eventually decided that *Onire* should only wear the *ade ogun*, and thus, rested the controversy surrounding his claim to beaded crown. The *Alawe* was charged for refusing to recognise the new authority vested in the *Ewi*, for purchasing two crowns, refusing to prostrate to *Ewi*, and for calling himself an *oba*. The *Alawe* was fined 50 pounds, and his vehicle was impounded. Nine of his chiefs were fined 102.10s pound for instigation.<sup>36</sup> The indication here is that, the authority to wear beaded crown solely rest on the prerogative of the colonial authority who must have been exploiting the gap created by the conflict among the *oba*.

The cases were later reviewed on March 4, 1925, at a *pelupelu* meeting. Since the beneficiaries of the new rule were the judge in the case, there was no modicum of redeeming the image of the institution, already tainted and badly damaged by conflicts, assisted by the colonial authority. Indeed, the kings later suffered another blow with the order that they had to supervise public works, and as a rule, must take permission from the District Officer before they can do

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anything in their kingdom. In this wise, some of them had to wait several hours outside the district officer's office before they could be attended to like ordinary persons. In trying to satisfy the spirit of the law, the *Elekole* had to relocate to *Itapa* in 1923 to physically supervise the construction of *Itapa-Ikole* road, because he was reporting to the resident officer on the progress of work on the road.

Basically, they were at the mercy of the colonial authority, which made sure that the *oba* remained undignified traditional authority in their domain. To completely de-robe the kings' authority, the colonial authority at the *pelupelu* meeting held at *Aramoko* in 1939, officially suggested that membership of *pelupelu* be democratised to include village heads, chiefs, reputable citizens and representatives of the educated class, and it should be reconstituted to a Superior Native Authority for the whole Ekitiland, so that discussions at the meetings will be broad based and all encompassing. Each district will contribute to the council based on its population<sup>36</sup>. According to the proposal, the superior native authority is expected to have a president appointed among the *oba*. The attempt to appoint a president among the kings, over and above the other kings hindered further discussions on the new superior authority and nearly destroyed the spirit of the *Ekitiparapo*. However, Mr. O.V Lee, the then colonial officer, then on special duty on re-organisation of Ekitiland, in the attempt to secure the support of the *oba*, and for the *pelupelu* to forge ahead, had to discuss the issue with each *oba* before re-opening it again for a serious discussion at the *pelupelu* meeting held in *Ado-Ekiti* in 1942, where the first *Ekiti* anthem was introduced to bring re-integrate the districts' that had signalled the intention to quit the *Ekiti* Council<sup>36</sup>. At the same meeting, there and then the proposal became acceptable to the council. The proposed *Ekiti* Superior Native Authority was to have a permanent president akin to that in Oyo, where *Alaafin* held sway. Beside the fact that this was alien to Ekiti, it grew the suspicion that *Oore* of Otun, who was frequently referred to as the most senior *oba* in *Ekiti*, just came back to the council. Thus, it was believed that the *Oore* would become the permanent president with other *Ekiti oba* as subordinate. The resentment was that the prestige and influence of the *oba* would be endangered if the *pelupelu* is increased on the basis of population and an *oba* elevate above the other *Ekiti oba*. The re-organization of the *Ekiti* Superior Authority was challenged from every quarter not only by the kings, but also by some *Ekiti* elites, particularly from *Ado* and *Akure*. The position of *Ekiti elite*, however, is that the matter of representation had

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not been adequately resolved. On Saturday, February 2, 1946 the *Onilaja* of Ado, an elite within the town of *Ado Ekiti*, challenged the re-constitution of Ekiti Superior Authority, claiming that the *pelupelu* (*Ekitiparapo* council) that had been in existence since 1886 had no legal status, as neither a constitution nor rules and regulations governed its activities. He further added that it operated at the whims and fancies of the D.O. He further asserted that Ado was not ready to continue with the *Ekitiparapo* council and that it should be granted autonomy just as *Akure*. The argument further stressed that the autonomy granted *Ilawe*, *Osi*, *Igbara*, and *Imesi Lasigi* from *Ado* was nothing short of victimisation of Ado's attempt to sever herself from *Ekiti* confederation. The *oba* added that the decision was contrary to the ruling made by the said commissioner vide W.P. 5635/471 of 27/4/1928 against Ado autonomy.<sup>36</sup> Ado's agitation could be viewed from three perspectives. Firstly, there was the impression of overbearing authority and influence of the resident officer who was acting without regard to tradition. Second, that the institution operated for over forty years without rules or principles' governing its activities was intolerable. Thirdly, the institution was operating more as a regimented civil service where the head could do whatever he chose, thus denying others the freedom to disagree. He became the *Excellency* far and above the king and tradition by posing as a new authority that must be feared. The district officers became lords to both the rulers and their people. In the long run, the council agreed to a re-organisation. They challenged the re-organisation of the council on the premise that the plan would make one of the *oba* an *Alaafin* or an Emir over Ekitiland. The resentment led to the demand by the *oba* of the larger districts of Ado and *Akure* that their districts be allowed to secede from the *Ekiti* confederation. In fact, *Akure* was the first to make a case for separation and when she was bent on seceding, claiming that she had no traditional affinity with *Ekiti* and could not justify her remaining in the confederation, she was severed from *Ekiti* in January 1946. The success of *Akure* in 1946 encouraged the Ado Tax Payers Association to re-open Ado's case for secession. Other districts followed suit. The agitation became so tensed that Mr. O.V Lee had to recommend a breakup of the confederation.<sup>36</sup>

The prospect that *Ekiti* might break up made some *oba* who had not agitated for secession to petition the district officer against disintegration of *Ekiti*. Nevertheless, *Akure* had broken away from *Ekiti*, but other districts were encouraged to remain. Ado people had to be intimidated by the colonial authority and the *Ewi Aladesanmi* made to write a letter of apology to



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the colonial authority and the council before she finally agreed to remain. In the opinion of the colonial authority and Mr. O. V. Lee, in particular, much good had come out of the *pelupelu* since its inception in 1900. But before then the kings, in line with elite opinion, had made case for a legal status for the council. But Mr. O.V. Lee advised for a deferment until the western province chiefs' conference was accorded legal status.<sup>36</sup>

The *Ekiti* Superior Administrative Authority was reconstituted with some modifications on the initial plan. The modifications were, firstly, the idea of a permanent president was de-emphasised. The presidency was to be rotated among the *oba*. Secondly, autonomy on financial matters was granted, even above what the kings had envisaged. When the proposal for democratisation, enlargement and the re-constitution of the *pelupelu* into Superior Native Authority resumed in 1944, and the modification having been entrenched, there was hardly any dissenting voice from the *oba*, because the fears of political and economic domination, prevalent in the preceding years, had been allayed. The kings, having admitted that cooperation was significantly necessary for progress and development, therefore, agreed to *pelupelu* being democratised and representatives being selected, based on population. Each district was to send to the council the *oba* as head of the district and one representative for every 2000 people.<sup>36</sup> Among the recommendations at the 1944 meeting was that each district should include young literates and their town unions' executives. In this way, the membership of the council was increased to 150; all whom were nominated, except the *pelupelu oba* that had been permanent members.

The *Elekole* of *Ikole*, *Oba Adeleye II*<sup>36</sup>, in view of the earlier challenges in the *pelupelu*, proposed a one year term for the president of the Superior Native Authority. The proposal was supported by the majority of the *oba*, thus, further erasing the fear of domination and paramountcy of one *oba* over the other. The new line of action would guarantee equality of the *oba* of each district. The Superior Native Authority had her inaugural meeting in August 1945 and was granted a legal status. This made it easier for the colonial government, to deal with a centralised authority than individual districts. In other words, the seventeen districts became local councils under the Superior Native Authority, which was responsible to the colonial administration.

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The Superior Native Authority composition gave, several *baale* and chiefs the opportunity to air their views and to be emboldened of staking claims to equality at one time or the other. In fact, about sixteen *baale* made claims for independence before 1950<sup>98</sup>. These were: the *Owa* of Oke Igbera and the *Owa* of *Itapa*, claiming independence of *Ikole* Kingdom; *Osi*, *Ode*, *Imesi*, *Egbe*, *Ilawe*, *Igbara-Odo*, claiming independence of *Ado* Kingdom; *Iyapa*, *Ipoti*, *Ewu* claiming independence of *Ijero*; *Ido-Irapa* and *Apa*, claiming independence of *Efon* Kingdom. The *Elekole*, the *Ewi* and the *Oore* constantly challenged one another on who was the most senior, just as *Oloye* was against the *Onire*<sup>73</sup> wearing a beaded crown, insisting that *Onire* had no right to it except to *Ogun* crown and supported by *Ekiti oba* in 1925.<sup>36</sup> The issue generated a lot of controversies among the kings, that *pelupelu* meetings were called to address the agitations. For example, the 1925 *pelupelu* was specifically summoned to address disputes between *Oye* kingdom and *Ire*; *Ado* kingdom and *Osi*, claim of political independence and wearing of crown. In spite of this development, *pelupelu* meeting created an avenue for the kings to discuss developmental programs and projects like road construction, building of schools, and dispensaries and water supply among others, which were also in the interest of the colonial government. For instance, road construction was seen as an important venture that could help in the movement of cash crops like cocoa and coffee for which *Ekitiland* was, and is still, well noted for. These social developments in various communities were part of what gingered the kings to support the colonial authority, more importantly for the fact that the colonial officers usually moved about in mobile hammocks made of cloth and stick, bore by local men, along bush patches, therefore, it was hoped that the roads when constructed will help reduce the burden of poverty and suffering of the people. The colonial authority made road construction a civic responsibility and the people were forced to work without pay like the Hebrew children in Egypt. Those who ran away, and were later caught, were made to carry a bigger basket overloaded with sand or stones above the normal one being carried by the labourers. It was a dehumanising experience and a form of exploitation. In *Kabba* province, for instance, labourers were paid six shillings for six days in road construction. In *Ekitiland* the labourers were neither remunerated by the colonial authority nor the *oba*.<sup>36</sup>

The foregoing challenges, coming as it were from various quarters, among and between the kings, between the elite and the kings, and between the elite, the kings and the colonial

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masters, became a torn in the flesh of the *pelupelu* institution, that it still grapples with, because, from the inception of colonial rule in 1900, their structure had remained at the mercy of various succeeding governments.

Between 1947 and 1949 the kings became active not only in government but in the struggle for Nigeria's political independence. They assisted in the launching of *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, the group that later became the Action Group (AG) in 1949. In 1951 when the Action Group became the regional government, the AG reorganised the structure of governance and gave the *oba* appointment as members in the House of Chiefs. The House of Chiefs met for the first time in Ibadan from January 7 to 9 and 19, 1952,<sup>36</sup> under Governor, Sir Chandos Hoskyns-Abrahall, with the *Ooni* of Ife, Adesoji Aderemi as President. The *Alaafin* of *Oyo*, Adeyemi II, the *Oba* of Benin, Akenzua in that order, were there with the *Alara* of *Aramoko*, the *Olojudo* of *Ido Faboro*, and the *Ewi* of *Ado*. The new House of Chiefs was seemingly the gathering of *Oduduwa* crowns. It completely sidelined the autochthones *oba* that had right to priest crown, like the *Onire*. Forty-eight *oba* were present at the 1952 House of Chiefs Conference. It must be noted that only two came from Ekitiland, namely, the *Ewi* of *Ado*, *oba* Aladesanmi I and the *Olojudo* of *Ido Faboro*, *Oba* Olayisade. Noteworthy here is that the *Olowo* of *Owo* and *Odemo* of *Ishara* were appointed state ministers. In the same process, the President who by honour of tradition was the *Ooni*, preferred the title of 'Mr Chairman'<sup>36</sup> to *Kabiyesi*, indicating a total acceptance and support of the British humiliation of the divine authority and sacredness of the *oba*.

The second session of the house started on August 5 1952, with the discussion on government policies on forestry, public health, co-operative, social welfare and Education. The council became a platform for the discussion of issues bordering on the social, political and economic development of Yorubaland. Though, the *pelupelu* council had influenced on various decisions on social and economic development of Ekitiland before the 1950s, it had greater influence on promotion of the education of their citizens through scholarships to deserving students at home and abroad. The financing of the Education of school teachers, construction of roads linking Ekiti towns with the neighbouring divisions, building of schools and the establishment of cottage industries, particularly in the agricultural sector, the provision of district police force were the height of attempts to maintain social security and promote the welfare of

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her citizen. The introduction of the Western House of Chiefs became the first time the *oba* were directly involved in decisions that had direct, legal and constitutional impact on the life of their people under the colonial government. According to *Odemo of Ishara*, “for within living memory it is the first time that Yoruba *oba* or ruler . . . has ever stood up in a government bench”<sup>36</sup>

#### **4:4; 1 Colonial influence and the politics of seniority**

The influence of the colonial government became entrenched with the completion of the 1886 treaty. The signing of the treaty formally placed Ekitiland under the British colonial authority, and this led to the introduction of subjective norms and rules that ran against the traditional social norms and practices. An instance was the convocation of the *pelupelu* in 1900 that introduced seniority against the hitherto co-equal structure. The recognition of the crown far above its pre-colonial status; the total subjection of the *oba* under colonial rule introduced some laws like the ‘freedom rights’ popularly termed the forestry law of 1900, that led to the arrest of *Oloye* and his chiefs in 1901 on the excuse of tampering with the forestry law.<sup>36</sup> From 1898, when the British subdued the Benin Empire, the “rule” was everyone to himself. So, when *pelupelu* was structured based on hierarchy the *oba* became divided politically along their own interests, unlike in the pre-colonial Ekitiland, when there were cooperation among the kings when any of them was confronted with external threat. This was the case in *Ikoru*, *Ijero* and Ibadan war, Ado and Benin war and the *Ekitiparapo* confederacy at war against Ibadan. The kings joined together to contribute soldiers, and supply food and other materials needed for the prosecution of the war. They did so as allies, and least with the intention of claiming supremacy.

The new hierarchy and structure introduced by *pelupelu* was a challenge to the traditional institution of kingship in Ekitiland since it was against the traditional principle of seniority among the Yoruba,<sup>36</sup> though which the kings have manage their differences not minding their different circumstances and challenges. Because, they could substantiate their origin in the primacy of Ile-Ife, particularly that the earlier group, that is, the *Obatala* group were more interested in their priesthood function,<sup>36</sup> such that even in places where they had reason to contend for position as in *Ado* and *Ikere*, among others, they chose to step aside for the sake of *Oduduwa*. The present *Ogoga* of *Ikere* claimed that *Ogoga* was the first *oba* in *Ikere* and that *Olukere* was a leper banished into *Olosunta* forest and, therefore not the aboriginal leader in the

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land. Extant studies from *Ikere* had substantiated his claim to the throne by alluding that he was invited to rule by the *Olukere*.<sup>36</sup> This had been part of the motivational arguments and account of supremacy that drive interest in seniority. This, however, had not relegated the position of the priesthood, rather it had assisted for better relationship and peaceful coexistence among the priest and kings, and had in some instances led to unity and alliances among *Ekiti* kingdoms, particularly during annual festivals and ceremonies, even in times of war against external forces. For instance, at the *Ikoro* war of 1854, and *Ise-Emure* war of 1873-1875, *Ijero* refused the Ibadan entrance to *Ikoro* kingdom; *Emure* stood against Ibadan and *Ise* in 1873-1875, *Oye* assisted *Ado* to ward off Benin invasion in the middle of the 19th century.<sup>36</sup> It was not until the introduction by the colonial authority of a centralised institution for the kings, with the characteristic of divide and rule, that those who still held to their crown, having seen the benefit of the crown and their legitimacy being threatened by the new system, began serious agitations for the recognition of their crown. Indeed, the *Odo-Otin* document of 1886<sup>36</sup> became a political document and tool used by the colonial government as reference to assigning political supremacy. The document assumed political relevance far and above the tradition of the people, while preferences were given only to some towns believed to be politically relevant to colonial governance. For instance, *Ado* and *Ikere* were engaging each other and could not participate in the *Ekitiparapo* war<sup>36</sup>, yet, the centrality of their town became an advantage. Unknowing to the colonial authorities, the structure of the *Ekitiparapo* confederacy was not real but a spontaneous union, born of common hostility to Ibadan and the rejection of its over-lordship.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the confederation had no rules and regulations, but like in the past, the unity displayed was a loose one, which the colonial authority did not have a deep knowledge about and rather than investigate, Reeve-Tucker, adopting it as a framework, forcefully subjected the kings to one another. Hence, *Ekiti oba* and towns were set against one another in the context for supremacy, by establishing the council of chiefs based on the structure of the confederation. That was why, the *Owa* of *Ilesa*, was made the head of the council of chiefs in Ekitiland. It was reason for the inclusion of *Akure* in *Ekiti* based on her various relationships and romance with *Ekiti*, particularly the reception of Captain Morehouse and Governor Clifford by representatives of *Ekiti*, *Akoko*, *Owo*, *Ondo* among several others at *Akure*. In fact, it was at the meeting with Governor Clifford that it was agreed that *Akure* be grouped with Ekitiland.<sup>36</sup> With these decisions, many towns and villages vent their

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grievances against the new order in agitation for correction. By 1917, the agitation of political independence by several towns actually overwhelmed the colonial government that it became an issue of major discussion at the *pelupelu* meetings. According to the *Ekiti* Division annual report, the claim of independence and beaded crown could only be compared to those applying for Raleigh bicycles.<sup>36</sup> The agitation for seniority has remained till date among the various kings, for instance between the *Oore* of Otun, *Olojudo* of *Ido*, the *Ewi* of *Ado* and the *Elekole* of *Ikole* and several others.

Some of these agitations received attention from the colonial authority, and since it was not limited to Ekitiland, the *Ooni* of *Ife*, who in the opinion of the British authority had the final say on beaded crowns, had to be contacted for a resolution. However, *Ooni's* intervention aggravated the situation by creating more challenges. For instance, the *Ooni* of *Ife*, then *Olubuse* II, in the case of *Elepe* in 1902 gave a list of twenty-one traditional rulers entitled to beaded crown in Yorubaland. This was gazetted in 1903. The list excluded some *oba* who also claimed that they were entitled to wear beaded crown.

With the exclusion of some *oba* the *Ooni's* list generated conflict among *Ekiti oba*. For instance, the *Olosi* contacted the *Ooni* for a review that would include his name on the list. Although the *Ooni* sought permission of the colonial authority to amend the list in 1903, indicating the fact that *Ooni* himself might have acted ignorantly.<sup>36</sup> His request was not granted. In 1904, other kings, among whom were *Iddo-Irapa*, (now *Ido-Ajinnare*) *Ido-Ile*, *Ode*, *Imesi*, *Egbe*, *Ilawe*, *Igbara-Odo*, *Imesi Lasigidi* and *Ire*, which also believed that their none inclusion on the list was disgraceful, shameful, ridiculous, and was a sign of demotion to them also joined the *Olosi* to protest the exclusion. The protest produced no desired result as the colonial authorities only refereed them to the earlier objection on the issuances of new crowns. In fact, Governor Sir William MacGregor stated unequivocally that if every king who asked for beaded crown was granted, the dignity and authority of the great kings would be negatively affected.<sup>36</sup>

This crisis of who was qualified to wear beaded crown continued until 1931 when *Ooni Adesoji Aderemi* gave another figure of kings that are entitled to beaded crown. The list had twenty-six names<sup>36</sup>. But those who presented claims, claimed that they had a direct descent from *Oduduwa* were in their hundreds; thus indicating that all the party that left *Ife* to establish

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kingdoms were not only his sons but may include other parties like his grandsons, his great grand children and even friends. In the list of the claimants was the *Oore* of *Otun* who asserted that his crown was from *Olokun*, the sea god, and that he assumed the position of a leader among the *Ekiti* kings being a diviner and Ifa priest to *Oduduwa*, a friend of the house, contemporary and benefactor of *Oduduwa*.<sup>36</sup> We must note that some of those displaced by *Oduduwa* hegemony in Ekitiland were political heads of their kingdoms. For example, *Elesun* had established Ife type kingdom in *Ado-Ekiti* but was displaced by *Ewi Awamaro* in a treacherous manner.<sup>36</sup> *Ogoga* took over from the *Olukere* in Ikere, *Oluse* in Ise, replacing sons and followers of *Orunmila*, an associate of *Obatala*, who was a great personage in early Ife kingdoms.<sup>36</sup> This is also supported by an *Ijesa* tradition that *Ilesa*, *Ikole*, *Omuo* and *Oye* were related through an unnamed woman who eventually became the *Atakumosa* of *Ilesa*.<sup>36</sup> Tradition did not explain the relationship of these kings which included *Obbo* and *Isan* kingdoms of similar relationship. Ironically, the majority of the kings in Ekitiland had family background that could be traced to Ile-Ife, but it is obvious that not all of them had relationship with *Oduduwa*, except the *Oore*, like *Oduduwa* himself who was an empire builder, having established his own kingdom based on the concept of *alademerindinlogun*, which he called the *Moba Merindinlogun*. This also entrusted on the *Oore*, a special role during the transitions and installations of any *Ooni* of Ife. As a matter of fact, *Ooni Olubuse* II confirmed that the *Oore* must be notified of the passing away of any *Ooni* before anybody.<sup>36</sup> For, according to him, it is the *Oore* who must inform other *oba* of a change in the house of *Oduduwa*. He, as a tradition, must also start the preparation for a new *Ooni*. This was useful information for the *Oore* to claim seniority.

*Oore's* claims had, however, attracted various criticisms from other *Ekiti oba*. Nonetheless, the three groups, the *Elu*, *Olu* and *Oore* each laid claim to *Ile-Ife*, to enable them to be within or remain among the principal kings of the *pelupelu* class. The desire to be counted with them was so strong that some *oba* had to be challenged and imprisoned for contravening the regulation for wearing beaded crown. Many of the claims had to be contested. The *Olode* of *Ode* claimed that he brought his crown from *Ile-Ife*, but the *Ewi* insisted that *Ode* was a town under the *Ado* kingdom and cannot wear a crown. In 1912, the *Olode* went to *Ado* with his crown on his head but with the support of the colonial government the crown was seized by the *Ewi Ado*,

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and the king was exiled. He, however, returned to *Ode* in 1916 at the intervention of the Christian missionaries.<sup>36</sup>

Apart from its political legitimacy and social relevance, the beaded crown became a source of advancing authority over land. For instance, the *Arinjale* of Ise challenged *Elemure* of *Emure* in a land feud, stating that the *Elemure* was not entitled to a beaded crown and as such could not have land.<sup>36</sup> When *Elemure* claimed that he was entitled to beaded crown, *Arinjale* asked him to provide proof. Although, *Elemure* referred to government gazette where he was registered, but because he could not lay his hand on the gazette the case dragged on until 1929 when he discovered the gazette in Enugu.<sup>36</sup> Also, from 1912 there were land disputes between the *Igbara-Odo* and *Akure*, *Akure* and *Ikere*, (1918) *Akure* and *Idanre*, (1926) *Ayede* and *Orin* (1960s). The contestants claimed they inherited lands due to their relationship with *Oduduwa*.

From the foregoing, manipulations for political and economic gains became the ground for challenging the comprehensiveness of the *pelupelu* institution. With the *Ooni* using beaded crown to sway allegiance to himself, he exercised sovereignty over those hitherto not in his camp. He displayed this tendency when he proclaimed that *Olosi* had lost his crown, when he was defeated by the *Ijesa* in his first settlement. Although, a defeat in a war meant loss of sovereignty, but *Olosi* claimed he was able to escape with his crown to resettle in Ekitiland. This claim, if true, amounted to *Olosi* still being a beaded crown *oba*, but in the opinion of the *Ooni* he could not still parade himself as a crown *oba* and, as such, was not an independent *oba* and automatically not a member of the *pelupelu*. The kingdoms supported by the *Ooni* were the leading kingdoms in Ekitiland at the time. But generally, however, the *Ekiti oba* lost power and dignity. He became loyal towards the colonial authority's interest and was ready to do his bidding to curry his favour and protect his crown.

Those who disobeyed the colonial authority position on any subject of great interest to her majesty were dethroned, banished or replaced by a loyal contestant. In this wise, an *Ekiti oba* was convicted of infanticide and executed in 1899.<sup>36</sup> The *Oloye* of *Oye*, *Oba Adugbole* that tampered with the forestry act in 1901 was arrested with his chiefs and detained for about six months; he became an object of ridicule.<sup>36</sup> In 1918, he was fined 20 pounds for extortion. *Oloye Obawoyomi* I was suspended as president of the Native court in 1923 and 1928.<sup>36</sup> Along the



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construction of power was the colonial intervention in the appointment of kings and chiefs. The British government positions from 1913, stipulated that as a rule, the colonial authority must be consulted before the appointment of chiefs. In 1918 when *Oloye Adugbole* died and a new *Oloye* was installed by the *Oye* kingmakers without the colonial authority's input, he was removed by Mr. J.H Finlay who installed *Oba Owoyomi I*. By 1922, this *oba* too had lost the favour of the colonial government; he was first ridiculed by having his salary slashed from 189 pounds to 150 in 1922, before being restored in 1927. When he died in 1932, the colonial government continued to exert their influence by imposing another *oba*, *Adeoba*, on the people of *Oye* in 1932. This colonial act, which became legalised in 1930, was challenged by the *Elemure* of *Emure* on the appointment and deposition of chief's ordinance,<sup>36</sup> though amended in 1945. It consumed several *oba* that were deposed or imposed against the tradition and custom of king making in Ekitiland. Also, the new law also threw out Ado people's position on the dethronement of *Ewi Aladesanmi*; even outside Ekitiland, the *Owa-Ale*'s suit against *Olukare*, believed to be was a government, appointed *oba* suffered the same faith.

Significantly, the colonial cannot be challenged by anybody due to colonial intimidation and harassment. Only few people dared colonial authority and when they do they had to retrace their steps to maintain good relationship with the government. *Oye* was a good example of such town in Ekitiland. In 1954, the appointments and recognition of chief's law replaced the 1945 act and became the western region law number 1 of 1955, under the government of *Chief Obafemi Awolowo* and *Chief Dauda Soroye Adegbenro* who was in charge of local government and chieftaincy affairs. The law made declarations on all issues relating to appointment of *oba* and chiefs, such that the rules governing appointment and selection became easily ascertainable.<sup>36</sup> The law expressly stated the ruling houses and those eligible, including the kingmakers and procedures to employ in filling vacant chieftaincy positions. Thus appointments or depositions were subjected to the dictates of the colonial authority. In this dimension, the *Ewi* of *Ado*, *Oba Aladesanmi II* was imposed on *Ado* people after his suspension by his subjects for having gone to the conference of Yoruba *oba* held in *Oyo-Ile* in 1939 with over 500 people without adequately taking care of their welfare. There were petitions from the chiefs, alleging that he stood against the traditions and customs of the land, particularly

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that the Ewi has behaved unconstitutionally by disregarding his councillors, by acting autocratically without proper consultation of his council, and by interfering in the affairs of ward, quarters and villages that are properly outside his province;... violence to local religious ... non performance of traditional festivals, farming in forbidden bush, and flouting certain *Aafin* customs<sup>36</sup>

In fact, Daniel *Adejugbe*, the grandfather of the incumbent *Ewi Adejugbe Aladesanmi III*, popularly called sergeant that contested with *Aladesanmi*, had been selected to take over from *Aladesanmi II*<sup>36</sup>. This decision was, however, upturned by the colonial authority, and *Aladesanmi II* was imposed.

#### **4.5 Rapport and rapprochement among *Ekiti* kings in the colonial period**

The bedrock of *rapport* and *rapprochement* among *Ekiti* kings was matrilineal-the *Omiye* and at a later date the patrilineal-the *ebi* system.<sup>36</sup> This sociological concept may have influenced *rapport* and *rapprochements* which has remained the guiding force from the inception of kingship tradition in *Ekitiland*. In this way, the kingdoms were organised on, and related with one another up to the time of the *Ekitiparapo* war. Indeed, the principle of seniority encouraged by the patrilineal system made the *Oore* of *Otun* the leader of the *Ekitiparapo* army and by extension the leader of *Ekiti oba*. As a tradition, the friend and confidant of one's father is also a father, particularly being a neutral force, traditions enable him to oversee the affairs of his friends children. This may account for the meetings in *Oore's* palace in the pre-colonial era.

The ideology may have given credence to the now generally recognised common origin, common ancestry and culture of *Ile-Ife*. But has however, raised the *Ekiti* consciousness, while inventing some sort of interconnections with *Ile-Ife* and the *Oduduwa* crown as a 'mask' for legality. In this way the kings relate with one another as brothers of the same father, that is *Oduduwa* and claimed to have gotten their legitimacy to establish their kingdom from him having been given the crown to rule.

Moreover, *rapprochement* was built on diplomatic relationships, which often cut across several kingdoms in the aim of maintaining peaceful and harmonious neighbourliness. This was a common phenomenon during annual festivals and coronation rites among all the kingdoms. In some instances, there were marriage alliances between two kingdoms, whereby one of the kings will give her daughter in marriage to another king. Evidences from field work supported

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*Olomola's* submission on marriage alliances between the *Elekole*, the *Olojudo* of *Ido Faboro* and the *Oore* of *Otun*. In fact, in this instance the *Olojudo* was said to have hijacked the lady sent to *Oore* of *Otun* while the *Elekole* had to prepare another lady for the *Oore* of *Otun* in exchange for the hijacked lady. The altercations, notwithstanding, the three kings never made it an issue of quarrel. Although, there were instances when relationship cut across familiar boundaries but we must note that what featured at these instance was the *Ekiti* principle and philosophy of life.

Furthermore, at annual festivals, each kingdom is represented by her emissaries. Normally the palace serfs bear the messages of peace and felicitation from their kingdoms except when there are rifts between two kingdoms. This was the practice during important festivals like the *Olosunta* in *Ikere*, *Ise*, and *Ode* festival in *Oye*. In the words of *Olomola* the practice of socio-economic and political diplomacy in Ekitiland has greater antiquity, and possibly, one that dates to roughly 500 years<sup>36</sup>. As a matter of fact, the traditions of origin of these kingdoms and their inter-dependency is full of instances of political, social and economic interactions and diplomatic exchanges in times of peace and even as a last result to avert war or to deliver a message of solidarity. In the case of the later, messages are coded in special diplomatic language understandable only to the initiates of social groups or secret societies like the *Ogboni* cult. The use of diplomatic language to convey definite and specific meanings is coded in symbols and anaphoric languages that at times, do not have any bearings with literal interpretations. For example, to say *opo ye* (the pillar has fallen or the stake is broken), *Ile pada* (there is a change of house), *Oba waja* (the king has entered into a bunker of beads)<sup>36</sup> is an indication that the king is dead. And since it is compulsory to intimate and relate with other kingdoms and kings on the passing away of a king or otherwise in Yorubaland, messages are coded and sent far and wide to inform other kingdoms. Powerful conventions regulate the relationship of the kingdoms, their kings and certain category of citizens who are believed to occupy sacred position, this include the palace serfs. For example, the *oba*, as a rule, must not be killed in a war. He could be captured but must be respected. When the *Ewi* of *Ado* went to *Ifaki* to meet the *Ibadan* warlord, he was accorded a great deal of respect and was sent back to *Ado-Ekiti* with gifts.<sup>36</sup> Also in 1875, the *Arinjale* of *Ise*, *Oba Olomoisola* was spared by *Aduloju* and *Ogedengbe* who ravaged *Ise* and the *Aare Latosisa* was said to have prostrated for the *Owa* of *Ilesa* even when he had already destroyed *Ijesa* kingdom.<sup>36</sup>

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In addition, for political and social relationships, gifts are usually used as symbols of message (*aroko*), which conveys the intention of the sender either to stop an impending war, or to seek support against external aggression or punishment for crime. In this way, the *Deji* of *Akure*, *Oba Ojijiogun* sent *esinsin* leave to the *Arinjale* of *Ise*, *Oba Olomoisola* in 1874 and his chiefs in his attempt to extradite *Ologbosere* an *Ise* citizen living in *Akure*, but had run away with the *Deji's* wife named *Asauke*.<sup>36</sup> The combination of symbols vary, depending on the type of message, but common objects like cowries, chalk, cam-wood, sticks, pepper, cola-nuts, calabash, ashes, knives are indigenous, and were among the commonly used objects, which carried special messages. War was not a common thing in Yorubaland until the arrival of the *Oduduwa* dynasty. The earlier *Obatala* group, according to traditions, shunned any form of physical violence such that “a quarrel between two men usually takes the form of grudging and refusal to greet.”<sup>36</sup> Lawuyi<sup>36</sup> avers that this Yoruba character still constitute the position of the Yoruba people on violence and what actually assisted the *Oduduwa* dynasty in the taken over of the *Obatala* government, and by extension, the pre-dynastic Yorubaland.

Hinderer, commenting on *Ekiti* people noted that “the *Ekiti* people love liberty-and have been known in the hour of extremity to choose death rather than a life of slavery”<sup>36</sup> Thus, in the face of intimidation and external aggressions, the *Ekiti* are known for aiding one another and can always unite against external aggression. In this way symbolic coded messages are sent to neighbouring kingdoms, intimating them of the need to support and even requesting for support. For instance, at the *Ikoru*-Ibadan war of 1854-1855, the *Ajero* invited all *Ekiti* kings in support of *Ikoru* against the Ibadan army. *Aramoko* also refused to aid the designs of the Ibadan against *Ado* Kingdom,<sup>36</sup> likewise *Ise* and *Emure* in 1873-1875.<sup>36</sup> Though, not all *Ekiti* kingdoms participated in these wars, kinship and brotherhood came to the fore in defence of *Ikoru* by *Ijero* against Ibadan and *Ado* by *Oye* against Benin.<sup>36</sup> Also, in *Emure* against Ibadan and *Ise* in 1873-1875.<sup>36</sup> In times of peace, each of the *Ekiti* kingdoms was on his own.

Nevertheless, there were instances when challenges beclouded the principle of brotherly and cordial or mutual relationship that two neighbouring communities have to engage one another in war lasting for years. Between the *Ikere* and the *Ado* kingdoms, there were several wars up to the middle of the 19th century,<sup>36</sup> which did not allow these two communities to participate in the *Ekitiparapo* war. The *Ogoga* of *Ikere* made us to understand that both

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communities neither participated in the *Ekitiparapo* war nor attended the first *pelupelu* in 1900, because they were both drumming the beat of war, expecting that one community will leave, thereby paving the way for the others to overrun such a community without let or hinder.<sup>36</sup>

The foregoing was the traditional basis on which the kings relate with each other up to the inauguration of *pelupelu* in 1900. *Rapport* among the *oba* was practically diplomatic with the aim of protecting the various traditions of kingship. The kings were, indeed, forbidden from leaving their palace except on rare occasion, which must be traditionally sanctioned, by appropriate officials. Hence, when the *Ooni Olubuse* I went to Lagos in 1903 to address the problem of *Elepe* and the *Akarigbo* of *Shagamu*, “the Yoruba *oba* including the *Alaafin* of *Oyo*, left their palaces and dwelt outside their walls until they were assured of the *Ooni’s* safe return”,<sup>36</sup> since Yoruba tradition forbids the *oba* from leaving his palace, and particularly for the *Ooni* of *Ife*, the journey caused consternation in Yorubaland. This is the essence of the relationship and association, which cut across familiar bonds to include social and cultural exchanges such that when these taboos were broken by Major Reeve-Tucker in 1900, the *pelupelu* was a channel for further relationship; the kings came out to display the cultural artistry of their various kingdoms. They came out of their palaces at different periods to pay royal visits and exchange pleasantries on issues bothering Ekitiland in general from wider perspectives.

## End Notes

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### TRANSFORMATION AND CHALLENGES OF *PELUPELU* INSTITUTION IN EKITILAND, 1960-2000

#### 5.0 Introduction

It has been established in this study that monarchical institution in Ekitiland has been a development, from the nuclear family, through the extended family, as a model of priesthood to beaded kingship. The emergence of kingship institution in Ekitiland had largely remained obscure. The development, however, was a product of an agrarian settlement,<sup>36</sup> consequent upon which kinship became the hallmark of relationship. The *Omiye*<sup>36</sup>(matriarchal) was the initial arrangement on which aggregations of settlements became towns and later the *ebi* system,<sup>36</sup>a patriarchal and extended family unit, larger in scope than the *Omiye*. The latter formed the basis of kingship relationship prior to the advent of colonialism in 1900. Obviously, these became the hallmarks of the rapport among Yoruba *oba*, in general, and Ekitiland *oba*, in particular.<sup>36</sup>Under the *ebi* system, patriarchy was the framework for maintaining relationship among the kings. It served as the link with ancestors and the gods, in contrast to the *Omiye*, which was a maternal, structured principle of seniority.<sup>36</sup>The *ebi* system though emphasised seniority; fundamentally, it championed resourcefulness and charisma, rather than age, as a prerogative for becoming a leader (*Oba*). An example is *Ayede* kingdom, a 19th century town which emerged from the ruins of the *Ekitiparapo* war among several towns and villages that had emerged as kingdoms in the pre-colonial period.<sup>36</sup>However, what was common to these systems was the concept of leadership. These were embedded in the nomenclature of governance. At this period, the *oloja*, *owa* and the *elu*, were at the head of government whether as the aggregation of farm settlements or the mini-state. The introduction of “town settlement or mega-town” regarded as *Olu-Ilu* was synonymous to *Oduduwa* and it resulted in the introduction of the *oba* with beaded crown. Thus, the farm settlements became subordinate towns, still retaining the *oloja*, the *owa* and the *elu* but were subservient to the *oba* of the new head town, which Akintoye refers to as royal towns.<sup>36</sup>This is the stage which Ade *Obayemi* called mega-state.<sup>36</sup>According to Oguntuyi, the *oloja*, *owa* and *elu*, before these periods were not autocratic until the arrival of the *Oduduwa* group that imposed the *oba*.<sup>36</sup> He was merely the lineage priest and sovereign father of all citizens, being a member of an extended family. He is, thus, a symbol and embodiment of his ancestors and the predecessors of his lineage. Oral interview avers that membership of the clan or lineage was *sinqua-non* to political authority in the pre-dynastic period. Leadership, therefore, was hereditary and was embedded in age such that the oldest is the head of the lineage. He became the spiritual head and automatically occupied the political headship position. As a spiritual head, therefore, he performed the spiritual evocation or reverence (*Ijuba*)<sup>36</sup>at the family shrine. As a matter of fact, the principle of seniority and inheritance among the Yoruba was fundamental to political orderings in the pre-dynastic period, such that the founders of new towns or settlements always returned to the head-town to participate in all festivals and traditional ceremonies and rendered help in times of need to his ancestral home, *orirun*. They joined other vassal towns in the building of palaces annually, for instance, and also rendered support during war. Indeed, the position of Ile-Ife in beaded crown, particularly among the Yoruba kingdoms was in favour of the fact that *Oduduwa* on whose alter-ego several kingdoms of the Yoruba claims beaded crown lived and died. This singular fact had made all Yoruba kingdoms and kings to relate with Ife in the

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primacy of her being the source of the Yoruba and from where they all received authority to rule. It became the source or brotherly relationship generally in Yorubaland.

There is, presently, evidence to the fact that some communities had existed before Ile-Ife, suggesting that what is known today as Yorubaland in its entirety may *probably* not have originated from Ile-Ife and that not all the Yoruba kings may claim to have originated from *Ile-Ife* or *Oduduwa*.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, field investigation and linguistic analysis of Yoruba dialects revealed, that there were Yoruba settlements *probably* older than *Ile-Ife* and, in essence, pre-dated *Oduduwa*. Scholars have argued the primacy of *Ife* due to new discoveries and evidences. The best known is *Oba-ile* near Akure.<sup>36</sup> In addition, some scholars have postulated migration and diffusion of cultures from the Benue valley area around the North-eastern Yorubaland.<sup>36</sup> Wande Abimbola<sup>36</sup> gave several examples of other Ife towns which could be the original home of the Yoruba people as *Ife-Oodaye*, *Ife-Nleere*, *Ife-Ooyelagbomoro*, *Ife-wara*, *Otu-Ife*, *Ife-Oore* and *Ife-Oojo*. Ade Obayemi's<sup>36</sup> archaeological findings reveal other towns like *Ife-Ijumu* in the present Kogi State as a possible source of Yoruba dispersal. These myths relating to Ile-Ife as not only the cradle of mankind but as well of a specific authority began, somehow, with attractions beaded crown. The sons of *Oduduwa* who later established kingdoms used this as tool to legalise the wearing of *ade-ileke*, beaded crown. Meanwhile, Ulli Bier<sup>36</sup> and Akinjogbin<sup>36</sup> have faulted the use of myths of origins of dynasties, particularly those relating to *Oduduwa* by various kingdoms as the beginning of kingship institutions in Yorubaland. Largely, because, it is somehow believed that some of these kingdoms had existed before *Oduduwa*.

Indeed, most of the traditions or myths of origin are not directly connected to *Oduduwa*. Ado tradition of origin, for instance, claims that Awamaro, the first *Ewi* was the third son of the *Ooni* of *Ife*,<sup>36</sup> the *Alaaye* of *Efon*, *Oba* Adesanya Agunsoye II claimed that *Efon* was founded by *Obalufon* Ogbogbo-dinrin who was the eldest son of *Oduduwa*. According to this tradition, *Obalufon* was the second and fourth ruler of *Ile-Ife*.<sup>36</sup> But a study of the various oral traditions and myths of origin of several Yoruba towns or kingdoms provide some kind of abstracts, which are *probably* characterised by political manipulation and orchestration. However, extant studies and traditions agree that *Oduduwa* had only one son, named Okanbi, who gave birth to seven children, two among them were women, particularly, the mother of *Olowu* who was the first child. The contention, therefore, is the claim of *Obalufon* Ogbogbo-dinrin that he was the first son of *Oduduwa*, which made him the second *Ooni* after *Oduduwa*. *Ooni* Aderemi Adesoji also supported this claim in 1931.<sup>36</sup> Akintoye's view was that the second *Ooni*, *Obalufon* Ogbogbo-dinrin who ruled after *Oduduwa* was *probably* not *Oduduwa*'s son but a relation who *probably*, based on tradition of relationship among the Yoruba by which "in the contest for the selection of king, an influential family would normally support the princely candidate close to itself by blood became a ruler." Ironically and more plausible was that *Obalufon* Ogbogbo-dinrin died on the throne and was succeeded by his son, *Obalufon* Ogbogbo-dinrin II. He was adjudged not qualified, since he was not a direct descendant of *Oduduwa* but a member of the palace who later became the *Ooni* due to the vacuum created by the non-availability of an heir apparent to the throne.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the abdication of the *Ooni*'s stool by *Obalufon* Ogbogbo-dinrin II, who was said to have run away at the sight of Oranmiyan,<sup>36</sup> a grandchild indicated that *Obalufon* Ogbogbo-dinrin II, had no right to the throne of Ile-Ife. It is possible also that *Obalufon* Ogbogbo-dinrin I, was in the lineage of the first *Ooni*, who indeed, was not among the grandsons of Okanbi but a close relative. He may have become the *Arole*, due to the benevolence of Yoruba tradition and the necessity to keep Ife traditions and culture alive. Significantly, there is the requirement of daily worship and sacrifices within the palace until a rightful "owner" is available.

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Another tradition argues that Ogun was the next ruler after *Oduduwa*.<sup>36</sup> Evidence from field work reveals that *Ogun* was the biological father of Oranmiyan, an altercation that led to the *Olojo* festival in Ile-Ife.<sup>36</sup> The argument is that relationship with an *Ooni*, particularly, does not indicate relationship with *Oduduwa* who was the empire builder. It must be noted that the *Oduduwa* dynasty is different from the *Ooni* dynasty and it is the *Ooni* dynasty that most Ekiti *Oba* claimed relationship with, except the *Oore*, who claimed the titular head of *Ife-oore*.<sup>36</sup> Though, the present *Alaaye* of *Efon*, *Oba* Aladejare claimed that the founder of *Efon* was the second and fourth *Ooni*. What is, however, certain was that the third *Ooni*, that is, *Obalufon* Ogbogbo-dinrin II, established *Aaye-Ipole*, while his descendants founded the present *Efon*.<sup>36</sup>

The argument is that, Ile-Ife primacy had resulted in the respect accorded the founders of the various kingdoms who were the progenitors and ancestors of the Yoruba race, not minding the differences in the various myths of creation associated with Ife and, thus, Ife has become a rallying point for relationship among the *oba* till date.

Of particular relevance to this study is the myth associated with *Orunmila*, which also gave prominence to *Ile-Ife*, to the extent that we could accept the fact that Ile-Ife is the melting point of all Yoruba descent. Apart from the *Oduduwa*, the myth legend has served as a reason for Yoruba unity. According to tradition, *Orunmila* was sent in the company of other deities to establish order on earth and as such played a significant role in the government of the “world” headed by *Obatala* until the government was overthrown by *Oduduwa*.

Furthermore, when *Oduduwa* took over government and established his dynasty in Ile-Ife, the initial structure of government established by *Obatala* and *Orunmila* was not totally annihilated, rather *Oduduwa* made use of these structures and accommodated stronger elements in the initial government and culture. Among these sub-cultures is the tradition of kingship and *alademerindinlogun*, which depicted socio-cultural and political understanding of creation that dovetailed into the religion and political structure of Yorubaland and encouraged relationship among the *oba*.

Paradoxically, the culture of the priesthood was synergised with the beaded crown kingship, while to maintain the initial aura of dignity and relationship attached to the institution the traditions and belief system of the people were engaged in such a way that there were no vacuum and strife in the leadership structure. In essence, *Orunmila*'s part was to maintain orderliness and divine ordering in the “young earth” established by the sixteen divinities called *agbamerindinlogun*.<sup>36</sup> In this way, the idea and concept of government associated with *Obatala* was religiously maintained as a parameter for structuring political relationship and association in Yorubaland and Ekitiland, in particular.

Oral tradition associated with *Orunmila* further stated that he sojourned in *Ile-Ife* for some time and had eight children who later dispersed to become kings. They include *Alara*, *Ajero*, *Oloye-moyin*, *Elejelu-mope*, *Alakegi*, *Olowo*, *Owarangun* and *Owa Ilesa*.<sup>36</sup> Apart from these eight children, there were other unnumbered disciples of *Orunmila* that dispersed in the footsteps of the children and became leaders in several towns among which was *Ido*.<sup>36</sup> It ought to be noted that *Obatala* was assisted by two principal agents (Esu and *Orunmila*) in his government. The importance of these principals is replete in *Odu-ifa*, which have sixteen main verses (that is the right hand of *Orunmila* having the same mark with Esu in the left which are represented by figure eight respectively). Oral interview corroborated this but went further to state that *Orunmila* gave sixteen divination seed (*Ikin*) to his sons with which they could only reach/consult him should the need arise. *Orunmila*'s concept of figure eight is expository in the ideology of eight children and that of Esu is embedded in Esu cultic belief. The summation of the two figures



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became the basis of the concept of unity and perfection in Yorubaland, and presumably, this gave rise to the concept of *ademerindinlogun*.

Oral interviews from field study revealed that the concepts of *ademerindinlogun* in the Yoruba cosmogony depicted agreement between parties in government,<sup>36</sup> which were clearly stated in the myths of origins, either of *Oduduwa* or that of *Obatala*.<sup>36</sup>In fact, both traditions agreed that the two acclaimed messengers of Olodumare (*Obatala* and *Oduduwa*) were assisted by sixteen wise men called *agbamerindinlogun* that were later deified to become *Orisa merindinlogun*. The ideology of *erindinlogun*, therefore, is more of an agreement with the past and the path laid down by *Orunmila* which *Oduduwa* adopted as the foundation of indigenous government in Yorubaland. Oral interviews from field work revealed that sixteen were, therefore, the pillars of government which served as local government authority within the pre-colonial Yoruba government in general and Ekitiland, in particular. The selection of the sixteen was to have orderliness and for easy management and control by the national authority in *Ile-Ife*, though, *Ile-Ife* was never an empire or seat of political authority, *Ife* was viewed as the *orirun* of the Yoruba nation; thus, she occupied an important place in maintaining law and order among the acclaimed children, who always returned to *Ife* to resolve any political logjam and must notify *Ife* after their coronation as *oba*. This was the case when Olubuse II was invited to Lagos to discuss *Elepe's* crown in 1903. In the case of Osi and Ilawe, the *Ooni* became a witness.<sup>36</sup>In essence, the Yoruba was following the traditional ordering made available by *Orunmila* and by indication, in agreement with the order of creation by Olodumare.<sup>36</sup>

From the foregoing, therefore, especially with reference to the kingship institution in Yorubaland, in general, and Ekitiland, in particular, the sixteen kingdoms were the composition of *Orunmila* and *Oduduwa* sons. The attempt to protect the various traditions which helped in the maintenance of peace and social order in the society have informed the selection of numbers and the application of figurative languages and symbols for various expressions in Yorubaland and, ultimately, the imposition of *erindinlogun* (sixteen), to maintain the status quo and as the ceiling of relationship and authority. Of course, every symbol of *erindinlogun* has seventeen conventional figures. An example is the divination seed. This also informed the type and mode of relationship maintained by the kings up to 1900 before the *pelupelu* was introduced by the colonial government.

Oral tradition revealed that it was traditionally forbidden for some kings to meet face to face; rather, night meetings and coded languages were used as a means of interaction and maintaining relationships or communications.<sup>36</sup>Meetings were in part and not centralised based on relationship. Furthermore, from the installation of the king, he was forbidden to make himself available in the public but only on rare occasions and when he does appear in public, he must be veiled. An interpreter assisted in passing on whatever information he needed to put across. He, thus, assumed the position of a spirit, and therefore, must not be seen by ordinary eyes and as such certain sacrifices must be made for him to meet certain individuals at certain periods of time.<sup>36</sup>

Oral interview from *Ikere* confirmed that the *Olukere*, the priest king, was forbidden from seeing the *Ogoga*, a beaded crown *oba* at certain period in the year. The *Aoro-eleju* must not see the *Oloye* from the day of his installation. The *Ogoga* of *Ikere* confirmed that when a road wanted to be constructed around the *Olosunta* shrine and it became necessary for the *Olukere* to see him for discussion, sacrifices were made to avert the anger of the owners of the land by *Olukere*, who actually came in person to make demands for materials for the rituals.<sup>36</sup> The *Olojudo* of *Ido-Faboro* also stated that between the *Oye* and *Ido* boundary, sacrifices were made for *Oloye* and *Olojudo* to be able to meet face to face.<sup>36</sup>What this

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suggests is that, life in the physical depended largely on the structure of authority in Yorubaland and remains, significantly, a product of cosmological ordering and blood relationship. Between *Oye*, *Eseta* (now *Ilupeju*), *Ire*, and *Arigidi* (now *Ayegbaju*), were alliances based on maternal relationship which became *Oye* Kingdom with *Oloye* as the head, being the eldest son of their mother, a certain *Yeye-Aye*.<sup>36</sup> Oral tradition regarding '*Egbe-oba*' suggested the peopling of *Ikole* kingdom (*Egbe-oba*) by children of the same parent. Also, the *Ajero* and the *Alara*...between *Onisan* and *Owalobbo* of *Obo Ayegunle* were traditions of origin tracing the birth of these founders to the same mother.

Conversely, the kings maintained diplomatic contacts and related with one another during their many annual festivals. They sent gifts to themselves as a sign of solidarity and support, as the case may be. They rendered support to one another in the time of war, though there were situations when, as neighbours, they engaged each other in war, like the *Ado* and the *Ikere*, *Ise* and *Akure* kingdoms. Many of them relish the cordial relationships which fostered peaceful coexistence within Ekitiland.

The above suggest that Ekitiland *oba* may be friendly and ready to unite in the face of any external attack or intrusion. The *Ekitiparapo* war of the 19th century, being a case in point, was initiated and fought based on this type of rapport and fraternity. Four *oba* were at the war front without seeing one another because tradition forbade them from meeting face to face.<sup>36</sup>The *Owa Agunloye* of *Ilesa* lived at *Esa Egure* now *Esa-Odo*, *Oore Okinbaloye Agbarurulorifa*, *Olojudo Eyeowa Odundun* and *Ajero Oyiyosaye* lived at *Imesi-Ipole*. This antecedence was to the colonial authority, an insight into the ideology of a united *Ekiti* nation. Hence, the invitations of the *oba* who they believed were leading *oba* to *Odo-Otin* to sign the peace treaty. This informed Major Reeve-Tucker's meeting with the North-eastern *oba*, on May 21, 1900 at *Oke-Imo* in *Ilesa* and the subsequent re-organisation of Ekitiland during his tour from November 8, 1901.<sup>36</sup>The meeting transformed the kingship culture from informal institution to a formal institution of government guided rules and structured in order of hierarchy. As noted above, *Ekiti* kings were independent of each other and had never met before Reeve-Turker invited them to *Oke-Umo* in *Ilesa*.

### **5.1 Transformation and Challenges of *Pelupelu* Institution: an overview**

On June 21, 1900, the conference of kings from the Eastern Yorubaland was inaugurated by Major Reeve-Tucker at Oke Imo, Ilesa as "Ilesa Council". Present at the inaugural meeting were few *oba*, while some send representatives.<sup>36</sup>The kings from Ekitiland include the *Ajero* of *Ijero*, *oba* Okeruku; the *Oore* of *Otun*, *oba* Adifala; the *Olojudo* Odundun; the *Elekole* Agbabiojusanmo; *Alaaye* of *Efon*, *oba* Atewogboye; *Olojaoke* of *Imesi-Igbodo*, *oba* Aniyebeye; the *Ogoga* of *Ikere*, *oba* Alowolodu; the *Arinjale* sent his representative, the *Atta* of *Ayede*, *oba* Omotoso was there as an observer, so also was the *Baale* of *Emure*. It was the first time the kings would meet together in a broad day-light and face to face. It was a total breakdown of the taboos of seclusion and the rules and rites associated with the *pelupelu* institution. The meeting was chaired by the convener, Major Reeve-Tucker and the interpreter for the meeting was an *Ijebu* man named *Gbangbalasa*.

The first day of the conference was for arrival, the second day was for proper meeting, while the third day was scheduled for departure. The meeting took place at the *Ilesa* market square on the second day, as scheduled. However, on the third day while the *oba* and their representatives were preparing to return home, the *Ijesa* people in praising their king boasted that "all the *Ekiti oba* are rats, but the *Owa...cat*".<sup>36</sup> This angered the *Ekiti oba* and probably coupled with the fact that the colonial authority seem believing that the *Owa* was the lead *oba* in Eastern Yorubaland based on the *Ekitiparapo* alliance during the war. The *Ekiti oba* vowed never to attend any meeting in Ilesa.<sup>36</sup> The June 21, 1900 meeting of

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the *oba* at *Oke-Imo* was the first centralised meeting that incorporated all the categories of the *oba* that is the *oloja*, the *owa*, the *elu* which are priest king and the beaded crown kings. Thus, it was referred to by the *Ekiti* people as *pelupelu*, since it incorporated both the *elu* and the *olu* king. Major agenda for discussion at the inaugural meeting was the order of seniority and building of roads<sup>36</sup> which took most of their time.

The attempt to protect the kingship traditions by the *Ekiti oba*, coupled with the perceived molestation by the *Ijesa* people, particularly the fear of the taboo of unseen, among others, hindered further *pelupelu* meetings until 1915. The 1919 meeting, among others, discussed issues relating to the poison of five people in *Osi-Ekiti*. The *Olosi* was fined one hundred pounds for complicity. This marked the beginning meeting attendance by the *oba*, and from then *pelupelu* became rotational. Even at that, it was not until 1920 when taxation and salary was introduced as emoluments that attendance became important for the *oba*. Hence, from 1919<sup>36</sup>, when the *oba* could not resist being personally present at the *pelupelu* meeting and as such, the taboo of being unseen was violated and broken.

The violation of the tradition of seclusion and the various taboos associated with kingship institutions changed the traditional aura associated with kingship institution, such that from 1900, mutual cooperation and understanding that was the hallmark in the pre-colonial period gave way to a struggle for position on the one hand and the attempt to maintain the kingship traditions amidst social challenges and political developments, on the other. The trend in the contestation for beaded crowns and the relevance of social developments attached to the *pelupelu* meetings were among the obvious reasons for jettisoning the various taboos and traditions associated with kingship. The polity became heated up such that individual *oba* had to engage in power politics and scheming to assert his status

What actually changed the trend was the development of Native Authorities Ordinance in 1913, which created *Ekiti* Division and the subsequent introduction of Native Authorities in 1917.<sup>36</sup> This development returned the kings to their pre-colonial status of political independence and autonomy. Subsequently, attendance became regular by the kings.

In later development, the 1919 *pelupelu* at Ado were attended by ten kings.<sup>36</sup> This became the stroke that broke the camel's back. However, the 1919 meeting offered some juicy packages for the kings, which further made attendance more attractive. For example, the meeting introduced taxation and 'salary' for the kings.<sup>36</sup> It gave the kings autonomy and 'super power' over their subjects. In fact, the district authority could shield the kings should they violate the traditions of kingship by providing adequate security for them under the indirect rule as representative of government. Towards this end, police stations were built very close to the palace in each district to assist the *oba* in enforcing the rules. Some of them became despotic, such that by the time taxation was about to be discussed, they were very ready to attend to the colonial dictates in matters of political and economic gains.

The colonial administration having overwhelmed the traditional institution, thus, re-constituted the *pelupelu* as an advisory body, though without legal backing, in 1920.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, between 1920 and 1939 *pelupelu* became a carnival of sort and a cultural festival. Each *oba* displayed the cultural artistry of his kingdom with funfair. They were accompanied by drummers, dancers and praise singers. The occasion featured big traditional dress, the biggest traditional *etu*, *sanyan*, made of *alaari* and *aso-ofi* robes. Each *oba* came with large retinues, which included the principal and other important chiefs in his domain. The performance became so competitive that it displayed among others the first set of motor vehicles in Ekitiland (see appendix). The *oba*, not wanting to be left behind or be outplayed in social outfits and splendour by their colleagues, encouraged their subjects to make contributions for the

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purchase of cars and for rebuilding of the palace. The *Ewi of Ado* levied his entire subjects three shillings for the rebuilding of his palace in 1923, which the *Ilawe* people refused to pay on the excuse that they were never at anytime subservient to *Ado-Ekiti*.<sup>36</sup> The *Ewi of Ado*<sup>36</sup> went to the Western Nigeria Council of Chiefs' meeting in 1939 with over 500 of his people and was unable to take care of them. This resulted in a serious crisis in *Ado* that partly culminated in the deposition of *Ewi Aladesanmi II* for some months, before he was reinstated by the colonial authority. In like manner, the Yoruba council of *oba*'s meeting in Oyo in 1939 became so challenging that the colonial government had to restrict numbers of followership and cars that must accompany each of the king to the subsequent meeting at Abeokuta in 1940. It was indeed, also, a challenge to the colonial authority, to fund the hosting *oba*. The colonial authority had earmarked one hundred pounds for hosting *pelupelu* meetings at the *Ado* meeting of 1919.<sup>36</sup> But the number of the entourage of each *oba* increased the expenses incurred at subsequent meetings, such that the money was increased to one hundred and fifty pounds at the *pelupelu* held in *Efon-Alaaye*<sup>36</sup> in 1920 in order to meet the cost of hosting the conference. Between 1900 and 1942, there were about eighteen *pelupelu* meetings, thrice in Ekitiland between 1900 and 1919 (August 17, 1900 at *Otun*, August 14-17, 1915 at *Otun*, and 1919 at *Ado*). Captain Ambrose initiated a meeting in 1902, but the meeting could not hold possibly in the attempt to still keep the traditions of kingship or other sociological factors arising from the transformation of the institution.

From 1919 to 1945, the *pelupelu* was a pseudo-advisory committee to the colonial authority, without a legal backing, but the colonial authority saw the usefulness of the council in addressing the various administrative challenges and social developmental programmes. In fact, the success recorded with the introduction of tax in 1919 stimulates the district officer to make it a matter of policy and encouraged the *oba* to meet on regular basis. Within these periods, fifteen *pelupelu* meetings were held in different locations on rotational basis, with funfair usually lasting for three days.

The concert provided avenue for the kings to meet and discuss various developmental programmes which were done in the spirit of *Ekitiparapo*. Issues of seniority and leadership within the council did, however, remain controversial, particularly among the presumed leading kingdoms of *Otun*, *Ijero*, *Ado* and *Ikole*. But the *oba* never allowed this to blindfold them when it comes to fraternity and developmental issues. At the first *pelupelu* in 1900, *Oore* was made the leader based on his role during the *Ekitiparapo* war. In fact, the *Oore Okinbaloye* signed as the head of *Ekiti oba*, when the *Alaafin* was rejected by *Ekiti oba* as their leader. In the opinion of *Adeyemi Folayan*, it was based on the age of the *Oore* of *Otun* among the other *oba* in Ekitiland.

Oral interview from the *Oore* of *Otun*, *Oba James Adedapo Popoola* and corroborated by archival sources, however, indicated that *Oore* was not the eldest *Oba* in Ekitiland in 1900 but the *Elekole* of *Ikole* who was asked to return home, having got to *Ijero*, due to his age at the time. It is probable that leadership was bestowed on the *Oore* based on age-long tradition and due to his benevolence and relationship with *Oduduwa*.<sup>36</sup> According to *Oba James Adedapo Oladapo Popoola*, when *Oduduwa* became blind, it was the *Olokun Adimula* that consulted the *Ifa* oracle which diagnosed *omi-okun* to be missed with other items<sup>36</sup> as the solution to *Oduduwa* blindness. This act earned him the appellation *Olore*, which later popularised his name, now corrupted as *Oore*. This act ensued into a relationship of friendship and family relation that, according to a Yoruba adage, *ogun odun ti oba ti laburo ko ti bimo*, that is, twenty years when the *oba* had got a brother, he has not had a son. According to him, the relationship with *Oduduwa* earned him a special role and place in *Oduduwa* house and even in the installation of any *Ooni* of Ife till date. He further stated that the *Oore* that attended the 1900 meeting was

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a newly installed *Okinbaloye Adifala*, who was the younger brother to the *Okinbaloye Agbarurulorifa* that led the *Ekitiparapo* war. The *Oore Adedapo Popoola* maintained that, *Oore's* leadership role was that of an uncle, a contemporary and friend of *Oduduwa* being the head of an Ife settlement called *Ife Oore*.<sup>36</sup> The *Oore's* position if juxtaposed with the concept of seniority among the Yoruba which includes age and fraternalisation of the various Ife towns could be equated to a father among *Oduduwa* supposed children. According to *Wande Abimbola* and quoted by *Oore Oladapo Popoola*, *Ife Oore* was a contemporary of six primordial Ife towns. In addition, the *Oore* has consistently justify his position on claims to leadership among *Ekiti oba*<sup>36</sup> by his involvement in the many disputes in Ekitiland, among which was the invitation to all *Ekiti* kingdoms for the *Ekitiparapo* war against Ibadan. Even, the 'escape' of *Fabunmi* from *Okemesi* to *Ogotun*, *Ijero* and *Ido-Faboro*, where he was eventually directed by the kings to *Oore* of *Otun* as one who could summon *Ekiti* kings to any meeting, attested to his acceptance by a fraction of the king's council. Some *oba* also, averred that the several installation imbroglios that had to be settled by *Oore* of *Otun*, even in his palace with several kings in attendance, notable among which was the installation of the *Atta* of *Ayede*, *Oba Omotoso* and the *Onitaji* of *Itaji*, *Oba James Adeleye II* corroborated *Oore's* significance.<sup>36</sup> However, some of the *oba* in the *pelupelu* council might be willing to agree to the principle of given 'credit to whom credit is due,' especially on issues of quality of respect, that accorded to the *Oore* of *Otun* may not be possible for any other individual without the historical backing.

The argument here is that, on what barometer have the kings been meeting at the palace of *Oore*? On what authority had the *Oore* invited other kings? What could be said in reference to these questions is that, *Ekiti* culture was built around a tradition and culture that gives room to respect and seniority of age or to the dogma of first come, first served. However, if the kings have set a tradition in the past for meeting at the palace of *Oore* of *Otun*, the need to continue with that tradition must have encouraged further meetings. This study, establishes that since *Ekiti* kings have always been meeting at the *Oore* palace, which in the view of some kings was a traditional meeting place, the present challenges confronting the institutionalisation of leadership might be due to socio-political developments, particularly of that linked to population increase, government patronage, closeness to the seat of power, political power relations, resourcefulness and wealth. This was in line with the various responses from the *Ekiti* Traditional Council to the petitions by the Ado people on the position of the *Ewi* among the *oba*.<sup>36</sup> The Ado people have continued to challenge the position of *Ewi* among *Ekiti oba*. In 1933, Evangelist *Babamboni* protested the grading of *Ekiti oba*. Specifically, he challenged the ranking of *Ewi* next to the *Elekole*, claiming that *Ewi* should occupy the first position rather than the *Elekole*. He noted that "*Ewi's* kingdom has always been the largest and most populous of all *Ekiti* ... the densest... the emporium of all *Ekiti* people and bounded by ten *Ekiti* kingdoms."<sup>36</sup> In 1942, *Akure*, and later, *Ado-Ekiti* demanded for separation from the *pelupelu* institution. Other 'kingdoms' made similar demand. Even, when other kingdoms were ready to federate, Ado was not prepared, until she was threatened before she finally agreed to remain with the institution. *Akure* was, however, granted her independence on January 1, 1946 and the Superior Native Authority also constituted.

The challenges of hierarchy and the claims by the Ado people that *Ewi* was the leading *Ekiti oba* almost became an albatross for the council, such that between 1946 and 1958, *pelupelu* was held on rotational basis. The attempt to foster mutual relationship and peaceful deliberations that could lead to social and economic development of Ekitiland being the focus of the *oba* made them to decide on the rotation of the meetings against a permanent seating place that was *Ado-Ekiti* from 1919.

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In 1986, the *Oore* of *Otun* also submitted a memorandum to the *Ondo* state government on the position of the *Oore* on the composition of the *Ondo* state council of Kings (chiefs), wherein he noted that “the form of political structure evolved by the *Ekitis* up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a confederacy, yet at every point in time throughout the known history, *Oore* has always taken precedence before any *oba* in *Ekitiland* which included *Akure*”<sup>36</sup>

In a letter dated 14/5/98, Ado people petitioned the military administrator of *Ekiti* state on what they termed “the apparent relegation of the *Ewi* of *Ado-Ekiti* to the fourth place in the hierarchical order of members of *Ekiti* state council of kings (chiefs)”<sup>36</sup>

Related to the above are issues of terminology and their referential significance. As indicated above, the terminology of ‘chiefs’ rather than kings were belittling. We have argued that this terminology was used to ensure the supremacy of the Queen of England as the only king in the British Empire. We assumed the wrong nomenclature was a fall out of the meeting of the *Ooni* with Governor Macgregor on the *Elepe* and the *Akarigbo* crowns. Specifically, after the *Ooni* had instructed that the crown of *Elepe* be seized, available record reveals that the *Ooni* later paid a visit to the governor in his residence the following day and told the king that he himself had resolved that he was king solely by the governor’s authority. While acknowledging the power of the British government, “the *Ooni* got up from his seat and entreated the governor... the *Ooni* removed his crown and placed it before the governor asking him to place his crown on his head as a special favour”<sup>36</sup> which the governor did. Though, embarrassed and visibly shaken on hearing the pleas of a supposed great Yoruba king the governor might have noticed the weakness of the Yoruba kings, thus assumed that they need to be protected by a more powerful one and undoubtedly the Queen of England. Before this time, the kings had been consistently referred to as king and not chief but this singular act of the *Ooni Adelekan Olubuse* 1 in 1903 changed the kings’ nomenclature and transformed their status. In fact, Samuel Rowe, the Governor of the Gold Coast Colony, in a letter written on May 29, 1883 had recorded that *Ekiti* had 132 kings and their leader the *Oore*.<sup>36</sup>

These features, nevertheless, the concert destroyed the age- long traditions of seclusion by bringing the *oba* out of their palace into a romantic and culturally saturated atmosphere. The kings were encouraged to socialise with their peers through which they build further relationships and interacted on issues of social, economic and political development within their districts. It also created avenue for the tributary villages to show solidarity towards the mother towns. Oral interview from *Ido* and *Ifaki*, corroborated by the *Oisa* of *Ado-Ekiti*, stated that the *Ifaki* people, in solidarity with the *Olojudo* of *Ido-Faboro* always prepared food (pounded yam) for *Olojudo*’s entourage whenever his going to *Ado-Ekiti* for *pelupelu*.

The *pelupelu*, apart from supporting social developments, contributed to the re-settlement schemes of some towns<sup>36</sup> among which is *Oye* and *Ifishin* in 1948. It was also instrumental to the establishment of *Ekitiparapo* College at *Ido-Faboro*.<sup>36</sup> Oral interview from *Ado*, *Itaji* and *Ikole* suggested that the *pelupelu* was actively involved in the creation of *Ekiti* State and the choice of *Ado-Ekiti* as the headquarters.<sup>36</sup> In addition, through the efforts of the *pelupelu*, roads were constructed, so also were dispensary and kings’ palace re-built. The deliberations also yielded fruits in the promotion of peaceful and harmonious living between the kings and their subject, on the one hand, and within several kingdoms, particularly in the various chieftaincy disputes, promotion of healthy living through the dissemination and monitoring of government policies, unemployment, maintenance of law and order. In fact, as a result of these meetings, the chieftaincy law was promulgated which in-turn encouraged intergroup relations

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among kings within other Yoruba groups. A case is the establishment of the Western Nigeria Council of Chiefs, which include other Yoruba sub-groups, and this has accounted for the unity enjoyed today by the Yoruba people and their kings across the world, which have also led to exchanges of royal visit to palaces by the kings unlike in the past when it was forbidden. In obedience to Sir Ralph More's assertion that "only the queen is the king in this land" between 1900 and 1940, the king as a duty must commence their meetings with the British Empire national anthem to affirm their unalloyed loyalty to the British monarch which is normally followed by the district officer's address. But in 1940, the *Ekiti* anthem was introduced to re-integrate all *Ekiti* kings and their towns at the *Ado-Ekiti pelupelu* conference.<sup>36</sup> The concert ended with the 1958 *pelupelu* at *Ise-Ekiti*.

Paradoxically, the introduction of the Western Nigeria Council of Chiefs in 1952 diminished the influence of the kings within their domain that, by 1955, when the local government authority act was introduced, the sixteen districts were reduced to eight local administrative centres. The law subjected the kings to the political elites who were elected members, and, by extension, the critical authority in the local government areas, except that eight kings out of the sixteen were transferred to the larger western region council, out of which only three could attend the council meetings, in the spirit of unity. The three slots were on rotational basis among the eight kings. The *Alara* of *Ilara*, the *Olojudo* of *Ido-Faboro* and the *Ewi* of *Ado* were the first to benefit from the new rule.<sup>36</sup>

This was the situation until 1976 when *Ondo* State was created and the eight kings were moved to *Ondo* State Traditional Council. The Council was not enlarged to accommodate more *oba* that had been disengaged from the annual *pelupelu*. The challenges of *Ekiti* kings within the *Ondo* State traditional council, according to the *Ogoga* of *Ikere*, was partly responsible for the roles the kings played in the creation of *Ekiti* State, which was principally to re-enact the *pelupelu* council. But the social and cultural features had changed considerably due to several transformations occasioned by the unstable system and policy of government in Nigeria. Thus, the concert had been abandoned for a formal meeting devoid of any social or cultural display. Most of the *oloja* and the *owa* that initially accompanied the *pelupelu oba* to the concert have been elevated to the status of an *oba*. This has become another challenge to the institution, because many of them are now categorised into the grade A position, including the *pelupelu oba*. The *Arinjale* of *Ise*<sup>36</sup> and majority of the king in the *pelupelu*, due to this very development, clamoured for a special *pelupelu* class different from the class A. *oba* being the sixteenth paramount ruler of *Ekitiland*. Apart from the above, the council meetings are now held at *Ado-Ekiti*, the state capital against the rotational basis, while all the kings and the *baale* have been grouped into classes and sub-classes of chiefs in an attempt to democratise the institution and make it the link between the state government and the people.

Moreover, the *oba* now enjoys freedom of association. This has enabled them pay royal visits to palaces as a means of cementing relationships and fostering good neighbourliness and also seek support for development. The *Ogoga* of *Ikere*, relating how he broke the age-long rivalry between the *Ogoga* and the *Ewi*, stated that he hoodwinked the *Ewi Aladesanmi* to his palace when they were preparing for the 1974 census (sic). According to him, "*Ewi Aladesanmi Anirare* was a powerful king and had prepared not to eat in *Ikere*, but when I realised this, I had to tell him that I will not allow him to leave my palace if he dare not eat, and I meant it and even told other kings in attendance, that day, *baba* eat and even drink and everybody was happy."<sup>36</sup> He further stated that in *Ado* at the *Ewi's* palace, he also ate and even forced the *Ewi* to buy him a drink which he took home. It must be noted that the kings as vicegerents of the gods were forbidden from eating in the public but at these occasions all the kings eat and make merriment in

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company of other kings including the *Ajero* Eyeowa, the *Elekole* of *Ikole*, *oba Adetula Adeleye* and the *Alaaye* of *Efon*.<sup>36</sup>

We can, therefore, conclude that the need for social development and political relevance in local and international contexts has remained the kernel of unity among the *Ekiti oba*, right from the pre-colonial times. This aspiration has become possible due to the willingness of the kings to establish a concert of the kings.

## 5.2 *Pelupelu* institution and the creation of *Ekiti* State

One area of development in which the *oba* played a critical and leading role in establishing a sense of direction, for the uniqueness of *Ekiti* identity was during the agitation for the creation of *Ekiti* State. An observer had observed,

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. The separate individuals form a class only in so far as they have to carry on a common battle against another class, otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors.<sup>36</sup>

The statement are true not only in the struggle for the creation of *Ekiti* State, what started as a resistance against socio-political and economic domination of Ibadan over Ekitiland, finally metamorphosed into an independent *Ekiti* state in 1996. The struggle against Ibadan started with *Fabunmi* of *Okemesi* and became an *Ekiti* project when *Okemesi* authorities externalised the conflict. The struggle for the creation of *Ekiti* State actually dates back to the 1970s, before *Ondo* State was created; in fact, the creation of *Ondo* State was, however, done with the support of all the sons and daughters of the *Ekiti*. The move was led by the kings. These kings include other *oba* and elite of *Ondo*, *Owo* and *Akoko* Divisions struggled for the creation of *Ondo* State with the headquarters at *Akure*, in the hope that their socio-economic and developmental aspirations would be met, when the seat of government is brought close to them, from the distant Ibadan. When *Ondo* state was finally created, the government came nearer still, but their expectations were not realised.

Ironically, what brought them together became another major challenge that culminated in the *Ekiti* people seeking a new state. In their opinion, Ekitiland was being marginalised by other smaller ethnic groups in *Ondo* State. Oral interviews carried out in Ekitiland revealed that until the creation of *Ekiti* state, the other ethnic groups in the *Ondo* state union (the *Ondo*, *Owo*, *Ilaje* and *Akoko*), believed that *Akure* which is the state capital is an *Ekiti* town and, therefore, *Ekiti* stood to enjoy more government patronage than any other ethnic group within the union. This belief, according to oral sources, partly resulted in a gang-up against and the marginalisation of the *Ekiti* people and their *oba*, by other ethnic groups in the State.<sup>36</sup> Their opinion was that the lion share, which goes to the headquarters of the state, went to Ekitiland without considering the fact that *Akure* had ceased to be part of Ekitiland from 1946.

The sharing formula used for the allocation of state resources in *Ondo* State, did not reflect the trend in population distribution within the state. Available record revealed that Ekitiland constituted about 52.8%<sup>36</sup> of the population of *Ondo* State, while the other three districts constituting the state were 47.2%. However, social amenities were shared on the basis of ethnic groups, and the entire *Ekiti*, with more than half the population got roughly one-quarter (1/4) of available resources. The resources were shared into four parts according to the number of the ethnic groups and not in the order of population density, which



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in the opinion of *Ekiti* people, should have been the yardstick of the sharing formula. In addition, the kings claimed that only the *Ewi of Ado* was recognised and remembered when it came to kingship emoluments and special allowances, outside the king's salary, even when eight members of the *pelupelu oba* were permanent members of the *Ondo State Council of Traditional Rulers*. In the words of *Ogoga*, "whenever they distributed anything among the *oba*, they gave to only one *Ekitiland oba* and that is all... This became bad when the state government was making proposal for the creation of additional local government areas, and the *Ekiti oba* were not carried along. In the opinion of *Olomola*, marginalisation of the *Ekiti* people was a factor but not necessarily the creation of local government. However, the *oba* were not happy of the development because most of the local such that they decided to make proposal, demanding an additional local council, to the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) without informing the state governor"<sup>36</sup>. This irked the military administrator. He summoned the *Ekiti* kings to *Akure* but the kings, having determined to continue with their agitations, refused to meet with the delegate sent by the governor to meet them on the issue. They insisted that they wanted to meet with him in person, whenever he was ready to see them. When the governor finally agreed to meet them in person, he expressed disappointment over their action. However, rather than the kings apologising, they only told him that since he refused to inform or include *Ekiti* in his proposal for the creation of new local government areas, they saw no reason why they also should inform him of their own decision to send proposal and appeal to the Federal Government.

According to the *Ogoga of Ikere*,<sup>36</sup> who said he led the delegation to the military administrator, a decision was made after the meeting that anytime the opportunity was available, *Ekiti* would muster all resources and courage to continue agitation for the creation of *Ekiti State* not minding whose ox was gored. *Olomola*<sup>36</sup> corroborated the above when he averred that the greatest challenge of *Ekiti* people since the colonial era was that they were being treated as one single entity, whereas other parts of *Ondo Province* (and old *Ondo State*), regardless of their limited population, human and natural resources, were regarded as different ethnic groups and all were accorded similar status. He noted that it was the *Ekiti* feeling of marginalisation, ostracisation and alienation within the region that spurred them into demanding a separate State of their own.

The first attempt for *Ekiti State* was made by the political elites between 1980 and 1982. In a letter dated May 9, 1980, the legislators of *Ekitiland* in the State and National assembly presented a proposal, based on social, economic viability of the state if created, to the State House of Assembly during the *Adekunle Ajasin* regime.<sup>36</sup> On May 25, 1982, another joint letter was also sent to the Senate Committee by the Assembly men and Councillors of *Ekitiland* requesting the creation of *Ekiti State*. But the political upheavals in the country in 1983, which culminated in the December 31, 1983 coup, did not help the people to realise their dream of having a State. Nonetheless, they were not distracted by this development, rather through memoranda and letters there was continued petitions and struggles for independence by the *Ekiti* indigenes in *Ondo-State*. In the process, *Ekiti* indigenes never rested on their oars but pressurised every government for the creation of the *Ekiti State*. When the former Military President, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, in 1990, commenced the program of states creation by setting up the *Mbanefo* Committee to review possible cases and make recommendations to government, this gave several agitators of state-creation including those from *Ekiti* another opportunity to air their views and to re-present their cases before the government. Before this, however, some indigenes of *Ekiti* within the *Ondo-State Civil Service*, who for one reason or the other, claimed to be marginalised either in appointments, promotion or certain privileges, had formed the Wednesday Group. Notable among this

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group was Mr. 'Deji Fasuan, the convener of the group. The Wednesday Group includes Mr. Akin Ogundana, Ayo Omodara, and Mr. F.B. Jegede, among others. From this stage on, the battle snowballed into one for a common heritage. It was, indeed, at the second meeting of the Group that decisions were made to incorporate the *oba* into the struggle for the creation of Ekiti State. In the opinion of Mr. F. B. Jegede, the *oba* were to play leadership roles, which they actually did, such that the palace of *Ewi* of Ado became the venue of all discussions regarding the state creation. In addition to pressure by the Wednesday Group there were allusions to Arch-Bishop Adetiloye's speech to the Anglican Dioceses at the 25yrs anniversary held at the Anglican Cathedral in Ado Ekiti. In his sermon, he motivated the kings and encouraged the *oba* to re-introduce the *pelupelu* to discuss the near neglect and backward status of Ekitiland among other sub-ethnic groups in Nigeria.<sup>36</sup> In short, the bishop was asking for Ekiti nation. Subsequent upon his motivation and encouragement, the kings moved straight to the *Ewi*'s palace at the invitation of *Ewi* Ado, *oba* Rufus Adejuyigbe and began consultations on how to realise Ekiti State project. Present at the first meeting were several *oba* from all the principal towns and in response to the deliberations, the *Owa Ooye* of Okemesi, *oba* Edward Adedoja Oni Aroyinkeye, catalogued the woes of Ekitiland under Ondo State. According to him, "it was very unthinkable that the balance kept on tilting in favour of non-Ekiti in Ondo State, *such that Ekiti indigenes have to occupy the back bench*". This statement encouraged the kings and it was agreed that they would be meeting regularly to discuss the issue and seek possible constitutional solution to the neglect. At the end of the first meeting, a memorandum was signed by the *Ewi* of Ado, the *Alara* of Aramoko, the *Elekole* of Ikole and the *Ogoga* of Ikere and the document was sent to the Federal Government and it was widely publicised in the print media. The meeting became regular and committees were set up for the agitation for Ekiti State and the *oba* were to act as liaison with Ekiti indigenes outside Ekitiland.

The Wednesday Group was also advised to change its name to Committee for the creation of Ekiti State, to make it look more active in the service of Ekitiland. Another forum also sprang up in January 8, 1994 and was led by Chief John Ajayi (Johnny) of Araromi-Ekiti. In this group were Dr. Dare Teniola, Dr. Bode Olowoporoku, Chief Awojolu, also Deji Fasuan of the Wednesday Group, Professor Kunle Adeniran, Dr. Kunle Olajide, among others. To this enlarged group the *oba* gave a stern order that they should not introduce politics into Ekiti project or hold political rallies unless it was generally agreed by the people of Ekitiland. From then, the *oba* became the rallying point and arrow head in the struggle, seeking the support of prominent individuals within and outside the state, while reaching out to their colleagues in Ondo State Traditional Council for support. Oral interviews within Ekitiland credited the creation of the state to the gallantry efforts of the *oba*, who never minded their suffering in the hands of would be political beneficiaries and state actors. Indeed, General Sanni Abacha, who acceded to the wishes of the *oba* said he did so because of the fact that the agitators were not politicians and were undaunted in their demand. The undaunted commitment of the *oba* from 1992 was best expressed by the General Sanni Abacha in 1996 when he asserted:

there is something unique in the persistent demand of the royal fathers who actually realised that if the state is created, none of them would become military governor or commissioner or board chairman, and yet they would leave their domains and risk the journeys to Lagos, Abuja and all necessary quarters without caring for the scandals 'bribe money portfolio' blackmailed allegedly being offered to them assuming that

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such monies were even to exist”<sup>36</sup>

The *oba* of Ekiti became the umbrella body and the nationalist group on whose struggle Ekitiland was liberated, like the Ekitiparapo war. The liberation efforts sparked off a new union and relationship based on mutual cooperation and partnership. There was a rejuvenation of the *pelupelu*, expanded by absorbing the minor chiefs, while the *Owa* and the *Oloja* were later elevated and graded into the status of *oba*. The new composition became the reconstituted Council of Traditional Rulers of Ekiti State. The renewed *pelupelu* council was the apex body/court of public opinion, having pioneered the struggle of the liberation of Ekitiland in the emergence of Ekiti state. In the words of *oba* Gabriel Oso Adeniyi, the *Obanla* of Ijesa-Isu, “Ekiti *Oba* risked their lives, staked their crowns, slept in petrol stations and fought gallantly to ensure that Ekiti State was created”.<sup>36</sup> In addition, they mobilized the citizens to contribute money for the take off of the state by instituting the Ekiti State Development Fund in all the major towns. Donations from the kings were in cash and kind.<sup>36</sup> This notwithstanding, the Traditional Rulers Council was not constituted for more than ten months after the state was created. As such, the *oba* were not able to immediately render any valuable contribution to the state in advisory capacity. They did, informally, though, assist and make sure that peace reigned in the state at large.

### 5.3 *Ekiti Council of Oba under the military rule*

Military rule featured in the history of Nigeria at various times. One major feature of the military was the high level of rapport and friendliness between the military administrators, the government functionaries and the kings. The *rapport* was dotted with visits to the palaces of the kings anytime the military assumed office. These visits were done to solicit the support of the traditional rulers, quite unlike the civilian governments that only resorted to the *oba* at critical and trying periods. The military government always made sure they courted the *kabiyesis* and only, on few occasions, were the *oba* challenged by the decisions of the military administration. This happened, *probably* because the *oba* understood the feature and character of the military, and could relate with them or that the military government were able to use the *oba* to legitimatise their rule, which were not normally got from the people. Indeed, the rapport of the *oba* with the military laid the golden egg of October 1, 1996, when Ekiti State was created with other five states by the then Head of State, General Sanni Abacha. He announced Lt. Col. Mohammed Inua Bawa as the first military administrator of the State on the 5th of October, 1996.<sup>36</sup> The governor arrived Ekitiland on October 8, 1996, and was received at the border of Ondo and Ekiti States accompanied by the military administrator of Ondo state, Navy Captain Anthony Onyaregbulem and the people of Ekiti led by Chief Deji Fasuan.<sup>36</sup>

The first point of call of the Governors was the Ewi’s palace. He was received by the *oba*-traditional rulers, who welcome him to the state on behalf of the people. To buffer the challenges of administering the new state, the Ewi of Ado Ekiti, *Oba* Adejuyigbe Aladesanmi III gave up his official car for the use of the governor. The first military administrator was, however relieved of his position on August 6, 1998 and a new administrator, Navy Captain M.A. Yusuff was put in the saddle until May 29, 1999 when democratic government was introduced and Mr. Adeniyi Adebayo became the first elected civilian governor of the state. Between October 1 1996 and March 29, 1999, the system of government changed from the military to a democratic rule/governance. Throughout this period, Ekiti *oba* were only

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active in their capacity as observers because the council had no legal backing of the government. Their decisions were largely not binding, on any sector of the public, even in an advisory capacity.

During this period, the governor was able to impose *oba* Adugbole II on the people of Oye-Ekiti contrary to their wish. When the people of Oye Ekiti protested the imposition on July 10, 1997, Lt. Col. Inua Bawa sent a detachment of mobile police to Oye for the installation of the king. This was an aberration of the traditional procedure, particularly on the rites of installation of kings in Yorubaland, in general, and Ekitiland, in particular. *Oye* tradition and culture of kingship had been constantly abused under successive administrative governments, at various times, such as 1901, 1918, 1923 and 1932, never had it been of the magnitude of the military interventions. The installation of *Oloye* of *Oye* inside the St. Peters and Paul Catholic Church, by Bishop Fagun was a misnomer and greatly challenged the traditional kingship rites.

An installation of an *oba* outside the traditional designated groove, which is the abode of the ancestors, neither qualifies nor places any individual in the position of a king, as the sanctity and legitimacy of a king was derived from traditional authorities and rituals that installed him, and initiated him into the cult of his ancestors. The rituals give him the right to the heritage of his predecessors, once consecrated through the various installation rites. The king, on assumption of office, becomes endowed with the ritual power and symbolisms like the crown, robes, sceptre and horsetail as umbrella.<sup>36</sup> The crown which is the most significant of the royal insignia, stipulates the sacred royal power of the king.

#### **5.4 Ekiti Council of *Oba* under the democratic rule**

Under the civilian administration in the First Republic (1952-1967), the kings were allowed some leverage in the participation and decision making in the act of governance. The *Ooni* of Ile-Ife became the governor of Western Region, and a couple of *oba* occupied ministerial positions. However, the rivalry that ensued between the political *elite* and the traditional institutions became an albatross, with the two groups trying to prove their superiority. Their society was largely under tension. Indeed, the struggle for superiority among the two groups recorded some casualties, particularly in the camps of the kings. The kings became an endangered species. *Alaafin* Adeniran Adeyemi, for instance, who was prepared to defend his people of Oyo against the reform of the regional government led by Chief *Obafemi* Awolowo became the first casualty by his deposition in 1954. According to *Alaafin* Adeniran Adeyemi II, “the right to rule was divinely bequeathed to the *Alaafin* and his cohort, but not to commoners.”<sup>36</sup> But in response to the position of *Alaafin* Adeniran Adeyemi II, Chief *Obafemi* Awolowo, in a paid advert by the Action Group was quoted as saying that

“because the office of a chief is hereditary, chiefs need not have, and in fact most of them never had, any previous training or experience in the delicate and serious functions of which they are suddenly called upon to perform on ascending the throne[...] overloaded with vast powers, they naturally prove incompetent and behave oppressively [...] quite apart from traditional usage, it is plain common sense that people who attain political leadership in the way these chiefs do should not be entrusted with too much power”<sup>36</sup>

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The battle line was, therefore, drawn between *Alaafin* Adeniran and Chief *Obafemi* Awolowo's Action Group led government, which believed that the kings were incapable and incompetent to rule in a democratic state. Consequent upon this, the Native Authority reduced *Alaafin's* annual salary by six hundred pounds. The *Areemo's* salary was abrogated with other palace emoluments sanctioned.<sup>36</sup> In 1953, the regional government introduced education and health levy which resulted into a protest in Oyo. The *Areemo*, T. A. Adeniran, was fingered as the master mind by the colonial authority. That same year, the divisional native authority introduced another form of taxation, which caused another round of protest in Oyo. The blame was laid at the same person's door step. In the view of the residents, one of the main causes, of discontent and a precipitating cause of the actual disturbance at Oyo was the behaviour of the *Areemo*, T. A. Adeniran. According to the resident, "this young man has taken advantage of his privileged position as the eldest son of *Alaafin* to insult many senior chiefs of Oyo, both publicly and in private, and he behaved in a most oppressive and tyrannical way to all and sundry who have come in contact with him."<sup>36</sup> The crown prince's position was subsequently abolished and he was banished to Iwo. On September 8, 1954, *Alaafin* Adeniran Adeyemi was asked to leave Oyo within four days, and on Monday, September 27, 1954, he proceeded on exile to Ilesa. While he was formally suspended on June 7, 1955, and a year after, on July 7, 1956, he was deposed. The *Olowo* of Owo was also caught in the same web. Though, the *Olowo* of Owo, Sir Olateru Olagbegi, was suspended by the Military Governor, Col. Adekunle Fajuyi on the June 15, 1966, he was banished to Okitipupa where he was until March 18, 1968 when he was deposed by Governor Adeyinka Adebayo on August 7, 1968. He was a victim of the political rivalry between the Action Group (AG) led by Chief Awolowo and the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) led by Chief S. L. A. Akintola. In a twist of fate, which was inevitable by the fact of Ifa-tradition had predicted his removal and a return after twenty-five years, coupled with his political influence, the Bamidele Olumilua Government restored him to the throne after the death of the imposed *Olowo* of Owo, *Oba* Ogunoye in 1992, exactly twenty five years after staying outside of the palace.

From 1979 to 1983, the government of Chief Adekunle Ajasin made several efforts to reorganise the kingship institution by re-classifying the kings into grades based on their type of crowns. In this wise, the Ondo State government instituted the Morgan Commission that completely changed the concept of kingship and like the colonial authority, the kings legally became chiefs (*ijoye*) rather than being a king-*oba*, they were treated with less respect.

The Cap 19 of the Western Region Law of Chiefs in 1959 was reviewed on February 5, 1976, at the eve of creating new states. The review was a repeal of the 1959, Revocation and Miscellaneous Provision Law called the Recognised Chieftaincy Order that had gazetted the *oba*, the *baale* and chiefs as recognised chieftaincies. In other words, they had been subjugated and functioning under the same law as chiefs, including the kingmakers who were graded as chiefs in the spirit of democratisation from 1959 and not until 1976, were they derecognised as "non-*oba*" and subjugated to the *oba* on whose domain they were initially.

The 1976 law became a leeway for the *oba* who is assumed to be the paramount ruler within his domain to have a say in the promotion of other minor chiefs, and it became the position adopted by the Morgan Commission of 1981. Although, the previous laws were modified in 1978 and 1979 as the Ondo State Chiefs Cap Law (cap 20), the absurdity in the previous laws were retained. The law, for example, states that "... no court shall have jurisdiction to entertain any civil cause or matter instituted for the

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determination of any question relating to the selection, appointment, installation, deposition, suspension or abdication of a chief...,” which partly explains the gap in the claims of sustaining the institution and the outcome with regards to the position and posture of government when at certain instances they claim loyalty and support for kingship institution, and at other time, court decisions are disobeyed and ignored. These was the case in Ado Ekiti when *oba* Adelabu George, became the king in 1984 under the Bamidele Otiko. Also, *oba* R. A. Adejuyigbe, Aladesanmi III benefited from these ouster clauses, and presently, the *Elekole* of Ikole and the regent of Ilesa became victims of the chieftaincy laws, even though the court did not spare the government on these challenges.<sup>36</sup>

Ekiti kings were subsumed within the Ondo State Council of Traditional Rulers, but from December 31 1983, when the military again seized power, the kings became the rallying point of both the government and the governed, though only at trying periods of their rule. Within this explanation can one understand the power and the authority of the *oba*, regarding that of the military and civilian governments, in that, it is logical for the military, which derived its power and legitimacy from the barrel of the gun, to entice the *oba*, who by tradition, has direct contact and link with the grassroots and so could draw support from them. Hence, on the one hand, the rapport between the military and the kings were aimed at sustaining military government, being the closest political institution to the people. On the other hand, the civilian government derived authority from the people through voting under the principle of democracy.

Democracy as a concept of government meant that the civilian government derived legitimacy from the people. This ideology pitched various democratic governments against the *oba*, who derived their power originally from the people’s tradition and culture. In the colonial period, for example, the argument of the political elites was that the *oba* were not literate enough to rule, particularly in a modern, political system. Presently, however, the position has changed, nevertheless, the rivalry has continued. In fact, many *oba* presently hold doctorate degrees in diverse academic fields but they are still subservient to the government which dictates the rule of local administration which traditionally was the prerogative of the *oba*.

The point is that political/adversarial rivalry has characterised the relationship between the kings and the various governments and has become that of the master to the servant. The kings are deposed, demoted and promoted at the will of the government. Even installations are done against the tradition of kingship. The *Owa Ooye* of Okemesi, *Oba* Edward Adedaja Oni was demoted to Grade Two from a First Class *Oba* by Evangelist Bamidele Olumilua’s Government being a protagonist of Ekiti-State in 1992, who perceived that the creation of Ekiti State will jeopardise his governorship position.<sup>36</sup> Adeniyi Adebayo became the governor of Ekiti (1999-2003), it took his administration about a year before he could reconstitute the traditional councils and afterwards, he re-graded the kings. He graded the *pelupelu oba* among the Grade A *oba*, thus increasing the number from twenty-one to thirty-one and placed them on equal footing, even with the *bale* or *oloja* of the pre-colonial period. Some of those elevated were *baale* or *Oloja* before the re-grading and was elevated to the status of Grade A, in line with the state’s policy of elevating every *oba* in the local government headquarters to grade A status in 2000.<sup>36</sup> The increase in number was not based on merit. Rather, many of the *baale* seems to have been elevated on no solid criteria from different classes of kings to become first class *oba*. It was alleged, for instance, that the *Oluyin* of Iyin-Ekiti and the *Obanla* of Ijesa-Isu-Ekiti were elevated from grade C to grade A, being the *oba* of the town of the governor and his deputy respectively. Adeniyi Adebayo government demoted the

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*Onire* from the first class (*Pelupelu*) to a second class *oba* on the excuse that the *pelupelu* class was many in Oye Local Government.<sup>36</sup>

Former Governor Ayodele Fayose (May 29, 2003-October 16, 2006) took over from Adeniyi Adebayo on May 29, 2003, and he continued with the desecration of the institution. On the eve of the local government election in March 2004, while soliciting for the support of the people, he made sure that he paid courtesy calls on the *oba* in their different palaces. When he visited the *Elekole* of *Ikole*, he told *oba* Adetunla Adeleye II that “traditional rulers wishing to receive benefits from his government must demonstrate unalloyed loyalty. His government, as starters, was prepared to give the kings gifts of new Peugeot 406 cars, but any ruler not ready to play lackey to his government would not benefit from the car gift... He asked the *oba* to come to his office on Monday to collect his own gift, as a mark of appreciation of the royal father's support”<sup>36</sup>. When the king kept the date, he got a much more expensive car, a Peugeot 604. But in a twist, in 2005, Ayo Fayose, accosted the *Elekole* of *Ikole*, *oba* Adetula Adeleye II in Ado Ekiti, seized the car in the public glare only to be saved by the *Ewi* of *Ado* who provided him another car back home. In the same vein, the *Onijan* of *Ijan*, *oba* Fadahunsi Oyewole was sent out of the traditional council meeting in 2006 for supporting his subject's political ambition.

On October 16, 2006, a state of emergency was declared due to the political challenges created by the politicians, and General Adetunji Olurin (an army officer in a civilian garb) became the state administrator on October 19 2006. General Olurin was welcomed by the kings. The chairman of the council, the *Oore* of *Otun*, *oba* James Adedapo Popoola gave him the assurance of their unalloyed support for the new administration. Olurin advised the *oba* not to be far away from government and promised not be far away from them, so that both of them would restore the much needed peace to the state. The chairman of the State Council of *oba*, *oba* Adedapo Popoola expressed gratitude to God that the problem in the state had not led to the shedding of blood. The *Oore* of *Otun* recalled that the monarchs had just concluded three days fasting and prayers for God's intervention in the political crisis of the state. This is a confirmation that the *oba* of Ekiti were in constant touch and with the desire of their people were deeply concerned about the health and welfare of the state in general.

Engineer Segun Oni of the People's Democratic Party became the governor on May 29 2007. He ruled for about one year and nine months before he was removed by the Electoral Tribunal seating in Ilorin on February 17, 2009. The *Ogoga*, recalling his relationship with Segun Oni, avers that Segun Oni's tenure was characterized by inconsistencies, particularly his relationship with some *oba* on the allocation of state resource. This, according to *Ogoga*, became a problem between him and the governor who threatened him severally, such that when his governorship was upturned by the tribunal. The *oba* called to tell him that kings reigned for life against the terminal rule of a governor and wished him well in his further endeavours.

Dr. Kayode Fayemi became the governor of the state in 2009 and confronted the challenges of selecting a new *Elekole* after *oba* Adetunla Adeleye II had joined his ancestors in October 2008. His intervention in the selection processes went in the line of his predecessors. The kingmakers were unable to agree on the choice of the new *Elekole*, *oba* Adewumi Ajibade Fasiku, Aladesekole I. But in a dramatic style, Dr. Fayemi announced the candidate against the will of a couple of the kingmakers, even when the case was still in the High Court. By implication, the tradition and culture of kingship was relegated in the process of the selection of kings.

Still related to the above, was Kayode Fayemi's government decision to remove the regent of Ilasa-Ekiti in the Ekiti East Local Government Area of the state. She had been installed by the

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kingmakers. The decision was probably due to party affiliations because the regent belonged to a different political party and had occupied a key position in her party. She was forcefully removed less than twenty four hours of her installation by government agents, brandishing guns and other weapons. They invaded the palace, ransacked it and removed eight crowns, other royal insignias, and thus, desecrated the palace and beat up her police orderly.<sup>36</sup>

The institution, more than ever before, has been subjected to series of attacks by the government which had consistently paid lip service to its importance and relevance to good governance in Nigeria, among others. The institution has become endangered in the face of the several daunting challenges confronting it.

## 5.5 The challenges before *Ekiti Council of Oba* in contemporary times

The *pelupelu* institution had faced several challenges from inception, many of which have traditionally overwhelmed the institution. Who dare challenge the authority of the *oba* in the pre-colonial period? He is the *oba mu kan mu, oba pa kan pa* because the kings are the *alpha* and the *omega* in their respective domain as the representative of *Olodumare*.

Oral traditions in Ekitiland agreed on the concept of sixteen kingdoms constituting the *pelupelu*. However, the numbers of kings claiming paramountcy are more than sixteen. Shortly after the *pelupelu* became the mouth piece of the kings, several kings and chiefs became agitated, given the opportunity to air their views, and laid claims to independence. About sixteen towns laid claims to independence before 1950.<sup>36</sup> These include, the *Owa* of *Oke-Igbira* and the *Owa* of *Itapa* claiming independence of *Ikole* Kingdom; *Osi, Ode, Imesi, Egbe, Ilawe, Igbara-Odo* claiming independence of *Ado* Kingdom; *Irapa, Ipoti, Ewu* claimed independence of *Ijero; Ido-Irapa* and *Apa* claimed independence of *Efon* Kingdom, among others.

In the opinion of the members of the traditional council, two among the initial sixteen, had been separated. *Obbo* had been separated through the boundary adjustment and demarcation of 1909, while *Akure* joined the Ondo province in 1946. But at present, there are seventeen kings in the *pelupelu* council. Based on the new structure of the traditional council, those in *pelupelu* are now subsumed within the Grade A *oba*. There are thirty one members at present. Although the promoted *oba* do not see the reason why they can not belong to the same group with the *pelupelu oba*. In fact, many of them have cited the inclusion of the *Atta* of *Ayede, Elemure* and *Olomuo* of *Omuo*, in the *pelupelu* council as justification for their eligibility.

It should be noted that the name of the *Atta* of *Ayede* and *Olomuo* of *Omuo* were not included on the list of the sixteen kingdoms by Major Reeve-Tucker in 1900. Interestingly, he had in his diary, the *Atta* of *Ayede* as one of the attendee. Also, *Omuo-Ekiti* at the time was in the *Akoko* division and was not part of Ekitiland. The *Elemure*, however, attended the inaugural *pelupelu* as a *baale* in the company of *Arinjale* and was indeed, the errand man at the meeting, including the *Onire* who attended with *Oloye*. These three kings (the *Atta* of *Ayede*, the *Olomuo* and *Elemure*), are at present members of the *pelupelu* council. The argument for the inclusion of *Ayede*, by some *pelupelu oba* was that *Ayede*, founded by *Esugbayi*, an Iye warrior, about the middle of the 19th century at the benevolence of *Ibadan*, who made him the native superintendent of *Ibadan* in Ekitiland as a sort of imperial expansion was incorporated into the *pelupelu* based on his war prowess.<sup>36</sup> Some *oba*, however, differ on this position, though others supported it based on his antecedence, which may have necessitated his none inclusion in the earlier



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*pelupelu* council given the fact that he was at a period in the enemy camp, although oral interview from Itaji confirms that his combative character earned him a place in the *pelupelu*. The source further stated that the *Onitaji* and *Onisan* actually invited Esubiyi, the founder of Ayede to settle between the two of them an act as buffer so that he could offer protection to the two kingdoms in times of war, and to finally make him part of the *pelupelu* council, he had to present gifts<sup>36</sup> to all the *pelupelu* members.

Moreover, while *baale* and *oloja* were being upgraded the *Onire* of Ire was demoted from the first class to the grade two class, just as the four kings elevated in 1946 by the colonial government to the *pelupelu* class were dropped on the excuse that *pelupelu* was a hereditary position and not by promotion. These four kings, *Olosi*, *Olojudo* of Ido-Ile, formerly Ido-Irapa, *Alawe* of Ilawe and the *Owa* of *Igbara-Odo* have sued the state government, challenging their demotion, and the *pelupelu* kings have also joined as defendants. Therefore, if the sixteen kings present at Oke-Imo were the original kings represented in the *alademerindinlogun*, the separation of two of them would have reduced the number to fourteen, but the figure keeps increasing. The increase has become worrisome to the *pelupelu oba*, majority of who claim that *pelupelu* is hereditary and not by promotion. Other kings in the other class maintained that there was no seniority among *Ekiti oba*. Most of them even claim that *pelupelu* is *oba pe oba*, that is king should call the king to a meeting. Perhaps it can be said that greater challenge is the fact that, the majority of the kings have found themselves at a disadvantaged position with the concept of *pelupelu*. *Pelupelu*, has a traditional implication, it is a political because it is more of an administrative structure. In fact, only a few of the *oba* of Ekiti understands the political importance, relevance and implication of *pelupelu* to the culture of their people. While some believe that it is just the meeting of the kings, (*oba pe oba*), some interpreted it to mean *olu ilu pe olu ilu*. Only few of them could decipher the implication of the two terms joined together to mean *pelupelu*, as the composition of the priesthood authority and kingship authority. In fact, the *Elu* are the aboriginal heads in Yorubaland and in order of precedence, the senior partner in the kingship tradition. Oral interview in Ile-Ife corroborates these views across Ekitiland. The aboriginal lineage heads in Ile-Ife are the *Elu*,<sup>36</sup> and they are seven in number. All these seven are very powerful particularly in the appointment of the *Ooni*.

An Ife tradition mentioned *Ife mefa, elu sikeje*,<sup>36</sup> meaning that Ife had six traditional leaders while the seventh leader was the *Elu*. Oral interviews from Ado confirmed that there were six *oba* in Ife; this was in line with the *Ife* tradition of *Ife-Mefa*, which also corroborates the significance of the *Elu* both in Ife, Ado and other Ekiti towns as traditional chiefs that are aboriginal heads of lineages. In Ekitiland, most towns paraded the *Elu* as the autochthones and kingmakers as done in Ife. The *Elu*, for example, is very significant in Oye kingdom. The *Oloye* must serve the *Elu* at the Oye national festival, during the worship of *Obalatan* deity, the national deity of the kingdom. In Ado and Ijan-Ekiti, the *Elu* are important personalities and serve as the kingmakers. We must understand that the position of a kingmaker is spiritual, being a feature of rituals, initiation rites and divination, which bifurcate into the roles, duties and responsibilities of the *oba*. However, the inability of the kings to really comprehend the workings of kingship tradition and culture remains a major challenge to the institution. Many of them are constantly working against the institution by subjugating their culture to foreign influences. Since only few of the kings recognise the workings and significance of tradition to kingship institution, the place of *ifa* oracle, particularly as it relates to kinship did not matter anymore, rather collusion and coercion have become the order of king-making in Ekitiland. The palaces that were homes of the ancestors have become abode of foreign culture with the erection of churches and mosques on centres of traditional worship.

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Another major challenge facing the *pelupelu* institution is the overwhelming power of government and the penchant for seniority, which the government, at times, enforces on the kings. The separation of the Deji Adesida I, from the confederacy was due to the recalcitrant attitude of the *Alaaye* of Efon *oba* Samuel Adeniran, who insisted that the *Deji* should respect him being a senior *oba*. Though, *Akure* was traditionally not an Ekiti town, the relationship with Ekiti kings would have offered an insight into inter-group activities among the sub-Yoruba ethnic groups, particularly in understanding a more viable federal system of government. The claim of seniority remains a main feature within the *pelupelu*, particularly among the leading figures like the *Olojudo* of Ido, *Elekole* of Ikole, the *Ewi* of Ado and the *Alaaye* of Efon, each challenging the supposed primacy of the *Oore* of Otun. The argument is that how can a non-son, claim what belong, to the son? In a protest letter to the military administrator of Ekiti State, dated 14/5/98, the council of chiefs and representatives of Ado-Ekiti populace frowned at the position of the *Ewi* of Ado among his brother *oba* in Ekitiland. The council reacted to the position of the *Ewi* as the number four *oba* in Ekitiland next to *Ajero*, *Elekole* and *Oore* in that order from the inception of *pelupelu*. They considered it improper and unacceptable, particularly with the new arrangement which did not recognise the *Ewi* as the most senior *oba* in Ekitiland, considering his feat in the creation of Ekiti State.

The changing status in the pattern and the structure of the political institutions has posed challenges to the development and integration of socio-political culture and institutions in Nigeria, in general, and Ekitiland, in particular. It has also impacted on the emergent socio-political culture of most Ekiti towns, when viewed against the norms and tradition of kingship. The flexibility and nature of intra-group relations in Ekiti kingship institution has been desecrated and violated by many of the changes effected.

Furthermore, the kings have been polarised along the lines of order of hierarchy with the *pelupelu* insisting on a traditional autonomy above the Grade A class, citing their colonial antecedence as the reason for demanding such privilege.

The re-organisation of the institution and the merging of *Baale* and the *Oloja* under one umbrella and the classification into groups had not gone down well with the *pelupelu* class, particularly their inclusion in the first class group of kings. The kings in the *pelupelu* group preferred a separate, rather than a central system, incorporating all the *oba*. In the opinion of the *Onitaji*, the extended inclusion has made it very difficult to sometimes address important issues because, at some instances, the council could be so rowdy and become uncontrollable. As such, suspicion and political bickering has become regular at most *pelupelu* meetings, and at present the kings are not one family, unlike in the pre-colonial period when there was no political grading. However, at turbulent periods, the *camaraderie* spirit binds them together as brothers.

Finally, there are now two existing bodies of the council of kings in Ekitiland. The first group is the *pelupelu* council which is an enlarged version of the traditional *pelupelu*. In the opinion of *Onire* and *Olojudo*, the present *pelupelu* is more of a political gathering because most of those in the council today were *Oloja* and *Owa* in the pre-colonial periods, even up till 1960. According to *Arinjale*, majority of them were in the third or fourth class before their elevation, due to the 2000 Chieftaincy and Local Government Law made by Niyi Adebayo government. The laws elevated the *Oluyin* of Iyin, *Alare* of Are, *Ilawe*, *Obanla* of Ijesa Isu, *Oniye* of Iye among other kings that were elevated by the 2000 Chieftaincy Edict. The study noted, based on oral interview that the *Olojudo* of *Ido-Iyapa*, now *Iddo-Ile*, left *Ido-*

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*Faboro* to establish *Ido-Iyapa*, the *oba* of *Ijesa-Isu*, formerly under *Ikole* kingdom were elevated for political reasons.<sup>36</sup>

The second group is the “Majority *oba* of Ekitiland” (MOBEL). This group represents those that were excluded from the *pelupelu*. There are a sizeable number of *oba* seeking recognition and autonomy like the *Ejiyan* of *Ipoti* and *Orun* of *Igbimo* within the *Ado* kingdom. The *Onire* of *Ire* who said that he was demoted by Governor Adeniyi Adebayo in 2001, has since continued to agitate for his reinstatement to the first class grade, on the excuse that he had been a member since 1900.

## **5.6 Rapport and rapprochement among Ekiti kings and the government**

The bedrock of relationship among Ekiti kings was the *Omiye*.<sup>36</sup> This symbolised that some of the kings were siblings. This sociological concept of kinship has remained the guiding force from the inception of kingship tradition in Ekitiland. In this way, the kingdoms were organised on, and related with one another up to the time of the *Ekitiparapo* war. Indeed, it was why the *Ekitiparapo* army was spearheaded by the *Oore* of *Otun*. The ideology has bonded the *Ewi* of *Ado*, the *Ajero* of *Ijero* and the *Elekole* of *Ikole* together as brothers, since an *Ado* tradition, in fact, has it that, a certain *Ewi* married one *Eyemode* who had sons for the kings of the three kingdoms consecutively. The traditions further recorded that the three of them reigned as contemporaries in the three kingdoms, and since then, *Ado*, *Ijero* and *Ikole* kingdoms have always seen themselves as one and has built their relationship on this maternal bound. This, however, gave credence to the now generally recognised common origin, common ancestry and culture of *Ile-Ife*. This may, indeed, have resulted from the cultural differences from their non *Yoruba* speaking neighbours; but has, however, raised the Ekiti consciousness, while inventing some sort of interconnections with *Ile-Ife* and the *Oduduwa* crown as a ‘mask’ for legality. In this way, the kings relate with one another as brothers of the same father, that is *Oduduwa* and claimed to have gotten their legitimacy to establish their kingdom from him, having been given the crown to rule.

Moreover, rapprochement was built on diplomatic relationships, which often cut across several kingdoms in the aim of maintaining peaceful and harmonious neighbourliness. This was a common phenomenon during annual festivals and coronation rites among all the kingdoms. In some instances, there were marriage alliances between two kingdoms, whereby one of the kings will give her daughter in marriage to another king. Evidences from field work supported *Olomola*’s submission on marriage alliances between the *Elekole*, the *Olojudo* of *Ido-Faboro* and the *Oore* of *Otun*. In fact, in this instance the *Olojudo* was said to have hijacked the lady sent to *Oore* of *Otun* while the *Elekole* had to prepare another lady for the *Oore* of *Otun* in exchange for the hijacked lady. The altercations, nonetheless, the three kings never made it an issue of quarrel. Although, there were instance when relationship cut across familiar boundaries but we must note that what featured at these instance was the Ekiti principle and philosophy of life. Furthermore, at annual festivals, each kingdom is represented by her emissaries at most functions. Normally, the palace serfs bear the messages of peace and felicitation from their kingdoms except when there are rifts between two kingdoms. This was the practice during important festivals like the *Olosunta* in *Ikere, Ise*, and *Ode* festivals in *Oye*. In the words of *Olomola*<sup>36</sup> the practice of socio-economic and political diplomacy in Ekitiland has greater antiquity and possibly one that dates to roughly 500 years. As a matter of fact, oral traditions of origin of these kingdoms and their inter-dependency is full of instances of political, social and economic interactions and diplomatic exchanges in times of peace, and even as a last result to avert war or to deliver a message of solidarity. In the case of the later, messages are coded in special diplomatic language understandable only to the initiates of social

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groups or secret societies like the *Ogboni* cult. The use of diplomatic language to convey definite and specific meanings is coded in symbols and anaphoric languages that, at times, do not have any bearings with literal interpretations. For example, to say *opo ye* (the pillar has fallen or the stake is broke), *Ile pada* (there is a change of house), *oba waja* (the king has entered into a bunker of beads)<sup>36</sup> is an indication that the king is dead. And since it is compulsory to intimate and relate with other kingdoms and kings on the passing away of a king or otherwise in Yorubaland, messages are coded and sent far and wide to inform other kingdoms. Powerful conventions regulate the relationship of the kingdoms, their kings and certain category of citizens who are believed to occupy a sacred position, this includes the palace serfs. For example, the *oba* as a rule must not be killed in a war. He could be captured but must be respected. When the *Ewi* of Ado went to Ifaki to meet the Ibadan warlord, he was accorded a great deal of respect and was sent back to Ado-Ekiti with gifts.<sup>36</sup> Also in 1875, the *Arinjale* of Ise, *oba* Olomoisola was spared by Aduloju and Ogedengbe who ravaged Ise and the Aare Latosisa was said to have prostrated for the *Owa* of *Ilesa* even when he had already destroyed Ijesa kingdom.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, for political and social relationships, gifts are usually used as symbols of message (*aroko*), which conveys the intention of the sender either to stop an impending war, seek support against external aggression or punishment for crime. In this way, the *Deji* of Akure, *oba Ojijogun* sent *esinsin* leave to the *Arinjale* of Ise, *oba* Olomoisola in 1874, and his chiefs in his attempt to extradite *Ologbosere* an Ise citizen living in Akure but had run away with the *Deji's* wife named Asauke.<sup>36</sup> The combination of symbols vary, depending on the type of message, but common objects like cowries, chalk, cam-wood, sticks, pepper, colanuts, calabash, ashes, knives are indigenous, and were among the commonly used objects, which carried special messages. Though, war was not a common thing in Yorubaland until the arrival of the *Oduduwa* dynasty, the earlier *Obatala* group according to traditions shunned any form of physical violence such that “a quarrel between two men usually takes the form of grudging and refusal to greet”<sup>36</sup>. Lawuyi<sup>36</sup> avers that this Yoruba character and feature is what still constitute the position of the Yoruba people on violence and what actually assisted the *Oduduwa* dynasty in the taking over of the *Obatala* government, and by extension, the pre-dynastic Yorubaland.

Hinderer,<sup>36</sup> commenting on Ekiti people, noted that “the Ekiti people love liberty-and have been known in the hour of extremity to choose death rather than a life of slavery” Thus, in the face of intimidation and external aggressions, the Ekiti are known for aiding one another and can always unite against external aggression. In this way symbolic coded messages are sent to neighbouring kingdoms intimating them of the need to support and even requesting for support. For instance, at the Ikoro-Ibadan war of 1854-1855, the Ajero invited all Ekiti kings in support of Ikoro against the Ibadan army. The Aramoko also refused to aid the designs of the Ibadan against Ado Kingdom,<sup>36</sup> likewise Ise and Emure in 1873-1875.<sup>36</sup> Though, not all *Ekiti* kingdoms participated in these wars, kinship and brotherhood came to the fore in defence of Ikoro by Ijero against Ibadan and Ado by Oye against Benin;<sup>36</sup> also, in Emure against Ibadan and Ise in 1873-1875.<sup>36</sup> In times of peace, each Ekiti kingdom was on its own.

Nevertheless, there were instances when challenges beclouded the principle of brotherly and cordial or mutual relationship that two neighbouring communities have to engage one another in war, lasting for years. Between the Ikere and the Ado kingdoms, there were several wars up to the middle of the 19th century,<sup>36</sup> which did not allow these two communities to participate in the *Ekitiparapo* war. The Ogoga of Ikere made us to understand that both communities neither participated in the *Ekitiparapo* war nor attended the first *pelupelu* in 1900, because they were both drumming the beat of war, expecting that

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one community will leave, thereby paving the way for the other to overrun such community without let or hinder.<sup>36</sup>

The foregoing was the traditional basis on which the kings relate with each other up to the inauguration of *pelupelu* in 1900. *Rapport* among the *oba* was practically diplomatic with the aim of protecting the various traditions of kingship which include the taboo of being unseen, among others. The kings were, indeed, forbidden from leaving their palace except on rare occasions, which must be traditionally sanctioned, by appropriate officials. Hence, when the *Ooni* Olubuse I went to Lagos in 1903 to address the problem of *Elepe* and the *Akarigbo* of Shagamu, “the Yoruba *oba* including the *Alaafin* of Oyo, left their palaces and dwelt outside their walls until they were assured of the *Ooni*’s safe return”,<sup>36</sup> since Yoruba tradition forbids the *oba* from leaving his palace, and particularly, for the *Ooni* of Ife, the journey caused consternation in Yorubaland. This is the essence of the relationship and association, which cut across familiar bonds to include social and cultural exchanges such that when these taboos were broken by Major Reeve-Tucker in 1900, the *pelupelu* was still a channel for further relationship; the kings came out to display the cultural artistry of their various kingdoms.

The *pelupelu* institution has, no doubt, assumed a different dimension in the governance of state. The establishments of the present council of traditional rulers by law number 3 of 2000 legalised the relationship between the king and the council. The law gave the institution the power to advise the governor on any chieftaincy matter, more particularly in the exercise of the power vested in the governor.<sup>36</sup> Though, the governor has no obligation to consult the council when it comes to delegation of authority. In other words, the appointment of the chairman of the council and promotion of *oba* is at the prerogative of the governor except that the chairman must be a member of the *pelupelu*, since the council now consists of all the kings in the state. Furthermore, the council may advised the governor on any matter relating to public policy concerning traditional rulers, customary law or cultural affairs, inter-communal relations, chieftaincy matters and maintenance of public order.<sup>36</sup> It is apparent from oral interviews and observations at the council meetings, which were now held on the last Tuesdays of every month at the ministry of local government and chieftaincy affairs, Ado-Ekiti that the kings now relate with one another as brothers, colleagues and friends. They drink and eat together in a relaxed disposition. However, in the words of the *Obanla* of Ijesa-Isu, *oba* Gabriel Oso Adeniyi, the kings don’t eat but swallow beads, because it is a taboo for the king to eat in the public<sup>36</sup>.

Finally, the *rapport* between the *pelupelu* institution and the present government of Ekiti State seem cordial. This is based on the principle that the institution is the bedrock of the people’s tradition and culture. To this end, the state government has made laws regulating its activities to advisory capacity, on matters sustaining the traditions and customs of Ekitiland. More importantly, the state government now relates with the institution on the pursuit and sustenance of peace in the state.

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## **End Notes**

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## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Summary

This study discussed *pelupelu* institution in Ekitiland from 1900 to 2000. It focused on the transformation and challenges of *pelupelu* institution in Ekitiland during the period of study. It revealed that *pelupelu* was a term that conveyed the traditional meaning and significance of the paramount *oba* in Ekitiland. Therefore, *pelupelu* referred to the indigenous political institutions in Ekitiland. In an attempt at comprehending the significance of political institutions in Ekitiland, the study explored general background of political institutions in Yorubaland to know the political structure of the *pelupelu* institution in Ekitiland. It noted that in Yorubaland, generally, political system resulted from the attempt to protect the people's agricultural products, particularly its arable products, and that the practice resulted into installing a priest-king who offered sacrifices before planting seasons and during harvesting. Due to his position in the lineage, the priest-king also adjudicated and mediated in the family disputes since he was the *baale*. It also revealed that the priest-king *oloriebi (bale)*, at some instances became the *oloja* or *owa* in Ekitiland just as the *baale* among other Yoruba sub-ethnic groups at the aggregation of settlements to become the mini-state; even at that, the priest king, that is the *oloja* or the *owa* was not autocratic until the arrival of the *oba* who claimed authority from *Oduduwa*. It also noted that until the era of *Oduduwa*, crown was not important but with the arrival of the *Oduduwa oba*, crown became the symbol of authority and power in Yorubaland, in general, and in Ekitiland, in particular, and it remained so until when Yorubaland became the British Colony in 1900. This study further observed that it was the colonial government that attached much importance to crown through which it midwife colonial administration in Yorubaland and ultimately destroyed the tradition of kingship and the taboos, especially the taboos of seclusion. It was noted that the destruction of the taboos marked the transformation of the institution (in 1900) from a traditional system into a formal organisation, which consequently resulted to the challenges of *pelupelu* institution in Ekitiland. The study established that the kings were subjugated to various governmental authorities from the colonial through to the civilian and military regimes. It also noted that the transformation opened a new vista where the kings could meet face to face consequent upon which they began the claim of seniority.

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## 6.2 Findings

The study observed that the political system in Ekitiland resulted from the attempt of the people to protect their agricultural products, particularly its arable products like yam. It is, therefore, noted that the priest-king, named *oloja*, *owa* and the *elu* are the aboriginal and the initial practice of kingship. He was revered *ebo-affin* (may his sacrifice be accepted) and, thus, submitted that theocracy was the indigenous system of government in Ekitiland, but it was structured like the monarchical system based on the aboriginal worldview. This study showed that the paraphernalia of office of the priest king and crown king only differed in the crown. The *oloja*, the *owa* and the *elu* only wore *Akoro or Orikogbofo*, the priest-crown (that are the paraphernalia of the office of priesthood) and not crown with bead and fringes which was attached to the office of the *oba*. This fact had been established by Oguntuyi, but not in connection with the challenges and politics of crown wearing within the kingship system. However, he noted that before Oduduwa, beaded crown in Ekitiland had no significance except the person wearing it had claim to Oduduwa. However, Oguntuyi did not explain, in detail, the apex of political authority and the political system as priesthood, a yawning lacuna which the present study has filled in scholarship.

Besides, it was established that the aboriginal priest kings in Ekitiland were overthrown by the Oduduwa groups from Ile-Ife, who, thereafter, established mega-state and kingdom style government and foisted on them, beaded crown kingship and, thus, divided the leadership structure along political and religious lines, such that the aboriginal priest-king were confined to the position of the chief priest to attend daily to the tutelary gods. In some Ekiti towns, there are still some *oloja* and *owa* whose positions were not affected by the composition of mega-states because they were accommodated, and became subservient to the beaded crown *oba* under the new political arrangement. The change in leadership led to the emergence of a new political system with authority vested in an individual as king (*oba*). It became a sort of constitutional monarchism, enabling the *oba* to exercise absolute political authority and possessed the power of life and death whereas in the former system authority was at the mercy of the people and the gods. The *oba* became lord and god in his territory and, so, was revered as *Kabiyesi* (one whom nobody dare question).



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The study further revealed that some of the Ekiti towns have sustained the mini-state style system of government with the *oloja* and the *owa* remaining as the head of the several quarters that came together as mega-state. This study revealed that, at present, there existed in Ekitiland both the priest-king and the beaded crown king which actually constitute the *pelupelu*.

The study has shown that before colonialism in Ekitiland, no *oba* could claim authority over other kingdom or over the whole Ekitiland. Each kingdom was autonomous. The Yoruba *oba*, in general, and Ekitiland, in particular, related with one another on the basis of brotherhood. There was, therefore, no reason to engage in the battle of supremacy until 1900 when the colonial government introduced the indirect rule system which emphasised beaded crown as a symbol of political authority and government -recognition, thereby creating supremacy problem. It noted that only the kings who collaborated with colonial authority enjoyed higher rating over those in the opposition to colonial rule. The colonial policy, thus, forcefully merged the *oba* through *pelupelu* in June 21, 1900, which signalled the end of the era of the taboo of seclusion and *incommunicado* (when the kings could neither meet face to face with one another nor leave their palaces) and, thus, began an era when the meeting of the kings became an avenue to exert socio-political authority and relevance.

It has also been revealed that the social changes of the 20th century were impacted by the preceding events, significantly the Yoruba civil wars of the 19th century. Unlike previous transformations, the post civil war era displaced, dismembered and detached the institution completely from her traditional functions and subsumed it under the colonial government. Moreover, it revealed that the changes displaced the *oba* from the scheme of authority and completely transformed the philosophy and the system of government from traditional to conventional. The power of the *oba* was, therefore, curtailed and subjugated to the approval of the Resident Officer, while the concept of power was transformed and redefined by the colonial authority. It is also noteworthy that the institution was transformed in the context of the need for expropriation, appropriation, governance and development. The tradition of seclusion, independence, autonomy and sovereignty of the kingdoms which had been an age -long tradition and the people's heritage as path to brotherhood and relationship were jettisoned for a centralised but discontented group. It further recorded that the transformation marked the resurgence and rejuvenation of the kingship institution in Ekitiland and opened a new vista for social

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consciousness and social integration, despite shifting socio-political conditions in 1920, 1930 and 1940. Even when the reforms of the 1930, 1940 and the 1950s eroded their powers, authority and influence, they found solace in the various social developments of the new system. Building of schools, hospitals, and construction of roads which reduced the burden of poverty and ignorance became a rallying point for the *oba* on the one hand while on the other hand, participation in politics became an important avenue to court friendship with successive governments and maintained political relevance as custodian of the people's culture amidst these rapid social changes up till independence in 1960.

This study further established that making the *oba* functionaries of the government reduced their authority and power, created unnecessary romance and interactions among them and their subjects. This deflated the status of the sacred kingship institution in the socio-political affairs within their domain. All through the period of indirect rule and after, the *oba* became mere puppets, political tools, road contractors and supervisors. The *oba* was, thus, treated as an ordinary member of the society and demoted to the position of a chief and principal officer of colonial government in his kingdom. Essentially, the interference of the colonial authority undermined the tradition of appointment of kings and chiefs by preferring men that were loyal to British administration to those loyal to the people. In addition, it showed that the loss of kingship power, authority and influence translated to the loss of revenue, which had initially depended on war booties, tolls and tributes which the colonial authority had translated to tax being collected by the kings and chiefs who now received salaries as compensation, which also became another challenge to the kings. Foreign influence, particularly of religion overwhelmed kingship culture and tradition of the institution to the effect that rituals have been abandoned in most of the palaces, rather churches and mosques now adorn the palaces, thereby pitching some kings against their subjects. In some instances, the *oba* is now installed in the church rather than in the groves and the shrines of the ancestors.

Furthermore, this study discovered that, those *oba* who participated in the 'colonial *pelupelu*' insisted that *alademerindinlogun* is a heritage and political tradition of paramountcy in Ekitiland and not of promotional position as it is at present, thereby persistently stating the maintenance of a *pelupelu* class of not more than "sixteen paramount *oba*". This study noted, however, that the concept of *alademerindinlogun*, which some *oba* have insisted must become

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the model and terms for grading of the *pelupelu oba* in disregard of other kings in Ekitiland, as a model of hierarchy was adapted from the Yoruba conception of the cosmological ordering. It noted that it was a development from *olojamerindinlogun* of Ekitiland who were leaders of the autochthonous communities before the coming of the *oba*, who transformed the concept to *alademerindinlogun* and made it more political. Indeed, it is deeply rooted in the religion of the Yoruba. It is a religious term which refers to the sixteen priesthoods in Ekitiland, but given a political dimension because it is the bedrock of traditional government in Yorubaland, in general, and Ekitiland, in particular, from the period of *Oduduwa* hegemony. Firstly, it is an ideology built around the view that *Orunmila* and *Esu*, the principal personae in *Obatala* government were each represented by eight figures which totalled sixteen, and second the sixteen deities that assisted *Oduduwa* in the running of the affairs of the world. The significance of sixteen was religiously guided as laid down by *Orunmila*. Hence, sixteen is about those who will lead a group of people as representative, rather than being marked for seniority, which posed great challenges within the *pelupelu* council. The term is only significant in concept as a figurative language of belonging to the *Orunmila* family and not in the number of figure involved. This study submitted that *olojamerindinlogun* or *alademerindinlogun* were meant for social representation, cultural affiliation and belonging, particularly to Ile-Ife the centre or the ‘genesis of the world’ in line with the sixteen *agbamerindinlogun* that assisted *Obatala* in the government of *Ife*. Thus, as a tradition, it became the religion of the people as a guide in social and political matters. More importantly, sixteen has to do with agreement and to enable with the consultation of the ancestors and the forebears of the land on social and political phenomenon.

The official democratisation of *pelupelu* institution to which incorporated village heads, chiefs, reputable citizens and representatives of the educated class has greatly demystified the kingship traditions- *oba* and his authority. It has been shown in the study that the *oloja*, the *owa* and the *elu* are now in the Ekiti State Traditional Council. The common grading of the kings and the chiefs is one of the identified challenges facing the *pelupelu* class, thus, the *pelupelu* desperately seeks its separation as an institution from the *Ekiti* State Traditional Council.

Situating the transformation and challenges of *pelupelu* institution in the right historical perspective, the study identified three phases of development: the colonial, civilian and military periods. The first phase started from 1900 to 1955 and could be described as the golden age of

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*pelupelu*. Within this period, meetings were attended initially by proxy, due to the challenges of the taboos of seclusion. Therefore, the *oba* sent delegates and the meetings were infrequent. There were only three *pelupelu* meetings between 1900 and 1919, excluding Mr. Ambrose's attempt of 1902. From 1919-1942, the taboos of seclusion was abandoned and the *oba* met regularly, every six months, in an advisory and consultative capacity and on rotational basis. Between 1939 and 1942, the pace of the meeting increased and within the four, years *pelupelu* meetings were held fifteen times at an average of four times annually in each of the main towns of Ekiti. This could be regarded as the peak of *pelupelu* meetings. The study further noted that during this period, *pelupelu* meetings became social gatherings of "festivals, featuring big dress competition, pomp, colour and music". *Pelupelu* meetings were really for competitions among the kings.

Also, it was observed that between 1945 and 1955, the reconstitution of *pelupelu* reduced the power of the kings and their chiefs, following the appointment and preference for elected members, many of whom had little respect for traditions or the institution of kingship since they (elected members) understood the power structure and were wealthier than most kings. An avenue was, therefore, created for rancour between the kings and their subjects which manifested in the 1950s. By 1950, four *baale* had been successful in their claim to beaded crown and independence, thus increasing the number of *pelupelu* to twenty

The second phase was the era of movement for independence and self rule/government, especially, when the Western Nigeria Council of Chiefs was inaugurated such that the *pelupelu* institution underwent significant modifications and transformations in an attempt to be relevant to the ever changing socio-political development in Nigeria, firstly, under the civilian government, and secondly, under the military administration. Social stratification and class struggle with power politics, not intended by those who engineered the *pelupelu*, became the contending forces within the kingship institution. It is critical that political rivalry characterised the relationship between the kings and the government. Some kings were deposed, exiled, demoted, and sometimes, promoted at will by the government. Even installations were done at variance with the tradition of kingship. Unlike in the past when the colonial authority was able to manage the *pelupelu* institution to its advantage, the civilian and military governments were unable to sustain the rapport and manage the institution advantageously. Rather, it became a win

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all situation, with the political *elite* relegating the traditional rulers to the background. Although the *pelupelu* was very relevant in the native administration of Ekitiland, it was moribund except that two of the *pelupelu oba* on rotational basis were representing the interest of Ekitiland in the enlarged Western Nigeria Council of Chiefs, under the civilian and the military from 1952 to 1976. When Ondo State was created and the *oba* transferred to the Ondo State Council of Traditional Rulers, the number was increased to eight permanent memberships and a number of rotational members until 1996 when Ekiti State was carved out of the old Ondo State, which transformed and subsumed *pelupelu* under the Ekiti State Council of Traditional Rulers.

The creation of Ekiti State is the third historical phase of *pelupelu* institution, and unlike the past when the bedrock of relationship among Ekiti kings was the *Omiye*, the increase in membership from the initial twenty one to thirty one caused a great disaffection among the *oba*, elevated *baale* and *oloja* that were minor chiefs. The increase in number, and particularly the upgrading of a few minor chiefs into the *pelupelu* which increased the number from twenty one to thirty one generated conflict within the *pelupelu* itself, and among other *oba* that were elevated and those who wanted to be elevated to the *pelupelu* status. Consequently, there are at present, two existing bodies of the council of kings in Ekitiland. The first group is the *pelupelu* council, and it is an enlarged version of the traditional *pelupelu* incorporating the erstwhile paramount *oba*. The second group is the “Majority *Oba* of Ekitiland” (MOBEL). This group represents those that were excluded from the *pelupelu* and a sizeable number of *oba* seeking recognition and autonomy.

As much contentious as the challenges were, the *pelupelu* has been able to manage its differences based on equality and autonomy of each kingdom. Though the *pelupelu* concert had destroyed the age long tradition of seclusion by bringing the *oba* out of their palaces into a romantic and culturally saturated atmosphere, it had its socio-political relevance. It encouraged the kings to socialise with their peers through which they built further relationships and interacted on issues of social, economic and political development within their districts. It also created avenues for the tributary villages to show solidarity towards the mother towns, while also encouraging unity in Ekitiland. In 1940, the Ekiti anthem was introduced at the Ado-Ekiti *Pelupelu* Conference, which was probably modified into the present Ekiti State anthem. The concert ended with the 1958 *pelupelu* at Ise-Ekiti

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In essence, this study emphasised the need for social development and political relevance as the kernel of unity among the Ekiti *oba* from the pre-colonial times up to the creation of Ekiti State in 1996, an aspiration made possible by the concert of the kings. This sociological concept of kinship has remained the guiding force from the inception of kingship tradition in Ekitiland. In addition were diplomatic relationships, which often cut across several kingdoms with the aim of maintaining peaceful and harmonious neighbourliness. These were a common phenomenon during annual festivals and coronation rites in all the kingdoms. In some instances, there were marriage alliances between two kingdoms whereby one of the kings would give out her daughter in marriage to another king. For political and social relationships, gifts were used as symbols of message (*aroko*) which conveyed the intention of the sender either to stop an impending war, seek support against external aggression or punishment for crime.

A significant finding of the study is that a greater challenge to the socio-political relevance of the *pelupelu* institution was that the majority of the kings themselves were at loss on the concept of *pelupelu*, which is a political amalgamation of Ekiti kings. Though it was a cult of the *oba* and has spiritual implications in its traditional form, it was partly ritualistic and partly political. Nevertheless, it was more of a political gathering for administrative convenience in the colonial period.

An emergent tradition presently undermining *pelupelu* institution is the fact that only few of the kings actually recognised the workings and significance of oral tradition to kingship institution. The place of *ifa* oracle in Yorubaland, in general, and Ekitiland, in particular, has been watered down as it relates to kinship rather collusion and coercion have become the order of king-making in Ekitiland. The palaces that were home to the ancestors have become the abode of foreign culture with the erection of churches and mosques on site of traditional worship. The changing status in the pattern and the structure of the political institutions actually posed challenges to the development and integration of socio-political culture and institutions in Nigeria, in general, and Ekitiland, in particular. This also impacted on the emergent socio-political culture of most Ekiti towns when the norms and tradition of kingship are juxtaposed. The flexibility and nature of intra-group relations in Ekiti kingship institution has been desecrated and violated by these changes.

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Furthermore, the kings were polarised along the order of hierarchy with the *pelupelu* insisting on a traditional autonomy above the Grade A class, citing their colonial antecedence as the reason for such privilege. The re-organisation of the institution and the merging of *baale* and the *oloja* under one umbrella and classification into groups infuriated the *pelupelu* class, particularly their inclusion in the first class group of kings. The kings in the *pelupelu* group preferred separation, rather than having a central system for all the *oba*.

Interestingly, however, the *pelupelu* institution has assumed a different dimension in the state. The establishments of the Council of Traditional Rulers By Law Number 3 of 2000 legalised the relationship between the kings and the Council. The law gave the institution the power to advise the governor on any chieftaincy matter, more particularly in the exercise of the power vested in the governor. The governor has no obligation to consult the council when it comes to delegation of authority. In other words, the appointment of the chairman of the council and promotion of *oba* is at the prerogative of the governor except that the chairman must be a member of the *pelupelu* since the council now consists of all the principal kings in the Ekiti State

### **6.3 Conclusion**

This study has showed that the convocation of *pelupelu* in 1900 had led to challenges which the *pelupelu* institution has been grappling with since then. It critically explained and analysed what led to the creation and the challenges faced by the *pelupelu* institution. The kings have been described as wielding the authority of the gods as divine rulers prior to their transformation, which brought about reduction in their power, political role legitimacy. This study submitted that the transformation subjugated the *oba* first under the colonial authority during the colonial period, a situation which was later transferred to the post-colonial government since independence either as a military or civilian government.

It has also been shown that the 1978 Land Use Decree and other tax policies by the government have completely stripped the *oba* of all tolls accruing from either land or the markets. This position relegated and pauperised the *oba*, such that the *oba* had to depend largely on government patronage, business connections, and the ability to align and re-align with an influential interest or the government of the day. The *oba* still occupies the position of authority

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but rather than being obeyed, they are compelled to obey constituted authority, without which, their kingly position may be jeopardised. In fact, those *oba* who failed to realise the effect of the transformation paid for it with deposition, exile and even execution as was the case, in 1910, 1918 and 1932 when *Oloye* of Oye was detained, suspended and removed for contravening the forestry laws of colonial authority.

The *oba* have, thus, become an endangered species, considering the fact that the post-independence political arrangements, either by the civilian or the military administration, did not provide any definite constitutional role for the *oba*, thereby making some *elite* to clamour for the abolition of the kingship position, while others believed that the palace should become museums or centres for monuments or fertilizer industries because they are the custodian of the people's tradition and culture, but reaffirming that they are no more relevant to the contemporary system of government. The kernel of the argument within these schools of thought is that the traditional rulers are not learned enough to stand the test of time. The present study contends that the position, given from field observations that many of the traditional rulers are graduates, with some holding doctorate (PhD) degrees of reputable universities can, therefore, perform creditably as traditional leaders even without insulating them from politics at grassroots governance which had hitherto been known as their domain.

This study, therefore, submitted that the *pelupelu* institution is still very relevant and could act as agent of social cohesion and integration; as custodian of customs and traditions that could be made to supervise local government administrations, particularly the customary courts, and, hence, preserve culture and heritage as has been the case in Britain, Australia and Holland where the monarchs played key roles in stabilising the polity.



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\* **These *oba* only attended to the researcher once**

\*\* **These are representatives of the *Ewi* of Ado and the *Owa-Ooye* of Oke-imesi *Ekiti***

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