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# Issues On Nupe-Oyo Relations, Up To The 19th Century

**Suleiman Abdul-Rahman Adebayo**

**Abstract**

*History shows that the convergence of people of different ethnic background at different parts of the glob produces organisations, which may be defined according to their different attributes. Several ethnic groups of nations make up Nigeria, just like some other countries of the world. Each group is usually recognised with her socio-cultural, economic and political identity. The Ilorin Emirate of Kwara State of Nigeria features a convergence of Nupe, Yoruba, Fulani, Hausa, Malian, Kanuri and Tuarage among others. Since the inception of the Emirate government, the ethnic groups have been unanimously pivoting the interest of the Emirate based on mutual concession, indeed, the relations among the ethnic groups is so intertwined that hardly could one see any marginal line of difference among them. Better still, each of the groups is still strongly holding valuable remarks and pride to her ethnic and eponymous ancestor, but as an index of intangible socio-cultural heritage for the promotion of the Emirate goal. Such promotion is sustained within the existing relations among ethnic groups of the Emirate. However, the historical factors that propelled their relations, which we see today, are not known by many of them. Most importantly, this study provides incentives to origin, focus and continuity, as characteristics to be considered for healthy co-existence and development of the Emirate. This work studies the earliest aspects of political, economic and socio-cultural relations between Nupe and Oyo, and how it metamorphosed into Ilorin-Oyo and Nupe-Ilorin relations. In addition, the work strengthens historic factors as essential tactics and discretion to foster brotherhood among the tripartite Nupe, Oyo and Ilorin. The primary and secondary sources of information in history are employed as methodological analysis for this study. Examination of the historic factors was premised on the king list style, for the work considered the period from the reign of Alaafin Sango to Alaafin Oluewu.*

## Introduction

Experience has shown that a collection of every nuclear families make up an extended family. Extended families virtually exist to expand into several clans of a community. In a situation whereby a reasonable number of communities confederate they form nation. Such nation is usually headed by a leader under any chosen pattern of administration. In view of such evolution and expansion theory

it is obvious that domestic issues that emanated from families across clans, communities and nations are sources of all historical events. This work considers domestic issues of the ancient Oyo and Nupe Kingdoms as perennial factors that established the institutions of the Kingdoms. In a bid to maintain their respective institutions (economic, political, and socio-cultural) the Nupe and Oyo kingdoms related. The relations lasted for about five centuries. Meanwhile at the declining process of the relations several vassal states of each of the kingdoms had emerged as sovereigns. Many of the sovereigns featured heterogeneity by virtue of accommodating different ethnic groups as bona fide indigenous members of community. Ilorin Emirate is a typical example of these sovereigns. A holistic study of the earliest form of relations between the Nupe and Oyo is very significant in the course of appraising the socio-cultural and politico-economic affairs that bind the descendants of Nupe and Oyo and other ethnic groups in the Ilorin Emirate. Apparently, the pre-Emirate relations of the two groups propelled links between the Fulani and the Yoruba. The aftermath of the relations involved the emergence of Ilorin community, successful invasion of Oyo; and the establishment/organisation of Ilorin as a sovereign Emirate. For this reason, this work reviews the origin of the political, economic and socio- cultural aspects of Oyo-Nupe relations, which bequeathed Oyo-Ilorin and Ilorin-Nupe relations. However, the history of the ethnic groups involved in the discussion is not static, hence an inward look is given to the transformation that had existed as a result of an inevitable occurrence of change.

**The Origin of Nupe-Oyo Relations**

Geographical location plays a key role in the integration of the nations of Nupe and that of the Yoruba. Ancient Oyo is bounded by the River Niger in the North East section. Thus Nupe land falls within the base of the River Niger and serves as a link between Hausaland and Yorubaland. All the river tributaries in Yorubaland flow into River Niger. The flowing directions of the rivers were among natural impetus that fostered sensitivity about Nupe-Oyo relations. For instance, the Awan River (with its tributaries, such as River Oyun, Asa, Imoru and Weru) flow into River Niger. The Osin River rising from Ife cut across Illa and advance to Ogudu where it finally get into River Niger. The River Oyi rises from Omu and flowing north-east (between Shoga and Lafiagi) into River Niger.

The Oro or Eguwa Rivers rise in Osi and flows north-east into the River Niger near the east of Lafiagi. The Oli rises from the south of Nikki in Dahomey and flows east into River Niger, through Kwatashi. The Siwashi rises from the south of Segbana in Dahomey and flows east (through Shagunnu) into River Niger. With the use of local canoe and manual boat, the indigenous people of the areas where the rivers rose and pass through were having links among themselves and the Nupe who lived around River Niger.

The migration of Oranmiyan from Ile-Ife towards Mecca cannot be over empasised as a factor that instituted a relation between Nupe and the Yoruba. Yoruba tradition posits that when the eastern route to Mecca was blocked, Oranmiyan resorted to the Northwest route in his migration and campaign against the Meccans who were believed to have persecuted his great grandfather from the territories of Mecca. The ancestral home of the *Tapa* (Nupe people) is located closed to the River Niger in the Northern hemisphere of modern Nigeria. When Oranmiyan's movement was halted by the *Tapa*, he together with his army stepped back and squatted at the bank of River Niger from where he was finally directed by one of the primus of Nupe kingdom to the Hill of Ajaka, the seat of Oyo's first court. The merger of the socio-cultural institution of the Nupe and the Yoruba was registered when Elempe, the king of Tapa married her daughter, 'Torosi'[1] to Oranmiyan[2]. The marriage was blessed with Sango, the third *Alaafin* of Oyo, whose wife, Oya (which became the Nupe/Yoruba indigenous name of the River Niger) was also a *Tapa*. At Ajaka, several Oyo kings ruled. The rulers included *Alaafin* Oranmiyan ,*Alaafin* Aganju, *Alaafin* Kori, *Alaafin* Oluaso, *Alaafin* Onigbogi and *Alaafin* Ofinran in succession. They all had relations with the Nupes. It was *Alaafin* Ofinran who moved the capital from Ajaka to Igboho. Several kings administered the kingdom at Oyo Igboho. Notable among them was *Alaafin* Obalokun. Socio-politically, Obalokun strengthened Oyo-Nupe relations by placing "The First *Ajele* (political resident) at Ijana near Ilaro, with the title of *Onisare*... and the appointment of an *Onisare* was regularly from Oyo and must be a *Tapa* by birth".[3] Furthermore, at the same Oyo Igboho, *Alaafin* Ojigi made great impact in connecting Oyo with Nupeland in the northern part of Oyo. He sent out a large expedition which struck the Niger in the North, near the Ibariba,[4] (Nupeland).

In summary, four cardinal factors were responsible for the basis of relations between the kingdom of Oyo and that of the Nupe, namely, the geographical, migration, economy, polity and marriage. The reign of Sango witnessed the division of the Oyo Empire into four regions: Epo, Ibolo, Ekun-Otun and Ekun-Osi.[5] Ilorin evolved from Ekun-Osi.

**Early Political Relations between Nupe and Oyo**

The ancient Yoruba kingdom operated feudal system of government, under which the vassal or provincial lords (primus) or prince superintended the affairs of towns/villages under their surveillance. The vassal lords administered areas across Popo, Dahomey and part of Ashanti with portion of the *Tapa* (Nupe) and Baruba. The synopsis around the migration of Oranmiyan was basis on contact of Oranmiyan and the *Tapas* (Nupe); the establishment of the first Oyo kingdom near Ajaka Hills; division of the ancient Oyo territory; and structuring of Oyo administration.

By the structure of Oyo administration, the office of the age-grade civic guard existed during the life time of Oduduwa as *Eso*, who were 70 in number, and the office was constituted into political autocrat by Alaafin Sango.[6] The promulgation of law about the number of the *Esos* that were to remain in the kingdom in peace and war times was announced by Alaafin Onigbogi, while he was in exile. The law therefore stated that, 'only thirty five (35) of the *Esos* should be absent from home at any time, leaving thirty five (35) for defense of the city and country'.[7] Oyo kingdom during the reign of Alaafin Onigbogi launched a political attack against Ita-Ibidun, an old settlement to the south-west of the kingdom. The king sent all his army and the Bashorun to Ita-Ibidun.

> The King of *Tapa* between whom and the Yoruba there had been strained relations since the death of Sango seized this opportunity for crossing the river and pouring his army into the Yoruba country, carried everything before him, until he stood before the gate of Oyo. The king (Onigbogi) fled to Gbere in Bariba (Baruba) country.[8]

History records that at the scene of the invasion, thousands of Oyo sculptors were looted by the king of *Tapa*. Some Oyo citizens were also captured

as slaves. The result of the above synopsis was that the Yoruba went through an interregnum of 80years as an exiled dynasty in Saki and Oyo Igboho. Nevertheless, before the circumstantial establishment of Saki and Igboho courts, *Alaafin Ofinran*, the son of Onigogi with the fugitives of his father remained as refugees in Gbere as allied mercenaries in "Eleduwe's army".[9] Without hesitation, Eleduwe seized the opportunity to take the Yoruba towns which included Irawo and Oke/Sero as Barubaland. At the stance of showing ill-treatment against the Yorubas, Ofinran decided to mobilise the refugees and headed to Oyo.[9]

The reign of Alaafin Ajiboyede was also a remarkable era of political relations between the Nupe and Oyo. During his reign, the Yoruba country was invaded by Lajomo, king of *Tapa*. Through the life of Chief Ajanlapa, the Osi wefa, the Yoruba succeeded in luring the Nupe and finally gained victory [10]. At last, Lajomo was taken as war captive to Oyo, where he remained for the rest of his life. It should be emphasised that even, in peaceful periods, territorial expansion of Oyo Empire was ongoing. For instance, "the peaceful reign of Alaafin Agboluaje witnessed the expansion of Oyo territory up to the side of 'River Niger', on the north and a portion of the Tapa and Bariba (Baruba) countries, on the east by the lower Niger, on the South by the sea coast, and on the west it includes the Popo and Dahomey"[11].

As it were, the Yorubaland served as a political asylum to the fugitives of the Nupe and the Baruba people, vis-à-vis the Nupeland. The Nupeland was useful as an escape route to the Elewi-Odo, the king of Popo when the notorious Bashorun Gaa tried to assassinate him in the reign of Alaafin Agboluaje. The king "speedily crossed the Esuogbe River and escaped to the Tapa country".[12] During the reign of Alaafin Ojigi the Nupe engaged in intensive raiding of the Igbomina people for slaves. The western/northern caravan route that ran through Osogbo, Ilorin, Igbomina, Eketu, Ogodo and into Hausaland and Bornu was explored by the Nupe slave raiders to suppress the Igbomina into slave trade. It was on this ground that Alaafin Ogigi appointed Laderin as a resident, to checkmate the interest of the Nupe over Igbomina. During the reign of Etsu Majia (1769-1777), many of the Igbomina towns and villages (Oba, Igbole, Ijara, Iri, Odo-Eku, Kanko) were sacked. It should be noted that a paralleled government was ran between Majia and Etsu Muazu. Thus between 1759 and 1795, Etsu Muazu was

involved in slave raiding of Igbominaland of Isin, Afon, Ajase-Ipo and Offa, all in the present Kwara State.

From the period of Alaafin Agboluaje to Abiodun, the kings of Oyo witnessed prosperity and tranquility. Indeed, Alaafin Abiodun consolidated the imperial expansion achieved by his predecessors with the unification of Tapa, Baruba, Dahomey, and Popo provinces. Be that as it may, the circumstances that surrounded the death of Abiodun ensured "tribal independence with loss to Yoruba, Tapa, and Bariba (Baruba) and Dahomey Provinces, and the Popo later on, which was continued to our day"[13].

Taking cognisance of the earliest interaction between the Nupe and the Yoruba, the motive for imperial expansion as well as individual pride had served as compelling factors that fostered relations between the two ethnic groups. An inseparable factor that enhanced their relations was the fact that the cavalry used by either of the ethnic groups at every point of invasions, attacks, and wars were a combination of the state nobles and foreign slaves from Hausa, Nupe, Yoruba and Bornu among others.

It should be reiterated that Samuel Johnson's argument supports tradition that said that Alaafin Ajaka was the only one that ruled in two different periods. And that he abdicated his throne when Sango returned from his expedition to Ile-Ife. Alaafin Ajaka was a peace loving king during his first reign. However, he was different during his second coming. One of his foremost expeditions was against the Nupe. Tradition has it that he employed large and well-trained birds, armed with arrows, and after crossing the Niger they showered down the deadly weapons upon the maternal relations of his brother, Sango.

In the era of King Oluewu, political storm of Ilorin began to precipitate on the court of the Oyo Empire. The last honour of Alaafin Oluewu was ravaged when Emir Shitta seized the Gbedu Royal drum of Oyo during the Alaafin's visit to Ilorin-court. Shitta asked Oluewu for the second visit, but it was rejected. The internal crisis between the Alaafin and his chiefs (Akioso, the Bashorun and Ailumo, the Asipa) escalated to civil disputes that led to the death of the Chiefs. Oluewu was now desperate to regain his honour while Shitta was determined to lord it over Oluewu. Shitta therefore collaborated with an erstwhile foe of Oyo, Lanloke, the Chief of Ogodo (Gudu as the Nupe call it), while Alaafin Oluewu was able to secure the alliance of Eleduwe, Kurumi of Ijaye, the Aseyin of Iseyin,

the Sabi-gana of Igana, the Okere of Saki and other western province chiefs to combat Ilorin allies under the command of Jimba, the Emir's General. It should be understood that Esugoyi, the King of Rabbah (Nupe territory) was a key factor among the Ilorin allies. The encounter ended in a stalemate at Otefun, a town of Oyo territory. Henceforth, through his combined force, Ilorin emerged as 'empire builder' before her ambition was truncated by Ibadan warriors.

**Earlier Socio-cultural Relations between Nupe and Oyo**

The Egungun deity which has become a cherished institution among the Yoruba was alien to the Yoruba culture in the earliest time. The Tapa (Nupes) used Egungun mysteries to instill fear into the Yoruba during the epoch ranging from Oranmiyan to Sango and to Alaafin Ofinran. In the period which could be recognised as the dark-age, the Nupes, crafted the Egungun against the Yorubas to suppress their resistance before carrying out political expeditions against them. Indeed, Egungun was an apparition to the Yoruba culture prior to the reign of Alaafin Ofinran. The Yorubas were exposed to Egungun mysteries at a place called Kusu, when Ofinran and his people were returning to Oyo after a few years of exile in Barubaland. They sojourned at Kusu, where some of prominent Nupe descents (Alapinni,Elefi, Olohan, Aladafa, Oloba and Oloje) joined them. Those who joined them at Kusu later became principal officials in Yorubaland. Their descendants are still practicing *Egungun* rites in some Yorubaland, while those who did not worship *Egungun* still retain their indigenous names such as Elefi, Olohan, Aladafa, Oloba and Oloje. Johnson attests that the secret of *Egungun* was revealed to the Yoruba by Nupe at Kusu, near the hill of Sanda through Saha, *Alafin* Ofinran's head slave. Kusu is seeing as a point of connection between some indigenous Nupe *Egungun* spiritualists and the Yoruba that were returning to Yorubaland. Today, the Alapini, Elefi, Olohan, Oloba, Aladafa, and Oloje have become *Egungun* institutions in Yorubaland. These personalities were traditionally related to Nupe. They were not even in Yorubaland when *Alaafin* Ofinran was returning to Yorubaland. It however confirmed that:

> The first Alapinni with the other Egungun Priest the Elefi, Olohan, Oloba, Aladafa and the Oloje emigrated (immigrated) from the Tapa country to Yoruba, joining the remnants returning from the Bariba country. These became the first and instructed the Yoruba

further in the Egungun worship; therefore the honours and the emoluments to be enjoyed in this worship by right belong to them and their successors unto this day.[14]

An aspect of the religious deity which is known as Ifa is regarded as a bridge that links Nupe with Yoruba. Tradition maintains two factions about the appearance, and institutionalisation of Ifa into the kingdom by *Aru'gba Ifa*, king Onigbogi's mother in the reign of Onigbogi. Two, it "was introduced into the Yoruba country by one Setilu, a native of the Nupe country who was born blind".[15]

Another event that warranted socio-relation between the Nupe and the Yoruba is related to celebration of *Bebe* festival of the Yoruba. *Bebe* festival was an important feast celebrated by Alaafin Ajiboyede, one of the earliest kings of Oyo. At the end of the feast, the king lost his son on natural cause. Henceforth, he resorted to treat the feigned condolence of his chiefs with cruelty by ordering their execution. Contrary this act, an amiable admonition from a Nupe man (who was known as Baba Kewu among Oyo) came to appease the king's inordinate grief. The scenario is reported by Jonson, thus:

> When a Moslem (Muslim) priest from the Tapa country called '*Baba Kewu*' sent his son '*Baba Yigi*' to instate with him for his unjust and cruel acts in avenging his son's death on innocent people when his son died a natural death.[16]

Furthermore, marriage is categorised as a prime factor of earlier connection between the Nupe and the Yoruba because the fourth and defied king of the Yoruba, Sango was a son of Nupe woman, Torosi, daughter of King Elempe of the Nupeland. The act is seeing as formation of alliance in historical perspective. Thereafter, Sango created an office known as *Tebu*, which was charged with the responsibility of annual presentation of a horse and a cow to the Elempe of Nupe country for sacrifice. When the catastrophe of testing the efficacy of the lightening charm of Sango destroyed his household, Sango resorted towards the court of Elempe, the King of Nupe.

It should be remembered that one of Alaafin Abiodun's daughters was married to Tabitu, a Muslim Nupe man. Tradition has it that Tabitu was paternally

Nupe man. His mother was a Hausa woman who traded in skins with Bashorun Gaa. Tabitu was said to have been taking care of one of Bashorun Gaa's daughter up till the death of the Bashorun. On the death of Bashorun Gaa Alaafin Abiodun appreciated the caring nature of Tabitu over Bashorun's daughter and married his daughter to Tabitu. Perhaps, Alaafin Abiodun's action could have enthused gesture for tribal indiscrimination between the Nupe and Oyo.

The alliance between Alaafin Amodo and Chief Lanloke of Ogodo was symbolic, for, the King sought a political support against the internal dispute in his court. In addition, he needed the alliance against the foreseen Fulani attack. The King cemented and strengthened this alliance by giving his daughter to Lanloke as wife, and treating Ogodo as independent sovereign.

On the basis of remote course, the confiscation of Quran with the other items of a Hausa trader, Alaja-eta could not only be seen as an act of brigandage against the Hausa trader, but also as an interface of socio-cultural interactions that propelled future engagement between the states of Muslim and the Yoruba. Apparently, Quran is an essential scripture of the Muslims. Having pleaded, the King ordered Bashorun Asamu the release of the goods that were seized from Alaja-eta. All of the items were returned except the Quran. Alaafin Aole was embittered by the action of the Bashorun and his associate, for not releasing the Quran. The disaffection constituted to internal crisis between Aole and Bashorun, and persisted in succession until the incursion of 'Ilorin'.

Bordering on the coast were two prominent vassal states of Oyo, these comprise the Egbado and the Ijana. Olu was the title of the head of Egbado while Onisare was that of Ijana. The Onisare was rated next to Olu. It is imperative to note that the Onisare must be a Tapa by birth, as also to acknowledge that:

> The Olu and the people of Ilaro, as well as the Onisare and the people of Ijana were so to speak but one people; they observed the same national customs, and the same laws, their national deity was the god Ifa and annual festivals in its honour were observed in both places one after the other in the same month, each lasting for a week, the one commencing the day after the other so as to give the people of both places an opportunity of taking part in each other's socio-cultural existence between Ijana and Egbado festivities.[17]

At this juncture, it is worthy to note that intercourse of socio-cultural affections really contributed to the integration and co-existence of the ethnic groups of the Yoruba (proper), the Egbados and indeed the Nupe. At the close section of the festival, the kings would meet on a field, which was an intermediary between their native lands. Two mounds of earth were staged close to each other for each of the king to sit on. They were not allowed by custom to look into each other's face rather they sat back to back looking homewards, and begging to send a friendly and congratulatory messages to each other, through their messengers. Their entourage were there as spectators. There is no doubt that the people were showcasing their identical interests through a transitory custom.

**Earlier Economic Relations: Alaafin Ojigi to Alaafin Abiodun**

As a kingdom in the Guinea coast of West Africa, the Yoruba has been a sovereign state, even when the Songhai Empire was reigning. Prior to the penetration of the Europeans into the West African sub-regions, the coastal region of the Sudan related with the Europeans, the Arabs, and the people of the Middle East through the trans-Saharan activities. It is obvious that the Songhai Empire extended to Katsina, Kebbi and Zaria, meanwhile, the influence of the political, economic and socio-cultural matters of the Empire were greatly felt in the Nupe Kingdom. Nupeland begun to play an intermediary role between the central Sudan states and the Oyo kingdom while the Yoruba kingdom played a vital role in connecting the coastal states of the region to the Hausa states. This connection became significant from the half of the sixteenth century; and became more important from the beginning of the seventeenth century. The people of Tuareg descent are also found among the population of the Ilorin Emirate. Following their invasion and annexation of Asben in the seventh century, the Tuareg had established a meaningful relation with the Nupe to explore the ''Asben resources''[18] in favour of the trans-Saharan activities. Muhammed submits that:

> The territory was blessed with some exchange commodities that were highly valued in the inter-regional trade. These were the '*Yan Asban horses,*' the red salt of Teguidda (or Takedda), datès, and brown salt sourced at Bilma. These items were in very high demand in Hausa land for medicinal, dietary, and cavalry purposes. The exchange of these commodities added to the range of

occupational pursuits, which the Tuarage engage themselves in, apart from their principal pastoral occupation.[19]

The commercial function of Sokoto enabled the Tuareg merchants import the red salt of Takkeda, and Bilma salt farther the Nupe kingdom to Ilorin. Having imported salt, date and live- stock, the Tuareg exported back grains, clothes, and kola nut from the suburb of Yoruba kingdom through Ilorin. Meanwhile, the main sources of the Cola were Gonja in Asanti and Yorubaland. Sokoto was economically significant to the Tuareg, Nupe, and Yoruba Kola nut merchants because it provided hostel accommodation to them. Using Sokoto as a base, diffusion of industrial and vocational works prevailed, and crossed to Ilorin among the several locations in which the merchants found themselves. In addition, Sokoto connected the Tuareg , Nupe and the Yoruba because of its position as an important centre of learning since the last decade of the seventeenth century. Apparently, after the fall of Songhai Empire, Nupeland received a host of Scholars, merchants and artisans who could not endure the devastation of the Empire as a result of the Moroccan invasion.

Hunting and fishing have been important activities to Africa. The Yoruba and Nupe importantly engaged in hunting and fishing, but the Nupe (Kede) were prominently and currently more engaged in fishing than the Yoruba. The natural need to sustain individual life made hunting the first occupation that linked the Nupe and the Yoruba. When both states were growing beyond hunting and gathering, trade became imperative. Therefore some of the local produce such as pepper, alligator pepper, spice, tusk, wild animal parts and slaves of the Yoruba became important articles of trade in the Saharan trade, in exchange for slaves and other articles such as potash, skins, neutron, the European cloths, cotton, needles, and glass which were needed by the Yoruba. However, horses and war instrument later became the objects of economy of the Yoruba. Ogodo, Gabi (Mokwa) were prominent among the entrepots of Nupeland. The caravan from Mokwa to the core guinea coast settled in Ogodo before advancing to the Yoruba country where it reached the Southern guinea coast of the Ijaw, Itsekiri, Urhobo and others. The Nupe and the Yoruba merchants evolved to aid the course of trans-Saharan trading activities.

Various genres of animals such as dangerous and harmless ones were hunted by both ethnic groups. It is important to emphasise that the Yoruba (in about sixteenth/seventeenth) territory of Ekun-Osi abounded with wild animals especially elephants, which ivory had long been hunted for and exported via Nupeland across the Sahara desert and the Atlantic Ocean. Other animal such as leopards, lions, tigers, pythons, and wild birds were hunted by the Yoruba for the production of cultural, spiritual and economic materials. The body parts of wild animals were exported to Ogodo, where it was useful domestically, or transported to Hausaland and the Sahara for economic benefits.

Right from the end of band stage, the people of Africa advanced to have settlements. Hence, the need to domesticate spices of some animals arose. Since about the fourteenth century, the Yoruba as well as the Nupe had significantly improved on the technology of effective animal husbandry. Each of the ethnic groups engaged in domestic production of animals. The spices nature of domestic animals of Nupe and Yoruba are different. The prevalence of diseases such as trypanosomiasis varies among the Nupe, Hausa and Yoruba environment. The disease was not common in Ilorin as it was in Hausa and Nupelands, therefore, some livestock holders preferred to settle at Ilorin permanently.

Usually, fishing occupation is largely determined by the geographical settings. Nupeland is endowed with the numerous bodies of water ranging from rivers, creeks, lagoons and lakes. The Kede and the Kakanda of Nupe exported fish to the hinterland of the Yoruba state in exchange for agricultural and craft products. In addition, they were involved in the canoe production that was useful to some of the part-time fishers of the Oyo provinces. In the middle age, Nupe fish dealers spent several months in Oyo-Ile and occasionally established settlements.

Cotton, Indigo and Tobacco were exclusively cultivated by the Nupe, especially the Kutigi and Sakpe. "Indigo (Indigofera spp.) was the chief ingredient for the dyeing industry. In the savannah land of Nupe, three kinds of indigo grew mostly accidentally, namely the indigo grass, the indigo tree and the indigo wooden climber. ''In most of Nupeland, the indigo was found scattered everywhere in the open bush",[20] whereas it was cultivated in Kantunga (Old Oyo) at the earliest foundation of the kingdom. The production and consumption of Indigo later became object of cultural institutions of the northern Nigeria and the

Yorubaland. The Indigo culture thrived in Northern Nigeria, yet it is well adorned socially and spiritually among the Yoruba. For instance, Alaafin Agboluaje was socially and economically inclined such that he aided the technological processing of Indigo among his wives.[21]

The leaves of indigo were said to be commercially imported to Oyo Igboho and restricted for usage among the Princesses within the capital. After the death of the Alaafin, it became an article to be traded only among the Princesses in the capital and those of the vassal states. The culture was said to have later spread to Ketu and Dahomey. It is expedient to note that the leaves were usually harvested and imported to Oyo every year. The Yoruba used it to prepare dark-blue colour. Its process involved pounding in a mortar and leaving to ferment in water mixed with ash; and later rolled into balls. They had several methods of good preservations for the indigo balls, that could last many years until the needed for domestic usage or economic transaction. This tradition continued up till the advent of the colonial period when "Baikie B.W., recommended it as an export trade item to the British government in 1862''.[22]

Bitter cola later became one of the chief export crops of the Yoruba merchants during the Saharan trade. Moreover, tradition holds that its cultivation was restricted amongst the feudal lords of Oyo during the Sango period. Bitter cola was spiritually valued in Nupe (Elempe) court even, before the birth of Sango. When Sango rose to power, the bitter cola trees found within the Nupe and Oyo boundaries were embargoed. Neither the Nupe nor the Yoruba common native could approach the trees. The transaction of bitter cola to and from the Nupe/Yoruba areas was conducted on the basis of exchange of value throughout Sango's life. Perhaps the economic crisis that had lingered on out of the production and exchange of this product constituted a remote cause of Ajaka's onslaught against the Nupe court after the demise of Sango[23].

Furthermore, history confirms that the production of Kola (acuminata) *Obi Abata* and Kola (nitida) *Obi Gbanja* were indigenous to Yoruba economy. Among the ancient Oyo dwellers, it was socially and spiritually important. Although neither of the kinds of cola (*Obi*) was consumed by Sango, yet cola was very important to him and several kings that reigned after him, for, it was the chief item to be used in divine consultation before embarking on any political expedition. It is also used in rituals and gods appeasement. It remained socially

important to most of the ethnic groups of the Niger area till present day. The Nupe also shared similar value for the cola. It features symbolically as an item of consumption among several ethnic groups of modern Niger area, most prominently among the Hausas. Therefore, right from the ancient time, Nupe merchants had been middle men between the Yoruba and the Hausa on the transaction of the cola, which passes through Kutiji and then northwards via Dabban, another town with long Muslim connections to Hausaland.[24]

In addition, economic history of Nupe confirms the production of cola, also in "Kutiji,...one of the Nupe towns which... was adjacent to Kusopa, of the kola forests...and it centre Labozi, one of the oldest kola-producing town in Nupe".[25]

Cattle rearing are indigenous to the Africa. The Fulanis (pastoralists) roamed every nook and cranny of African grazing land. Three factors attracted the Fulani from the northern hemisphere of Oyo via Nupeland to the Ekun-Osi of the ancient Oyo. First was the absence of tsetse fly, which attracted reindeer pest epidemic on the cattle. Second was extensive presence of the area for fodder,[26] and third was the absolute scarcity of salt in Oyo-Ile. It is important to mention that the Oyo territory falls in Savannah and guinea-savannah, Ekun-Osi being majorly savannah.

More importantly, salt was among the major articles of exchange for slaves in ancient Oyo. Prior to the discovery and introduction of the item to Oyo, the Yoruba used *Obu*, an insipid rock salt and locust beans as seasoning. Salt was introduced into the Yoruba country during the reign of Alaafin Obalokun Agana Erin. Meanwhile with the introduction of salt, the Yoruba realised their perseverance over the age-long usage of *Obu*. However, apart from engaging in dual transaction with the Yoruba, the earlier pastoralists that plighted Nupe and Oyo predisposed the interior economic area of Oyo to the Nupe and other caravan merchants of the Sahara.

Based on socio-cultural material value, Nupe adored beads as their socio-cultural ornament. They used it also as a symbol of freedom and compliance to the ceremonial aspect of their tradition. The Nupe women used it as neck lace and bangles. Also, the Yoruba admires the use of beads, especially among the royal tittle holders and the priest. In the medieval period the usage of bead was strictly prohibited among the common people of the kingdom, although a classical kind

of beads were used as *Ileke/Bebe* (waist bead) among the Yoruba and Nupe women. Oral source revealed that the art of bead making was transmitted to Ilorin Nupe men of pre-Alimi era from their ancestors in Nupeland.[27] Bead production was mainly concentrated in Idiape, Okelele and Ogidi areas of Ilorin metropolis.[28] In the nineteenth century there was evidence that bead production also took place in Afon and Offa among the Nupe craft men.[29] The produced beads of the era portrayed special feature, which include ''red stone-lantana beads...predominantly for expot''.[30] It is significantly worthy to note that the production of beads involved a rigorous exercise, perhaps this is the reason why only men engaged in its production.

> Production of beads was tedious and consumed a considerable measure of men-hours. It took more than three hours to drill a one-inch hole in a bead, and from four days to a week to produce a necklace of about eighteen beads.[31]

Based on the resistant nature of beads to fire, the researcher foresee that scientific experiment should be indigenously carried out on natural composition of beads for the production of fire proof objects. Nonetheless, the Nupe women and women of other ethnic engaged in the finishing aspect of bead production. Some women were involved in grinding part of the materials utilized for producing the beads.... They were involved in the arrangement of the beads after production.[32] In addition, Indigo was suitable for the adornment of *Segi* (blue pipe beads), *Iyun* (Corals), *Okun* (stone beads), *Erinla* (striped yellow pipe beads), all of which were pre-dominantly of the court of ''Onisile who aided the course of the manufacturing of the objects rightly from within his court''. [33] *Segi*, *Iyun* and *Erinla* were in hot demand in Nupeland because the objects were in vogue for the court regalia and even among the dignitaries of the land. It is noteworthy to mention that the objects are still in use among some Nupe, even in the twenty-first century. Economic exchange of values took place between the kings of Nupe and Alaafin.

As a matter of fact, blacksmithing was a crucial occupation in the Nupe and Oyo kingdoms. Iron ore deposit was present both in some parts of Nupe and Oyo territories, but the technological knowhow varied among the smiths. Iron deposit centres in the Nupeland include Gbara, Jinea, and Bida. This was noticed

by Clapperton, during his exploration to the Nupeland. The raw-iron won from the ore and the tool made from the iron were certainly important in both local and foreign trade, including Yoruba country. Nupe smiths flourished as far as Yawri, and along the road leading to Oyo-Ile.

Political and economic factors propelled the presence of Laderin (the great grand-father of Afonja) in the Ekun-osi of Oyo kingdom. Indeed, he was appointed to mitigate the incessant Nupe slave raiding against the Igbomina. His area of jurisdiction covered the whole of present day Ilorin to the base of the River Niger at Jebba. During Laderin's period, Ilorin was prominently known as *Bode* (boader/gate-way) through which slaves were transacted.[34] Laderin was then referred to as the lord of Oyun.[35] The possession of Oyun by Afonja is reflected in the *Oriki* (cognomen) of Afonja, that his eponymous ancestor scolded his purchased slave, Oyun, which ''turned to water ( River 'Oyun') in annoyance''.[36] Part of the *Oriki* goes thus:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *...gbajata* | *won* | *lo* | *ree ra* | *Oyun....* | |
| | sold a dog | they | went | to buy | Oyun | |
| | *...Oro ni* | *Baba won* | *sofun* | *Oyun* | *nijosi* | |
| {Gloss} | statement is | father their | foretold | Oyun | then | |
| | *Ohun* | *naa* | *loyun* | *ba* | *subulule* | |
| | On | it | 'Oyun | soon | fell to the ground | |
| | *Losi d'* | *'mi*(omi) | and she | turned | water (River)[37] | |

The above cognomen is translated thus: ...they sold a dog and went to buy Oyun.... It was a statement that their father foretold Oyun in those days. By the statement Oyun fell on the ground and turned into water (River).... Oyun in Kwara State is a name of a tributary river that linked the East/West of the State with River Niger. It is a name of a Local Government Area in Kwara State.

## Change and Continuity in Nupe-Oyo Relations: Alaafin Abiodun to Alaafin Oluewu and Emergence of Ilorin

Agunpopo, the first son of Alaafin Abiodun was a trader dealing in potash, within Oyo and across its boundaries. He was said to have had great influence among the traders from Nupeland. The chronological list of kings was adopted to

account for the earliest relations between the Nupe and Oyo. However, at the inception of Alaafin Abiodun, a remarkable change had occurred between the relations of Oyo and Nupe. The occurrence of events were rather documented in synchronization, although this had never relegated the proficiency of oral traditions as far as the history of the Nupe, Ilorin and Oyo relations is concerned. Unlike the courts of Songhai, Kanem and Kano, the presence of the Arabic writers and philosophers was not recorded in Alaafin's court. Meanwhile, the court of Nupe had sniffed the presence of Islam right from the reign of Etsu Mammon Wari, the fifth Etsu to Tsoede. This scenario also provides the writer an impetus of marking historical events (concerning Nupe-Ilorin and Oyo relations) with actual dates. The Europeans occupied Lagos in 1860 yet the herald of their presence in the inland of the Yorubaland had been greatly felt during the reign of Alaafin Aole.

However, the usurpation and draconian acts of Bashorun Gaa had conspicuously ignited the burning embers of the provinces, villages, and towns of Oyo into emancipation for liberty. The end of Alaafin Abiodun's reign marked an important epoch in Yoruba history. With the death of Abiodun ended the universal and despotic rule of the Alaafin of Oyo in the Yoruba country. He was the last of the kings that held the different parts of the kingdom together in one universal sway and with him ended the tranquility and prosperity of the Yoruba country[38]. It is obvious that Alaafin Abiodun embraced diplomacy and alliances of all the towns and villages of Oyo to crush the Bashorun and his allies. Thus, before the attack of Ilorin, several towns and villages of Oyo had begun to dispute the authority of Oyo. This ended in revolutionary wars that devastated the whole of Yorubaland, ending in the Fulani usurpation and tribal independence. Just as in many Yoruba towns, Afonja's influence had been noticed in Ilorin.

In addition, the miserable death of Alaafin Aole called for a sheer political revolution in Oyo Empire. His death was predicated on the conspiracy among Bashorun Asamu and Owota, an old *Ilari*, against Afonja and Chief Opele of Gbogun.[39] After the death of Aole and ascendancy of Alaafin Adebo, Afonja from Ilorin and the Baale of Gbogun, Opele were the first to proclaim the independence of their states, and the others joined the race of rebellion. They no longer paid tribute to the authority. The *Ilaris* and other messengers of the

Alaafin were no longer upholding civil responsibility and loyalty to the kingdom; they in turn lost their prerogative among the citizenries. Practically, indeed, while Afonja declared the sovereignty of Ilorin, Chief Opele of Gbogun did not hesitate to announce the independence of Idofian and Igbo-Owu (both now Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State) under his jurisdiction. Envisaging future attack from the capital, Afonja decided to groom alliance by inviting Alimi and Solagberu from Kuwo, a place now in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State.

In retrospect, the hereditary succession of residential administration of Ilorin (from Laderin) was not really sustained by Afonja. Also significant to mention here is the beginning of migration of Oyo dignitaries and icons (who have royal ties with the Alaafin of Oyo) into Ilorin. For instance, "Muhammadu Yahaya, the progenitor of the Oju-Ekun family in Ilorin, whose mother was the daughter of Alaafin Abiodun, was the son of Kanuri emigrant from Oyo. He joined Shehu Alimi at Kuwo and was later made the Mogaji Oju-Ekun of Ilorin.[40]" Of course, the epoch was a new dawn of the emergence of Ilorin as a convergence station of heterogeneity that aided Fulani's onslaught against Oyo and the establishment of Fulani hegemony in Ilorin. However, just like Almami of Mandinka Empire of Futa Djalon, it should be reiterated that Alimi's tour across Oyo territory endeared him opportunity to spy strategic affair of Oyo before finally arrived Ilorin.

**Conclusion**

As a result of declining process of Oyo, several dignitaries (with their followers) had decided to migrate to Ilorin. Those who choose to live in Ilorin main land include the Jakota family of Ile Ijesha, Habib's father, the ancestor of Sheik Adam Abdullahi (al-Ilori), the ancestor of Abdullahi Kijan of Oke-Apomu and several others. Some of those who stayed at the outskirt included the ancestor of Olohunoyin family who remained at Ogbodoroko, the ancestor of Atotilato family who stayed at Agbaku, and the Oloje family who maintained their stand at Ogidi, to mention but a few. It is imperative to understand, that, those families that stayed at the outskirt of Ilorin later trooped into Ilorin at the evolution of the Ilorin Emirate government. Those that settled in the metropolis and those that latter joined them, eventually expressed their loyalties to Alimi and his successors.

With other ethnic groups from different part of Niger Area, they make up a cosmopolitan state of Ilorin, among who are the Ilorin of the Nupe origin. In entirety, Ilorin as a heterogeneous state maintains a continual relations with the present Nupe people.

## Notes And References

1. Aboyeji, J.A. "Foreign Influence on Igbomina C, 1750-1900" Ph.D. Thesis submitted to The Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. p.100.
2. The Yoruba Oral Tradition preserves the cognomen (*Oriki*) of Oranmiyan till date. See Yoruba Oral Tradition on *Oriki* Oranmiyan.
3. Johnson, S., The History of the Yoruba from the Earliest Time to the Beginning of the British Protectorate, C.S.S. Book Shops, Lagos, Nigeria, 1921, p.227.
4. *Ibid*. p.174.
5. Ibid. p. 68.
6. Ibid. p. 158.
7. *Ibid*. pp 12-13.
8. Ibid. p. 158.
9. Note: The Eleduwe's army comprised the majority of Nupes who barged in for economic and political gains. See Nadel. S.F., **A Black Byzantium**, The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria, University Press, Oxford, Great Britain, 1942, p.20
10. Note: The Oyo refugees were first received with open arms by the king Eleduwe and his Balogun Bokoyo because Ofinran's mother was a Baruba woman.
11. See Johnson, S., The History of the Yoruba.... on the story of king Ajiboyede, one of the Yoruba kings at Igboho, p.162.
12. Note: Elewi Odo, the king of Popo came to celebrate Bebe (festival jubilee) with his bosom friend, Alaafin Agboluaje. In ceremonial contestation with the Alaafin, he displayed varieties of attires, which later instigated the annoyance of the Bashorun Gaa. See Johnson pp. 179-80.
13. *Ibid*. 187. Note: up till 1900 Popo and Dahomey were Yoruba provinces.
14. *Ibid* pp.159-161.
15. *Ibid* p. 32.
16. *Ibid*. p. 164. Note: Baba-kewu means the man of Quranic and Islamic knowledge, while Baba-Yigi literarily connotes the man giving to

solemnization. Each of the subjects was performing the socio-cultural function that was synonymous with his name.

17. Johnson, p. 227.
18. See Muhammed Kwaire, A History of Tuareg Migration From Niger Republic to Sokoto Metropolies:1900-1986, Ibadan University Press Publishing House, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, 2014, pp. 25-27.
19. *Ibid.* p.26.
20. Nadel, A Black Byzantium, pp. 235-6.
21. It is common among the Yoruba Traditional Folklores.
22. Baikie, "Notes of a Journey from Bida in Nupe to Kano in Hausaland, "In Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, (1967) pp. 950-97. Vol. no.
23. See Johnson, on story of Alaafin Ajuan (Ajaka), pp. 152-4. Note: Sango was socially and spiritually addicted to bitter cola. He detested the consumption of kola nut of any kind. Look for Oriki Sango.
24. Nadel, S.F. "**A Black Byzantium** The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria" in Michael, M. *The Foundation of Bida Kingdom*, Ahmadu Bello University Press, Zaria, Nigeria, 1981. p.15.
25. FO 2/3. Baikie to Melmesbury, 7th January, 1859. p.16
26. Nadel, S.F., **A Black Byzantium**, The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria, University Press Oxford, London, Great Britain, 1942, p. 143.

*Oral interview with Alhaji Ola Alakuko, A scholar, Age 85, Oke-Apomu, Ilorin, Feb. 2005.

27. Banwo, A.O., The Colonial State and Ilorin Emirate Economy 1900-1960, PhD Thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Nov. 1998, p.46. Also see Ann O'Hear, The Emirate History of Ilorin in the 20th Century: The Rise and Decline of Middle-men Society, Ph.D Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1983,
28. NAK, Filles on Ilorin Province(NAK/ILORIN PROF) SNP10/208P/1918-Ilorin Province Afon District- Reassessment Report by Mr. Benton, P,G.
29. Banwo, A.O., The Colonial State,... p.45.
30. Ann O'Hear, "The Emirate History of Ilorin in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.

31. The Rise and Decline of a Middlemen Society", Ph.D. Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Centre of West Africa Studies, University of Birmingham, November, 1983. p.110.
32. Banwo, A.O, The Colonial State… p.46.
33. See Johnson on the Scientific Endowment of Alaafin Onisile, p. 176.
34. Interview with Suaib Aremu, Magagi Aare of Ilorin, Age:78 years, 21/6/17.
35. Interview with Muhammed Alabi Sule, Rtd. Immigration Officer, Age:56, 21/6/17.
36. Oyun is a tribute River that linked River Niger from the eastern part of Kwara State.However, after her falling down, Oyun's turning into 'water' could be plausible, perhaps she had angrily jumped into the river and got drown.
37. The cognomen (*Oriki*) of Afonja is inherent in traditional history of Ilorin. Consult Ilorin Oral Tradition on *Oriki* of Afonja.
38. Jimoh L.A.K. Ilorin The Journey So Far,… p.30. Also see Johnson, the History of sba… p.187.
39. Jimoh, Ilorin The Journey So Far,… p. 51.