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## FOREWORD

The Interim Common Services Agency (ICSA) of the then Six Northern States established Arewa House in 1970 as a Centre for Historical Documentation and Research. When the Federal Government took over Ahmadu Bello University in 1975, Arewa House became one of the Research Centers of the University. Though at its inception the main focus of its activities are on issues affecting the peoples of the Northern Nigeria, yet its research and other academic activities are dynamic in scope; covering Nigeria, Africa and the world. Arewa House is located in the residential quarters and office complex of the late Premier and distinguished leader of the then Northern Nigeria, Alhaji (Sir) Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto. Consisting of Archives, Library and a Museum Complex, it also provides other support services. Similarly, put in place conducive environment for research and intellectual activities.

Our decision to commence a journal and to name it Arewa House Journal AHJ is to further provide an opportunity for the Publication of broad-based research in the discipline of History, meant to encourage research development. It is founded on two key tenets: firstly, to publish the most exciting researches with respect to the subject matter of History and secondly, to provide opportunity for reviewing and publishing, and disseminating good articles in the Humanities for teaching and research. Our vision is to disseminate knowledge; provide a learned reference materials in the field of historical research and writing; and establish channels of communication between academic and research experts in the humanities and policy makers.



AHJ for now is planned to appear every year in December. It calls for and accepts well-researched articles, book reviews, review articles and scholarly opinions from scholars and researchers, on wide range of topics in History and other related disciplines in the Humanities dealing with issues that augment knowledge and ideas and whose lessons would provide the path towards historical knowledge for a meaningful development in Nigeria, Africa and the world.

While being a peer reviewed, AHJ is also fully refereed that seeks to promote deeper understanding of issues in Nigeria, Africa and the world through scholarly researches and exchange of knowledge with utilitarian value. Its editorial policy is neither committed to any constricted ideological prism nor opposes any viewpoint and approach to discourses. Instead, it recognizes and appreciates that a wide range of multi-disciplinary approaches are fundamental in understanding those wide ranges of issues surrounding the respective disciplines of History in particular and the Humanities in general. It equally accepts as legitimate, opposing viewpoints and ideologies, which have shaped and are still shaping the understanding/misunderstanding of historical discourse. AHJ not only documents the research efforts of individuals but equally thrives to making knowledge universal through the cross-pollination of ideas for development and human progress.

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Editor-in-chief

Arewa House Journal

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Abubakar Ibrahim Zaria**, a Lecturer with the department of Philosophy, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Has published many articles in journal and attended many international conferences.

**Aboyeji, Adeniyi Justus**, teaches history at the University of Ilorin. His areas of specialization cut across economic, diplomatic and military histories. He has, to his credit, a number of scholarly articles, which have appeared in national and international publications.

**Ahmad Ibrahim**, is a lecturer with the department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

**Alabi Oladimeji Mohammed**, is a Lecturer, Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin.

**Agunbiade Nurudeen**, is a Lecturer with the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin.

**Asma'u Ahmad Giade**, a lecturer with the Department of Archeology, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. She has published many articles in journals.

**Hafsat Lawal Kontagora**, Principal Lecturer in Kaduna Polytechnic, department of social development and currently a Director at the National Teachers Institute, Kaduna. She has published many articles in reputable journals.

**Ibrahim Maccido Muhammad**, a Senior lecturer with the department of Arabic, Kaduna State University, Kaduna. He was a former Grand Qadi of Kaduna State. He has published a number of articles in reputable journals.

**Kabiru Yahaya**, a lecturer with Kaduna Polytechnic and has many articles to his credit.

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## BRITISH ADULTERATION OF TRADITIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW OF ILORIN EMIRATE

By

OMOIYA, S.Y, OLAITAN, B.O, ONAGUN, R. ALABI, O.M,  
and AGUNBIADÉ, N.

### **Abstract**

*The abolition of Slave Trade and the adoption of legitimate trade which mobilized explorers from different parts of Europe to Africa provided a new phase of African history. Apart from the scramble by the Europeans to establish areas of influence and control that would have resulted to conflict which was averted by the 1884/1885 Berlin Conference and Charter, the eventual process by which different European authorities' interests were effected, generated diverse interpretations of African Scholars to provide explanations for the current situation and on different aspects. In a number of places, the establishments of British Colonial rule were certainly not mutual. Hence, the use of the West Africa Frontier Force (WAFF) to complement other diplomatic efforts to tinker with the indigenous political system to accommodate the colonial interest. History, being the veritable source of validating Traditional African Political institutions and its dynamics has been embrowned in challenges propelled by varying interests of scholars of African history. The diverse opinion of scholars on Emirate history and specifically the history of Ilorin Emirate falls into this category. An overview of Ilorin Emirate history through the periscope of British interest and influence will go a long way to further illuminate the gray areas of the Emirate's past, for better understanding of the present traditional political structure.*

### **The conquest of Ilorin by British Forces and its direct impact on colonial rule**

The formal British conquest of Ilorin 1897 consequent on the efforts of Governor Carter of Lagos to make Ilorin peaceful passage for British merchants which generated series of



correspondence between Governor Carter and the Colonial office in London on one hand and Tubman Goldie, Head of the Royal Niger Company on the other, culminated into the Colonial office order for the military attack and eventual defeat of Ilorin indigenous army.

The high rate of casualty suffered by the indigenous army of Ilorin in the hands of the British led West African Frontiers Force, made the Emir and the Balogun ran for their lives. They were eventually sought for and made to sign peace treaty with the European Commanders. (Obaro Ikime 1977) The experience must have been a good lesson to appreciate and respect the superiority of the British led Forces.

The appointment and posting of the first British Colonial Resident, David Carnegie to Ilorin in June, 1900 opened a new phase of intra and inter-ethnic conflict through power play between the indigenous chieftaincy institutions. For instance, the *Balogun Agba*, fully supported by the other *Balogun* jointly expressed their resentments against the arrival of David Carnegie as the British Resident in the area because they saw it purely as a foreign domination and an erosion of their power and influence. On the other hand, the *Emir* was warm towards him (the Resident) (Omoiya S.Y. 1988). Certainly, because he neither had any political power nor influence to lose.

These contrasting postures of the *Balogun* and the peoples of Ilorin on one hand and that of the *Emir* on the other, provided good opportunities for the Colonial Resident to exploit the power play between the indigenous ruling classes to fashion out the approach to be adopted to make easy, the establishment of colonial rule in the area. David Carnegie observed that the *Emir* was powerless and that the actual rulers in Ilorin Emirate were the *Balogun* and the other Chiefs. They were said to enjoy the good following of the people (NAK/SNP/15/11 Carnegie to H.E July 1900).

The Colonial Resident took this advantage of the differences between the Ilorin traditional ruling class to impress on the Colonial High Commissioner, Lord Lugard, to forcefully back the weak, that is, supporting the *Emir* against the powerful chiefs in Ilorin represented by the *Balogun*. NAK/SNP/15/11 Carnegie to H.E July 1900. It was not long when David Carnegie took ill and died. He was replaced by P. Dwyer (Omoiya S.Y. 1988).

In the second Colonial Resident's report of July 1900, he confirmed the enormous powers of the *Balogun* in the administration of Ilorin Emirate. He went further to say that to his personal knowledge *Balogun* Inakoju Ali of Alanamu was the actual ruler in Ilorin within the immediate past six years (NAK/SNP/15/11/Dwyer to H/E August, 1900). He then suggested that the only way by which the colonial administration could be established in Ilorin *Emirate* without much cost, was to depose and deport *Balogun* Alanamu who was identified to be leading the other *Balogun* and the people of Ilorin against the establishment of British rule in the area (NAK/SNP/15/11/Dwyer to H/E August, 1900). Dwyer also confirmed the mere status of the *Emir* in the administration of the *Emirate*. He opined that the deposition and deportation of *Balogun* Inakoju Ali of Alanamu would be a lesson to the other *Balogun* to stop their resistance against the establishment of colonial rule (NAK/SNP/15/11/Dwyer to H/E August, 1900).

In the reply to P. Dwyer, the High Commissioner agreed with all the suggestions made by the Resident but advised that he should tarry in the move against *Balogun* Alanamu, until the arrival of the forces from Asante, before he swung into action. Lugard also advised Dwyer to constantly monitor the movement of *Balogun* Alanamu, to be able to charge him for an offence and then provide rational grounds for his deposition and deportation (NAK/SNP/15/11 H/E to Dwyer September, 1900).

The *Emir*, perceiving the British intention to contest the powers of the *Balogun*, continued to demonstrate loyalty to the British. This

support was demonstrated in Bida incident of 1900. In August of that year when Bida was hard pressed by the imperial forces, she sent to Ilorin for military assistance (Obaro Ikime 1977 P. 129). While the *Balogun* and the people of Ilorin were ready to offer the assistance, the *Emir* reported the incident to the colonial Resident Obaro Ikime 1977 P. 129. The *Emir* feared that if the resistance of the people of Bida was successful, they might equally grant assistance to the *Balogun* and the people of Ilorin to drive the British away. Consequently, his treachery will become a case against him (Alh. Saliu Dauda. Oral evidence).

Another chance that showed the pro-British stance of the *Emir* came from an incident that involved the Caliph in Sokoto. This time, he received a letter from the Caliph in Sokoto, Attairu first, to cause a disturbance in Ilorin so as to divert the attention of the British army from attacking Sokoto at the time (Alh. Saliu Dauda. Oral evidence). It was likely that the Caliph decided to make the demand on the *Emir* of Ilorin to be able to have enough time to get prepared for the attack of the British. As custom demanded, the *Emir* read the Caliph's letter aloud to the people. As he did in the case of Bida, the *Emir* sent the Caliph's messenger with the letter to the British Resident in Ilorin (Alh. Saliu Dauda, Oral evidence). By this act of *Emir* Sulyman, he had given up the Caliph to the British. The *Balogun* Agba, the other *Balogun* and the people of Ilorin maintained a watchful eye on the *Emir*'s relations with the colonial Resident and they were hopeful that time will soon catch up with him (Alh. Sule Salawu, Oral evidence).

From the religious point of view, the acts of *Emir* Sulyman negate the principle and practice of the Islamic religion. Going by the tenets of the Holy Quran and the Hadith, it is an obligation for a Muslim to resist the leadership of non-Muslims, who are commonly referred to as infidels (The Holy Quran, Chapter 8, verse 65). Also, for a leader of a Muslim community, such as Ilorin, to subscribe to the ruler ship of the British who were non-Muslims is totally unIslamic (The Holy Quran, Chapter 8, verse 65).

The friendliness of *Emir* Sulyman with the Colonial Resident is an illustration of his preference for political power and influence to Islamic reformist interest given by the Jihadists. It thus opened a new phase of inter group relations that was purely motivated by political reasons. This time, between the *Emir* of Ilorin and the British on one hand, and the Ilorin Traditional Political System led by the *Balogun* on the other. The personal decision of the *Emir* to prefer relationships with British agent to his traditional administrative team, clearly illustrates the strong desire of *Emirs* in Ilorin to rule rather than to reign and serve as mere religious leadership symbol.

On the part of the *Balogun*, the experience of their encounter with the British led West African Frontier force, which brought about the conquest of Ilorin in 1897 was still very fresh in their memory. This explained why they tried to avoid any form of open confrontation with the British at the time they were in Ilorin to formally establish colonial rule.

### The Restructuring the Ilorin Power Relation.

The full demonstration of *Emir* Sulyman's support for the British colonial interests was manifested by his non-support of the *Balogun* in Ilorin against the British rule, betrayer of sister Emirates such as Bida and even the caliph in Sokoto. These behaviors of the *Emir* were certainly meant to convince the colonial administration of his unalloyed support of it. He certainly must have believed that with his loyalty to the British and the British support for him, his traditional status in the administration of Ilorin Emirate will dramatically change from a titular head to a full *Emir* with authority.

On the part of the British, they have also come to terms with the reality that except they forcefully back the *Emir* against the *Balogun*, the penetration and establishment of colonial rule in Ilorin would be impossible. Thus, there began the scheme to arrange an arrest of the leader of the opposition to their rule, strip him of his traditional title and deport him out of



Ilorin(NAK/SNP/15/11 P. Dwyer to H. C. August 1900). The Colonial government believed its action will not only remove the opposition but that it will also deter other people from opposing its rule (NAK/SNP/15/11 Lugard to Dwyer, September, 1900).

By 1902 the stage was set, and *Balogun Inakoju Ali*, the *Balogun Agba* (Alanamu) became the first victim of the colonial government's schemes to subjugate and subordinate the *Baloguns* who were the actual rulers in Ilorin Emirate.

As S. Hogben puts it;

... *The Emir, finding himself backed up by the Resident, broke away from the constraining hands of Alanamu and other chiefs and commenced to act up to his position in a way which showed that he realized how tide had changed. No longer was he figure head shaking in shoes with dread of a sudden death, but an Emir, supported by the Government, who insisted on the payment of tributes* (Hogben S. J. 1966 pp.161 – 163).

Hogben goes further to narrate how the *Balogun Agba*, *Balogun Inakoju Ali* of Alanamu was napped by traps set by the Colonial government (Hogben S. J. 1966 pp.161 – 163). The *Balogun* was immediately arrested and deported to Jebba, where a contingent of the colonial army was already waiting in preparation for any eventuality that could attend the deposition order (Hogben S. J. 1966 pp.161 – 163).

The large group of people who moved from Ilorin to Jebba to see the *Balogun* and demonstrate their support for his cause made the colonial government appreciate the fact that it was not an issue they could control with mere presence of the army, without resorting to violence. To avoid unnecessary bloodletting, *Balogun Inakoju Ali* was thus moved from Jebba to Lokoja (Omoiya S. Y. 1986) a more distant place from Ilorin. It must be appreciated that the *Emir* represented the minority group, while the *Baloguns*, especially Alanamu and the others represented the majority. The large number of people from different ethnic groups in Ilorin who went to Jebba despite the heavy presence of the colonial army to forestall any form of violence that could accompany the deposition

of *Balogun Alanamu*, confirmed the popularity of the *Balogun*.

Apart from the people's demonstration of support for *Balogun Inakoju Ali*, the actions of the other *Balogun* and the people totally betrayed the postulations of both the colonial Resident in Ilorin, P. Dwyer and Lord Lugard that the removal of *Balogun Inakoju Ali* of Alanamu would prevent others from fomenting any further trouble. The other *Baloguns* instructed their people to ignore both the Colonial Resident and the Emir by not cooperating with the colonial instructions passed through the Emir (Omoiya S. Y. 1986). The failure of colonial administration to realize the anticipated peace by the dethronement of *Balogun Inakoju Ali*, the *Balogun Agba* in Ilorin made them to look inward for the solution to the problems. The colonial administration therefore had to moderate its intention to forcefully subjugate the *Balogun* to the control of the Emir. The British realized that the *Baloguns* too must be carried along, if only the British intended to succeed in their control of Ilorin. It was for this purpose that the government decided to award some of the *Balogun*, Second Class II chieftaincy status, while the Emir was awarded first class status (NAK/ILO/PROF/1/1 Report No 6 January 1903). Even with the recognition accorded the *Balogun* by the British which was in contrast to their original plan to forcefully impose the *Emir* on them as a sole administrator, frictions between the *Balogun* and the *Emir* on the operation or implementation of colonial policies in Ilorin continued to generate crisis between them and their followers. The reaction of the other *Balogun* and in fact, that of the majority of the people of Ilorin, was premised on the fact that the colonial administration had decided to confer on the *Emir* the status of a sole authority in Ilorin, in which all the other political institutions in the Emirate would be responsible to him. This was done by referring all matters relating to the Emirate only to the *Emir* and the position taken by the *Emir* on them was supported by the colonial administration. Added to this was the fact that all instructions by the colonial administration were only passed through the *Emir*. This policy of the colonial administration negates the traditional structure in Ilorin Emirate whereby

collective leadership rather than sole authority was the system that had sustained Ilorin Emirate as an entity. Through the natural process of political development and changes in Ilorin Emirate, the *Emir* only reigned, while the *Balogun* ruled (NAK/SNP/5173/1907 Report on Ilorin Prof. 1906).

The efforts of the colonial administration to forcefully impose the *Emir* as a sole authority, naturally generated protracted reactions such as the uncooperative attitudes of the *Baloguns* and people of Ilorin against the British. This situation explains why the colonial administration continued to change its policy of administration in Ilorin until the other traditional political institutions in the Emirate were effectively integrated into its colonial system.

By 1908 the colonial government had concluded its plans to reorganize the territories under Ilorin Emirate. The territories were grouped into eighteen (18) units called districts. The Districts were *Akanbi, Afon, Owode, Ajasse, Igbaja, Offa, Otun, Omu, Osi, Shonga, Share, Iponrin, Lanwa, Ejidongari, Oloru, Paiye, Malete* and *Onire* (Elphinstone, K. V. Vol. III pg.9)

The restructuring of Ilorin Emirate was designed to make the *Emir* the most influential and powerful in the Emirate. Perhaps because the *Emir* was not consulted before the Colonial government made the new structural arrangement public, the *Emir*, for the first time in the history of colonial administration in Ilorin, openly expressed resentment against the colonial policy. The *Emir* also expressed fears that some of his own appointees, as *Daudu*, would also lose their position (Elphinstone, K. V. Vol. III pg.9). It actually took the colonial administration some time to convince the *Emir* that the administrative reforms were to his advantage. With the reorganization, the powers and influence of the *Balogun* were further eroded. The new arrangement was considered by the *Balogun* as another negative policy of the colonial government aimed at reducing their powers and influence, and in fact meant to subject them to the control of the *Emir*. Even with this knowledge, the *Balogun* could not readily organize any resistance against the

British authority at this time. The manner in which two of them were humiliated was still very much fresh in their memories.

However by coincidence, some of the places grouped into districts still fell within the influence of the respective *Balogun*. Some of their original appointees were retained as District Heads of some of the newly created districts. However, the appointed district heads were quickly made to know that they were not officers of the colonial government but subjects of the *Emir* and on no account should any of them relate directly with the Colonial Resident (Elphinstone, K. V. Vol. III. Pp.9-18). They were made to know that they were totally responsible to the *Emir* either by appointment or by operation and no more to the *Balogun*.

The administrative restructuring created new power relations among and between the political office holders. Both the *Emir* and the *Balogun* appreciated the enormous benefits they derived from the administration of the fiefs. Apart from the fact that fiefs served as the main source of their personal economic wealth, it was also a good source of their influence and powers. The adjustments, both human and structural that followed the creation of the Districts, naturally opened a new phase of inter group relations in Ilorin Emirate. While some of the old fief heads were lucky to be among the newly appointed District Heads, some others were not so lucky. The boundary adjustment of the old fief structure to that of the new District was also important. Places that had not been under a single authority were brought together under a District Head. Coincidentally, some of the fief appointees of the respective *Balogun* were either retained or appointed among the new District Heads.

The *Balogun* had to console themselves with the fact that some of their original appointees were still retained as District Heads. They were however also fully aware of the fact that their traditional control and influence in the newly created districts were no more. Certainly, because the *Emir* himself was not involved in the formulation of the colonial policy, that created the districts, he could not readily appreciate the enormity of the powers given him

by the colonial government. He maintained a measure of the traditional process of administration by relating with some of the newly appointed district heads through their original benefactors, the *Balogun*, and he requested the *Balogun* to appoint successors into any vacant stool of a District Head.

### **The accommodation of diverse interest groups in the Emirate**

The limited achievement recorded by the colonial administration to ensure peaceful acceptance of its rule through the use of force, made the colonial administration to continuously change its policy until, it recognized the indigenous ethnic balancing in the administrative structure of the Emirate. The implementation of the recommendations of the Palmer's Commission of Enquiry of 1913, wherein, more Yoruba were brought into the Emirate council, with the inclusion of *Aare* and the *Baba Isale*, both of whom were from *Aare Afonja's* family, actually provided the atmosphere for the colonial administration to record peace in Ilorin.

The establishment of British colonial rule in Ilorin can therefore be said to have generated two contradictory historical issues. The first was the disunity in the relations between the indigenous political ruling class, which the British exploited to their advantage and the second was the recognition by the British, of the need for ethnic balancing in administering Ilorin.

### **Conclusion**

The experiences derived from British Colonial rule in Ilorin can be summarized as creating the atmosphere for another phase of power struggle between the indigenous ruling classes, justify the importance of ethnic balancing in heterogeneous community as Ilorin and illustrate the limited achievements that can be made with the use of force.

The restructuring of the political powers and functions of the indigenous institutions to accommodate British has remained the source of problems between the Chieftaincy institutions in Ilorin. Even though the treachery of Emir Sulyman both to the members

of his emirate council, to Bida and the Caliph at Sokoto, did not catch up with him in his life time, his lineage has not been Emir in Ilorin since his demise in 1915. Added to this, is the currency of the need for the indigenous political institutions to seek relevance from ruling state or National government to survive and sometimes against one another. That the Traditional Political Institutions now operates in advisory capacity and they draw their respect and influence from the role their progenitors had played, critical historical appraisal is still required to place the indigenous political Institutions in Ilorin Emirate.



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