



Research Article

The British Colonial Rule and The Traditional Administration of Ogbomoso Between 1893 -1960

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of British colonial rule on the traditional administration of Ogbomoso between 1893 and 1960. Before colonial intervention, Ogbomoso operated under a well-established indigenous political system headed by the Baale (later Soun), supported by traditional chiefs and community institutions that regulated political, judicial, and administrative affairs. The introduction of British colonial rule brought significant transformations through the implementation of indirect rule, native authority structures, and colonial administrative policies. These reforms altered existing power relations, redefined the authority of traditional rulers, and introduced new mechanisms of governance that gradually integrated Ogbomoso into the wider colonial administrative framework of Nigeria.

The study utilizes both primary and secondary sources, including archival documents, government records, books, and scholarly journal articles, to investigate the nature of colonial administration and its effects on local governance. Findings reveal that colonial policies strengthened the authority of the Baale in some respects while simultaneously subjecting traditional institutions to colonial supervision and control. The research further demonstrates that the emergence of educated elites, progressive unions, and political associations contributed to the democratization of local administration and challenged the concentration of power within traditional structures. The study concludes that British colonial rule profoundly reshaped Ogbomoso's traditional administration, leaving enduring political and administrative legacies that continued to influence local governance beyond Nigeria's independence in 1960. The paper contributes to a broader understanding of the interaction between colonial governance and indigenous political institutions in southwestern Nigeria.

Keywords: British colonial rule, traditional administration, indirect rule, local governance, Ogbomoso, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

The British colonial era in Nigeria spanning from the 1890s to 1960 had a profound impact on the indigenous administration of Ogbomoso, a city in southwestern Nigeria. The imposition of British colonial rule brought significant changes to the traditional systems of governance in Ogbomoso, shaping the political, social, and economic landscape of the city. In 1900, the Royal Niger Company's Charter was revoked and British forces under Frederick Lugard began to conquer the north, taking Sokoto in 1903. By 1905, Britain controlled Nigeria, which was divided into the Colony (i.e., Lagos) and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. In 1914, the two

regions were amalgamated and the Colony and Protectorate was established.

The administration of Nigeria was based on a system devised by Lord Lugard called "Indirect Rule." Under this system, Britain ruled through existing traditional political institutions rather than establishing a wholly new administrative network. In some areas (especially the southeast), new African officials (resembling the traditional rulers in other parts of the country) were set up; in most cases, they were not accepted by the majority of the people and were able to rule only because British power stood behind them. All important decisions were made by the British governor, and the African rulers, partly by being associated with the colonialists, soon lost

most of their traditional authority (Crowder, 1968; Afigbo, 1972).

The imposition of colonial rule at the end of the 19th century marks an important turning point in Yoruba history; it was only the culmination of a century of warfare and fifty years of direct European involvement in the interior. Ogbomoso was not left out in the process of British imperialism of Yorubaland and Nigeria in general. Ogbomoso, one of the major cities in Nigeria that also experienced British colonial rule, is located in the northern side of the present Oyo State of Yorubaland in Southwestern Nigeria. The city was founded in the mid-16th century; Ogbomoso people predominantly belong to the Yoruba ethnic group. In 1991, the population was estimated to be approximately six hundred and forty-five thousand (645,000). By 2006, the population had climbed to more than one million people (National Population Commission, 2006). Farming, agriculture, and general commerce form the backbone of the economy; agricultural products include yams, cashew, cassava, maize, and tobacco remain notable in the region.

The place known today as Ogbomoso is situated almost midway between Orile-Igbon and Iresa, Oyo and Ilorin in the northern part of Yorubaland. It was surrounded by four kings of remote antiquity: Aresa of Iresa to the east, Onikoyi of Ikoyi-Ile to the west, Olugbon of Orile-Igbon to the north, and Timi of Ede to the south (Oyerinde, 1934; Johnson, 1921). An historical analysis of the traditions of Ogbomoso suggests that the town began as a military post established sometime early in the 16th century by the Olugbon, a traditional high-ranking Oba in the Old Oyo Empire, possibly upon the orders of Alaafin in Oyo-Ile. The town was located on the southern fringes of the central province of the empire but within the territories of the Olugbon. Also, because of its frontier location, the site of the town had attracted four settlers who settled in the region (Agiri, 1976).

There are different settlements that had been built at different points forming a nucleus before the arrival of Ogunlola, an Ibariba hunter. Ogunlola was of Ibariba descent; he came to the area now known as Ogbomoso in pursuit of his hunting profession. He settled under the Ajagbon tree, a tree at the edge of a grove, and used the branches for hanging his gears. The whole place was at this time a dense jungle. He (Ogunlola) was an expert archer and brave hunter. Later, Ogunlola and his wife Esuu built their hut by the side of the Ajagbon tree. Ogunlola noticed and detected an oozing of smoke from some nearby locations. Ogunlola then took courage and approached these places and discovered other hunters. The first one named Aale at a side now called Okelerin quarters, the second called Onsile at the site now known as Ijeru quarters, the third was Orisatolu at Isapa quarters, and the fourth was Akandie of Akandie quarters (Oyerinde, 1934; Agiri, 1976). The descendants of the first three of these hunters are still today the Aale

of Okelerin, Onpetu of Ijeru, and Bale of Isapa quarters. There is no more Baale Akandie.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The traditional administration of Ogbomoso, like many other Yoruba towns, underwent significant transformations during the British colonial period. While several studies have examined colonial administration in Yorubaland (Atanda, 1973; Ajayi & Smith, 1964; Afigbo, 1972), there is a noticeable gap in the historiography regarding the specific experiences of Ogbomoso. Most existing scholarship has focused on major colonial centers such as Ibadan, Abeokuta, and Lagos, leaving the experiences of secondary towns like Ogbomoso underexplored. This oversight is particularly significant because Ogbomoso's unique position as a frontier military settlement, its role as a refuge during the Yoruba wars, and its subsequent integration into the colonial administrative structure offer valuable insights into the dynamics of colonial governance at the local level.

Furthermore, the existing literature often presents a generalized narrative of colonial rule's impact on traditional institutions without adequately capturing the nuances of local responses, adaptations, and resistances. The case of Ogbomoso provides an opportunity to examine how specific historical factors—including pre-existing power structures, the emergence of educated elites, and the formation of progressive unions—mediated the effects of colonial policies. This study addresses this gap by providing a detailed historical analysis of the transformation of Ogbomoso's traditional administration under British colonial rule between 1893 and 1960.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the nature and structure of the pre-colonial traditional administration of Ogbomoso before British intervention.
2. To analyze the processes through which British colonial rule was established in Ogbomoso and the mechanisms of colonial administration implemented.
3. To assess the impact of British colonial policies—including indirect rule, native authority structures, and judicial reforms—on the traditional political institutions of Ogbomoso.
4. To evaluate the role of educated elites, progressive unions, and political associations in reshaping local governance during the colonial period.
5. To identify the enduring legacies of British colonial rule on the traditional administration of

Ogbomoso beyond Nigeria's independence in 1960.

1.4 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What was the structure and nature of the traditional administrative system in Ogbomoso prior to British colonial rule?
2. How did British colonial rule transform the traditional political institutions and power relations in Ogbomoso?
3. What were the mechanisms and policies through which British colonial administration was implemented in Ogbomoso?
4. How did the emergence of educated elites and progressive unions influence local governance during the colonial period?
5. What are the enduring legacies of British colonial rule on the traditional administration of Ogbomoso?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the historiography of colonial administration in Nigeria by providing a detailed case study of a secondary Yoruba town that has received limited scholarly attention. By examining the specific experiences of Ogbomoso, the study enriches our understanding of the diversity of colonial experiences across Yorubaland and Nigeria as a whole.

Second, the study offers valuable insights into the dynamics of indirect rule and native authority systems at the local level. It demonstrates how colonial policies were implemented, resisted, and adapted in specific historical contexts, providing lessons that are relevant to contemporary debates about decentralization, local governance, and traditional institutions in post-colonial Africa.

Third, the study illuminates the role of educated elites and civil society organizations—specifically progressive unions—in shaping political change during the colonial period. This contributes to a broader understanding of the relationship between colonial governance, elite formation, and the emergence of nationalist politics in Nigeria.

Fourth, the findings of this study have contemporary relevance. The legacy of colonial rule continues to shape local governance structures in Nigeria, and understanding the historical trajectory of traditional institutions in places like Ogbomoso provides important context for current policy debates about the role of traditional rulers, local government reform, and democratic governance.

Finally, the study adds to the growing body of scholarship on Yoruba history and politics, providing a

detailed analysis of a specific community's experience of colonialism that can serve as a reference point for comparative studies with other Yoruba towns and other regions of Nigeria.

1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on the period between 1893 and 1960. The year 1893 marks the beginning of formal British colonial presence in Yorubaland following the signing of treaties of protection between British officials and Yoruba rulers. The year 1960 marks Nigeria's independence from British colonial rule. The study is geographically delimited to Ogbomoso, a town in the present Oyo State of southwestern Nigeria. The study examines the political and administrative dimensions of colonial rule, focusing on how British policies transformed traditional governance structures. While economic and social aspects are mentioned where relevant, the primary focus remains on political and administrative changes.

1.7 Structure of the Paper

This paper is organized into six sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 provides a review of relevant literature and establishes the conceptual framework for the study. Section 3 outlines the methodology employed in the research. Section 4 examines the pre-colonial administration of Ogbomoso, providing essential background on the traditional political system before British intervention. Section 5 analyzes British colonial rule in Ogbomoso and its impacts on traditional administration. Section 6 concludes the study by summarizing key findings and discussing their implications for the historiography of colonial governance in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Literature Review

The study of colonial administration and its impact on indigenous political institutions in Africa has generated a substantial body of scholarship. This literature review examines key works that provide theoretical and empirical foundations for understanding the transformation of traditional administration in Ogbomoso under British colonial rule.

Colonial Administration and Indirect Rule in Nigeria

The foundational work on colonial administration in Nigeria remains Lord Lugard's (1922) *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, which articulated the principles of indirect rule. Lugard argued that British colonial administration should govern through existing indigenous institutions, preserving traditional political structures while gradually introducing Western administrative practices. This approach, he contended, would be more efficient and less disruptive than direct imposition of British institutions. However, as subsequent scholars have demonstrated, indirect rule was less about preserving tradition than about creating new

structures of authority that served colonial interests (Mamdani, 1996).

Crowder's (1968) *The Story of Nigeria* provides a comprehensive overview of Nigerian history, including detailed analysis of colonial administration. Crowder argues that indirect rule in Northern Nigeria was more successful than in the South because Northern emirates already had centralized political systems that could be adapted to colonial purposes. In the South, where political organization was more decentralized, indirect rule required the creation of new "traditional" authorities, often with limited legitimacy among local populations. This observation is relevant to Ogbomoso, which had a centralized system under the Baale but also experienced tensions between different factions and interest groups.

Afigbo's (1972) *The Warrant Chiefs* examines indirect rule in Southeastern Nigeria, where traditional political systems were highly decentralized. Afigbo demonstrates that the creation of warrant chiefs—appointed rather than hereditary rulers—led to significant political conflict and ultimately contributed to the Aba Women's Riot of 1929. While Ogbomoso's centralized system under the Baale avoided the worst excesses of warrant chief appointment, the manipulation of traditional authority for colonial purposes still generated significant tensions.

Atanda's (1973) *The New Oyo Empire* examines the transformation of the Oyo Empire under British colonial rule. Atanda demonstrates how colonial authorities manipulated traditional institutions to serve administrative purposes, often undermining the authority of traditional rulers in the process. His analysis of the relationship between the Alaafin and the British Resident provides important context for understanding similar dynamics in Ogbomoso. Atanda argues that colonial policies paradoxically strengthened the powers of some traditional rulers while subjecting them to unprecedented external control.

Local Government and Native Authority Systems

The Native Authority system, formalized in the Native Authority Ordinance of 1917, established the framework for local governance in colonial Nigeria. As Enemu (1999) notes, the Native Authorities were essentially local government structures that operated under the supervision of British district officers. The system combined traditional leadership with colonial oversight, creating hybrid institutions that served both indigenous and colonial purposes.

Ajayi (2000) discusses the theory of democratic participation in local government, arguing that local institutions provide important opportunities for political education and participation. This perspective is relevant to Ogbomoso, where the Native Authority Council and later the Progressive Union provided platforms for political engagement. Ajayi also emphasizes the efficiency theory of local government, arguing that proximity to the people enables more effective service

delivery. This was one of the rationales for the Native Authority system, though the reality often fell short of this ideal.

Bamidele (2004) identifies the key objectives of local government as decongestion, economic realism, participation, and national pride. These objectives were not always achieved in colonial Ogbomoso, where the Native Authority often prioritized the maintenance of colonial order over community development. However, the emergence of progressive unions represented local efforts to realize some of these objectives, particularly participation and development.

Awa (1991) and Wraith (1984) both emphasize the role of local government in decentralizing political power. In the colonial context, however, decentralization was often more apparent than real; British district officers retained ultimate authority, and Native Authorities operated within carefully circumscribed limits. This tension between rhetoric and reality is evident in Ogbomoso, where the Baale was formally recognized as the Native Authority but his actions were subject to colonial supervision.

Yoruba Political History and Ogbomoso

The pre-colonial political history of the Yoruba has been extensively documented in works such as Johnson's (1921) *The History of the Yorubas* and subsequent scholarly studies. Johnson provides valuable information about Ogbomoso's origins and its place within the Oyo Empire. He notes that Ogbomoso was established as a military outpost and later grew into a significant political center.

Oyerinde (1934) provides an indigenous history of Ogbomoso, written by an educated elite who later became a prominent figure in the town's politics. This source is invaluable for understanding local perspectives on the town's history and the dynamics of traditional politics. Oyerinde documents the early settlement, the establishment of the Baale's authority, and the emergence of various chieftaincy titles.

Agiri (1976) examines the traditions of origin of Ogbomoso, providing critical analysis of the chronology and the relationships between different founding groups. He demonstrates that the traditions contain both historical facts and mythical elements, requiring careful interpretation. Agiri also explores the implications of the origin traditions for contemporary political relationships in the town, particularly the status of different quarters and chieftaincy groups.

Ayandele (1966) examines the missionary impact on modern Nigeria, including the role of missionaries in Ogbomoso. The Baptist missionaries established a significant presence in Ogbomoso, creating a literate elite that later played important roles in local politics. Ayandele argues that missionary education created new sources of authority and legitimacy that challenged

traditional structures, setting the stage for the emergence of progressive unions and political associations.

Theoretical Literature on Administration and Governance

The concept of administration, as Simon (1966) defines it, involves the activities of groups cooperating to accomplish common goals. This cooperative element is evident in Ogbomoso's traditional administration, where the Baale worked with the Ilu chiefs and other office holders to govern the town. Under colonial rule, the cooperative dimension became more complex, involving relationships between traditional authorities and colonial officials.

Presithus et al. (1967) emphasize that administration is an activity concerned with the means of carrying out prescribed ends. In Ogbomoso, colonial administration introduced new ends—the maintenance of colonial order, tax collection, and the implementation of British policies—alongside traditional ends such as conflict resolution and community welfare. This created tensions and contradictions that were navigated differently by different actors.

Waldo (1969) discusses the rationality of administration, arguing that administrative systems are characterized by a significant degree of rationality. Colonial administration in Ogbomoso exhibited a form of rationality oriented toward colonial objectives, which did not always align with community interests. This created conflicts that eventually contributed to the mobilization of opposition to the Native Authority.

Akpan and Ekanem (2013) identify local government as involving the division of a country into smaller units for administrative purposes, with inhabitants participating through their elected representatives. In colonial Ogbomoso, participation was limited—representatives were appointed rather than elected until the 1950s—and ultimate authority rested with colonial officials. Nevertheless, the Native Authority system did create new channels for participation, particularly as Progressive Unions and political parties became more active.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by several concepts that require clarification. First, *traditional administration* refers to the indigenous system of governance that existed in Ogbomoso before British colonial rule and continued, in modified form, during the colonial period. This system was headed by the Baale (later Soun) and included a council of chiefs (Ilu chiefs) who advised the ruler and participated in decision-making. The traditional administration performed political, judicial, and administrative functions.

Second, *indirect rule* refers to the British colonial policy of governing through existing traditional institutions. Under this system, traditional rulers were designated as Native Authorities and given responsibility for local

administration, subject to the supervision of British district officers. While indirect rule theoretically preserved traditional institutions, it also transformed them by subjecting them to colonial control and using them to implement colonial policies.

Third, *Native Authority* was the formal designation given to traditional rulers and their councils under colonial law. The Native Authority Ordinance of 1917 established the legal framework for this system, classifying traditional rulers into different categories and specifying their powers. Native Authorities were responsible for local administration, tax collection, and judicial functions, subject to colonial supervision.

Fourth, *local governance* refers to the administration of local communities through institutions and processes that are responsive to local needs and preferences. In the colonial context, local governance was structured by the Native Authority system, though community participation was limited. The emergence of Progressive Unions and political parties represented efforts to enhance local governance by increasing community participation and accountability.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by the theoretical insights of several scholars. Mamdani's (1996) concept of "decentralized despotism" is particularly relevant. Mamdani argues that colonial rule in Africa created a bifurcated state, with civil and customary law operating in parallel. The customary law sphere was characterized by authoritarian governance, with traditional rulers exercising extensive powers over their subjects. This concept helps explain the paradoxical situation in Ogbomoso, where the Baale's powers were strengthened under colonial rule while traditional checks and balances were weakened.

Atanda's (1973) analysis of the transformation of the Oyo Empire under colonial rule provides another important theoretical contribution. Atanda demonstrates how colonial policies created a "New Oyo Empire" that was different in significant ways from its pre-colonial predecessor. Colonial rule both strengthened and weakened traditional institutions, creating hybrid forms of governance that combined indigenous and colonial elements.

Afigbo's (1972) analysis of warrant chief systems provides a cautionary perspective on the manipulation of traditional institutions. Afigbo demonstrates that the creation of new "traditional" authorities often led to political conflict and resistance, undermining the stability that indirect rule was supposed to provide. While Ogbomoso's case was less extreme than the warrant chief system, similar dynamics of manipulation and resistance are evident.

Clapham (1985) discusses the role of "gatekeeper" elites in African politics, arguing that the legacy of colonial rule created patterns of elite privilege and exclusion that

have persisted into the post-colonial period. This concept is relevant to Ogbomoso, where the educated elites who emerged during the colonial period became important political actors who challenged the monopoly of traditional authorities.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a historical research methodology, which is appropriate for examining the transformation of traditional administration in Ogbomoso over the period 1893-1960. Historical research involves the systematic collection, critical evaluation, and interpretation of evidence from the past to answer research questions and test hypotheses (Tosh, 2000). The historical approach is particularly suited to this study because it focuses on the analysis of change over time and the examination of processes and events in their specific historical contexts.

3.2 Sources of Data

Data for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources.

Primary Sources: Primary sources included archival documents held at the National Archives of Nigeria in Ibadan, particularly files related to the Ogbomoso District Native Authority, colonial correspondence, annual reports, and court records. Other primary sources included unpublished manuscripts, letters, and official correspondence from colonial officers and local officials. The personal papers of Chief N. D. Oyerinde, housed at the National Archives, provided valuable insights into local politics and the perspectives of educated elites.

Secondary Sources: Secondary sources included books, scholarly journal articles, theses, and published government reports. These sources provided background information, theoretical frameworks, and comparative perspectives that enriched the analysis. Key secondary sources included works by Johnson (1921), Crowder (1968), Atanda (1973), Ayandele (1966), and Afigbo (1972).

3.3 Historical Method

The study employed the historical method, which involves several stages. First, relevant sources were identified through archival research, bibliographic searches, and consultation with experts in Nigerian colonial history. Second, sources were critically evaluated for their authenticity, reliability, and relevance. Third, evidence was extracted from sources and organized thematically according to the research questions. Fourth, evidence was interpreted and synthesized to construct a coherent historical narrative and analysis.

This study recognizes the challenges of historical research, including the partial and potentially biased nature of available sources. Colonial archival sources, for example, present the perspectives of colonial

officials and may not adequately represent indigenous viewpoints. To address this limitation, the study pays attention to sources that present indigenous perspectives, including the writings of educated elites like Oyerinde and archival documents that record local responses to colonial policies. Multiple sources are used to triangulate evidence and provide a more complete picture of events.

3.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis involved thematic analysis of evidence extracted from primary and secondary sources. Themes were identified based on the research questions and included topics such as: the structure of pre-colonial administration, the establishment of colonial rule, the operation of the Native Authority system, the role of Progressive Unions, and the transformation of traditional institutions. Evidence was interpreted within its historical context, with attention to the specific conditions and constraints that shaped events in Ogbomoso.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

As a historical study, this research did not involve direct contact with human subjects. However, it did involve the use of archival documents and published sources, some of which contain sensitive information about individuals and communities. The study treats such information with respect, presenting it accurately within its historical context and without unnecessarily harming the reputation of individuals or communities. Sources are properly cited to acknowledge their authors and to enable verification.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, while archival sources provide valuable evidence, they are incomplete and may not fully capture all aspects of Ogbomoso's history. Some documents may have been lost or destroyed, and others may not have been preserved. Second, colonial archival sources may be biased toward colonial perspectives, potentially underrepresenting indigenous voices and experiences. Third, the study focuses primarily on political and administrative dimensions of colonial rule, with less attention to economic and social aspects. Fourth, the study is limited to the period 1893-1960 and does not explore the post-colonial period in detail. Despite these limitations, the study provides a comprehensive and analytically rich account of the transformation of traditional administration in Ogbomoso under British colonial rule.

4. Pre-Colonial Administration of Ogbomoso

4.1 Founding and Early Political Organization

The political organization of pre-colonial Ogbomoso was shaped by its origins as a frontier military settlement. As Agiri (1976) documents, Ogbomoso was established as a military outpost of the Oyo Empire, reflecting the empire's strategy of using settlements to protect its frontiers and facilitate its expansion. The town's location

on the southern fringes of the central province of the Oyo Empire, but within the territories of the Olugbon, gave it strategic importance in the empire's military and political calculations.

The founding narrative of Ogbomoso, recorded by Oyerinde (1934) and summarized by Johnson (1921), emphasizes the role of Ogunlola, an Ibariba hunter, as the primary founder. Ogunlola arrived in the area in pursuit of hunting and settled under an Ajagbon tree. He was subsequently joined by other hunters: Aale (who settled in what became Oke-Elerin quarter), Onsilé (who settled in what became Ijeru quarter), Orisatolu (who settled in what became Isapa quarter), and Akandíe (who settled in what became Akandíe quarter). These hunters, along with their followers, formed the nucleus of the settlement.

Ogunlola, the leader among the hunters, brought all four settlers under his control and established his dynasty as the ruling house in Ogbomoso. However, in the early period, he and his successors acknowledged the Olugbon as their immediate superior Oba and the Alaafin as their ultimate sovereign (Agiri, 1976; Oyerinde, 1934). This relationship with the Oyo Empire was politically significant, as it gave Ogbomoso access to the empire's military resources and legitimacy, while also subjecting it to imperial demands.

4.2 The Office of the Baale

The ruler of Ogbomoso was known as the Baale until 1952, when the title was changed to Soun. As Atanda (1973) notes, the title Baale (meaning "father of the land" or "chief of the town") was common among Oyo-Yoruba towns and designated the head of the local political community. The Baale of Ogbomoso was the supreme political authority in the town, responsible for the overall governance of the community.

The Baale's authority derived from multiple sources. First, it was based on his descent from Ogunlola, the founder, which gave him a genealogical claim to leadership. Second, it was based on his control over the town's military resources, reflecting Ogbomoso's origins as a military outpost. Third, it was based on his role in the town's ritual and religious life, as he headed the Ogboni society and other religious cults. Fourth, it was based on his relationship with the Alaafin and other external authorities, which gave him access to resources and legitimacy beyond the town.

The Baale was supported by a council of chiefs known as Ilu chiefs. These chiefs held titled positions that were originally based on military achievement, reflecting Ogbomoso's martial origins. As the town became more settled, the Ilu chiefs took on broader administrative and judicial functions. The Baale had the power to appoint and dismiss the Ilu chiefs, though he was expected to consult with other chiefs and to respect established traditions in doing so.

4.3 The Ilu Chiefs and the Policy-Making Council

The Ilu chiefs constituted the policy-making council of Ogbomoso's traditional administration. As Oyerinde (1934) documents, the chiefs held specific titles associated with particular responsibilities. For example, the Areago was a senior military chief, while the Jagun was responsible for the town's defense. The Bara and Ikolaba held important administrative positions, while the Abese was the town's chief secretary. The Otun Agoro and Are Alasa were also significant chiefs, though the latter was later disqualified from the Native Court during the colonial period.

The council of Ilu chiefs performed several important functions. First, it advised the Baale on political and administrative matters, providing counsel based on the chiefs' knowledge of tradition and their experience in governance. Second, it participated in judicial decision-making, hearing disputes and rendering judgments. Third, it served as a check on the Baale's power, ensuring that he did not act arbitrarily or violate the town's traditions. Fourth, it represented the interests of different quarters and constituencies within the town, ensuring that diverse voices were heard in decision-making.

However, the power relations between the Baale and his Ilu chiefs underwent important changes over time. In the early period after the town's founding, the Baale maintained strict overall administrative control, retaining the power to appoint and depose at will the Ilu chiefs who constituted the policy-making council (Agiri, 1976). As a reflection of its military origin, the position of the Ilu chiefs was open to all aspirants from among later arrivals in the town who demonstrated martial valor. This openness to new entrants may have limited the extent to which the chiefs could develop independent power bases.

4.4 Dynamics of Power and Succession

The relations between the Baale and his chiefs were not static but evolved in response to both internal and external factors. At least on two occasions, the wide administrative powers enjoyed by the Baale were curtailed by the Alaafin. Two Baale were removed from office by the Alaafin following allegations made by the Ilu chiefs against them that they violated some traditions of the town (Oyerinde, 1934). These instances are cherished by the Ilu chiefs as vindicating their own constitutional rights against the arbitrariness of the Baale, even at that period of the town's history.

The power relations between the Baale and his Ilu chiefs underwent important and rapid changes during the 19th century. Beginning with Toyéje (ruled between 1790-1825), who succeeded Afonja of Ilorin as the Aare Ona Kakanfo of Yorubaland, and successive Baale of Ogbomoso till 1870 acquired larger powers at the expense of other competitors within the town. To do this effectively, they had exploited the disintegration of the Old Oyo Empire following the Afonja revolt and the Fulani conquest of Ilorin, to free themselves from the

political control of the Alaafin. The Baale now became the head of all the religious cults including those of Sango and the newly introduced Ogboni, a position he used to sustain his powers (Atanda, 1973; Oyerinde, 1934).

A new element was introduced into the town's politics from the 1820s with the arrival of a large population of displaced persons and chiefs from neighboring towns and villages as a result of the wars of the period (1790s-1830s). Ogbomoso became, like Abeokuta, a place where many found refuge. However, it did not evolve a federal system of government that accommodated all interests in the town. Each Baale merely utilized the numerical strength of the refugees and their courage to reinforce the defence of the town while excluding them from the political processes for fear that they might seize power from him. In this policy, the Baale received the support of his Ilu chiefs, and the old antagonism between the competitors seemed to disappear (Agiri, 1976).

4.5 The Revolt of 1870 and Its Consequences

The rule of Ojo Aburumaku (1865-1869) marked the apogee of the Baale's arbitrariness. He had ruthlessly invoked all the latent powers vested in him to become a despot. Like Toyeye, his father, he held the office of Aare-Ona Kakanfo to establish his authority not only in the town but also his superiority over neighboring Oyo towns, while he paid the customary homage to the Alaafin. His rule had the result of uniting the Ilu chiefs, the refugee chiefs, and many of the townspeople in a common cause to rid themselves of institutionalized tyranny (Oyerinde, 1934).

While Ojo was alive, the malcontents could not effect their plans, thanks to his spy rings and the fact that he had pushed the turbulent among his soldiers and war captains out of the town to assist Ibadan in the Ijesha campaigns. But when his son, Otunla, seized the throne after him in September 1869 in direct violation of the town's traditions forbidding father-son succession, the climax was reached. Chiefs and all their supporters linked up with some Ogbomoso soldiers at Ilesa and obtained Ibadan's help to dethrone Otunla and install Gbagun, the rightful candidate (Atanda, 1973; Agiri, 1976).

The revolt has remained of great significance in Ogbomoso politics ever since. It entrenched the belief that the townspeople and the chiefs could remove their ruler through an open revolt. Baale Gbagun (ruled 1870-1877) became a citizen ruler and was coerced to accept certain administrative, financial, and judicial reforms that imposed some limitations upon his powers (Oyerinde, 1934). If the 1870 revolt sanctioned the constitutional rights of Ogbomoso chiefs and citizens to open rebellion against an unpopular ruler, it also subordinated the town to Ibadan. Thereafter, Ogbomoso rulers lost their rights to independent action on political and military matters among the Oyo kingdom. Baale Laoye I (ruled 1877-1901) had to accede to direct

military demands from Ibadan during the Ekiti Parapo and Kiriji Wars. His predecessor, Gbagun (ruled 1870-1877), bowed to the intervention of Aare Latoosa of Ibadan in the disagreement between Gbagun and a section of the Muslim community in Ogbomoso in 1876. Thus was forged the political links with Ibadan that later, in the 1930s and 1940s, proved irksome to Ogbomoso (Atanda, 1973).

4.6 Judicial and Financial Systems

In the pre-colonial judicial system of Ogbomoso, all disputes were settled in the compound by the head of compounds. Disputes between compounds were taken before the chiefs, and any rift between compounds was taken to the Onpetu. The system was based on customary law and operated through consensus rather than imposed judgment. Elders played a crucial role in dispute resolution, drawing on their knowledge of tradition and community norms (Oyerinde, 1934; Agiri, 1976).

The financial system was based on contributions from the community, often in the form of labor or goods rather than monetary payments. Revenues supported the Baale's household, the chiefs, and community projects such as the defense of the town. There was no formal taxation system in the modern sense; instead, resources were mobilized through customary obligations and contributions (Johnson, 1921; Atanda, 1973).

5. The British Colonial Rule in Ogbomoso and Its Impacts

5.1 Establishment of Colonial Presence

At the inception of the British colonial rule in Yorubaland in 1893, there was generally a great deal of uncertainty in the minds of many Ogbomoso people as to the real import of the new epoch. The Ekiti Parapo and Kiriji wars that involved Ibadan and her allies including Ogbomoso on the one hand and the Ijesa and Ekiti on the other, were over. Although Ilorin still remained belligerent and Ogbomoso felt relatively unsafe because of its nearness to that town, there were assurances that Ilorin forces could not for long defy the British. Still, Baale Laoye saw the British as intruders and a threat to his control of the town (Atanda, 1973; Oyerinde, 1934).

In 1893, the new British Resident in Ibadan, Captain R. L. Bower, demanded that Baale Laoye should report all important administrative and judicial matters to him (District Officer, Ibadan, 1893). This demand represented a significant shift in Ogbomoso's political status. Previously, the Baale's authority had been constrained by his relationship with Ibadan and the Alaafin, but British oversight introduced a new and more powerful external authority.

In February 1895, a detachment of soldiers under Mr. Sarbine, a British officer, was stationed in the town to check Ilorin's incursions into Ogbomoso's territories. Baale Laoye now came under the direct orders of the military officer and had to obey him on virtually all

judicial and administrative matters. A clash between the two men was inevitable, as the British had arrogated to themselves the right to interfere in the government of the town, making such requirements "as are good for the people" (Akiele, 1895). The grudges between Baale Laoye and Mr. Sarbine deteriorated to the extent that Baale Laoye refused to supply food to the troops. However, in July 1898, the acting Resident, Captain Erhardt, intervened to restore amicable relations between the two men, promising to support Laoye's rule in every legitimate way. Finally, on November 18, 1898, the troops were removed after the Royal Niger Company had conquered Bida and Ilorin. Baale Laoye was made personally responsible for the administration of the town, swearing obedience to the Resident, Captain Fuller, in Ibadan (District Officer, Ibadan, 1898; Atanda, 1973).

5.2 The Native Authority System and Local Government

The Native Councils Ordinance of 1901 formally set up the first local government structure in Yorubaland under colonial rule. The ordinance recognized the Baale and his council, made up of the Ilu chiefs, as the government of the town. As the president of the council, the Baale fixed the venue for meetings and decided on the business of the day, subject to the overriding power of the Ibadan Native Council and the Governor (Colony of Lagos Gazette, 1901). In 1907, the Ogbomoso Council was formally constituted into a Native Court but again restricted in its power by the Ibadan Judicial Council.

The Native Authority Ordinance of 1917, however, revolutionized the local government structure generally in Oyo Province. Now designated Native Authorities, rulers were classified into three categories—first, second, and third class—and each was given sole powers of administration in their towns, districts, or divisions. The Baale of Ogbomoso was a third-class ruler and became by law an autocrat in his town and district. He was subject to the Baale of Ibadan, a second-class ruler. For efficient administration, the ordinance separated judicial from administrative functions. The Baale was concerned with the overall administration, while the Ilu chiefs served as judges of the Native Court (Native Authority Ordinance, 1917; Atanda, 1973).

The establishment of the local government structure in Ogbomoso between 1901 and 1917 was, therefore, a gradual elimination from their previous positions of the Baale's competitors for power. While in 1901 the Ilu chiefs were recognized as part of the policy-making organ of government, in 1917 they were completely removed from this position. The Baale was now the sole authority who determined all policies and decided how to effect them. His traditional powers to appoint and dismiss any of his Ilu chiefs had received the official British sanction in 1917. The role of other chiefs in the town's administration was reduced to insignificance. The military chiefs had become stagnant since the end of the Yoruba wars, and there was no policy to integrate them into the administration. For some time after 1917, two of

them—the Aare Alasa and the Otun Agoro—sat on the Native Court as judges. But in 1927, they were removed by Mr. Lapage, the district officer, because they were not listed as judges in the warrant re-constituting the court in 1922 (District Officer, Ibadan, 1927).

5.3 Judicial Reforms and Administration

The judicial system under colonial rule was not in accordance with the pre-colonial judicial system. During colonial rule, the Ogbomoso Native Court was opened in 1916 as a Grade B Court, having powers on debts up to one hundred pounds (£100), power on imprisonment up to one year, or fine up to fifty pounds (£50). Members of the Ogbomoso Native Court included: Areago, Jagun, Bara, Ikolaba, Abese, Otun Agoro, and Are Alasa (who was disqualified later) (District Officer, Ibadan, 1916; National Archives of Nigeria, 1916).

The Native Court system represented a significant departure from pre-colonial practices. While traditional dispute resolution had been based on consensus and community participation, the Native Court operated with formal rules and procedures. The court had the power to impose fines and imprisonment, which had not been typical of pre-colonial justice. The court's jurisdiction was limited to certain types of cases, and its decisions were subject to appeal to higher colonial courts.

5.4 Financial Administration and Taxation

The financial system under colonial rule was based on taxation and fines levied in all administrative quarters. These revenues were used to embark on developmental projects such as roads, bridges, post offices, and educational institutions (District Officer, Ibadan, 1920; National Archives of Nigeria, 1920). The introduction of taxation represented a significant change from pre-colonial practices, where resources were mobilized through customary contributions. Colonial taxation created new relationships between the Baale, the colonial state, and the community, as taxes were collected by Native Authority officials and remitted to colonial authorities.

The tax system also created opportunities for conflict. Tax collection was often unpopular, and those who resisted were subject to fines or imprisonment. The Baale and Native Authority officials were responsible for tax collection, which put them in a difficult position—they were expected to meet colonial tax targets while maintaining their legitimacy among the community. This tension contributed to political conflicts in Ogbomoso, as the Progressive Union and other groups criticized Native Authority officials for what they perceived as oppressive tax collection (Oyerinde Papers, 1934; Atanda, 1973).

5.5 Reforms of the 1930s and the Emergence of Progressive Unions

The reforms initiated by Governor Donald Cameron (1931-1935) into the system of Native Authority had very important consequences in Ogbomoso. As in other

parts of the Oyo and Ibadan divisions, they allowed a wider base for local politics than had been the case by admitting representatives of the elite to achieve some socio-economic development for the towns and districts. The changes were made relatively easier in the Ibadan division by the personality of the new British Resident, Mr. H. L. Ward-Price, who was the complete antithesis of his predecessor, Ross. Ward-Price also encouraged the educated elite to form Progressive Unions through which public opinion was mobilized in the Ibadan division to influence the British to change their former policy of making the Alaafin Supreme in the Ibadan and Oyo divisions. Ibadan division became administratively independent of the Alaafin in 1934 (Atanda, 1973; Oyewumi, 1934).

In Ogbomoso, the changes were introduced with the appointment of Chief N. D. Oyerinde as a member of the Native Authority Council in 1931 and the revocation of the Baale's position as the sole Native Authority in 1934. He now had to rule with his Ilu chiefs. A primary objective of the reforms as they affected Ogbomoso was to allow all rival groups within the town to participate in the local administration, which the British hoped would neutralize all opposition to the Native Authority, making it an effective organ for the maintenance of law and order within its area of jurisdiction (District Officer, Ibadan, 1934; Oyerinde Papers, 1934).

Secondly, the British saw the Progressive Union as a vehicle for the expression of the political, educational, and economic needs of the different sections of the town, therefore welcomed its inauguration. Notwithstanding these hopes, there was only hesitant co-operation between the Baale and the Ogbomoso Progressive Union (OPU) from 1931 to 1935, followed by discontented acquiescence after 1935 and open confrontation from 1940 to 1951 (Oyerinde Papers, 1940; National Archives of Nigeria, 1943).

Baale Oyewumi welcomed the new reforms to the extent that did not affect his ultimate control of policy making. When his Ilu chiefs were intractable about Oyerinde's appointment to the Native Authority Council, he silenced them by making him Otun Baale (Oyerinde Papers, 1934). The OPU regarded it as its major task to help the Baale achieve an efficient and progressive administration unhindered by conservatism and prejudice. It wanted, therefore, the Baale's control of the court abolished, the integration of the other chiefs into the local government, and a reduction of the Baale's overall powers in the town. Although the Baale had an understanding of what socio-economic progress meant—he wanted schools, post offices, pipe-borne water, and good roads in the town and realized that he had to cooperate with OPU—the relationship was fraught with tensions.

5.6 The Role of Progressive Unions and Political Associations

Politically, the system of administration in Ogbomoso during British colonial rule was in conjunction with different societies formed to collaborate with different leadership. These included Egbe Ilupeju (Ilupeju Society) formed in 1939, Egbe Soun (Soun's Society) formed to popularize the Baale's enlightened activities, and Egbe Ilu (Society of the Townspeople) (Oyerinde Papers, 1940; National Archives of Nigeria, 1943). From 1944 to 1950, the Ogbomoso Progressive Union (OPU) was at the height of its popularity in the town. After the February 1942 meeting, it became the practice that representatives of all associations and societies meet to discuss town affairs. At such meetings, emphasis was placed upon the need for co-operation among all the associations and societies to achieve the town's progress. Faction opposition was then decried (Oyerinde Papers, 1942).

The emergence of the Progressive Union represented a significant shift in Ogbomoso's political landscape. Previously, political participation had been limited to the Baale and his chiefs. The Progressive Union created a platform for educated elites and other community members to participate in political discussions and to advocate for change. The Union's demands—for a more representative local government, better public services, and greater community participation—were essentially demands for the democratization of local governance (Atanda, 1973; Oyerinde Papers, 1940).

The OPU also played a significant role in shaping the political consciousness of Ogbomoso residents. Through meetings, publications, and advocacy, the Union educated community members about their rights and about political developments in the wider colonial context. The Union's links with nationalist movements in other parts of Nigeria meant that Ogbomoso residents were not isolated from the broader currents of nationalist politics.

The British welcomed the OPU's suggestion in 1934 for the creation of a Town Council and a District Council comprising sequentially all the chiefs in the town and district. But the OPU and the British had different aims. The British hoped that the new councils would stimulate self-expression among the chiefs, but more importantly, enable the Baale to control public opinion. The OPU, on the other hand, wished to unite opposition in the Town and District Councils against the Baale, to force him to cooperate with it. When the councils were created in 1935, Baale Oyewumi realized the intentions of the OPU and set out to create his own party among the chiefs. He allowed some of them to hear, privately and illegally, cases and litigations affecting people within their quarters (Oyerinde Papers, 1935; District Officer, Ibadan, 1935).

5.7 The Influence of National Politics

The national politics of the 1950s also influenced the administration in Ogbomoso towards the end of colonial rule in Nigeria. From 1952, members of the Parapo,

seeing the changes in the struggle for policy determination in the local government council, began to ask for the dissolution of the Ogbomoso District Native Authority Council and the introduction of the Western Nigeria Local Government Law of 1952 to democratize the council. In 1954, the law was applied, and the Action Group won all the contested seats, bringing a happy relation with the new Soun and the Action Group. The success of the Action Group in the 1956 and 1959 regional elections made the party become more entrenched both in Ogbomoso and Western Nigeria (Atanda, 1973; Oyerinde Papers, 1954).

The influence of national politics on local administration represented a significant shift in the power dynamics of Ogbomoso. Previously, local politics had been structured by the Native Authority system, with traditional rulers exercising significant power subject to colonial supervision. The introduction of elected local government councils changed this dynamic by creating new channels of political participation and new sources of political legitimacy. The Action Group's success in Ogbomoso demonstrated that the educated elites and progressive forces had gained significant political influence.

5.8 Impacts of British Colonial Rule on Traditional Administration

British colonial rule had both positive and negative impacts on the traditional administration of Ogbomoso. The positive impacts included the modernization of the administrative system, with more efficient governance structures, improved record-keeping, and the introduction of formal judicial procedures (Atanda, 1973). The Native Court system provided a more structured approach to dispute resolution, even if it was not always aligned with traditional practices.

However, the negative impacts were more significant. Colonial rule weakened traditional checks and balances, giving the Baale unprecedented power while reducing the authority of the Ilu chiefs (Atanda, 1973; Oyerinde Papers, 1934). The colonial authorities' willingness to support the Baale in the exercise of his powers made him more autocratic, contributing to the political conflicts that emerged in the 1930s and 1940s.

Colonial rule also created new sources of conflict by introducing new institutions and new expectations. The progressive unions and political associations that emerged during the colonial period challenged the Baale's authority and demanded democratization of local governance. The conflicts between the Baale and the OPU, and between different factions within the community, were partly the result of these new dynamics.

The legacy of British colonial rule continued to shape Ogbomoso's administration even after independence. The institutions and practices introduced during the colonial period—the Native Court system, tax administration, local government structures—remained in place, albeit with modifications. The political conflicts

and divisions that emerged during the colonial period also continued to influence local politics in the post-colonial era.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Findings

This study has examined the impact of British colonial rule on the traditional administration of Ogbomoso between 1893 and 1960. The findings reveal a complex and dynamic process of political transformation, shaped by both colonial policies and local responses.

First, the study has demonstrated that Ogbomoso had a well-established traditional administrative system before British intervention. The Baale, supported by the Ilu chiefs and other community institutions, governed the town through a combination of political authority, military power, and religious legitimacy. This system was not static but evolved over time, responding to internal dynamics and external pressures such as the disintegration of the Oyo Empire and the influx of refugees during the Yoruba wars.

Second, the study has shown that British colonial rule significantly transformed Ogbomoso's traditional administration. Through the Native Authority system, colonial policies strengthened the Baale's formal powers while simultaneously subjecting him to colonial supervision and control. The Ilu chiefs, who had traditionally served as a check on the Baale's authority, were marginalized in the colonial administrative structure. The Native Court system introduced formal judicial procedures that differed significantly from pre-colonial practices.

Third, the study has revealed that the period of colonial rule was marked by significant political contestation. The emergence of educated elites and progressive unions created new political actors who challenged the monopoly of traditional authorities. The conflicts between the Baale and the Ogbomoso Progressive Union, and between different factions within the community, reflected broader tensions between tradition and modernity, and between different visions of governance.

Fourth, the study has demonstrated that the influence of national politics became increasingly significant in the 1950s. The democratization of local government, driven by the Western Nigeria Local Government Law of 1952, shifted power from traditional authorities to elected councils. The Action Group's success in Ogbomoso reflected the broader political realignment that was taking place across Nigeria.

6.2 Major Findings

The major findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. **The Pre-Colonial System Was Dynamic:** Ogbomoso's traditional administration was not a static "traditional" system but evolved in

response to internal and external pressures. The system adapted to the challenges of the 19th-century Yoruba wars and the influx of refugees.

2. **Colonial Rule Strengthened and Weakened Traditional Authority:** Colonial policies paradoxically strengthened the Baale's formal powers while subjecting him to colonial supervision. This created a system of "decentralized despotism" (Mamdani, 1996) in which traditional rulers had significant local power but were ultimately controlled by colonial authorities.
3. **Progressive Unions Played a Crucial Role:** The Ogbomoso Progressive Union and other associations provided a platform for educated elites and community members to advocate for political change. These organizations were instrumental in challenging the Baale's autocracy and demanding democratization of local governance.
4. **National Politics Shaped Local Administration:** The influence of national political parties, particularly the Action Group, was significant in the 1950s. The democratization of local government reflected broader political changes at the national level.
5. **Colonial Rule Had Enduring Legacies:** The institutions and practices introduced during the colonial period continued to shape Ogbomoso's administration after independence. The political conflicts and divisions that emerged during the colonial period also persisted.

6.3 Historical Significance and Contribution to Scholarship

This study makes several contributions to historical scholarship. First, it fills a gap in the historiography of colonial administration in Nigeria by providing a detailed case study of a secondary Yoruba town. While much scholarship has focused on major colonial centers, the experiences of towns like Ogbomoso have received less attention. This study demonstrates that the dynamics of colonial rule were diverse and complex, shaped by local conditions and actors.

Second, the study contributes to our understanding of indirect rule in practice. It shows that indirect rule was not simply the imposition of colonial policies on traditional institutions but involved complex negotiations and contestations between multiple actors. The Baale, the Ilu chiefs, the Progressive Union, the British colonial officials, and other actors all shaped the outcomes of colonial governance.

Third, the study illuminates the role of educated elites and civil society in colonial Nigeria. The Ogbomoso Progressive Union was not just a local organization but part of a broader movement of educated elites who were reshaping Nigerian politics. The study thus contributes

to our understanding of the relationship between colonial governance, elite formation, and nationalism.

Fourth, the study provides insights into the dynamics of political change in Africa. The transformation of Ogbomoso's traditional administration under colonial rule reflects broader patterns of political change that have shaped the African continent. The tensions between tradition and modernity, between centralization and decentralization, and between authoritarianism and democracy are recurring themes in African political history.

6.4 Policy and Contemporary Implications

This study has several contemporary implications. First, it demonstrates that the legacy of colonial rule continues to shape local governance in Nigeria. The tensions between traditional authorities, elected councils, and other actors that emerged during the colonial period persist in contemporary Nigeria. Understanding this historical legacy is essential for efforts to reform local government and strengthen democratic governance.

Second, the study highlights the importance of community participation in governance. The Ogbomoso Progressive Union's advocacy for greater participation and accountability demonstrates that civil society organizations can play a crucial role in democratizing governance. Strengthening civil society and creating spaces for community participation should be priorities for democratic governance in Nigeria.

Third, the study suggests that political change is often contested and involves multiple actors. The transformation of Ogbomoso's administration under colonial rule was not simply imposed from above but involved negotiations and contestations between the Baale, his chiefs, educated elites, colonial officials, and community members. This complexity should be recognized in efforts to promote political reform.

Fourth, the study demonstrates that local governance is intimately connected to national politics. The influence of the Action Group on Ogbomoso's politics in the 1950s reflects the broader relationship between local and national governance in Nigeria. Reforms to local governance must consider the national political context.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Several areas for further research have been identified. First, the post-colonial transformation of traditional administration in Ogbomoso warrants further investigation. What happened to the Baale's authority after independence? How did local government reforms in the post-colonial era affect traditional institutions?

Second, comparative studies of colonial administration in different Yoruba towns would be valuable. How did Ogbomoso's experience compare to that of other secondary towns, such as Oshogbo, Ede, or Saki? What factors explain similarities and differences in colonial experiences?

Third, the economic and social dimensions of colonial rule in Ogbomoso merit further investigation. How did colonial policies affect economic activities, social relations, and community life?

Fourth, gender dimensions of colonial administration in Ogbomoso have not been adequately explored. How did colonial policies affect women's roles and status in Ogbomoso society? How did women participate in the political transformations of the colonial period?

6.6 Final Reflections

Politics during the colonial period in Ogbomoso shows a remarkable continuity with its pre-colonial past. The key issue was how to enlarge the political processes to accommodate all interests in the town and thereby reduce the arbitrariness of the Baale and the Ilu chiefs. In the nineteenth century as well as during the British colonial period of the colonial rule, Ogbomoso citizens had to have recourse to open revolt or agitation to check the excesses of the Baale's autocracy. Although the British pyramidal structure of the local government was designed to make Baale autocratic, Ogbomoso people exploited the institutions again to curb the Baale's arbitrariness. This shows that in the operation of any political structure, what matters are the actors who filled the positions or roles within the structure.

The Alaafin utilized his resurrected traditional role to aggrandize his own powers, but at the same time, he was unwittingly a tool in the hands of Ogbomoso citizens in negating some of the very objectives of the Native Administration up till 1931. The changes in the composition of membership of the Ogbomoso council were not necessarily caused by the growing awareness of the people but were a result of the continuous struggle between the Baale and the leadership of OPU to control public opinion. In the process, more interest groups in the town became politically conscious at various times. It appears, however, that some members of the OPU observed correctly that nationalist struggle would have a great effect upon local politics and that in the post-1945 era, the political future belonged to the educated elite. It is in this wise that one can appreciate the militancy of this section of the OPU leadership, its adoption of the populist approach, and its final link-up with the Action Group Party.

In conclusion, the British colonial period (1893-1960) was a transformative era in Ogbomoso's political history. Colonial policies, local responses, and broader political changes combined to reshape the town's traditional administration in significant ways. The legacies of this transformation continue to influence Ogbomoso's governance and politics in the contemporary period, demonstrating the enduring significance of colonial rule in shaping the political trajectories of African communities.

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