

Resilience of Traditions in Contemporary Politics: A Historical Study of the Political Influence of Traditional Rulers in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study aims at examining the nature of the continued relevance of traditional rulers in contemporary Nigerian politics in spite of the negative impact of colonialism and Westernization on the institution. In pre-colonial period, traditional rulers occupied important positions of political authority in African kingdoms. They were held in high esteem and believed to be representatives of the gods on earth. Before the emergence of colonial rule in Nigeria, traditional rulers were the political and spiritual heads of the various kingdoms and states which now make up Nigeria. Impressed by the well organized system of traditional political institutions in some parts of Nigeria, the British colonial masters made use of traditional rulers in the colonial administrations particularly in the implementation of the Indirect Rule system. However, towards the last years of colonial rule, there was a shift from the traditional rulers to the educated elite who eventually succeeded in achieving political independence for the country. Since 1960, traditional rulers have been relegated to the background in the political scene in Nigeria and the Constitutions stipulate that they should be non-partisan and be politically neutral in the electoral processes. However, in spite of this, traditional rulers continue to play important role in the political and electoral processes in contemporary Nigeria. This study examines the factors and nature of the continued political influence and relevance of traditional rulers in contemporary Nigerian political landscape.

Keywords: Campaigns, colonialism, elections, political parties, traditional rulers

INTRODUCTION

In practical terms, traditional rulers do not have any official role to play in the political machinery and governance in contemporary Nigeria. At best, they serve in an unofficial capacity as mere advisory body to the local, state and federal government functionaries¹. This situation is not unique to Nigeria alone as the situation is similar in other parts of the world, particularly in independent African states. This situation has not gone down well with the traditional rulers themselves and other people who know and acknowledge the importance of traditional ruler ship in traditional African societies. Not only this, scholars and other commentators have differed in their positions to whether the status-quo should remain or that traditional rulers should be given official recognitions, roles and responsibilities in the Nigerian contemporary political landscapes (Emordi and Osiki, 2008). Indeed, no significant step has been taken to improve the status of the traditional rulers in Nigeria since the military intervened in Nigerian politics in January 1966.

Be that as it may, the traditional institutions in Nigeria, particularly the traditional ruler ship has remained a strong political force to reckon with in the contemporary Nigerian politics in spite of their official

and constitutional relegation to the background. This has been made possible by the fact of the power and resilience of African traditions and spiritualities which have continued to have great influence in the lives and activities of the Africans.²Traditional rulers in Nigeria have continued to play prominent role in the political activities in contemporary Nigeria particularly in the mobilization of electorates and during electioneering processes like choice of political candidates and electoral success. Thus, during the electioneering processes, traditional rulers come to the centre stage of politics as they play host to both serving and aspiring political office holders who come to receive royal blessings and endorsements³. They also continue to wield strong political influence even after the electioneering processes have been concluded and political offices occupied by the politicians.

Premised on this background, this study examines the nature of the contemporary relevance and importance of the traditional ruler ship in Nigeria. It takes a historical look at the travails of the traditional institutions from the pre-colonial period through the colonial period up to the present. The study argues that the continued relevance of the traditional institutions in contemporary Nigerian politics is due to the fact that traditional institutions are very resilient because their

authority and legitimacy are derived from the people's traditions and customs (Ashiru, 2010). The study relies on the analysis of both primary and secondary historical data and is divided into six parts.

TRADITIONS

Sources of authority of traditional rulers in pre-colonial Nigeria: Essentially, all classes of ruler ship must have sources of authority and legitimacy. For instance, in a democracy, the authority and legitimacy of the class of rulers are derived from the votes of the electorates while military rulers derive their authority from the barrels of gun. Significantly, Max Weber has rightly categorized all types of authority into three-legal/rational, traditional and charismatic (Anifowose, 1999). As the name implies, the power, authority and legitimacy of traditional rulers in the pre-colonial Africa were derived from traditions. In literal terms, tradition refers to such concepts as "old", 'description' and 'custom' (Rogets, 1988). According to Encarta Dictionary of English, the word 'tradition' can be defined in five senses, three of which are relevant to its usage in this study. First, it refers to custom or belief which is a long established action or pattern of behavior in a community or a group of people, often one that has been handed down from one generation to generation. Second, it presupposes body of customs, i.e., a body of long-established customs and beliefs viewed as a set of precedents. Third, tradition refers to handing down of customs i.e., the handing down of patterns of behavior, practices and beliefs that are valued by a culture.

Thus, from the Nigerian view point, traditional rulers refer to the set of rulers of the various Nigerian peoples and communities before these people were brought together by the British colonial rulers in the establishment of Nigeria (Onoja, 2007). In the Northern part of Nigeria before the coming of the Europeans, the category of traditional rulers included the *Mai* of Borno, the *Habe* rulers in Hausaland, the Attah in Igalaland, the Etsu of Nupeland and a host of others. Consequent upon the Islamic Jihad led by Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio in the 19th century Northern Nigeria, the Habe rulers (*Sarki*) in Hausaland and other parts of Northern Nigeria were replaced by Fulani *Emirs* while the *Mai* rulers in Borno became *Shehu* rulers (Abubakar, 1980). In the Southern part of Nigeria, the Yoruba and Edo peoples of the Southwest were led by *Obas* as traditional rulers in their various towns and villages (Atanda, 1970). The Igbo were organized in a non-centralised system whereby the heads of the different clans formed the highest political authorities in Igbo villages (Afigbo, 1980). The Edo and Igala kingdoms had enormous influences on the move towards centralization among the Western and Northern Igbo groups before the advent of colonialism. In the different parts of pre-colonial Nigeria, the peoples had

different systems of traditional political system which were either centralized or non-centralized and under the leadership of recognized heads as traditional rulers.

Traditional rulers occupied important positions among the peoples of pre-colonial Nigeria. Their positions were sanctioned by the traditions, history and culture of their respective peoples who held them in high esteem and reverence (Amusa, 2010). For example, among the Yoruba of the Southwestern Nigeria, traditional rulers are regarded as the representatives of the gods of the land (*Alase Ekeji Orisa*) and the custodians of the people's history and culture. A Yoruba Oba personifies the kingdom and represents the reincarnation of the past ancestors of the community (Falola and Akinrinade, 1985). Among the Hausa, Kanuri and other peoples of Northern Nigeria, the traditional rulers, i.e., the Emirs and Shehu wielded strong political power, authority and influence and were well respected by the people. Since the traditional rulers derive their authority from the traditions of the people, they were considered to have divine rights over the people to rule and govern them. Their words were orders and their actions were divine and sacred (Atanda, 1973). They were hardly seen in public except during important traditional festivals and religious celebrations.

To this end, during the pre-colonial period in Nigeria, the position of traditional rulers was not only divine but it was based on ritual leadership and political power was seen as sacred trust between the people and the rulers (Cohen, 1970; Ashiru, 2010). The people submitted themselves and were absolutely submissive to the authority of the rulers who in turn were expected to rule for the general good and welfare of the community as a whole. They were seen as the symbols of the peoples past, custodians of their history and past, upholder and preserver of their culture and customs, epitome of cultural norms and values of the society such as truth, discipline, courage and responsibility and so on Emordi and Osiki (2008). In theory, traditional rulers in pre-colonial societies had permanent tenures of office and the positions were hereditary. However, in practice, they had a number of advisers, assistants and other courtiers and their final decisions were based on consensus of opinions of all the stakeholders.

Although traditional institutions in pre-colonial Nigeria were in most cases absolutely monarchical, they were not in any way autocratic or totalitarian. In fact, various mechanisms were put in place for checking the abuses of tending autocratic rulers in pre-colonial Nigerian societies (Atanda, 1980). This was the situation of traditional ruler ship that the British colonial rule met when Nigeria was colonized in 1900 and the various people forced together in the 1914 amalgamation.

Colonialism and the changing status of traditional rulers in Nigeria: More often than not, scholars often

misrepresent the role of traditional rulers in the colonization and colonial rule in Nigeria, particularly their participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. They have also been accused of complicity in the sustenance and prolongation of colonial rule in Nigeria for their support for the British colonialists. The fact is that people tend to look at the past with the eyes of the present, thereby seeing the negative sides of the activities of past heroes and heroines who had done what they did in the light of the realities and situations of their time. While it is an established fact that traditional rulers were actively involved in the trade in human beings with the Europeans, the truth is that the trade was not considered bad at its time. In fact, it was the global commerce of its time which brought together the major world continent of that era-Europe, Americas, Asia and Africa (Curtin, 1976). Therefore, the involvement of Africans in such a global trade was a benefit then rather than curse. Also, the active involvement of traditional rulers in the 'heinous' trade could be explained from the perspective of the fact that, by traditions, they were supposed to represent their peoples in all manners of dealings with foreigners⁴. Hence, they had the traditional rights to negotiate with the Europeans the sales of their war captives and condemned criminals. It can be categorically stated here that no African traditional ruler offered the sale of his people subjects, apart from condemned criminals and war captives to the Europeans. In fact, the sale of male slaves was prohibited by most traditional rulers in Nigeria (Ryder, 1980).

Unfortunately, scholars have not emphasized the nationalist role of traditional rulers during the period of colonial subjugation of African states by the Europeans. Indeed, traditional rulers constituted the early opposition to the colonization of Nigeria during the period of the 'legitimate' trade which followed the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. They saw the desire of the Europeans to take over the control of the commerce in their domains as an affront against traditions and as the custodians of peoples custom, they rose to the occasion by challenging the European domination and control. Examples of traditional rulers abound in this regard. They included Kosoko of Lagos, Jaja of Opobo and Nana Olomu of Itshekiri in the Oil Rivers and a host of others (Coleman, 1958). Because of the European possession of superior fire-arms, all these rulers were captured and deported to enable the Europeans control the commerce of the areas under them and puppets were appointed in their positions. This deposition and enthronement of traditional rulers by the European official during this period was to have disastrous impact on traditional chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria.

The Europeans were to follow up their economic control of Nigerian territories with active political control following the commercial rivalries which led to

the Berlin West African Conference of 1884/1885 and its recommendation of 'effective occupation' of the areas of influence of individual European states (Coleman, 1958). The traditional rulers were also instrumental to the opposition to the formal colonization of Nigeria. Such rulers included Oba Overami of Benin and other traditional rulers in Southern and Northern Nigeria who engaged the British troops in several battles for the defense of his traditional domains. The defeat of these traditional rulers resulted in the formal colonization of their territories. These were some of the impressive efforts of Nigerian traditional rulers to maintain the integrity of African traditions in the face of alien European domination which has not been appreciated by some scholars calling for the total scrap of traditional institutions in Nigeria.

It was not until the British colonial official began to realize that colonial success depended greatly on the recognition and involvement of the traditional rulers that they began to patronize and incorporate them into the Indirect Rule system. This realization was not unconnected with the fact that the Europeans discovered that Nigerian peoples were so bound with their traditions and traditional rulers to the extent that whatever they ordered was what the people would do or not do as the case may be. This was the origin of the involvement of the involvement of traditional rulers in colonial government which has received great criticisms from scholars as 'criminality' (Emordi and Osiki, 2008). Again, this category of scholars tends to look at the past with the eyes of the present.

Undoubtedly, the introduction of the Indirect Rule system, first in Northern Nigeria and later in Southern Nigeria gave the traditional rulers the opportunity of active participation in the colonial government through the Native Authority. The Indirect Rule not only strengthened the power and influence of traditional rulers, it also attempted to create it where it did not exist at all (Adesoji, 2010). This was the situation in the Eastern part of the country among the Igbo where the colonial government experimented with the establishment of 'Warrant Chiefs' to act like the Hausa Emirs or Yoruba Obas (Adesoji, 2010). This was a manifestation of the colonial ignorance of the different peculiarities of the traditions of the various peoples of Nigeria. Although the Indirect Rule served the purpose for which it was created in the places where it was successful such as Northern Nigeria and Yorubaland, it altered the balance of power in traditional political systems in several of these areas. Indeed, it was a total failure in the East as it led to more problems that it met. Yorubaland offered perfect example of the disruption of traditional chieftaincy institutions by the Indirect Rule. It excessively altered the traditional arrangement of balance of powers and made the paramount rulers above board (Atanda, 1970). However, it must be

emphasized that they only danced to the tunes of colonial officials, collected taxes and remitted such to them and were therefore stooges of colonial government rather than being the protectors of the interest of the people which they used to be in the past.

Convinced of the enormous powers and recognitions wielded by traditional rulers in Nigerian communities, the colonial government made move to give constitutional backing to their participation in colonial government in Nigeria. This was achieved in 1914 after the amalgamation of both the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria. In the 1914 Constitution of Nigeria, six Nigerian traditional rulers were made unofficial members. These were Sultan Attahiru of Sokoto, the Alaafin of Oyo, the Emir of Kano, Chief Richard Henshaw of Calabar and the Shehu of Bornu (Adesoji, 2010). From this period, traditional rulers began to enjoy constitutional recognitions throughout the colonial period even at the expense of the educated elite who formed the bulk of the nationalist leaders. The matter came to a head during the period of decolonization when the colonial officials adopted ‘divide and rule’ tactics to prolong the attainment of Nigerian independence by setting both the educated and traditional elites against each other (Coleman, 1958). Thus, when self-government drew near, traditional rulers were given a say in governmental matters.

Significantly, the Richards Constitution of 1946 created a House of Chiefs in Northern Nigeria members of which were all first-class traditional rulers in the Region (Odumosu, 1963). The same arrangement, with some differences, was replicated in the Western Region through the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 and in the Eastern Region through the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954. While this strengthened the political influence of traditional rulers in Nigeria, it increased their partisanship as they began to lend their supports to the ruling political parties which had the rights to select the traditional rulers that would be at the House of Chiefs (Vaughan, 2000). Thus, traditional rulers had begun to flout traditions which required them to work for the interest of their subjects irrespective of their political affiliations.

The climax of the involvement of traditional rulers in colonial politics was in the last years of colonial rule in Nigeria in the late 1950s and in the First Republic between 1960 and 1966. During these periods, ruling political parties in the three regions began to patronize leading traditional rulers and lure them into their folds through political appointments and offices. For instance, in the Western Region, Oba Adesoji Aderemi, the Ooni of Ife was appointed as the Governor of the Region by the Action Group (AG) government of the West in 1959 (The Guardian, July 16, 2007; Adesoji, 2010). In addition to this, some prominent traditional rulers in Yorubaland such as the Olubadan of

Ibadanland, Osemawe of Ondo, Oluwo of Iwo, Olu of Warri and a host of others were given ministerial appointments during this period (Vaughan, 2000). The unfortunate situation during this period was that, while the favored traditional rulers were given political appointments, those that were not in the good books of the ruling party were dealt with severely. This was the situation in the First Republic in Nigeria during which the traditional institutions became instruments of political rewards or punishments as the case may be in the hands of the politicians⁵.

Interestingly, this was the situation as regard the status of traditional ruler’s vis-à-vis modern politics when the military struck in January 1966 bringing the First Republic to an end. The military suspended the Constitution and took over all spheres of governance hitherto manned by the politicians (Kirk-Greene, 1976; Alao, 1990). With its conviction that, while traditional rulers are very powerful and respected in among the Nigerian peoples, they must not be partisan, the successive military regimes in Nigeria covertly and overtly excluded traditional rulers from government. This was done through the Local Government Reforms of 1976 and the 1979, 1989 and 1999 constitutions designed by military regimes in Nigeria (Emordi and Osiki, 2010). Through these avenues, traditional rulers were legally and formally insulated from the governmental affairs and administration as they were given very limited advisory roles to play. Even at the local levels which are the levels in which the traditional rulers commanded great respects, the military governments made the local government administrator/chairman superior to the traditional rulers (News watch, April 18, 1988; Emordi and Osiki, 2008).

In spite of this formal constitutional relegation, traditional rulers still had modicum of recognitions during the successive military regimes. For instance, the Aguiyi Ironsi military regime appointed traditional rulers as Chancellors of federal government owned universities in 1966 as a mark of honor and respect for traditional institutions in Nigeria (Nigerian Tribune, July 28, 1966). Also, the 1989 Constitution stipulated the establishment of a state and local government council of chiefs in every state and local government area in Nigeria. Furthermore, the General Sani Abacha-led autocratic regime decreed that 55 of statutory allocations of local governments should be set aside for the upkeep of the traditional institutions in such local government areas (Aiyede, 2003). The military made use of the traditional rulers mainly in the area of legitimizing their regimes and in the area of settling disputes during crises. This why the military, particularly the Babangida administration saw the traditional rulers as “the most valuable asset the nation had” (Newswatch, April 18, 1988).

It was also under the military regimes of Generals Babangida and Abacha that the actions and utterances

of traditional rulers were mostly criticized in Nigeria. For instance, the annulment of the 1993 presidential elections adjudged the fairest and freest in the history of elections in Nigeria by the Ibrahim Babangida administration was unanimously condemned by all classes of Nigerians including the traditional rulers. To the utmost surprise of Nigerians, it was not long before prominent traditional rulers in Nigeria began to befriend the dictator that succeeded General Babangida, Late General Sani Abacha and supported his succession bid (Conscience International, 1998; Onoja, 2007). Some of them started to justify the annulment of June 12, 1993 Presidential election and the incarceration of the presumed winner, Chief M.K.O. Abiola. They became regular visitors at the Aso Villa, the official residence of the Nigerian Head of State, during the dark years of General Sani Abacha. No doubt, they benefited immensely from Abacha's loots in the forms of contracts, gift of cars and cash, oil blocs and oil lifting opportunities among others (Onoja, 2007).

By the end of last millennium, the position of traditional rulers in governance in Nigeria has been reduced to that of advisory and placed under the control of local government councils. However, this does not mean that traditional institutions have died a natural death as they were to play prominent role in the democratic dispensation that ushered in Nigeria into the 21st century.

Contemporary politics in Nigeria since 1999:

Resilience of traditions and traditional rulers: It has often been fallaciously stressed that traditional institutions is facing a crisis, or is undergoing struggles for relevance and survival in contemporary Nigerian politics. According to one scholar, the reflections of the stress of the traditional rulers in contemporary Nigeria are personal humiliation, salary cut, salary stoppage, restriction, suspension, banishment, dethronement and murder (Adesoji, 2010). However, it can be categorically stated here that all these indices are not unique to traditional institutions alone but are general phenomena affecting all classes of Nigerians in contemporary time. Thus, the position here is that the traditional ruler ship is not facing any crisis of relevance or survival in contemporary Nigeria. This is because it has always been relevant and has survived a lot of organized efforts to scrap it completely. Traditional chieftaincy institution is very relevant in contemporary Nigeria but what it is clamoring for is constitutional role and recognition.

The fact that traditional chieftaincy institution does not enjoy constitutional recognition or responsibilities does not mean that it is not relevant or that it has outlived its importance. What is happening to the traditional chieftaincy institutions in contemporary Nigeria is just a manifestation of our inability to fashion out suitable political system that will reflect our social,

economic and political realities as against the colonial and military imposed political structures of the colonial era and post-independence period respectively. Despite this, traditional chieftaincy institutions and traditional rulers have continued to exercise considerable influence and play active role in the political administration at all levels of government in Nigeria albeit informally.

In the first instance, traditional rulers in Nigeria play important role in the choice and emergence of electoral candidates in contemporary Nigeria in spite of their non-affiliation to any of the political parties. During the electioneering processes, political aspirants troop to palaces of traditional rulers in their communities to receive royal blessings and endorsements. As fathers to all, traditional rulers give royal blessings to all the aspirants that come to them because they all come from their domains and whoever emerges also receives the supports of the traditional rulers. Our argument here is that traditional rulers still command great respect and awe among the people of Nigeria and these accounts for their patronage by political office aspirants in the build up to elections and electioneering processes. Examples of this abound in the various parts of Nigeria during state and local government elections. Even, at the federal level, presidential aspirants endeavour to visit and get the royal supports of first class traditional rulers across the country.

In the same vein, political office holders in Nigeria endeavour to enlist the support of traditional rulers in order to legitimizing their reigns and tenures. It is a common sight in all parts of Nigeria to see the presidents; state governors, senators and other highly-placed political office holders pay homage to traditional rulers as the first point of during tour of any part of the country. This recognition of the fact that traditional rulers are a major force in the legitimization of political regimes has been acknowledged by both military and civilian regimes in Nigeria and this accounts for the great patronage of the traditional institution by successive governments in Nigeria in spite of lack of constitutional role for it. Even the greatest critics of the traditional chieftaincy ruler ship in Nigeria would agree that they remain the closest governments and most effective mobilizers of the people at the grassroots (Emordi and Osiki, 2008)⁶. Professor Ade Ajayi rightly noted that it is in the realization of this fact that traditional rulers remain the focal point of the people's collective aspirations that governments at all levels always want to identify with traditional institutions in Nigeria (Newswatch, April 18, 1988).

Basically, our argument here is that if traditional rulers still play critical role in the electoral processes such as emergence of political leaders and legitimization of tenures, then it would not be correct to say that chieftaincy institution is facing crisis of relevance in contemporary Nigeria. The only problem

with the institution is that it is not enjoying any constitutional backing or role and this has been its major challenge since the end of the First Republic (Emordi and Osiki, 2008). However, having gone this far in our analysis of the nature of the contemporary political relevance of the institution, it is important to attempt an assessment of some of the major criticisms of the chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria.

In the first instance, Keulder (1998) has identified four major areas of criticisms against the traditional institutions in Nigeria. These are: The institution of traditional rulers is an essentially autocratic one and cannot be accommodated under a democratic dispensation; The institution is bound by tradition and is hence not an effective tool with which to promote modernization i.e., development; The institution is essentially male-dominated and contributes to institutionalized gender inequalities at the local (rural) level and; The institution promotes “tribalism” which is a potential threat to the national policy of nation building. While all these are true of traditional ruler ship in Nigeria, the fact is that they are not unique problems of traditional institutions alone. These are general problems affecting all socio-economic and political institutions in Africa. For instance, to say that traditional chieftaincy institution is inherently autocratic may not be absolutely correct as some traditional institutional arrangements provided well executed system of checks and balances. The old Oyo political system among the Yoruba is an example of such traditional ruler ship where it was very difficult for the monarch to become autocratic and despotic. The argument that traditional institution is based on traditions and therefore may not be suitable for the promotion of modernization is also weak because in contemporary Nigeria, traditional institutions are one of the prominent instruments and agents of community development (Ashiru, 2010; Ofuafor, 2010; Okoduwa, 2010).

Other prominent criticisms of the chieftaincy institutions in contemporary Nigeria include tussle for leadership among traditional rulers in the Council of Traditional Rulers, involvement in partisan politics for personal gains and lending support for the reigning governments whether civilian or military. Significantly, the traditional institution in Nigeria has also been accused of continued participation in traditional festival and ritual in spite of modern influences. Moreover, traditional rulers in Nigeria are fond of bestowing traditional chieftaincy titles to wealthy and affluent people in the society who have not made any significant contribution to the growth and development of the society for their personal aggrandizement and material benefits (Adesoji, 2010; Orji and Olali, 2010; Emordi and Osiki, 2008; Onoja, 2007). As argued above, all these and other criticisms of the chieftaincy institutions

in Nigeria are reflective of the general political decadence in Nigeria and not unique to traditional ruler ship.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the travails of the traditional chieftaincy institutions in Nigeria from the pre-colonial period to contemporary era. The central argument of the study is that the continued relevance of the traditional rulers in contemporary Nigerian politics is an indication of the resilience of traditions to the influences of modernity. Essentially, traditional rulers do play active roles in the emergence of political leaders as well as the success of successive governments in contemporary Nigeria at all levels-local, state and federal. This is in spite of their lack of constitutional recognition or specific constitutional roles. This study holds that it is fundamentally wrong for people to say that traditional rulers are facing crisis of relevance or recognition in contemporary Nigeria as often emphasized by some scholars because no administration in Nigeria has ever completely overlooked traditional rulers (Bitiyong, 1989). They have always been relevant and recognized and in the words of Crowder and Ikime (1970), “today there are (only) few parts of Africa in which chieftaincy is not still an important social, religious and political institution”.

In essence, what traditional rulers in contemporary Nigeria crave for is not relevance, survival or recognition but formal constitutional roles in governance of modern Nigeria. This study concludes that the continued political influence of traditional rulers in Nigerian politics is not as a result of the emergence of successful people such as retired professors, army general, police chiefs, civil servants etc as traditional rulers as claimed by some scholars but as a result of the resilience of African traditions in the face of modernity and foreign influences. To this end, the study recommends that constitutional roles should be given to traditional rulers in contemporary Nigeria not only because they are the closest to the grassroots but also because traditional chieftaincy institution is a permanent feature of Nigeria’s body polity.

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End notes:

- 1 For details on the nature of participation of traditional rulers in contemporary Nigerian politics see the collection of essays in Babawale *et al.* (2010).
- 2 Toyin Falola has done an impressive historical analysis of the resilience of African cultures to the influence of foreign cultures among the contemporary Africans (Toyin, 2003).
- 3 This is a common practice in contemporary Nigeria. For instance, one of the authors of this study witnessed such event at the palace of the Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade, Olubuse II, where some prominent traditional rulers in Osun State played host to Osun State Governor, Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola in the build-up to the 2003 gubernatorial elections. At this meeting, they not only gave him royal blessings but also traditional endorsement as the favorite candidate of the royal fathers. Although the elections were alleged to have been marred by irregularities, the importance of this endorsement in the electoral success of Olagunsoye Oyinlola cannot be over-emphasized. The defeated candidate of the Alliance for Democracy, Chief Bisi Akande, even acknowledged the role of the Ooni of Ife in the success of Oyinlola (Akande, 2004).
- 4 David Aworawo has attempted a critical examination of some of the major theoretical explanations advanced by scholars to justify the Atlantic slave trade in one of his works. (Aworawo, 2003).
- 5 This is an unfortunate trend in the Nigerian politics whereby political office holders punish traditional rulers who are not in their good books and favor those that do their biddings. This is not unconnected with the fact that traditional rulers are constitutionally placed under the lowest politic tier in Nigeria, that is, Local Government Council. This trend necessitates constitutional roles for traditional rulers in contemporary Nigeria.
- 6 See the collection of essays on the chieftaincy institution in Nigeria in Babawale *et al.* (2010).