

Governance and the Traditional Institution: Examining the Roles of Chiefs in Nigeria

Chidume, C. G. PhD

Department of History & Strategic Studies,
Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State

Abstract

The paper critically examines the place of traditional rulers in contemporary Nigeria. It examined the various methods used in appointing chiefs, the functions the chiefs performed and the degree of power they wielded from a historical perspective while highlighting the cases for and against continued existence of chiefs in Nigeria. Taking a contemporary example on the influence of chiefs, it comes to the conclusion that chiefs will continue to be relevant in Nigeria for many reasons. It advocates a constitutional role for chiefs to legalize their widely acknowledged influence. The paper approaches the subject from the standpoint of decolonial epistemology. It utilized secondary source materials and textual analysis to drive home its arguments.

Keywords: Chieftaincy, Institution, Nationalist, Nigeria, Traditional

Introduction

The term chief is preferable to traditional ruler. Although this paper refers primarily to traditional rulers, they were not the only category of chiefs involved in the administration of their communities. The term can then be used in a generic context to cover other categories of chiefs, like Presidents of Native and Sharia Courts, Warrant Chiefs, and other rulers who wielded power in the past (Ikime, 1970).

It is noteworthy that traditional rulers lost their sovereignty during the colonial period and were, therefore, called chiefs as subordinate authorities of an imperial power. But before the advent of colonial rule, they bore royal titles which varied according to local usages. For example, among the Yoruba and Edo, they were kings of sovereign States associated with such titles as Oba, Alaafin and Awujale (Falola, 2006). Among on the Igbo, traditional rulers were variously known as Eze-ala, Igwe and Obi. The Tiv ruler was called Tor and that of Igala, Attah.

As the Hausa example shows, the titles of some of the rulers have changed in time perspective. They comprised the Sarkin, the early authority holders, Others include the Amir Muminin or the Sultan of Sokoto and the subordinate Emirs who ruled after the Fulani Jihad. The Sultan of Sokoto was not seen as a king. Instead, he was the Commander of the Faithful (Crowder & Ikime, 1970: ix). Similarly, the Emirs preferred, and still prefer, to be called Islamic leaders to chiefs or traditional rulers (Yahya, 1984: 4).

Origins of Chieftaincy: Chiefs as Sacred Rulers

The titles and functions of the early rulers evidence the antiquity of the institution of chieftaincy in Nigeria. The rulers were said to be the progenitors of their community and the hereditary priests of the gods of agriculture and fertility. They were, therefore, responsible for:

The fertility of the land, the state of the crops and well-being of (their)
people (Young, 1966)

As the chiefs incarnated the god of fertility, they were associated with many taboos and seen as sacred or divine rulers. Thus, among the Kanuri, where we have the oldest documentary evidence of sacred authority, their ruler was said, between the 9th and 10th centuries, to have lived in “a rural seclusion from his subjects surrounded by much mystery and taboo” (Smith, 1971). Similarly, within the same period, Thurstan Shaw's research indicates that the Igbo town of Igbo-Ukwu had developed a centralized authority (Shaw, 1972: 3). The early rulers of Igboland, the *Eze-ala* (literarily priest of the earth deity or chief priest of the land) and the eastern Ijo Amayanabo, were priestly chiefs of their

locality responsible for fertility and agriculture (Meek, 1937).

The Yoruba were equally ruled by priestly chiefs called *Oghene* (Falola, 2006). The early rulers were replaced around the 13th century by the Obas of the Oduduwa dynasty. The Obas were also believed to be the priests of their community and the source of fertility and other blessings (Smith, 1988: 107).

Similarly, the early Hausa rulers, the Sarkin Noma (literarily chief of farming) or Sarkin Kasa (literarily king of the country or land), were the ritual leaders of an agricultural community responsible for its fertility (Smith, 1988). Large States like Kano evolved around ancient religious centres, and their rulers constituted “the priest of the Tsumburburai, the spirit of the Dala hill, and the adjacent groove of Jankara (Yahya, 1984: 8).

The titles and functions of the early rulers are a manifestation of the agricultural origins of chieftaincy. The institution might have started to evolve around 3000 BC when agriculture was discovered in Nigeria, gaining much impetus from 500 BC to 200AD due to the historic changes associated with the invention of iron tools (Shaw, 1976). Thus, as in other parts of the world, the discovery of agriculture popularly called the Neolithic Revolution, created the need for the establishment of a centralized political system under the aegis of religious authority (Cohen, 2020:60).

Political Functions of early Chiefs and the Degree of Power They Possessed

The religious functions of the chiefs conferred political power on them. They and their ruling council comprising heads of lineages and representatives of the ancestors, as well as other elders, were responsible for law-making and arbitration. Depending on the locality, age grades, cult slaves, diviners, and others, constituted the law-enforcement organs.

The early chiefs ruled over a small territory or mini state comprising a few subsistence agricultural communities that hardly produced much surplus. They, therefore, extracted a small quantity of tributes from their subjects. Besides periodic services of free labour, the tributes consisted of consumable agricultural products that were perishable (Mauet, 1971: 99). The early chiefs, therefore, lacked the resources to exercise elaborate political power.

The rise of Mega States and the Socio-Political and Economic role of their Rulers

The transformation of the mini States to mega States constituted one of the most remarkable developments in Nigerian political history. The mega States possessed two major characteristics. First, they were larger in size than the mini States. Second, they evolved a complex hierarchy of political authority that, in some localities, included kings, ministers, ruling councils, provincial Governors, and district, ward, and village heads.

J. Atanda, in his study, correctly identified the period in which the mega-States evolved. He put it thus:

The efflorescence of mega States and therefore of traditional monarchs came in the period 1400-1800. The period saw the transformation of Kanem into Kanem-Bornu Empire, the making of the Hausa States, the rise of Oyo Empire, the emergence of the Benin Kingdom.... (and) the expansion of the Benin Kingdom... the period also was the beginning of the transformation of Ijo fishing village into a kingdom... (Atanda, 1984: 15)

The mega States were also found in Igbo communities like Aboh, Onitsha, Oguta and Nri. The mega-states were located in strategic commercial zones, which enabled their rulers to play a key role in the international exchange economy. Thus, unlike the early chiefs, those who ruled during the overseas slave trade acquired much wealth. Besides the tributes of agricultural goods and services, they received tolls, market dues, and or custom duty (in foreign goods). The chiefs also obtained goods through trade, manilas, beads, and other durable items used as means of exchange (Horton, 1969).

Slaves and firearms constituted some of the chiefs' most important investable commodities. Slaves served as court officials. They also farmed, traded, and helped protect exchange centres and routes.

More importantly, slaves and freemen formed the bulk of the warriors who were equipped with firearms and deployed in various military operations. The chiefs, for example, mobilized the warriors to subdue their local rivals. They also used them to invade and conquer nearby and distant communities. The chiefs incorporated the conquered territories into an existing political structure and thereby transformed their mini States into mega States.

Warriors and Rulers in the Mega States: Changes in Monarchical Power and Succession

The formation of the mega states brought warriors to the political limelight. Rulers realized that the ultimate source of their power was largely dependent on warriors who constituted the primary agents of violence. Thus, in some of the large States, such as Oyo and Kano, warriors were rewarded with fiefs. They were also appointed ministers, Provincial Governors and to other key political offices (Ifemesia, 1969: 108).

The exposure of warriors to political power intensified conflicts in society. It led to the emergence of three categories of warriors whose varying interests are critical for understanding the changes monarchical power and succession underwent over time,

The first type of warriors can be described as loyalists. They were incorporated into the ruling aristocracy and, therefore, had to support the monarchy. The warriors were, for example, responsible for the remarkable expansion of the Oyo Empire which covered a total area of over 14,000 square miles in the 18th century (Atanda, 1970: 219). They also contributed to the towering heights attained by the rulers of Kano, Benin and other leading expansionist States.

The second, category of warriors consisted of warriors who allied with rival princes or powerful traders to undermine monarchical authority. This category of warriors were found in the eastern Ijo Delta States and the Itsekiri Kingdom. From the middle of the eighteenth century to the later part of the nineteenth, warriors who were organized in canoe-houses in the Delta, fought against one another, overthrowing kings and enthroning their rivals. Thus, by the nineteenth century, most of the chiefs ruling Bonny were said to be powerful traders of servile origin (Jones, 1970). The crisis in Bonny also led to the founding of Opobo whose King Jaja, a former slave, constituted the most powerful ruler of the Delta during the advent of colonial rule. Similarly, Itsekiri merchant princes were engaged in a fierce and protracted rivalry which disrupted royal succession. Thus, when the reigning Olu died, there existed the longest known interregnum in Itsekiri history, lasting from 1848 to 1936 (Ikime, 1970).

The third category of warriors, primarily found in Yoruba and Hausa societies, either seized power from ruling monarchs or imposed their authority on conquered territories. The warrior-chiefs of Yorubaland emerged during the collapse of the Oyo Empire. They ruled towns like Ijaye, Abeokuta, and Ibadan (Falola, 2006).

Political conflicts in Hausaland took increasingly religious and ideological overtones during the Fulani jihad of the 19th century. The jihad was led by orthodox Islamic clerics who wished to establish an Islamic State. The clerics, therefore, declared a holy war against Hausa rulers and replaced them with loyal supporters (Waldman, 1965). The Fulani jihad led to the founding of a Caliphate headed by the Sultan of Sokoto. He was assisted by Emirs who ruled the provinces. Although the Caliphate was the largest State in Nigeria before the colonial period. Its administrative structure was similar to that of the former Hausa States (Yahya, 1984).

Warriors and the Fragmentation of Authority in the Mini States: The Igbo Experience

Unlike some of the mega States, warriors did not assume leadership positions in the mini States. The rulers of the mini States hardly played any active role in the overseas slave trade. They were, therefore, not involved in commercial rivalries and expansion that required warriors' services. The rulers, in fact, continued to be ritual heads of their communities as in the past..

Oracular traders, especially the Aro who engaged the services of Abam warriors, contributed in two

major ways to the changes that occurred in the Igbo mini States (Oriji, 1984). Firstly, the Aro used the warriors to conquer a few communities which they administered as trading colonies. Secondly, the Aro, during their commercial expansion, allied with titled men who used the *Ekpe* or *Okonko* and *Ozo* societies for law-making, arbitration and application. The allies of the Aro were, therefore, largely responsible for the fragmentation of political authority in Igboland during the slave trade.

Background of Chiefs and the Power they possessed during the introduction of Colonial Rule

Nigerian societies were ruled by chiefs of different backgrounds who possessed varying degrees of power when the British began colonising them in the later part of the nineteenth century. A minority of chiefs wielded absolute power. They included the warrior-chiefs of Yorubaland whose claim to rulership was primarily based on the fame they attained in battle rather than on ascribed criteria. The warrior-chiefs hardly involved the civilian authorities in governance (Falola, 2006). Similarly, the kings of expansionist States like Benin and Nupe tended towards absolutism.

A majority of Nigerian rulers were, however, constitutional monarchs. Among the Yoruba, for example, customary checks and balances were placed on the Oba's power. Thus an Oba who governed without consulting his ruling council risked of being dethroned (Lloyd, 1960). Similarly, Hausa States like Kano were administered by a constitution which was fashioned in the fifteenth century by the al-Maghili, the famous North African jurist-theologian. The constitution has continued, till the present time, to provide the guiding principle for the governance of Kano (Yahya, 1984). Among the Igbo, sacred authority holders possessed *ofọ*, a symbol of authority which was expected to kill those who exercised arbitrary power (Horton, 1969).

Categories of Chiefs under Colonial Rule

The institution of chieftaincy institution underwent further changes during the colonial period. Based on how they responded to British intrusions, chiefs were divided into two categories. The first consisted of those who resisted the intrusions and were therefore described as disloyal rulers. Jaja of Opobo, Nana of the Itsekiri and others exemplified those chiefs called disloyal rulers. They resisted British incursions which they feared would undermine their sovereignty and commercial interests. The chiefs were dethroned and banished. They have correctly been described as the leaders of the primary resistance movement (crowder & Ikime, 1970: xii).

Other punitive measures were taken against disloyal monarchs. For example, in the eastern Niger Delta, the status of the monarchs was reduced to that of a subordinate chief or head of a canoe house (Jones, 1970). Similarly, after the dethronement of Sultan Attahiru of Sokoto, the Sultanate administration was abolished and the subordinate Emirs were recognized as independent rulers of their territories (Smith, 1970: 15). In Benin, the Oba was banished and a regency council was appointed to govern the State. An interregnum therefore, existed in Benin from 1897 to 1914 (Igbafe, 1970).

The second type comprised of either collaborators or those who developed friendly relations with the invaders while carrying out their official functions. It is not surprising that the survival of chiefs and the degree of power they wielded during the colonial period depended largely on whether they were labeled disloyal or friendly rulers.

Appointment of Friendly Chiefs under Colonial Rule

The British took much interest in ensuring that friendly chiefs were appointed to the throne. The principles of legitimacy were, therefore, respected only in cases where the potential successor of a monarch was considered loyal to the colonial administration.

Colonial officers in large States like Oyo (Atanda, 1970), Kano (Pandey, 1970: 198) and Bornu (Cohen, 1970: 200) compiled intelligence reports on rival princes. They then influenced the king-makers by informing them about the candidates who would have no difficulty in getting official

recognition. As the case of Bornu illustrates, the officers refused to ratify the appointment of Abba Kyari Kura, a popular prince whom they reasoned would be unfriendly to the British. They accused the prince of insanity to justify their claim that he was incapable of holding the post of the Shehu (Cohen, 1970). On the other hand, the British bypassed the king-makers, *Odi*, and directly appointed Daniel Otubusin, their loyal supporter, the Awujale of Ijebuland. Despite the storm of opposition the appointment aroused, the Awujale continued to rule his people for over a decade (Ayandele, 1970).

Similarly, Dogho, a merchant prince of the Itsekiri who had collaborated with the British in overthrowing Nana and the Oba of Benin, was appointed President of the Benin River Court (1895-1914) and the Native Court of Appeal of Warri Province in 1914. The prince was also recognized as the Paramount Chief of Warri from 1917-1932 (Ikime, 1970).

It is also noteworthy that among the Igbo, heads of communities classified as enemies were hardly appointed Warrant Chiefs. Instead, those given warrants were collaborators, young men, and others, who owed their appointment to the exigencies of the colonial situation (Afigbo, 1972).

Functions of Chiefs and the Degree of Power they exercised before 1960

The policy of indirect rule, which the British adopted in Nigeria, placed the administration of the local communities in the hands of the recognized chiefs. The policy was introduced to other parts of the country such as the northern Nigerian Emirates, characterized by a hierarchical power structure. The emirs were appointed heads of Native Authorities, carrying out judicial, legislative, and executive functions under the supervision of British officers. Sharia courts were established to help in the administration of Islamic laws (Pandey, 1970: 64).

Among the Yoruba and Edo, prominent traditional rulers like the Oni of Ife, the Alafin of Oyo and Oba of Benin were appointed head of Native Authorities. Native courts were also set up to adjudicate native laws and customs. Similarly, in the eastern provinces, some warrant chiefs, especially in Onitsha and Calabar Provinces, were elevated to the status of heads of Native Authorities.

There is no doubt that chiefs who were appointed heads of Native Authorities possessed more power than their 18th-century predecessors. Unlike the past, when Chiefs-in-Council made laws and arbitrated disputes, the Native Authorities embodied all the arms of government. Chiefs also realized that they were bureaucrats of the colonial administration which controlled the means of coercion, and were no longer the agents of the gods. They, therefore, became accountable to those who appointed them and not to the ruling council and other traditional organs that exercised checks and balances on their authority. The powerlessness of the ruling council is exemplified by the Oyo Mesi, whose members;

...had to curry the favour of the Alafin to get remunerative posts like Baba Kekere (sub-lords) or as native court judges (Atanda, 1970)

Chiefs perceived as friends of the administration were given a free hand to rule their localities. A typical example is Alafin Ladugbolu of Oyo (1906-1931). He was granted a special dispensation to depose powerful chiefs like the Bale of Ibadan and Ogbomosho. The territorial jurisdiction of the Alafin was also increased to cover an area much larger than the one he inherited from his predecessors in the nineteenth century. It included Ibadan which had, by then, become the most potent State among the Yoruba (Atanda, 1970).

Similarly, Chief Dogbo of the Itsekiri was involved in appointing of Native Court judges. He received only a mild reprimand when he acted beyond his jurisdiction by suspending a Warrant Chief of the Western Ijo Native Court. The Chief was so powerful that it was difficult for anyone to accede to the throne of Olu of Warri until he died in 1932 (Ikime, 1970).

Chiefs and the Nationalist Elite: 1940s to 1960s

Although the warrant chief system collapsed in the Eastern Provinces, the Native Authorities survived until the 1940s when they were modified due to the emergence of the nationalist elite. The nationalist elite who formed political parties from 1940s to 1950s constituted the most vocal critiques

of the colonial system. They assailed chiefs whom they reasoned were reactionary agents of the colonial masters and called for constitutional reforms which would lead to self-government. As the nationalist elite continued to mount pressure on the colonial administration, it granted their demands and introduced a representative government in the three regions of Nigeria in 1951.

The evolution of representative government intensified the politicization of chieftaincy in Nigeria. The nationalist elite realized that they needed the chiefs to win elections at the grassroots. Therefore, they adopted various legislations that brought the chiefs under the control of the political parties that formed the governments of each region. There were legislations which, for example, created a bicameral Regional House of Assembly and Chiefs. The regional governments were invested with the power to appoint members of the House of Chiefs. In addition, the Native Authorities were reorganized into a three-tier administrative system comprising local, county and divisional councils. While a few of the council members were chiefs appointed by regional governments, a majority were elected under the platform of political parties. More importantly, chiefs were graded and regional governments assumed responsibility for their appointment and dismissal (Ade-Lawal, 1984: 7-8). The chiefs adapted in various ways to the legislations encroaching on their powers. Some were able to increase both their local and regional powers, many managed to survive while a few others lost their thrones.

As the British did during the Native Authority system, loyal chiefs who supported the political party in power in each region, were rewarded by its government. Typical examples were the northern emirs, a majority of whom were loyal to the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) which controlled the government of the northern region. Some of the Emirs were appointed either ministers or members of House of Chiefs. The regional government ensured that the rights and privileges enjoyed by friendly Emirs were preserved. The late Ahmadu Bello, the former Premier of the Northern region, was articulating the views of his administration when he stressed:

Anything which (would) endanger the prestige of the Emir or even... remove any of their traditional trappings... would set the country back for years (Schwarz, 65: 114).

On the other hand, Emirs who fell out with the NPC were either dismissed or forced to abdicate their throne. They included Emirs Ja'afane of Zaria and Muhammad Sanusi of Kano (Smith, 1970). Similar measures were adopted by both the Action Group (AG) and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) which, respectively, ruled the western and eastern regions. The AG, for example, rewarded Oba Akenzua of Benin for his loyalty by appointing him not only the President of the Benin Divisional Council but also, a member of the House of Chiefs. The Oba was made a minister without portfolio in 1955 and he held this post until 1962, when the AG lost its control of the western region (Igbofe, 1970). The Oba, however, appeared to have switched his support to the NCNC which championed the creation of the Mid-West region in 1963. He was, therefore, appointed the President of the Mid-west House of Chiefs until 1966, when the military took over the reins of government from the civilians (Igbofe, 1970: 284).

The AG and NCNC also rewarded loyal chiefs by appointing them members of the House of Chiefs, Presidents of Councils and Customary Courts. On the other hand, Chiefs whom the AG and NCNC regarded as their opponents, were disgraced and dismissed. Thus, for example, the AG deposed the Alafin Adeniran Adeyemi II of Oyo in 1954 for pitching his camp with its rival, the NCNC (Atanda, 1970). Similarly, the NCNC controlled government of the Mid-West region dethroned, in 1965, Olu Erejuwa II of Warri, a loyal supporter of the AG who was formerly the President of the Warri Divisional Council and a cabinet member in the Western region.

Chiefs under the Military Administration, 1966-1979

When the military administration came to power in 1966, it took some measures to check the politicization of chieftaincy. It created twelve States to weaken regional loyalty and restored to the throne, those chiefs the politicians had unjustifiably dismissed from office. The military

administration also abolished in the eastern region, the Ministry of Chieftaincy Affairs and the Customary Courts, which were used to victimize political opponents (Jones, 1970). For similar reasons, it brought under the control of the State Governments, the Native Authority Police, as well as the Sharia and Native Courts of the Northern and Western regions, respectively.

The military reforms were, however, discontinued during the Biafra-Nigeria War. Then in 1976, the military regime set up in each of the nineteen States it had created, a Traditional Council of Chiefs. The Council was expected to advise the government on local government, chieftaincy and other matters. The Local Government Edict was also promulgated. Its purpose was to “stimulate democratic self-governments...” (Ade-Lawal, 1984) at the local level and prepare the country for a civilian administration. The Edict, therefore, provided for elected councilors and thereby excluded chiefs from the local government administration.

Chiefs during the Second Republic, 1979-1983

Chiefs, as evidenced by the 1979 Presidential Constitution, continued to play an advisory role in the country's administration. The Constitution provided for the establishment in each local government area of a Police Committee comprising the chiefs and some other important personalities from the locality. The Committee's primary function was to make recommendations on how to improve the relations that existed between the Police and the community. Then, at the State level, there was a Council of Chiefs whose functions were similar to those of the Traditional Council of 1976. Its membership consisted of a Chief elected by his colleagues in each Local Government Area, and a few others appointed at the discretion of the State Government. Finally, at the Federal level, a Chief nominated by the State Council of Chiefs, was appointed a member of the Council of State. The Council of State was responsible for advising the President on such issues as the National Population Census, the Prerogative of Mercy, the award of National Honours and other matters that might be referred to it periodically (CFRN 1979).

Even though the 1979 Presidential Constitution assigned marginal and advisory roles to the chiefs, some of them used their personal initiative to influence the politicians in authority. Chiefs whose supporters controlled the Federal or State Governments had access to the key leaders of the Second Republic. They used their connections to influence the appointment of Cabinet members, Board members, and others. On the other hand, chiefs who were seen as opponents of a ruling party were, as in the First Republic, victimized and, at times, dethroned (Ibrahi, 2019).

Summary and Conclusion

This paper has established that the chieftaincy institution has existed in Nigerian societies from antiquity to modern times. The early chiefs were the hereditary sacred authority holders of their communities. They made laws and arbitrated disputes with their ruling councils. The chiefs were primarily not autocrats and, therefore, lacked total means of coercion.

Unlike the early chiefs, those who ruled the Mega States during the overseas slave trade were backed by warriors. Therefore, they could exercise a high degree of political power. However, the involvement of warriors in governance disrupted the hereditary chieftaincy system.. Warriors who possessed the means of violence seized political power and became the absolute rulers of some communities. Warriors and oracular traders were also associated with the fragmentation of political authority in some of the Mini States.

The chieftaincy institution underwent remarkable changes during the colonial period. Chiefs whom the British regarded as disloyal rulers were dismissed and, at times, banished. Attempts were made to ensure that only friendly chiefs were appointed to the throne. Chiefs recognized as head of Native Authorities were the most powerful traditional rulers during the first four decades of the twentieth century.

The policy of rewarding loyal chiefs and punishing disloyal ones was intensified by the nationalist

elite who ruled Nigeria from the period of self-government to the end of the First Republic (1951-1966). Chiefs who supported the ruling party increased both their local and regional powers as presidents of Divisional Councils and Cabinet members respectively. On the other hand, some of those branded opponents of the ruling party were dismissed from office.

The military regime that ruled Nigeria from 1966-1979 took various measures to ensure that chiefs were not appointed to key political offices at both Local, Regional, and State levels. It created advisory roles for the traditional rulers and thereby marginalized them in the governance of Nigeria. The marginalization of chiefs continued during the Second Republic, although a few of them were able to use their position to become “King-makers.”

As the present-day traditional rulers seem to be increasingly powerless, a school of thought has suggested that the chieftaincy institution should be scrapped in Nigeria (Ajayi, 1992). Chiefs, it is argued, represent a reactionary class which has managed to survive by collaborating with the British, civilian and military regimes irrespective of the philosophical or ideological orientation of such regimes. Although it sounds plausible, the argument against traditional rulers appears simplistic to the extent that chiefs are the only category of people who are singled out as collaborators. Those who may also be labeled as collaborators are found in the public and civil service. They also exist among the various religious groups, the business community and other organizations.

More importantly, one wonders who is a greater collaborator, the chiefs who, as subordinate authorities of the colonial administration, were expected to carry out its policies or the civilian and military leaders of independent and sovereign Nigeria? The leaders have not only continued to seek the chiefs' support but also to perpetuate the country's dependence on the Western capitalist system.

It must not be forgotten that chiefs were the leaders of the primary resistance movement and the leading critics of different regimes. Some of the critics lost their thrones while others were subjected to untold indignities. It is, therefore, unhelpful to accuse chiefs of collaborating with different regimes without appreciating the oppositional roles some of them have been playing in Nigerian political history.

Chieftaincy has its own vitality. It is not doomed to extinction. Chiefs are seen in communities where the presence of the government is hardly felt, not only as a symbol of authority helping to maintain law and order but also, as modernizers involved in rural development projects. They also constitute a cultural rallying point in an era where our fundamental values are threatened by the rapid pace of social change.

The syncretic role chiefs have been playing as the link between ancient and modern forces has contributed to the survival of traditional rulership (Miller, 1968). Present and future leaders in Nigeria need to involve the chiefs in governance in order to benefit from their administrative experience and the wisdom they have accumulated over the years.

References

- Ade-Lawal, N. (1984) “Constitutional Development in Nigeria and the Political Role of the Traditional Rulers”. Paper presented at the Conference on *The Role of Traditional Rulers in the Governance of Nigeria* Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan Conference Proceeding
- Afigbo, A. E. (1972) “The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria 1891-1929” (London: Cambridge University Press)
- Ajayi, R. (1992) “Politics and Traditional Institutions in Nigeria: A Historical Overview” *Transafrican Journal of History* Vol. 21
- Atanda, J. (1984) “Historical Evolution of Traditional Rulers and Institutions in Nigeria up to C. 1900” in *The Role of Traditional Rulers in the Governance of Nigeria* Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan Conference Proceeding
- Ayandele, E. A. (1970) “The Changing Position of the Awujales of Ijebuland under Colonial Rule” in M. Crowder & O. Ikime (eds) *West African Chiefs* (New York: Africana Publishing

- Corporation & Ife: University of Ife Press)
- Cohen, Y. (2020) "Culture as Adaptation" in Y. Cohen (ed) *Man in Adaptation: The Cultural Present* Routledge 1st edition (6 December)
- Crowder, M. & Ikime, O. (eds) (1970) *West African Chiefs* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation & Ife: University of Ife Press)
- Falola, T. (2006) "Power, Status and Influence of Yoruba Rulers in Historical Perspective" in T. Falola & A. Genova (eds) *Yoruba Identity and Power Politics* (USA: Boydell & Brewer, University of Rochester Press)
- Jones, G. I. (1970) "Chieftaincy in the Former Eastern Region of Nigeria" in M. Crowder & O. Ikime (eds) *West African Chiefs* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation & Ife: University of Ife Press)
- Horton, R. W. G. (1969) "Fom a Fishing Village to City State: A Social History of New Calabar" in M. Douglas & P. Kaberry (eds) *Man in Africa* (London: Tavistock Publications)
- Ibrahim, J. (2019) "Some Recollections On Rimi's Attempt To Diminish The Emir Of Kano" *Daily Trust* 17 May
- Ifemesia, C. (1969) "States of the Central Sudan: Kanem Bornu, the Hausa States" in J. Ajayi & I. Espie (eds) *A Thousand Years of West African History* (Ibadan: Ibadan University and Thomas Nelson's Sons)
- Igbafe, P. A. (1970) "The Changing Status of the Obas of Benin Under Colonial Rule and since Independence" in M. Crowder & O. Ikime (eds) *West African Chiefs* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation & Ife: University of Ife Press)
- Ikime, O. (1970) "The Changing Status of the Chiefs among the Itsekiri" in M. Crowder & O. Ikime (eds) *West African Chiefs* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation & Ife: University of Ife Press)
- Lloyd, P. (1960) "Sacred Kingship and Government among the Yoruba" *Africa* xxx
- Maquet, J. (1971) *Power and Society in Africa* (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing)
- Meek, C. K. (1937) *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe: a Study in Indirect Rule* (London: Oxford University Press)
- Miller, N. (1968) "The Political Survival of Traditional Leadership" *The Journal of Modern African History* 6(2)
- Orij, J. N. (1984) "Chieftaincy Institution in Igboland: A Historical Perspective" in *The Role Traditional Rulers in the Governance of Nigeria* Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan Conference Proceeding
- Panden, J. (1970) "Aspects of Emirship of Kano" in M. Crowder & O. Ikime (eds) *West African Chiefs* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation & Ife: University of Ife Press)
- Shaw, T. (1972) "The Significance of Igbo-Ukwu and Future Archaeological Research in Southeastern Nigeria" *Ikenga* 1
- Smith, H. (1971) "The Early States of the Central Sudan" in J. A. Ajayi & M. Crowder (eds) *History of West Africa* Vol.
- Smith, J. (1970) "The Relationship of the British Political Officer to his Chief in Northern Nigeria" in Crowder, M. & Ikime, O. (eds) *West African Chiefs* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation & Ife: University of Ife Press)
- Smith, R. (1988) *Kingdoms of the Yoruba* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988)
- The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* (Lagos: Sweet & Maxwell)
- Waldman, M. (1965) "The Fulani Jihad: A Re-assessment" *Journal of African History* Vol. 6
- Yahya, D. (1984) "Critics and Continuity: Emirship of Kano in an Ideological Society", in *The Role of Traditional Ruler in the Governance of Nigeria*