



BENIN-EKITI RELATION: AN ONUS OF SUBSTANTIATION

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Abstract

Pre-colonial times are characterized by the smooth and frequent relationship among societies. The nature of this relationship was mostly on the cultural, commercial and political ground. This, however, encourages inter-marriages, borrowing of languages and other features which were most times dictated by the needs of the various societies involved. Benin imperialism in Ekiti land is an aspect of cultural integration between the people of Benin and Ekiti. Although the nature of the alliance is said to have always run against the tide, it is, however, important to notice the impact of Benin's extension of influence in Ekiti land which brought about cultural integration between the two communities. This paper examines the various reasons of convergence between the Benin culture in one hand and the Ekiti people on the other side. It thus argues that Benin's expansion on some parts of Ekiti land has brought about cultural relations between them and that the administrative control which Benin had over them in one time or the other has encouraged these cultural similarities. The work relies on both primary and secondary sources and also employed descriptive and analytic methods in analyzing relevant data for the research.

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Introduction

In modern academic research, every dynasty, kingdom or clan has a historical narration for their place of origin. The people of Ekiti and Benin are not excluded in the context of this fact; hence, there is need to examine not only their historical background and their settlement pattern in time and space but also their point of contact and relation. The primary task of this paper is to examine the historical context of the people of Benin and Ekiti respectively for a better understanding and interpretation of their relationship in the past and present, acknowledging the ongoing argument between the Yoruba and the Benin Historian

Benin and Ekiti in Historical Perspective

Benin City is situated on a branch of the Benin River and lies along the main highways from Lagos to the Niger Bridge at Asaba and eastern states. The city is also linked by roads to Sapele, Siluko, Okene, and Ubiaja and is severed by air and Niger River delta ports of Koko and Sapele.⁴

Previously, the central city of the Edo (bini) kingdom of Benin, was burned to the ground (and was stripped for almost 2,500 of its celebrated bronzes) in 1897 when the British invaded the city after the Edo had slaughtered a purportedly unarmed British conciliatory mission agent.⁵ Hints of the old divider and canal remain, yet the new city is a nearby pressed example of houses and boulevards joining on the royal residence and compound of the Oba (Sacred lord) and the administration workplaces. In the central square is a statue of Emotan, a lady respected for her unique sacrifice for the Oba.⁶

Benin as nomenclature is used to describe the people as well as the entity which they occupy till date. Benin Empire was a large entity encompassing different peoples and ethnic

⁴ C. O. O. Ugowe., *Benin in World History*, (Lagos Kosayaz Nigeria Limited, 1997.)

⁵ A. F. Ryder., *Benin and the Europeans 1485-1897*, (London: Longman, 1969.)

⁶ The woman called Emotan used to sell her petty foodstuffs in the Oba's market. She was known to Ewuare and did him excellent service. When Uwaifiokun was still the Oba, Emotan advised Ewuare not to expose himself to the fury of the chiefs, who by order of the then Oba, his brother, conspired to kill him. She, therefore, hid him. She thus earned Oba Ewuare's special favour when he came to the throne in about 1440AD. When she died, Ewuare had her buried in the Oba's market and in order that she should not be forgotten, he had a specific tree planted on her grave on the spot where she used to sit and sell her wares. So Oba Ewuare then deified Emotan. See Tam Fiofori, *A Benin Coronation: Oba Erediauwa*. (Benin City: Sun Art BEP, 2004) p.6

groups which were brought together by various means including wars to acknowledge the authority of the Oba.

Benin city lies between Latitude 6¹ 12¹ N and Longitude 5¹ 45¹ E is about 11.4KM (73 N⁰ Miles) inland from the mouth of the Benin River which flows into the Gulf of Guinea. It is on relatively flat terrain with a few hills to the East and the North-East and is some 78.65 meters above the sea level. The city lies in the thick equatorial rain forest, belt with abundant vegetation and forest consisting mainly of very tall trees and dense underground.⁷

Benin City has long been famous for its 'bronzes' actually brass work, some of which is said to date from the 13th century and for its ivory and wood carvings; its museum has a notable collection of some of the kingdom's early pieces. Benin is also the center of Nigeria's rubber production, with several processing plants and a crepe factory; the Rubber research institute of Nigeria (1961) is nearby at Iyanomo. The traditional export of palm oil and kernels remains essential. The Nigerian Institute for oil palm research (1939) is just outside the city on the old road to Lagos.⁸ The land area now known as Edo state has a long history of civilization. It is partly what remains of the once powerful and famous imperial Benin kingdom, one of the most potent Africa Empires during the 15th and 16th century. The body of water called the Bight of Benin and Dahomey, the former French colony, now called the Republic of Benin derived their names from the famous imperial Benin kingdom.⁹

According to Osadolor, the kingdom of Benin is one of the most crucial forest states of West Africa during the pre-colonial period. It is one of the most mentioned societies in contemporary European literature. This is attributed to the fact that they had early contact with the Portuguese. Furthermore, during the era of European scramble for and partition of Africa, thousands of the royal art of Benin were taken to Europe by the British conquerors.¹⁰ The kingdom of Benin was the first in this part of Africa to be established with the emergence of the Ogiso. Although the date of the rise of the Ogiso dynasty has not been determined with certainty

⁷ F. N. Ogbonmwan, *Early Catholic Missionary Activities in Benin City*. (Port-Harcourt: Josemaria Trust Nigeria Ltd. 2005) p.1

⁸ C. O. Ugowe, *Benin in World History*, (Lagos: Kosayaz Nigeria Limited, 1997.) See also Paula Ben Amos., *The Art of Benin*, (London: the Thames and Hudson Publishing, 1974)

⁹ J. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, 5th edition, (Benin City: Fortune Publisher, 2004.) p.3

¹⁰ O. B. Osadolor, "The Military system of Benin Kingdom," Ph.D. Thesis, (University of Hamburg, Germany 2001). p. 2.

nor is an approximate date agreeable. Out of the 31 kings of the Ogiso dynasty, Jacob Egharevba has a list of 15 in his *Short History of Benin* and suggests that the dynasty was founded about 900AD. There were other mini-states and settlements in the forest region of the present day south-central Nigeria when the seat of monarchy emerged in Benin. The idea of a centralized political organization which evolved in response to local politics was a contributory factor to the emergence of the state.¹¹

According to Adiele E. Afigbo, Benin's imperial history, especially in its military dimensions and external relations should, if properly handled, throw some light on aspects of the history of the petty chiefdoms to the north, east and south of the kingdom after about 1400.¹² In south-central Nigeria, that is in southern Nigeria, east of Yoruba land and west of the Orlu-Nsukka uplands, the rise, and expansion of the Benin Empire was one of the factors, though not necessarily the most important single factor in explaining the development of the states and societies in the area.

In Yoruba-land also, the dimension of inter-group relations with Benin presents some difficulties for the historian of pre-colonial Nigeria in the historical interpretations of common traits in the social structure and political institutions of the societies. Do such characteristics suggest conquest, the migration of peoples, or merely the diffusion of ideas? The examination of such traits as argued by P.C Lloyd provides an almost endless source of data for the historian but few easy solutions to his questions.¹³ According to Dzeka and Osadola, such traits was as a result of influence which the Benin people had with the Portuguese, which however made them more enlighten and culturally exposed compared with their neighbouring villages or communities gave them an upper hand in their relations with the Ekiti people.¹⁴ The case of Ewi (a Bini prince) and Ilesun community; and the case of Ogoga (a Bini hunter) and the people of Ikere is a typical instance to the above claim.⁶

¹¹ J. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, 5th edition, (Benin City: Fortune Publisher, 2004,) p.3

¹² A.E Afigbo, "The Benin Mirage and the History of South Central Nigeria." *Nigeria daily Magazine*, 1998 no. 137 p.23

¹³ S. O. Biobaku, *Sources of Yoruba History*, (New York: Clarendon Press, 1973)

¹⁴ S. O. Biobaku, *Sources of Yoruba History*, (New York: Clarendon Press, 1973.) See also T. Dzeka, O. S. Osadola, Social-Cultural and Institutional Diffusion in Western Nigeria: An Assessment of Benin Influence on Ekiti, *Makurdi Journal of Arts and culture (MAJAC)*, Vol.13, 2015, pp. 215-225, S. A. Akintoye., *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1993*, (London: Longman Group Limited, 1971.)

Osadolor argues that there is no reason to think for upwards of three millennia, he opines that people speaking varieties of the Edo (Benin) language have occupied an area of some 31,000 square kilometers in extent, to the west of the River Niger in present-day southern Nigeria. From these people, the kingdom of Benin was established. The name by which these people were identified, or of their territory has not been found with reasonable confidence. The Benin people call themselves Edo and not 'Benin' while their Yoruba neighbours to the west call them 'Ado'.¹⁵ In line with Osadolor's argument, 'Ado' is an Ekiti community which Biobaku claims to have been established by a Benin prince called 'Ewi' who disposed-off its original traditional ruler to establish his kingdom there-in.¹⁶ He further argues that the charisma of their traditional rulers influenced the expansion of Benin to some part of Yorubaland.¹⁷ He further opined that the attempts to extend its power into south-eastern Yoruba-land led to a war with Benin, first in the late 16th century, and the sphere remained effectively outside of the control of Oyo because of the treaty signed with Benin which fixed the boundary between the two powers at Otun.¹⁸ Against Osadolor's stand, Dzeka and Osadola argue that the Benin kingdom and Oyo Empire did not influence one another regarding war or conquest because both shared a similar origin. The personality of Oranmiyan which has a more significant influence in the writing of Benin history and Yoruba history respectively gives much clarity to the argument.¹⁹ Besides the control of more considerable part of Yoruba-land, the neighbours of Benin to the north, south, and east were subjected to its rule. The most distant conquest became tributary states while those within some eight kilometers of Benin city were subjected to direct control, and those between were placed under Princes of the royal lineage whose political powers were derived from the authority of the Benin monarch.

The penetration of British commercial and political influence in Lagos, however, put an end to the control of Benin in the area. Not long before the British occupation of Lagos, Osemwede had sent the 'Osodin' and two other chiefs there to demand the tribute, presumably because it had not been delivered at the proper time. They found the town engulfed in a civil war

¹⁵ O. B. Osadolor, "*The Military System of Benin Kingdom*," Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Philosophy and History, University of Hamburg, Germany. 2001.

¹⁶ S. O. Biobaku. *Sources of Yoruba History*, (New York: Clarendon Press, 1973)

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ T. Dzeka, O. S. Osadola, Social-Cultural and Institutional Diffusion in Western Nigeria: An Assessment of Benin Influence on Ekiti, *Makurdi Journal of Arts and culture (MAJAC)*, Vol.13, 2015, pp. 215-225

between Akintoye and Kosoko, and it is not clear whether or not they succeeded on their mission. Akintoye, who held the emblems of authority from Osemwede, eventually had to yield to Kosoko, but the latter acknowledged to Beecroft in 1851, that he could not consider himself *de jure* of Lagos without the sanction of Benin, and that this could not be forthcoming so long as Akintoye lived.²⁰ Beecroft too gave explicit recognition to the Oba's authority in the town when he addressed a letter to him before the expulsion off Kosoko.²¹

Despite Beecroft's seeming readiness to acknowledge the Oba's rights in Lagos, Akintoye seized the opportunity of his restoration under British protection to repudiate his former allegiance. According to Consul Campbell, Akintoye on the application for the usual tribute sent the king of Benin's messengers home without anything, telling them that the trade of Lagos was henceforth changed and that he could not afford to pay any more tribute.²² No better fortune attended Oba Adolo's attempt in 1860 to re-instate Kosoko who had made his peace with Benin, perhaps by promising to resume payment of the tribute. Adolo sent a message to the new ruler of Lagos, Dosumu, informing him of his wish to place Kosoko on the throne. King Dosumu replied that he only recognizes the British government now, not as in former times when Lagos was under the king of Benin to whom annually a tribute was paid, and that he requested the king of Benin would not send any more messages relative to the bringing back of Kosoko to Lagos.²³ British consuls in Lagos approved of this shuffling off of dependence upon Benin because it left British suzerainty unchallenged; and when in 1861 Britain formally annexed Lagos, no reference was made to Benin. Nevertheless, though the Obas and chiefs of Lagos might repudiate all dependence on Benin in the face of the British consul, they appear on occasion to have sought the favour of the Oba with presents.²⁴

Ekiti, on the other hand, is an independent state before the British conquest. It is an upland zone rising over 250 meters above sea level. It, however, lies on an area underlain by metamorphic rock. It is generally an undulating country with a natural landscape that consists of old plains broken by step-sided out-crops that may occur singularly or in groups or ridges. Such

²⁰ R. S. Smith., *Warfare and Diplomacy in pre-colonial West Africa*, (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd. 1976.)

²¹ A.E Afigbo, "The Benin Mirage and the History of South Central Nigeria." *Nigeria daily Magazine*, 1998 no. 137 p.23

²² S. A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840- 1993*, (London: Longman Group Limited, 1971)

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Omo N'Oba Erediauwa, *I Remain, Sir, Your Obedient Servant*, (Spectrum Books Publisher, 2004)

rocks out-crops exist mainly at Aramoko, Efon-Alaaye, Ikere, Igbara-odo, and Okemesi Ekiti. The state is dotted with rugged hills, notable ones being Ikere Ekiti hills called Olosunta in the south, Efon-Alaaye hills on the western boundary and Ado Ekiti hills in the center.²⁵

Ekiti was one of the many Yoruba states in what is today Nigeria. Ekiti as a nation and districts of Yoruba race had her progeny in Oduduwa, the father and progenitor of Yoruba race. Ekiti has her origin from Ile Ife. The tradition has it that Ekiti was formed when the grandchildren of Oduduwa journeyed through Iwo-Eleru (cave) near Akure in Ondo state and had stopped over at a place called Igbo Aka (Forest of termites) closer to Ile Oluji. Some of the grandchildren of Oduduwa, however, decide to form their own rule in their present location (forest of termites) while Owa-obokun the current day monarch of Ijesa land and Orangun of Ila chose to move ahead and settled in the present day Ijesha and Igbomina land in Osun state.²⁶ Due to the hills found in the area, they named the place in their mother's language "Ile Olokiti" meaning land of hills. So Ekiti derived her name from hills.²⁷

Much has been written concerning the Ekiti people, settlement patterns and geographical conditions. Biobaku and Olomola describe the Ekitis to be a sub-ethnic of the Yoruba derivation and are often symbolized by their dialectical homogeneity that the people themselves pride one another in their most familiar greeting of 'o kun o.' The Ekiti are historically homogenous, culturally identical, geographically contiguous and religiously similar. Apart from this, there exists a territorial unity that makes a clear distinction impossible.²⁸ However, if the above assertion is true, then it is apt to consider them as one of the dynasties formed by the children of Oduduwa. The nature of information is in contention. Oduduwa has sixteen grandchildren, Okanbi happens to be the only son of Oduduwa.²⁹ Orangun of Ila is the eldest while Oranmiyan is the youngest. It is however argued by the Benin historians that Oranmiyan ruled the Benin Kingdom at a point in time before he left in anger; this, however, gave reasons why the Yorubas

²⁵ A. Oguntuyi., *History of Ekiti: From the Beginning to 1939*, (Ibadan: Bisi Books, 1979,) p.21.

²⁶ T. Dzeka, O. S. Osadola, *Social-Cultural and Institutional Diffusion in Western Nigeria: An Assessment of Benin Influence on Ekiti*, *Makurdi Journal of Arts and Culture (MAJAC)*, Vol.13, 2015, pp. 215-225 see also A. Oguntuyi., *History of Ekiti: From the Beginning to 1939*, (Ibadan: Bisi Books, 1979,) p.28

²⁷ I. Olomola, *History of Ado- Ekiti from earliest times to the present*, (Ile-Ife: SA Printers Multi concept Co. 2017,)

²⁸ O. Biobaku, *Sources of Yoruba History*, (New York: Clarendon Press, 1973,) see also I. Olomola, *History of Ado- Ekiti from earliest times to the present*, (Ile-Ife: SA Printers Multi concept Co. 2017,)

²⁹ J. A. Atanda, *An Introduction to Yoruba History*. (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1980)

share so many things in common with the Benins in names and culture.³⁰ The Ekiti never acknowledged one single leader, and in fact, no two kingdoms were known to have been ruled together by a single Ekiti Oba. In spite of this, Ekiti through intermarriage, socialization of children, princes, and attendance of social occasions continue to uphold their oneness.

Archaeologically, the Yoruba race is not more than 2000 years,³¹ meaning other tribes existed before the Oduduwa appearance, this, however, gave credence to Benin's claim that they did not originate from the Yorubas.³² Oranmiyan returned to Ile- Ife from Benin after he installed his son, Eweka as the first Oba of Benin having being frustrated with the strange land. Benin was said to mean “the land of vexation” (Ile-Ibinu) because Oranmiyan left the place in annoyance.³³ Although there are controversies whether actually, Oranmiyan returned to Ile- Ife, it is undisputed that his remains were buried at Ile- Ife. Samuel Johnson gave a critical analysis of this controversy. He is of the view that due to the distance of traveling between the variously established dynasties during this era, it might be difficult if not downright impossible to bring the complete remains of Oranmiyan down to Ile- Ife. But customs allows the shaving of the deceased head and paring of his nails for burial rites.³⁴

The above, however, gave us a better understanding of the relationship between the Binis and the Yorubas no matter how controversial it might be. There is no doubt that the Edo people of Benin took some of their political ideas from their Yoruba neighbours. This historical understanding of the Benin and Yoruba correlation in ancient origin is of use to our knowledge of Benin's imperial activity in Ekiti land. Since Ekiti is said to be a sub-ethnic of the Yoruba derivation usually symbolized by their most familiar greeting of ‘*n okun o*’ (well-done), the similarities between the various villages that make up the entity called Ekiti cannot be discarded.³⁵ Aside from the fact that the word Ekiti connotes a hill- like land structure (Okiti),

³⁰ J. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, 5th edition, Benin City: Fortune Publisher, 2004, see also T. Dzeka, O. S. Osadola, Social-Cultural and Institutional Diffusion in Western Nigeria: An Assessment of Benin Influence on Ekiti, *Makurdi Journal of Arts and culture (MAJAC)*, Vol.13, 2015

³¹ J. A. Atanda., *An introduction to Yoruba History*, (Ibadan, University Press, 1980)

³² S. O. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*. (London: Lowe and Brydone printers, 1921,) pp. 159-160

³³ O. S. B. Omoregie., *Benin under the Ogiso Monarchy*, (Benin City: Neraso Publishers Limited, 1988,) See also T. Dzeka, O. S. Osadola, Social-Cultural and Institutional Diffusion in Western Nigeria: An Assessment of Benin Influence on Ekiti, *Makurdi Journal of Arts and culture (MAJAC)*, Vol.13, 2015, C. O. O. Ugowe., *Benin in World History*, Lagos Kosayaz Nigeria Limited, 1997.

³⁴ S. O. Johnson., *The History of the Yorubas*, (London: Lowe and Brydone Printers Limited, 1921.)

³⁵ O. Biobaku, *Sources of Yoruba History*, (New York: Clarendon Press, 1973,) see also I. Olomola, *History of Ado- Ekiti from earliest times to the present*, (Ile-Ife: SA Printers Multi concept Co. 2017,)

the various villages have decided to include the term not only as a name but also an identity. This explains why all the communities in the present day Ekiti state have the word Ekiti tagged to their names, i.e., Ado-Ekiti, Ikere-Ekiti, Ikole Ekiti, Aramoko Ekiti, etc.³⁶

Benin's Influence in Ekiti Land: Unending Dialogue

According to legend, Benin's influence and expansion in Ekiti land are ascertained. The present-day Ado Ekiti was formerly known as Ilesun. The community has her traditional ruler called Elesun who led and administered the town in full capacity, which according to Biobaku was efficient enough for the period in question, not until a visitor was accommodated from Benin kingdom who was said to be one of the princes of Benin called Ewi.³⁷ He uses his superior strength, maybe as a result of his exposure and military tactics, to seize the community and eventually behead it, traditional ruler. The head of Elesun was said to have been buried at Erekesan market in Ado Ekiti opposite the Ewi's palace.³⁸

Since the Ado and Ikere people shares boundaries, the people of Ado under the influence and political power of Ewi, (the Benin Prince) began to seize their farmlands having seen their political weaknesses. Ikere was headed by a traditional priest who has the sole responsibility of worshipping their famous rock called 'Olosunta'.³⁹ The zeal of overcoming the oppression of the Ado people under the leadership of Ewi, however, prompted the Ikere people to seek for the assistance of a Benin hunter who was known to be strong and powerful. He usually hunts for animals in the forest in-between Ikere and Akure which was said to be under the imperial power of the Oba of Benin as at that time. His name is 'Ogoga.' Although he was successful in his mission, the people, however, refuse to allow him to go back to his hunting because of the fear that the people of Ado might attack them again in no time. He was however offered accommodation and was encouraged to live among them. For the love and confident the people had in him, he was made the political head of Ikere while the existing chief priest retained his position as the traditional head of the community. This, however, explains why Ikere people up

³⁶ T. Dzeka, O. S. Osadola, Social-Cultural and Institutional Diffusion in Western Nigeria: An Assessment of Benin Influence on Ekiti, Makurdi Journal of Arts and culture (MAJAC), Vol.13, 2015

³⁷ O. Biobaku, *Sources of Yoruba History*, (New York: Clarendon Press, 1973),

³⁸ I. Olomola, *History of Ado- Ekiti from earliest times to the present*, (Ile-Ife: SA Printers Multi concept Co. 2017,) see also T. Dzeka, O. S. Osadola, Social-Cultural and Institutional Diffusion in Western Nigeria: An Assessment of Benin Influence on Ekiti, Makurdi Journal of Arts and culture (MAJAC), Vol.13, 2015

³⁹ Ibid

to date had two traditional heads, Ogoga, (the lineage of the Benin hunter) and Olukere (the descent of the Olosunta, chief priest).⁴⁰

Oguntuyi acknowledged the scholarly works of Johnson, Biobaku and Abraham who all accepted that “the Ekitis are among the aboriginal elements of the country absorbed by the invaders from the east.” Even though the belief of these scholars concerning the number of groups that invaded Ekiti varied, but they all acknowledge that the Ibinnin people who came into Ado-Ekiti, Akure, and Ikere probably in the 17th century were among the groups.⁴¹

Basil Davidson opines that one of the most famous Obas of Benin during the period of expansion was Ewuare who came to the throne in about 1440.⁴² According to him; Ewuare was powerful, courageous and wise. He was said to have fought against and captured 201 towns and villages in Ekiti, Ikare, Kukuruku, Eka and Ibo society. He, however, took their rulers captive and he compelled the people to pay tribute to him, but there was no written record or even oral tradition that laid credulity to Basil's claim, as no community in Ekiti was recorded to have paid tribute to the Oba of Benin.⁴³

According to Paula Ben-Amos, Benin was ruled by a series of kings who were called Ogisos or ‘rulers of the sky’.⁴⁴ Depending on the tradition, this dynasty consisted of thirty-one, twelve Ogisos.⁴⁵ A revolt by the people removed the Ogisos from the throne. After a brief attempt at republican government, the people asked the king of Ife in Yoruba land for one of his sons to rule them. He sent Oranmiyan whose own son Eweka became the first Oba in the dynasty which rules Benin today. By estimating the average reigns of Obas, scholars have suggested that the new dynasty was founded in the 13th century or somewhat earlier.⁴⁶ The transition of this new dynasty symbolizes a change in basic temporal and spatial orientation. The Ogiso period is archaic and essentially mythological. Neither strict chronology nor the exact number of kings is

⁴⁰ A. Oguntuyi, *History of Ekiti: From the Beginning to 1939*, (Ibadan: Bisi Books, 1979,) p.21.

⁴¹ Ibid p.3.

⁴² B. Davidson., *The Growth of African Civilization*, (London: Longman Group Limited, 1965.)

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ A. Ben-Paula., *The Art of Benin*, (London: Thames and Hudson Publishing, 1974.)

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ J. U. Egharevba, *The origin of Benin City*, (Benin City: African Industrial Press, 1954.)

essential. The second dynasty, in contrast, is founded on temporal duration and the activities, personalities, and innovations of nearly every Oba are remembered in excessive detail.⁴⁷

The reign of Ogiso Owodo witnessed unprecedented crises, conflicts, misrule, acrimony, and anarchy. Ogiso Owodo was said to have summoned the State Council Meeting only when there was trouble and had no respect for the kingmakers (Uzamas). He was said to have seriously breached the norms and ethics of the culture when he executed a pregnant woman who was said to be a helper to Queen Esagho. This was an abomination in Benin. It is further said that Ogiso Owodo had physical defects which affected his personality. This accounted for his erratic behaviour. It was therefore not a surprise that the people revolted and rejected the monarchical system of Government. This episode brought the Republican system of Government under the leadership of Evian for the first time in their history.⁴⁸

However, the establishment of a Yoruba dynasty brought Benin into a broader political and cultural orbit and redirected its spatial orientation from east to west. The east is the cardinal direction associated with the creator god, 'Osanobua,' and with the creation of the land, which first rose out of the primordial waters in a place which today is the Igbo town of Agbor to the east of Benin.⁴⁹ All the sites where once the Ogisos built their palaces and ancient quarters are on the eastern side of the present city. In contrast, the founder of the second dynasty came from Yoruba land to the west of Efon, and many of the essential early Obas came from western districts of the Benin kingdom. The change in spatial orientation was accompanied by a shift from a closed society to an open one; Benin became cosmopolitan, receptive to foreign ideas not only from the Yorubas but through expansion and trade, from other neighbouring groups and eventually from the western world.

Conclusion

This paper has been able to examine the history of the people of Benin and Ekiti. It has also been able to discuss the various ways in which Benin influences the people of Ado and Ikere Ekiti as a way of establishing the central question of this paper; that Benin people at a particular

⁴⁷ A. Ekhaguosa, *Benin City: The Edo State Capital*. (Benin City: Aisien Publishers, 1995.)

⁴⁸ M. Ediagbonya, *The Socio-political and Economic Transformation of Ughoton, (Benin Kingdom), ca, 1440-1897*, Ph.D. Thesis presented to the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, September 2015; pp. 37-38

⁴⁹ J. U. Egharevba., *A Short History of Benin*, 5th edition. (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1964.)

time affected the people of Ekiti. The relationship between the Ekitis and the Benins cannot be destabilized. The presence of Ewi and Ogoga in the Ilesun and Ikere political structure respectively depict a deep sense of relationship which must have occurred about cultural superiority. Furthermore, having the heads of all the late kings of Benin buried at Ile- Ife at a particular point in time is an indication of a uni-source explanation for both dynasties; a fact that can hardly be contended.

It could also be postulated that where whole complexes are similar in two differing ethnic stocks, the two groups have a common origin in the remote past which is the case of the Benin and Ekiti people. Whether single traits in entire complexes are adopted, it may be that the adoption answers the need in which adopting culture is deficient. More important, the items may be in tune with the present cosmos in the accepting culture. However, the relationship has gone a long way even in the area of names being answered by the Ekitis and the Benins; for instance, names like Osadola and Obaseki being answered by two essential families in Aramoko Ekiti has been argued to be a result of dovetailed cultural ethos due to the similarity-base among the Benin people.⁵⁰



⁵⁰ The people of Benin also bear similar names like "Osadolor" (Benin) closely pronounced with "Osadola" (Ekiti). "Obaseki" is also a notable family name in the history of Benin; 'Agho' known as Chief Obaseki. The people of Ekiti also answer these names. See also T. Dzeka, O. S. Osadola, Social-Cultural and Institutional Diffusion in Western Nigeria: An Assessment of Benin Influence on Ekiti, Makurdi Journal of Arts and culture (MAJAC), Vol.13, 2015, P. A. Igbafe, Obaseki of Benin, (London: Heinemann, 1972) pp. 3-5