

Urban Development and the Changing Role of the Balogun Institution in Abeokuta

Lanre Davies

Abstract

This study attempts to analyse the changing role of the Balogun chieftaincy title among the Egba, right from its inception when the Egba people consciously formed a military group for the defence of their townships at their Orile (homestead), and the time they arrived Abeokuta up till the twentieth century. Studies on Egba political and military history have not been devoted to the evolution of the Balogun chieftaincy institution in Egbaland or Abeokuta nor has any of these studies considered the changing role of the Balogun institution in an urban setting. This article is the first attempt at studying the changing roles of the Balogun institution from the time it was instituted in the Egba forest. It discusses the fortunes of the institution in the city of Abeokuta where urban and political development greatly affected the traditional role. The article argues that urbanisation and political development in the city of Abeokuta brought about the transformation of the Balogun to what it became in the twentieth century.

Introduction

Several works have been done on Egba history since the second half of the nineteenth century. Anna Tucker's *Abeokuta or Sunrise within the Tropics* and Saburi Biobaku's book *The Egba and Their Neighbours* are particularly noteworthy. Pallinder Law's "Government in Abeokuta with particular reference to the period of the Egba United Government" is a major contribution to the political history of the Egba. H. B. Harunah's "Evolution of Central Administration in Abeokuta, 1830-1898" is noteworthy in the context of the political and military history of the Egba in the nineteenth century. Adebeshin Folarin and Isaac Delano's works were all done on the political history of the Egba. Toyin Falola and Dare Oguntomisin's book on Abeokuta is also a major work on the political and military history of the Egba. B. O. Soḩuga's work entitled "A Comparative Study of Lisabi and Sodeke as Egba Statesmen" is also on the political and military history of the Egba. Segun Osunkeye's work, "Trade and Commerce in Traditional Egba Society" in *Abeokuta Home of the Egba*, and Harunah's article "Lagos-Abeokuta Relations in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland" in *The History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, were on the economic history of the precolonial Egbaland. To date, most of what has been written on the Egba treated the people's political, social, economic, and to a lesser extent, military history. The few studies that have devoted considerable attention to the military history of the Egba have neglected the evolution of the Balogun institution. Consequently, very little has been done to analyse the changing roles of the Balogun, especially in the city of Abeokuta. It is this gap that this article attempts to fill.

The Egba are a subgroup of the Yoruba who inhabited an area between Remo country and the present Oyo town, before the disturbance that destroyed their

homestead or Orile, following the outbreak of the Owu war. According to Samuel Johnson, the Egba originally occupied an area bounded by certain imaginary lines drawn from Ijaiye to meet the Ogun River at Olokemeji and another from the same point via Ibadan to the west of Ijebu Remo down to the coast (Johnson, 1997: 17). In the aftermath of the Owu war, the Egba kingdom, which had in no way been overtly involved in the problem that led to the Owu war, got punished for not joining in the war one way or the other. The victors accused the Egba of secretly helping the Owu during the war. Ironically, some Owu also laid siege against some Egba towns, accusing them of not coming to their aid. In the process, the Egba settlements became divided, as some joined the aggrieved Owu to fight other Egba settlements. And, between 1825 and 1827, the victorious army of Ijebu, Ife, and Oyo burnt one Egba town after the other (Akinjogbin, 1998: 33-51). The Egba subsequently dispersed and finally migrated to Abeokuta after the transit camps at Ibadan and Odo-Ona, from where Sodeke of Iporo led them to Abeokuta around 1830.

Origin of the Institution

Any meaningful analysis of the evolution of the institution of the Balogun chieftaincy title in Egbaland must take cognisance of the situation in the Egba forest before the Egba migrated to Abeokuta in 1830. In retrospect, the experience of the Egba under Oyo Empire was instrumental to the emergence of the Balogun chieftaincy title in the Egba forest. During the time of Gaha as Bashorun of Oyo, the Alaafin's authority over the Egba forest diminished. The representatives of the Alaafin, namely the Ilaris and Ajeles, managed to convert Oyo's problems to their advantage. They started to act as petty despots without the religious or political restraints which had previously made their presence acceptable (Gailey, 1982: 1). The Ilaris and Ajeles were no longer content with the collection of annual tributes. They virtually usurped the power of the Egba rulers. They tyrannised the Egba by making excessive demands from them and also harassing their women (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 114).

The activities of the Oyo Ajeles in the administration of the Egba at their Orile made Lisabi Agbongbolo Akala, an Itoku man by birth but who grew up at Igbein, to organise the Egba men into a mutual assistance society called *Aaro* (Ajisafe, 1964: 15) in every Egba town. Lisabi later converted the society into the Olorogun society (war society) which he used to rid the Egba of the excesses of the Ilaris and the Ajeles stationed in the various Egba towns in the three provinces (Gailey, 1982: 2). His principal lieutenants were Amosu of Ikija in Oke-Ona, Arinkotu of Ojoo and Akila of Iddo in Gbagura. Lisabi and his associates armed their followers in secret with bows and arrows, slings, spears, daggers, swords, hatchets, and clubs. Violent uprising eventually began in Lisabi's Igbein and soon spread to every other Egba town. It is estimated that over six hundred members of the families and associates of the Ilaris and Ajeles were murdered by the Egba (Gailey, 1982: 2). Thus, the uprising of the Egba Olorogun under Lisabi brought an end to the political domination of Egbaland by Oyo.

The attempt by the Alafin to re-conquer Egbaland proved abortive. An Oyo army made up of troops from Oyo, Ibarapa, and Egbado, crossed the River Ogun at Mokoloki and advanced towards Igbein, Lisabi's town. Lisabi had however hidden the women and children of the town in a ravine called Melegu. When the Oyo army entered Igbein, they found it deserted. As the invading army was busy ransacking the town, Lisabi's militia suddenly and swiftly descended on them and put them to rout (Gailey, 1982: 114). It has been argued that apart from the military tactics employed by Lisabi, the Egba's victory could also be attributed to the military weakness of the Oyo army under Alafin Abiodun (1774-1789). During his prosperous reign, the Oyo army became inefficient and was subsequently defeated by Borgu in 1783, Ife in 1791, and Lisabi's militia in 1796 (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 116).

Thus, the transformation of *Aaro* into the Olorogun society was very significant in the initiation of the Balogun chieftaincy title among the Egba, who had hitherto relied on the *Ode* society (hunters) for the defence of the society. The hunters of each town performed police duties and engaged in reconnaissance activities which were not effective in defending the Egba against external aggression. This limitation made the Egba to place themselves under the protection of the Alafin of Oyo. With the creation of the Olorogun society, Lisabi now led a standing militia that could be used to defend the Egba forest whenever occasion arose.

The victory of the Egba over the Oyo army made the Oke-Ogun people to enter into a treaty of peace with the Egba under Lisabi. This treaty was observed until the Agbaje war, when it was broken by the Oke-Ogun people. The people of Oke-Ogun exploited the disunity among the Egba to carry out frequent attacks on the Egba territories consequent upon the death of Lisabi (Ajisafe, 1964: 17). Falola and Oguntomisin quoted Ajisafe as saying:

With Lisabi at the head of this new force the Egba could now raise their own national force under a commander like their Oyo, Owu and Ijebu neighbours. With the existence of the Olorogun, the Egba would no longer need the protection of the Alafin of Oyo against external aggressors as the military society could be mobilised for defense (Ajisafe, 1964: 115 cited in Falola and Oguntomisin 2001:116).

The alliance with the Oke-Ogun people made the Egba to pursue an active common frontier policy against Dahomey, which raided Oke-Ogun periodically. Lisabi built a fortress on a hill in order to watch the activities of the enemies easily. He remained in this fortress at the head of a garrison (Biobaku, 1957: 10). Therefore, it can be safely concluded that Lisabi was the first commander of a united Egba army in remembered history even though he was not officially addressed as Balogun of the Egba. He however functioned as the Jagunna, which was the Egba equivalent of the Balogun title at that time. Ajisafe has shown how the Jagunna was the Commander in Chief of the Egba army. According to him:

The title "Jagunna" ranks higher than the title "Balogun"; it is a royal appointment and is equivalent to "Minister of war." The Jagunna rules

all the Baloguns either of his province or of all the other provinces. He is responsible to the king (Alake) alone, and is to wear his cap before the king when all other warriors would or must uncover their heads [sic] (Ajisafe, 1964: 29).

As a military leader, he organised an army that was capable of defending the sovereignty of the Egba. His army was divided into three columns – the centre, the right, and the left – each under a commander. The centre was commanded by the Jagunna, the right by the Lukotun, and the left, the Lukosi (Sonuga, 1966: 23). Lisabi also taught the Egba how to protect their townships by erecting fortifications around them. He is also remembered by traditional historians as a man who strictly enforced laws and taught the Egba how to protect their civic institutions. But his achievement went beyond commanding the Egba forces. He became a military and political leader under whom the Egba were not only united, but also prosperous (Ajisafe, 1964: 17). The Egba took advantage of their newly won independence and security to engage in trade beyond their immediate environment. They traded in kolanut with the Hausa of northern Nigeria, and also engaged in coastal trade at Badagry. These commercial activities brought prosperity to the Egba people. J. B. O. Losi recorded how Lisabi was proud to declare that “I fought for them (the Egba people) to wrap alari cloth and I warred for them to wear sekini cloth” (Losi, 1924: 9).

The achievements of Lisabi in the areas of peace, unity, prosperity, and security of the Egba nation notwithstanding, he later became unpopular among his chiefs. Ajisafe, Losi, Biobaku, and Falola and Oguntomisin have given various reasons for this, ranging from jealousy over his fame by his chiefs, war-weariness and resentment of conscription of young people who could be used on the farms into the army to his old age, among others. As a result of all these, Losi noted how Lisabi was decoyed to a hill in the Egba forest by some of his chiefs who were critical of his government and pushed into the ditch below where he was seen no more (Losi, 1924: 9). Biobaku, however, argued that Lisabi either died in a Dahomian raid on the Egba frontiers or mysteriously took his own life in the forest (Biobaku, 1957: 10).

The importance of the military arrangement under Lisabi in the Egba forest cannot be over-emphasised. Local differences had been submerged under the force of his personality and the need to combine to meet an external foe. His death however brought about a return to the ancient rivalries and jealousies among the Egba, and the ineffectiveness of the old federal authority which according to Biobaku, “was neither clearly defined nor able to assert itself” (Biobaku, 1957: 11). This was the prelude to the civil wars. Although Biobaku has argued that many of these might have occurred in the Egba forest before the Owu war (Biobaku, 1957: 11), the first to be recorded in Egba history was the Ogedepagbo war between Igbein and Itoku. The war resulted from the attempt to run a salt monopoly which Igbein “had either imposed or violated” (Biobaku, 1957: 11). When the parties to the dispute threatened to involve all the other Egba Alake towns, the blockade runner or

smuggler (Ogedepagbo of Itoku) was condemned to death and executed by the *Oro*.

The second civil war was as a result of a chieftaincy dispute between Asalu and Depolu in Ilugun under Oke-Ona province. Some Egba Alake townships tried to intervene to stop the war but their overtures were rejected. They thereafter aided Depolu to expel his arrogant rival Asalu (Ajisafe, 1964: 46-47). The third was the Agbaje civil war. The war broke out because seven Egba Alake towns (Itoko, Erunwon, Ijeun, Itoku, Oba, Itesi, and Itori) formed their own court at a central place called Kosofe, where their combined Parakoyi gave such impartial justice that they completely ignored the Alake's court (Ile Ogboni Ake). When this rival court began to withhold a portion of its fees which it formerly sent to Alake Okikilu, he decided to move against it by enlisting the assistance of Agbaje, a notable warrior from Ijanna in the Egbado country who brought a large army into the Egba forest. The Egba raised a large force and besieged the Alake at Ake. Alake Okikilu fled to Kemta after Agbaje forces had been defeated at Itori. It has been argued that Alake Okikilu died either by accident or design (Ajisafe, 1964: 48-49). Okikilu was the last Alake in the Egba forest and another Alake was not appointed until 1854 after the Egba had migrated to Abeokuta. The fourth outbreak of war in the Egba forest was between Itoku and Oba. The cause of the war is still shrouded in mystery but Ajisafe has noted that it was the fiercest and the most horrible war ever fought in the Egba forest (Ajisafe, 1964: 49). According to him, one Lakoso, a powerful war chief in Ijeun, helped the Itoku people and this enabled the Itoku people to subdue the Oba people even as Lakoso himself received a mortal blow in the course of the war (Ajisafe, 1964: 49).

The civil wars that resulted from the collapse of the first military arrangement initiated by Lisabi emphasised the weakness of the federal civil authorities in the Egba forest. Even though the Alake was *primus inter pares*, and was universally acknowledged as the supreme judicial authority, there was no binding obligation to resort to his court as powerful individuals could ignore it altogether. There was the will to act collectively in settling inter-township disputes (as in the Ilugun civil war) but it did not bear fruit in the absence of recognisable military machinery as experienced under Lisabi. When Egba Alake towns established a central Parakoyi court, their success tempted them towards separatism. Again when Alake Okikilu failed in his attempt to deal with seceding towns, his office fell into abeyance simply because there was no central coercive machinery.

This lack of cohesion and mutual jealousies proved destructive to the Egba at the time of the upheaval which engulfed Yorubaland in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when the allied forces of Ife, Ijebu, and Oyo refugees invaded the Owu kingdom, whose territory was adjacent to the Egba forest. After the destruction of Owu, the victorious forces attacked one Egba town after the other. Incidentally, the Egba lacked the leadership and internal cohesion to contain or even repel the attack of the enemies. Instead of evolving all Egba military machinery as practised under Lisabi, the Egba townships aided the enemies against their fellow Egba towns and even rejoiced at the fate of such towns until the same

fate befell them. As a result, the whole Egba forest was completely devastated by the allied forces (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 118).

Institutionalisation of Balogun Chieftaincy among the Egba

As noted earlier, the inability of the Egba to unite against the invading forces of Ife, Ijebu, and Oyo spelt doom for the Egba towns which were destroyed by the enemies. In the demoralising atmosphere of the period, the Egba failed to perceive the advantage of a united defensive action. The calamity that befell the Egba rendered many Egba towns desolate. Apart from Awe, Fiditi, Iloba, Abena, Akinmorin, Agerige, Aran, Kojoku, and Oroko, which had submitted themselves to the Alafin (Ajisafe, 1964: 55), Ibadan was the only Egba town which was not destroyed. It used to be an Egba Gbagura town but was later occupied by the invading forces. Dispersed and chastened, the Egba wandered for some time before they finally resorted to Ibadan, now under Okunade, the *Maye* of Ife, and the commander-in-chief of the allied forces. Ibadan later became the rallying point of the Yoruba and the bulwark of the Yoruba defence against the Fulani (Biobaku, 1957: 14). It was at this time that all the foreign war titles, with the exception of Bashorun and Aare-Ona Kakanfo, were introduced to the Egba (Ajisafe, 1964: 55). According to Biobaku:

At Ibadan, the Egba regrouped themselves and evolved the first truly federal organisation, an all-Egba military command. They adopted Oyo-Yoruba ideas and titles for their forces. Yisa of Itoko... became the Balogun... of the Egba, Debaoku of Ijemo, and the Seriki. Each had his right- and left-wing commanders. There was also the cavalry, led by the Sarumi and his lieutenants. The old militia, the *olorogun*, had given way to an organisation approaching a national army except that its units were still organised according to the old towns (Biobaku, 1957: 14).

Thus, Yisa of Itoko became the first Egba man to assume the title of Balogun in Egba history. He was said to have become conspicuous for his bravery and military tact and subsequently was made the first Balogun of the Egba army in Ibadan under *Maye*, while Deboku of Ijemo became the Seriki of the Egba army (Ajisafe, 1964: 57). However, when age began to tell on them, the two military men retired from active service. Lamodi succeeded Yisa as the Balogun of the Egba army, while Denlu succeeded Deboku as the Seriki. Denlu was later succeeded by Sodeke of Iporo as Seriki of the Egba army. It is important to note that at the time Lamodi emerged as the Balogun of the Egba army, Lakanle was the Balogun of the Oyo army, Kale was the Balogun of the Ijebu army, while Ege was the Balogun of the Ife army, all of whom were under the command of *Maye*, the commander-in-chief at Ibadan (Ajisafe, 1964: 58).

The situation in Ibadan at the time Lamodi emerged the Balogun of the Egba did not encourage the continued co-existence of the Egba with the other Yoruba groups in the town. At that time, the motley assemblage of people in Ibadan lacked food and other means of livelihood. As a result, the Oyo, Ijebu, and the Ife allies were in the habit of kidnapping the Egba and selling them into slavery (Ajisafe,

1964: 58). The Egba people tried to prevent this to no avail as they were outnumbered by the hostile forces in Ibadan. When the situation became unbearable, the Egba people decided to leave Ibadan and encamp far away from the hostile forces on the western side of the Ona River. This decision was communicated to Maye, who initially refused and charged the Egba leaders with rebellion. He later ruled that unless the sincerity of the Egba to leave Ibadan was proved by the casting of kola in their favour, the Egba people would be destroyed. The Egba however, managed to free themselves from Maye's charge and finally encamped at the Ona transit camp under Sodeke (Ajisafe, 1964: 58).

Before the Egba departed Ibadan, Egba leaders under Balogun Lamodi had arranged that some Egba should remain in Ibadan to forestall any surprise attack by the hostile army. Therefore, Balogun Lamodi, Agburin of Ilugun, Soge of Ibadan, and Lasilo, the Osiele, with all their followers, remained in Ibadan, while Sodeke the Seriki of the Egba army led the remaining Egba people to the western side of the Ona River. This military strategy prevented Maye, the commander in chief of the allied forces who regarded the Egba as his bondsmen, from launching a surprise attack on the Egba people.

However, when the allied forces realised that the presence of Balogun Lamodi in Ibadan would frustrate their plan of attacking the Egba, they conspired against him. They invited him to a friendly meeting presided over by Maye, the commander-in-chief, where he was to be assassinated. Balogun Lamodi attended the meeting with some of his followers. According to Ajisafe, the sight of Balogun Lamodi overawed the conspirators. Instead, the bard of Balogun Ege of Ife, sang his praise thus:

O mighty Ege! how strange it seems to me ---
Brave and powerful as thou art ---
Yet a coward should be!
What! The hind legs of the dreadful wolf
Have been caught and held fast;
And yet there's none to confront him! [sic] (Ajisafe, 1964: 59)

Chief Ege, the Balogun of Ife, was said to have been so irked that he took his loaded gun and fired at Balogun Lamodi whom he missed. In self-defense, Balogun Lamodi shot and killed his assailant, Chief Ege, the Balogun of Ife. He was said to have fired another shot at chief Maye, but missed his target (Ajisafe, 1964: 60). Consequently, the conspirators and their followers attacked Balogun Lamodi and his followers who were pursued towards the Egba encampment at Oke Ona. In an attempt to rescue his son, Osota, from the conspirators, Balogun Lamodi was grievously wounded but still managed to get to the Egba camp on the western side of River Ona. He died the following day. Before his death, he urged Sodeke the Seriki and other Egba leaders to save the Egba from annihilation by the hostile forces by urging them to lead the Egba people to a secure place of abode (Ajisafe, 1964: 60).

Not satisfied with the new development, the allied forces under chief Maye regrouped and decided on a final onslaught on the Egba at their Oke-Ona camp. Maye's forces arrived at Oke-Ona to discover that the Egba, although outnumbered, were prepared for attack under their new Balogun, Sodeke. With daring courage, the Egba defended themselves against the combined Ibadan forces under Maye. They fought with the desperation of a people whose very existence was threatened. The Egba under Balogun Sodeke put the allied forces to rout. The allied forces fled in all directions and were pursued by the Egba soldiers who captured Chief Oluyole and his horse (Ajisafe, 1964: 61). He was later released by Balogun Sodeke through the entreaty of Maye. His horse was released to him much later.

Thereafter, the Egba decided to vacate their Oke-Ona camp for a safer place. It was clear to the Egba that the trans-Ona camp was too close to Ibadan for their safety. Balogun Sodeke had heard of a site far away from Ibadan to which three hunters had escaped in the course of the disturbance that destroyed the Egba towns. Tradition claims that the site was the farm of a man from Itoko who was also a member of the Ogboni. Oral sources have it that it was this man that introduced the Olubara into the Ogboni statecraft. Other traditions maintain that the site belonged to an Egbado man called Adagba (Biobaku, 1957: 16).

Whatever it was, Balogun Sodeke quickly dispatched some hunters to make the necessary investigation preparatory to settlement in the area. Having also made the necessary enquiry from Ifa, through soil sample taken from the site, Balogun Sodeke led the Egba to the new settlement "under the stone." It was this site that expanded to become a formidable city called Abeokuta. A notable chief of Ikija, Ogunbona, who later became prominent in Abeokuta, joined the Egba shortly before they left their trans-Ona settlement. Hotly pursued by the allied forces under Maye, Chief Ogunbona escaped capture by denying that he was an Egba man. He told his interrogators that he was an Ijebu because of the *ebe* marks on his back.

The evacuation of Oke Ona camp was carefully planned. Chief Sodeke, the Balogun, detailed an advance party to cut a wide track through the forest to the chosen site. Sodeke himself and the Egba Alake people constituted the advance party. They were followed by the Egba Gbagura people led by Agbo. The Oke-Ona people brought up the rear and were led by Lumloye, the Balogun of Ilugun. A skeletal force under Agburin of Ilugun, Soge, and Lasilo the Osiele of Ilugun, protected the rear and used delay tactics against Maye's forces (Biobaku, 1957: 17). Both Agburin of Ilugun and Soge of Ibadan later joined the others at Abeokuta while Lasilo, settled at an outpost named after him to forestall any surprise attack on Abeokuta (Biobaku, 1957: 17).

The Balogun Institution in Nineteenth Century Abeokuta

The Balogun institution was instrumental to the effective defence and administration of Abeokuta right from the time the Egba settled in Abeokuta till the end of the nineteenth century. An all Egba Olorogun was established for the whole of Abeokuta. Even though there was an attempt to re-create the old Egba

townships, a federal Egba Olorogun was preferred to the civil government of the Egba forest in the chaotic situation the Egba found themselves in Abeokuta. From 1830, when the main body of the Egba entered Abeokuta, they settled on the western side of the Olumo Rock from where the remnants of the old towns formed townships or quarters to which they gave the names of their former townships. Some pre-fixed *Ago* (camp) to the names in order to keep alive the desire to return to the old location in less troubled times in the future (Biobaku, 1957: 17).

Chief Sodeke allowed all Egba refugees to settle in Abeokuta. Very soon three main Egba groups of Egba Alake, Egba Gbagura, and Egba Oke-Ona congregated in Abeokuta. They were later joined in 1831 by the Owu. The Egba surrounded the new settlement with a wall which was constantly adjusted as new refugees arrived and formed their own quarters. Balogun Sodeke allotted land to the new-comers, and the settlement quickly spread over parcels of land formerly farmed by the people of Itoko and Ijemo (Biobaku, 1957: 17).

However, the Egba settlers faced two immediate problems in Abeokuta. The shortage of food supply and insecurity like: Food, clothing, and money were very scarce. The food supplied by the Itoko, Ijemo and their Ibara, Isaga and Ilewo neighbours were not enough to feed the teeming population. So great was the famine that occurred that some of the settlers pawned their children and wives to the Ijemo and Itoko people for food (Ajisafe, 1964: 64). Balogun Sodeke solved this problem by asking the people to take to farming. And within one year of settlement in Abeokuta, the Egba were able to produce food in abundance for all and sundry (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 120).

In the area of defence, Balogun Sodeke, like Lisabi before him, realised that unless the Egba could consolidate their strength in the defence of a single town, they were doomed as a people. This explains why he threw open the gate of Abeokuta to all Egba refugees, the Owu, and much later the Saro returnees, in order to transform the town into an impregnable fortress. No doubt, this put severe strain on the town as the Egba were soon hard pressed for food and other supplies. But as said earlier, the people later got over the problem.

The nascent settlement was soon threatened by the old enemies of the Egba – the Ibadan and Ijebu marauders – who overran the newly established farms of the Egba and kidnapped in broad daylight anyone who ventured beyond the town wall. Balogun Sodeke and the Olorogun drove the marauders off and pursued them far into the Ijebu country and within sight of the coast (Biobaku, 1957: 18). In order to keep their Ijebu attackers at bay, Sodeke and the Egba soldiers attacked Ijebu Remo towns, capturing Offin, Makun, Ogere, Ilishan, Ode, and Isamoro. They also attacked Ota, which they suspected was aiding the Ijebu (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 120). A combined Ibadan and Ijebu force drove the Egba from Ota. They returned to Abeokuta via Agbamaiya on the Ogun River. The Egba's attack on Ota revealed that the Egba desired to control the trade route to the coast from their new location which the Ibadan and the Ijebu were trying to prevent. They were desirous of crushing the Egba before they became too powerful.

The Egba's attack and capture of Ijebu Remo's towns notwithstanding, the Ijebu and Ibadan planned a joint attack on Abeokuta. However, Ibadan sent a small detachment under Oluguna, because of Ibadan's involvement in war with Ipetumodu. Thus the Owivi war of 1832 was fought mainly between Ijebu and the Egba. Balogun Kalejaiye and six other Ijebu generals led the Ijebu soldiers while Sodeke personally led the Egba soldiers. In the first encounter, the Ijebu defeated the Egba with heavy casualty. The Egba retreated to Ibara and drew reinforcement from Abeokuta. When the news of the defeat reached Abeokuta, the Egba panicked so much that some of them drowned themselves in the Ogun River rather than fall victim to the Ijebu invaders or resume another period of wandering and suffering in the forest (Biobaku, 1957: 19).

Balogun Sodeke gathered the remaining Egba soldiers and also sought the assistance of Oba Adele of Lagos who not only procured arms and ammunition for the Egba but also led his own force personally to assist the Egba (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 120). Moreover, the Egba were said to have accidentally forestalled a major attack on their position at Ibara and pursued the disconcerted Ijebu into Egbado territory. Again, acting on information provided by Ishaga spies, the Egba intercepted an Ijebu convoy which was taking gunpowder to the Ijebu army. Equally important was the fact that the Egba were protected on their southern flank by a neutral Ota, which was then under the leadership of Ajano. In addition, before Sodeke attacked the Ijebu, a plague broke out in their camp to compound their problems (Biobaku, 1957: 20). Therefore, when the final battle was fought, the Ijebu were at a great disadvantage. Although the Ijebu fought brilliantly well, the result was predictable. Balogun Kalejaiye and the remaining six Ijebu war generals were captured, executed, and their heads taken as trophies to Abeokuta where they were buried in front of Sodeke's compound at Iporo (Ajisafe, 1964: 66).

Strengthened by their victory over the Ijebu, the Egba accused the Egbado towns of collaborating with the Ijebu, and so sent a detachment under Apati the Bada of Kemta to punish the Egbado people. Apati destroyed several Egbado towns notably Ijanna, Imala, Kesan, and also attacked Ilaro, their capital. The Olu of Ilaro was driven to Itoro, where he was captured and slain (Biobaku, 1957: 20). The people of Ilaro fled to Idogo, and elected another Olu, whose reign was short. The Egba later forced the people of Ilaro to re-settle at Ilaro and made them to install a pro-Egba Olu, and to accept an Ajele from Abeokuta to supervise the administration and collect annual tributes for the Egba (Biobaku, 1957: 20). Having conquered Egbado, the Egba attained supremacy in the Egbado country. As a result, the Egba succeeded in keeping the trade routes to the coast open. The major routes important to them were Lagos, Badagry, and Ota. The Egba watched events in these areas with keen interest.

The Balogun also protected the Egba against armed bandits in Abeokuta, when the new town was infested by armed robbers led by one Dado, a chief of Igan in the Egbado country, and from Ibadan marauders. Between them, they raided and laid waste the north-western farms of the Egba, in 1834. Initially, Balogun Sodeke

established a system of day and night watch but this proved inadequate. Then a sizeable force under Agana, an Igbein chief, was sent to either capture or kill Dado. The first force sent by Balogun Sodeke was driven back. But a second one under Apati, the Seriki of the Egba, drove back the marauders at Samore, and captured a lot of booty (Biobaku, 1957: 22-23).

Not long after this, the Egba found themselves confronted by the great might of Ibadan. In 1835, Bashorun Oluyole led a very large force to invade Abeokuta. The Ibadan were supported by Kurunmi of Ijaiye, the Aare Ona Kakanfo of Yorubaland, and Ayo of Abemo (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 120), two notable war generals, who joined Oluyole at Olokemeji. The grand forces hoped to sack Abeokuta by surprise. The Egba sentries however spotted the invading forces and alerted the Egba soldiers. Balogun Sodeke quickly mobilised an Egba force to engage the enemy on a hill close to the town. In the first encounter, both sides were forced to retreat. The invaders camped on the other side of the Arakanga stream and began a regular siege on Abeokuta for over three months. The Egba regrouped and launched a vigorous attack on Ibadan and their allies and put them to flight. The Egba pursued them as far as Olokemeji, killing many of them and also capturing many as slaves. Balogun Sodeke returned to Abeokuta triumphantly with his forces and booty (Biobaku, 1957: 24).

The defeat of Ibadan at the Arakanga war of 1835 elicited various reactions at the time. The Ibadan gave excuses for their defeat – the campaign was badly planned and ill executed; junior chiefs followed their leaders half-heartedly and carried fake kegs of gunpowder which were in fact filled with yam flour, etc (Johnson, 1997: 251-252). Johnson also argued that the Ibadan merely attacked Abeokuta to avenge the death of Oshun, the chief of the Oyo cavalry, who was killed at Oniyefun in the aftermath of the Owiwi war, and not to destroy Abeokuta (Johnson, 1997: 251-252). Whatever was the reason for Ibadan's defeat; the Egba had defeated not only the strongest military power in Yorubaland, but also some of the best war generals in Yorubaland, and had succeeded in driving back Ibadan permanently.

The victory of the Egba over the Ibadan also marked a turning point in Egba history. Refugees poured into Abeokuta between 1836 and 1842. Balogun Sodeke's fame spread far and wide. All the Egba who had hidden in the forest during Egba dispersal from the Egba forest now found their ways back to Abeokuta. Inhabitants of friendly towns, especially from Oke-Ogun, who fled before invaders now found refuge in Abeokuta. Captives of war, especially of Oyo, Ife, and Ijebu, brought back by the Olorogun, when not sold into slavery were absorbed into the Egba household as domestic slaves (Biobaku, 1957: 24-25). Thus Abeokuta was fortified with immigrants and became readier than ever to withstand any attack. More importantly, the Egba were now confident enough to embark on the offensive.

The Egba attacked the people of Iperu whom they believed supplied Ibadan with gunpowder during the Arakanga war. The Balogun of Odo, Aiyejorun, led the Egba force by the quickest route to Iperu, but failed to surprise the town. Iperu

quickly appealed to Ibadan for help. The Egba were said to have feigned a retreat, drew the people out and then fell upon them with deadly results. Arrival of the Ibadan force led by Lakanle however saved Iperu. The Egba then withdrew having lost Aiyejorun. They returned to Abeokuta with some Ibadan captives (Biobaku, 1957: 24).

Politically, the Balogun institution was effectively used to administer Abeokuta under Balogun Sodeke. It should be noted that during the brief stay of the Egba in Ibadan, they had resuscitated the Olorogun not only as a unifying force, but also as their militia. Under Lisabi, the Olorogun transformed from a socioeconomic organisation into an essentially military society. Under Sodeke in Abeokuta, the society was restructured along the model of the Oyo army with its hierarchy of officers. Balogun Sodeke organised the Olorogun society at federal and local levels. Sodeke himself was the Balogun and commander in chief of the Egba army. Chief Apati of Kemta succeeded Degeshi as Seriki after his death; Lumloye of Ilugun in Oke-Ona was appointed Otun (commander of the right wing), while chief Agbo of Gbagura was made the Osi (commander of the left wing) of the all Egba forces (Biobaku, 1957: 21). The new high command was now made representative of all the Egba sections.

Nonetheless, the old township of Ologun remained. Many war chiefs did not have federal titles. They merely took township titles until there were vacancies in the central high command. The Olorogun of each township was responsible for its administration while the central Olorogun concerned itself with matters affecting Egbaland as a whole. A central Olorogun house was built behind Sodeke's house where the central Olorogun chiefs discussed matters ranging from the appointment of military officers, defence and military expeditions, to foreign policy. The central Olorogun council also decided on matters referred to it from the township or local Olorogun councils. Decisions reached at the central Olorogun council were taken to the various Egba townships for implementation. Sodeke led the Olorogun and presided over its central council meetings until his death in 1845 (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 121). Thus under Balogun Sodeke, as in the days of Lisabi, the Olorogun became an instrument of political cohesion in Egbaland.

The Olorogun under Balogun Sodeke led the Egba when there was no civil authority in Abeokuta before any Egba section appointed civil heads. The government presided over by Balogun Sodeke in the exigency of the period was essentially military and this made the commander-in-chief to be very powerful. In spite of the awesome power possessed by Sodeke, he was unlike Kurunmi of Ijaiye, far from being autocratic. It has been argued that the federal nature of the Egba military government, especially the representative structure of the central Olorogun council, meant that decisions reached at the council represented the wishes of all sections of the Egba in Abeokuta. In addition, the presence of such powerful men as Deliyi, the Balogun of Ijemo, Apati of Kemta, Ogunbona, and Ogundipe Alatishe provided adequate checks on Sodeke (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 122). Just as in Ibadan, rivalry was very common among these chiefs. Ajisafe noted how chief Deliyi once challenged the supremacy of Sodeke as the

overall head of the Egba in Abeokuta, an incident that would have resulted into serious breakdown of law and order but for the tact of Tejuoso, an Ifa priest, who awarded the honour to Sodeke, but fined him because he risked the safety of the new town under him in civil strife (Ajisafe, 1964: 68-69). After this incident, his supremacy was no longer challenged by any of his colleagues.

The Olorogun institution under Sodeke also influenced the development of civil authority in Abeokuta. Balogun Sodeke realised that a civil constitution had to be established as soon as the emergency which gave rise to the Olorogun was over. A new civil authority, under Losi, a descendant of an Alake in the Egba forest, was put in place as an attempt to organise an all Egba Ogboni. A grand lodge (Ile Ogboni Egba) was built at Itoko and its officers were drawn from various townships of the Egba Alake section (Biobaku, 1957: 21). The idea of a federal civil authority in the 1830s was new and also short-lived as Losi, the Oluwo of the all Egba Ogboni, built an Ogboni lodge at Ake, his own quarters. Other all Egba Ogboni leaders followed suit in their various quarters but these civil authorities were all overshadowed by the Olorogun.

The liberated Egba who had been set free at Sierra Leone by the British Naval Squadron were encouraged to return to Abeokuta as a result of the peace guaranteed by the Olorogun under Sodeke. By 1842, their population had risen to more than five hundred. Balogun Sodeke allowed them to practise their own religion, appoint their own headmen, and administer their own community. It was on their advice that Sodeke favourably received Christian missionaries, such as Thomas Birch Freeman (1842), and Henry Townsend (1843) (Falola and Oguntomisin, 2001: 122). The favourable disposition of Sodeke to the Christian missionaries created a very conducive atmosphere for the work of the missionaries in Abeokuta, when they finally decided to settle down even after the death of Sodeke in 1845.

Shortly before the death of Balogun Sodeke, the cordial relationship between the Egba and Ota broke down. It has been argued that the Ajano of Ota "demanded from the Egba an exorbitant price for his friendship that safeguarded their trade route to Lagos" (Biobaku, 1957: 27). The Egba took up the challenge and sent a force under Lumloye, the Otun Egba, to reduce Ota. Ibadan, Kosoko of Lagos, and Ado had offered to help Ota but the Egba quickly surrounded Ota in such a way that they prevented Ota from receiving the desired help from its allies. After a long siege that weakened Ota's resistance, the Egba stormed the town and took it in 1842. The Ota people were allowed to remain in the town for as long as they did not rebuild the town walls, and the Egba also placed an Ajele there to collect tributes for the Egba (Biobaku, 1957: 27).

At the fall of Ota, Lumloye wanted to proceed to Ado but Sodeke disagreed. He realised that unlimited expansion in the Egbado region might bring the Egba into an unnecessary clash with Dahomey. The conquest of Ota was necessary as it had kept open the trade route to Lagos as far as Ebute Meta. Balogun Sodeke was always mindful of the danger from Ibadan and did not want the Egba forces to be

tied down elsewhere in case the Ibadan re-appeared from the north. Hence he overruled Lumloye, who died shortly after his return to Abeokuta. A small force sufficient to continue a siege but not to conquer Ado was therefore left outside the town (Biobaku, 1957: 27).

Moreover, renewed hostility between Abeokuta and Ado-Odo made the Egba to declare war on Ado-Odo. The Egba accused Ado-Odo of interfering with Egba trading activities along the Badagry route. Dahomey, being in good relations with Ado-Odo, saw the Egba siege as an opportunity to attack Abeokuta on the ground that Ado-Odo was a tributary to Porto Novo. Gezo (the Leopard) led the invasion himself, but he underestimated the Egba. The Egba forces led by Ayikondú met Dahomey at Imojulu and drove Dahomey back. Gezo their king narrowly escaped capture while his war charms, stool, and royal umbrella made from the skins of different animals were seized by the Egba (Tella, 1998: 23). The Egba took these trophies to Abeokuta and Dahomey vowed to regain them at all cost. Rev Samuel Johnson has argued that Dahomey negotiated the return of the items to Dahomey all to no avail as they had been destroyed. King Gezo was said to have vowed that he would not live without the destruction of Abeokuta (Tella, 1998: 23).

After the defeat of Dahomey, the Egba continued their siege of Ado-Odo more actively such that when Henry Townsend returned from England, he could not proceed immediately to Abeokuta, because the Egba had blocked the route. Townsend had to negotiate with the authorities in Abeokuta for safe passage. While negotiating for this, Sodeke died. The death of Sodeke raised serious constitutional issues and this protracted Townsend's negotiations with the Egba. Sodeke had welcomed the advent of Christianity and European influence. He had applied the necessary restraint on the Olorogun, without which they would have endangered the new settlement by dissipating their energies on slave raiding. Although Balogun Sodeke's leadership lacked traditional sanction, he proved to be a leader of the highest calibre.

However, the demise of Balogun Sodeke brought about a decline in the fortune of the Balogun institution in Egbaland. His demise resulted in the factionalisation of the Olorogun institution in Abeokuta. Apati the Seriki, expected to succeed to the vacant office of the Balogun of the Egba because he had been next in rank to Sodeke. However, Ayikondú the Balogun of Igbein was chosen instead in conformity with the traditional practice whereby Igbein supplied the supreme commander of the Egba armies which dated back to Lisabi's time (Biobaku, 1957: 32). But since the the Egba's dispersal from their forest, township affiliations had been ignored in the choice of federal Ologun. Yisa of Itoko and Sodeke of Iporo had held the office at different times. Only once was the holder of the office (Sodeke) challenged by Deliyi of Ijemo. In the more settled state of affairs in 1845, the Igbein people asserted their traditional privilege to the title of Balogun of Egbaland which they refused to surrender to Apati, a Kemta chief. Moreover, Apati was of servile origin. Apati's real name was believed to be Humpati. His father was an Egun slave while his mother was of Oyo descent (Biobaku, 1957: 32).

Although Ayikundu offered to step down when Apati vigorously asserted his right to succeed Sodeke, the people of Igbein eventually kept their traditional title while Apati imported a higher rank which satisfied his pride. He purchased the Oyo imperial title of Bashorun from Oluyole, its holder in Ibadan. At about the same time, Anoba of Ago-Ika in Gbagura purchased the title of Are-ona-Kakanfo from Kurunmi of Ijaiye (Biobaku, 1957: 32). Biobaku has argued that the titles were personal to their holders and that their introduction to Egbaland was a concession to "over-mightiness and the innovation encouraged extra-constitutional actions on the part of the Ologun whose pretensions were not recognised within the framework of the Egba traditional constitution" (Biobaku, 1957: 32). However, neither Apati nor Ayikundu was able to succeed to Sodeke's prestige and leading position among the Egba. The civil authorities regained some influence. Thus, Henry Townsend had to negotiate his safe passage with both the leaders of the Ologun and the Ogboni. Apart from writing letters to Apati the Bashorun and Okukenu the Sagbua of Ake, Townsend also wrote a letter to Ogunbonna, the Balogun of Ikija another influential chief.

Moreover, events in Lagos, after the demise of Sodeke, further revealed the decline in the power of the Ologun. When Akitoye ascended the throne in 1841, he recalled all exiles including his ambitious nephew, Kosoko, who lived in Porto Novo and Whydah where he became acquainted with Portuguese slave dealers. So, when in 1845 Akitoye decided to admit the English to Lagos, abolish the slave trade, and promote legitimate commerce, Kosoko placed himself at the head of the supporters of slave trade on the island and rebelled against his mild uncle. After a twelve-day civil war, Akitoye was defeated by Kosoko, and many of Akitoye's followers were captured and slain. Akitoye therefore took refuge in Abeokuta with friends and relations (Aderibigbe, 1975: 1-26). A pro-Kosoko party in Abeokuta opposed Akitoye's stay and demanded his head to be sent to Kosoko in Lagos. Okukenu the Sagbua of Ake and the head of the Ogboni, on the other hand, provided refuge for Akitoye, in his own township of Ake. The ogboni supported Akitoye not only because his mother was an Egba, but also because he opposed the slave trade while the leading Ologun supported Kosoko because of his support for the slave trade (Harunah, 1987: 199). Hence, the question of asylum for Akitoye created a rift in Abeokuta after the demise of Sodeke, as a result of which the pro-Kosoko party led by Basorun Apati attacked the Ake people by burning their houses. The people of Ake in consequence relocated and Ake quarter was established on its present site which was then on the outskirts of the town.

The support of the leading Ologun for slave trade resulted in the Abaka raid of 1846. According to Biobaku, the raid on Abaka in Oke-Ogun "might be explained as the action of the slave-trade party who wanted to carry on business with Domingo Martinez at Badagry" (Biobaku, 1957: 34). The Abaka raid illustrated further the division and weakness of the Egba state. The leading Ologun and their forces were now a law unto themselves. The slave trade party was in the ascendancy among the Ologun at this time. It completely disregarded the official policy of the Egba, which until the death of Sodeke had been against the slave trade. After the Abaka raid, fresh agitation against Akitoye broke out and

Okukenu, the Sagbua of Ake, judged it best to allow Akitoye to leave Abeokuta. Akitoye was therefore, escorted to the frontier of the town of Imowo and handed over to the people of Badagry, who were charged to protect him from Kosoko or risk the wrath of the Egba (Biobaku, 1957: 34).

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Ologun institution in Abeokuta was no longer as powerful as it was under Balogun Sodeke. In 1848, when Henry Townsend returned to England, it was clear that the civil authorities under Okukenu were in the ascendancy as Townsend took a letter from Okukenu, the Sagbua of Ake, and chiefs of Abeokuta, to Queen Victoria. The Egba used the letter to profess hatred for the slave trade and identified Lagos as its stronghold. The Egba wanted to navigate the Lagos lagoon and link Abeokuta to the coast through the Ogun River (Biobaku, 1957: 35). The land route from Badagry via Ado-Odo to Abeokuta was becoming more and more unsatisfactory and needed to be replaced by an inland waterway which would be within Egba jurisdiction. In this way, the missions and traders would receive their stores and supplies in safety, and the Egba a more secure trade route. Only the British preventive squadron could guarantee this.

After Henry Townsend's return to Abeokuta from England in 1850, the immediate problem confronting the Egba was the survival of Abeokuta against Dahomean attack. The persecution of the Christians notwithstanding, as at Itoku, in 1848-49 and in 1850 at Igbore, supporters of slave trade were still active, and the point of interest is that it illustrated the absence of a central authority, which Ologun adequately provided under Sodeke. Despite the seeming disagreement between the leading Ologun and the civil authorities in Abeokuta, at a meeting with Consul Beecroft where Sokenu the Seriki was the spokesperson, the Egba jointly requested the fortification of their town and also suggested that Akitoye be reinstated at Lagos (Biobaku, 1957: 43).

While the British were still thinking about the reinstatement of Akitoye, Abeokuta was attacked by Dahomey, on March 3, 1851, just two days after the installation of Somoye as the Basorun. Before Dahomey attacked Abeokuta, its soldiers had encamped at Isaga, in the Egbado country where the people under their king, Asade Okogan, had feigned submission and at the same time warned the Egba of the approaching army. The Isaga people also advised the Dahomey soldiers to attack Abeokuta in the daylight instead of under the cover of darkness and led them to wade through the Ogun River at a deep point where their powder was lost or became wet (Tella, 1998: 24-26). The actual attack was launched upon the Aro gate where the Isaga had directed them. The wall around the Aro gate had just been repaired by Okukenu, the Sagbua of Ake, and other pro-missionary chiefs. Although, the Dahomean soldiers approached Abeokuta in a stolid and disciplined manner, firing on their enemies with grim determination, the Egba soon discovered to their chagrin that foremost among their assailants were the Amazons and were revolted at the thought of yielding to women. Sokenu, the Seriki, led an outflanking move which soon demoralised the besiegers. The attempt of Akati, the Commander of the Dahomean forces, to rally his demoralised troops proved

abortive. He perished in this attempt and his leaderless forces broke into a retreat. The retreating forces were pursued by the Egba who arrived Isaga just in time to save the people of Isaga from punishment for their deceit. The retreating forces never lost their cohesion as they recrossed the Yewa River, and laid waste Egba farms on their way and took some prisoners home (Biobaku, 1957: 44).

The perennial challenge at Abeokuta since the death of Balogun Sodeke had been the absence of a strong central authority. In its place, there was a plethora of chiefs and authorities. Henry Townsend succeeded in persuading the Egba authorities to resuscitate the defunct title of the Alake. The missionaries favoured a strong king who could control the activities of the Ologun and lend executive support to the missionary programme of agricultural regeneration of the area. Their candidate was Ogunbonna. After he had, however, planted the traditional shade trees at the Aafin at Ake, the Egba people recalled the incident in which he had denied his Egba nationality and rejected him. Biobaku has, however, argued that the Ologun actually preferred a weak candidate and so defeated Henry Townsend's real aim of ensuring their subordination (Biobaku, 1957: 52). The Losi of Ake was chosen but he died before general agreement could be reached. Okukenu, the Sagbua of Ake, was therefore, elected in 1854, as the first Alake in Abeokuta (Ajisafe, 1964: 102). In real terms, Okukenu transformed into Alake but without any appreciable increase in his authority. No doubt, the diminishing power of the Ologun was clearly aided by the Ologun for selfish reasons. The leadership of the Ologun abhorred a strong centre that would prevent the Ologun from wielding and using power as it suited their whims and caprices. Under Sodeke, members of the military were prevented from being over-mighty subjects. From time to time, they were checkmated from engaging in any military adventure by Sodeke.

The death of Okukenu on September 4, 1862 made Basorun Somoye, an Ologun, to be appointed Regent and he was accorded the royal greeting of Kabiyesi without any serious change in the fortune of the Ologun in Abeokuta. In view of the Makun war, Somoye could not exercise any control over the Ologun. Robberies were rife and trade was disrupted. In addition, after the destruction of Ijaiye on March 18, 1862, the Ijaiye refugees had congregated at a separate quarter in Abeokuta, thus swelling the rank and file of Ologun in Abeokuta to the detriment of the central authority.

The disagreement among the Ologun did not help matters at all. This affected so many things in Abeokuta in the period under study. It reflected in the Ifole of 1867, where there was no ologun of any means to restrain the activities of the mob in Abeokuta. It was only at Ikija that the Christians were saved by Ogun-dipe Alatishe. In other sections of Abeokuta, the mob had a field day and the missionaries and the converts suffered great loss. The death of Bashorun Somoye in 1868 worsened matters as the Ologun supported two rival candidates, thus fuelling the embers of discontent in Abeokuta. One of the candidates (Ademola) eventually got installed by the Ogoni in 1869 (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 52). This however did not deter the other group from installing their own candidate

(Oyekan). The result was the factionalisation of the Ologun and lack of unity in Abeokuta.

The rift in Abeokuta politics, brought about by the conflict over the choice of Alake among the Ologun, resulted in about three decades of unsettled government in Abeokuta. Again, there was the emergence of over-mighty subjects, as some powerful Ologun dominated Abeokuta politics even when there were sitting Obas. First, it was Ogundipe Alatishe who dominated the politics of Abeokuta until his death in 1887; second, there was the rule of the triumvirate -- Chief Osundare, addressed as Oba Nlado of Kemta, who had, at times, rivaled Ogundipe; Ogundeyi Magaji of Iporo, who later assumed the title of Basorun; and Sorunke the Jagunna of Igbein, who was the Balogun of Abeokuta; and third there was the dominance of Aboaba, the Balogun of Abeokuta (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 52). During this time, the Ologun split internally. Even when Chief Aboaba of Igbein became the dominant power in Abeokuta, the Ologun was still factionalised. Thus, the Ologun institution could not play the desired role as it was under Sodeke, who was the last Balogun that wielded effective power over the whole of Abeokuta.

The Balogun Institution in Twentieth Century Abeokuta

No doubt, the Balogun institution in twentieth century Abeokuta was not as effective as it was in the preceding era, especially from the third decade of the nineteenth century up till the death of Balogun Sodeke. The assumption of the office of Balogun by Chief Aboaba did not bring any significant change to the institution, in spite of the power and wealth of Aboaba. The internal division among the Ologun still remained. Besides, the Igbein people under Balogun Sorunke and Aboaba had claimed the Ogun River for Igbein Township and as such, claimed the duties from the Isheri customs. This created division in the Egba polity and a lot of confusion in the latter part of the nineteenth century in Abeokuta, to the extent that Balogun Aboaba was exiled to Ibadan in 1898.

However, the ascension of Gbadebo as Alake in 1898, coupled with the re-organisation of the Egba United Government (E.U.G.), brought a serious setback to the Balogun institution in Abeokuta. Alake Gbadebo was a very powerful king who was wise, bold and very strict. His character and conduct were said to have incurred the displeasure of the people of Egbaland (Ajisafe, 1964: 153-154). The activities of the Lagos government at this time aided the power and prestige of Alake Gbadebo at the expense of the Balogun institution. The government of Lagos supported Gbadebo against any internal division. The re-organisation of the Egba government as supported by the Lagos government was based on the authority of the Alake, while Aboaba and the Seriki of Abeokuta, including the sectional Obas, were recognised as advisers to the Alake in Council (Pallinder-Law, 1972: 59). So, it became more and more difficult, if not impossible, for the Ologun to play a prominent role in Abeokuta politics, especially after the Ijebu expedition of 1892 and the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Lagos by Abeokuta. Like other states in Yorubaland such as Ibadan, Ijebu, Ekiti, and Oyo, among others, the Pax Britanica introduced by the British colonial

government put an end to the glory and significance of the Balogun institution in Abeokuta.

In addition, the issue of external war had become a thing of the past by the twentieth century. The Dahomean menace which was a serious threat to Abeokuta had ceased in 1875, when the Egba fought the forces of Dahomey for two months (March-May) before Dahomey was successfully and finally defeated (Ajisafe, 1964: 133-134). Thus, the continuous menace of Dahomey which started in 1844, through 1851, 1863, 1864, 1873, to 1875, finally came to an end in 1875. Hence, the opportunity used by the Ologun to gain ascendancy among the Egba was removed completely. By the end of the nineteenth century, every external aggression against the Egba people had ceased. Nonetheless, internal problems such as the Itori crisis of 1901, the Kemta trouble of 1903, the Ijemo massacre of 1914, the Adubi rising of 1918, and the popular revolt that led to the abdication of the Alake over taxation in 1947-48 still occurred in Abeokuta (Davies, 1986: 33-67).

The re-organisation of the Egba government in the name of the Egba United Government the 1898 agreement with Sir McCallum, and the annexation of Abeokuta by Lord Lugard after the Ijemo massacre of 1914, brought an end to the arrogance and prestige of the Ologun in Abeokuta. Their prominence as war chiefs directing affairs in Abeokuta effectively ceased in the more settled situation of the twentieth century when the Egba government functioned as part and parcel of the colonial administration in Nigeria. The Ologun's traditional role as military personnel underwent quick transformation and became a ceremonial institution. The Balogun institution was not discontinued with, but military prowess was no longer a criterion for the office. Prominent indigenes of Abeokuta were honoured, from time to time, with military offices without necessarily being military officers. It should be noted that declarations relating to the appointment of suitable candidates for the six Ologun chieftaincy titles in Abeokuta were approved by the colonial government on November 12, 1958. These Ologun chieftaincy titles were: Balogun Egba (zoned to Egba Alake section); Otun Egba (zoned to Oke-Ona section); Osi Egba (zoned to Gbagura section); Ekerin Egba (zoned to Owu section); Seriki Egba (zoned to Egba-Alake section); and Ashipa Egba (zoned to Egba-Alake section) (Lisabi Day Souvenir, 2008: 31). The holders of these offices must have become the Balogun in their various towns before they could be appointed to the central Ologun offices. Oral investigation revealed that since performance in warfare or military prowess was no longer a criterion, the contribution of the recipients to their various townships in particular and Abeokuta in general was the *raison detre* for such conferment.

Conclusion

This study has examined institution of the Balogun chieftaincy among the Egba, from its inception up till the twentieth century. It has demonstrated that the Balogun title among the Egba passed through several stages before it was finally institutionalised. It has been argued that Lisabi initiated the process through which the Balogun chieftaincy later became institutionalised among the Egba. It has also

been shown that Yisa, an Itoko man, was the first person to assume the title of Balogun in recorded Egba history. Traditionally, the Egba war chief was known as Jagunna, until the Egba's sojourn at Ibadan, where they borrowed the title of Balogun.

However, the Balogun institution experienced changing fortunes in the period under study. From the time of Lisabi, through Yisa of Itoko, Lamodi, and Sodeke, the institution provided effective military and dynamic political leadership for the Egba at critical periods. First when they were in need of liberation from the political yoke of Oyo; under the tyranny of the allied forces at Ibadan; and later for defence against the allied forces of Ijebu and Ibadan, at the Owiwi war; the allied forces of Ibadan, Ijaiye, and Abemo, at the Arakanga war; and the Dahomean menace of the 1840s. Under Sodeke, the Egba in Abeokuta were able to build a new home that repelled the attacks of all their neighbours and emerged as one of the successor states to the old Oyo Empire. Indeed, Lisabi, Yisa, Lamodi and Sodeke were not only able to defend the Egba against their enemies, but also succeeded in infusing a sense of unity into the Egba through their leadership qualities. Through military prowess, they led the Egba to achieve imperial success:

The post-Sodeke period however brought about a decline in the fortunes of the Balogun institution. The unity of purpose that characterised the early period was dumped for selfish reasons. The Ologun became divided among themselves, at the expense of the Balogun institution. Thus, all the Balogun that succeeded Sodeke could not control the Ologun as a group. Again, those who emerged as Balogun after Sodeke were not necessarily the most powerful or important Ologun. Moreover, the importation of the title of Basorun into the military hierarchy of the Egba in Abeokuta did not help matters. Those who eventually emerged as Balogun were not as powerful as the Basorun under Apati, Somoye, or Ogundeyi Magaji. This development created serious cleavage in the Balogun institution. The type of leadership provided by the Balogun institution under the status quo ante was non-existent in the post-Sodeke period.

Consequently, the civil authorities started sharing power with the military in Abeokuta from the 1840s until the end of the nineteenth century, when political expediency, pax Britanica, and the fast rate of agglomeration and urban development in Abeokuta finally sealed the fate of the Ologun in any meaningful power sharing with the civil authorities. The Ologun now function as advisers in the Alake's council. Thus, the Balogun military institution moved from a position of prominence and reverence at the beginning of our period to one of insignificance by the end of the period.

References

- Aderibigbe, "Early History of Lagos" in ed. A. B. Aderibigbe, *Lagos: The Development of an African City*, (Lagos, Longman, 1975).
- Ajisafe, *History of Abeokuta*, (Abeokuta, Fola Bookshop, 1964).
- Akinjogbin, "Wars in Yorubaland, 1793-1893: An Analytical Categorisation", in ed. Adeagbo Akinjogbin, *War and Peace in Yorubaland, 1793-1893*, (Ibadan, Heinemann, 1998), 33-51.
- Biobaku: *The Egba and Their Neighbours, 1842-1872*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957).
- Davies, "The Politics of interregnum in Egbaland 1947-48" (B. A., Ogun State University, 1986).
- Delano, *Oba Ademola II*, Ibadan, Oxford University Press (O.U.P.), 1969
- Falola and G. Oguntomisin, *Yoruba Warlords of the Nineteenth Century*, (Asmara World Press Inc., 2001).
- Folarin, *Egba History: Life Review, 1829-1930*, 1931.
- Gailey, *Lugard and the Abeokuta Uprising. The Demise of Egba Independence*, (London, Frank Cass, 1982).
- Harunah "Evolution of Central Administration in Abeokuta, 1830-1898" (M.A. Unilag, 1983).
- Harunah, "Lagos - Abeokuta Relations in 19th Century Yorubaland" in ed. A. Adefuye et al, *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, (Lagos, Lantern Books, 1987).
- Johnson: *The History of the Yorubas*, (Lagos, CMS, 1997).
- Lisabi Day Celebration, Programme Souvenir.
- Losi, *History of Abeokuta*, (Lagos, 1924).
- Osunkeye "Trade and Commerce in Traditional Egba Society" in *Abeokuta Home of the Egba*.
- Pallinder-Law, "Aborted Modernisation in West Africa? The case of Abeokuta", *Journal of African History* (J.A.H.), XV, 1, 1974, 66.
- Pallinder-Law, "Government in Abeokuta with Special Reference to the Period of the E.U.G.", (PhD Goteburg, 1972).
- Solanke, *Abeokuta Centenary Celebrations*, (Abeokuta, 1931).
- Soluade, *History of Ijemo*, (Abeokuta, 1981).
- Sonuga, "A Comparative Study of Lisabi and Sodeke as Egba Statesmen" in *Historia*, no. 3, 1966.
- Tella, *Isaga: A Victim of the Egba Dahomey Military Confrontations (1862-1951)*, (Ibadan, International Publishers Limited, 1998).
- Tucker, *Abeokuta or Sunrise within the Tropics: An Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission*, (New York, Robert Carter and Brothers, 1855).
- Oral information was also collected from several informants.