
**When ‘Gods’ Return in Body Bags:
The Evolution of Depositions, Exiles
and Medical Tourism among Yoruba
Traditional Rulers in Southern Nigeria,
c. 1476–2016***

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ABSTRACT

Why is it that the traditional rulers, who barely left their territories in pre-colonial African societies, now travel outside their territories and even abroad for health tourism, births, social functions and diplomatic meetings, among other things? The sad stories are some of them ‘joining the ancestors – being mummified’ in these foreign lands. With focus on the Yoruba traditional rulers in Southern Nigeria, the study relies on critical analysis of extant literature, oral interviews, media reports and archival sources. This paper argues that certain factors such as the contacts with Europeans, colonialism, and globalization have been the evolution of the fate of traditional rulers into deposition, exile and medical tourism. While foreign visitations or tourism are crucial to modern statecraft, this paper further argues that the reasons why such visitations of our so-called ‘gods’ end up in returning to us in body bags is due to, among other things, the enervating

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health care system of African states,. Based on the findings, recommendations were made.

Keywords: *ancestors, deposition, exiles, tourism, medicine, Yoruba, Oba.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is simply leisure activity outside one's place of residence. In 1994, the United Nations made three classifications which include: domestic, inbound and outbound tourism. It is an important factor in the economy of many countries and in the management of many cultural sites and natural areas. The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) defined it as

Social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (who may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism is related to their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure (UN WTO n.d.).

It brings individuals and human communities into contact with each other and, through them, with cultures and civilizations. It also plays an important role in facilitating cultural exchange (Robinson and Picard 2006: 4). Tourism promotes the economy, stimulates diplomacy, and promotes cultures. Unfortunately, very little is known about how African traditional leaders have entered this sector. The focus is on the Yoruba of south-west Nigeria.

The origin of the Yoruba has been a hotly contested episode of myths in the annals of ethnic studies (Near East [Lange 2011] or Niger River), but the most plausible of these myths is that Oduduwa, the Primogenitor of the Yoruba race, migrated from the Near East and met some people in Ile Ife who were themselves Yoruba-speaking.¹ It is generally believed that Oduduwa's only child, Okanbi, commonly called Idekoseroake, had seven grandchildren (Atanda 1980: 5). His first-born, a princess, married a priest and became the famous Olowu, the ancestor of the Owus. The second child was also a princess, who became the mother of the Alaketu, the primogeniture of the Ketu people. The third, a prince, became king of the Bini people. The fourth, the Orangun, became king of Ila; the fifth, the Onisabe, or King of the Sabes; the sixth, Olupopo, or king of the Popos; and the seventh and last born, Oranyan (also known as Ọ̀rànmíyàn), Alafin of the Oyos (Johnson 2001 [1921]: 7–8). The Yoruba country lies immediately

west of the River Niger (below the confluence) and south of the Quorra (i.e., the western branch of the same river above the confluence), with Dahomey to the west, and the Bight of Benin to the south (Johnson 2001 [1921]: xix).

The political organisation of the Yoruba is monarchical, with checks and balances. However, the kingship was held sacred; his wives and children were highly respected. To this end, the Oba was revered, no matter how young or old.² They were also regarded as the custodians of the people's tradition and culture since they acted as the nexus between the people and the gods of the land. Little wonder, the Oba was forbidden to appear in public streets during the day, except on very special and extraordinary occasions after the coronation, although he was allowed to take evening strolls on moonlit nights, when he could walk incognito.³ These Oba, also known as sacred kingship, were common in the Yoruba kingdom of western Nigeria (Lloyd 1960: 221), and the secrecy of the Obaship exalts the Yoruba traditional ruler – the Oba, mystifies his office and also makes him appear immortal to the people.⁴ Thus, whenever he was deposed by the people through the Oyomesi or Ogboni,⁵ he 'must' break the calabash.⁶ When this was done, then the ancestral throne could be succeeded. Hence the Yoruba saying, '*ti Oba kankobaku, Oba imiko le je or laikuerigi, a ko le fi awo re se gbedu*'.⁷

The ancestor worship through belief in rituals is routed in Africa, although urbanization still remains an incapacitating factor (Pauw 1974). It is this belief in the power of the dead over the living reinforced by the custom of burying the deceased in houses and by acts of propitiation performed after a person's death on matters of importance (Campbell 1861: 63; Addison 1924: 157). The belief in ancestors undoubtedly shapes the African Traditional Religion (ATR).⁸ These ancestors are believed to come in good and evil. The evil ones can be warded off by annual or daily propitiations; the same applies to attracting the good ones. Beliefs in deities (orishas) such as Iro, Oro, Egungun and Eleko represent the spirits of the Yoruba ancestors, and festivities are used to communicate with them (Dennett 1968: 28). In the nineteenth century, the journalist who observed Abbeokuta (Abeokuta) confirms this, 'like other heathen nations, they adore their ancestors, where the Egungun was worshiped annually' (Tucker 1855: 34–35). The Oba is regarded as a god.

During the initiation of an Oba, the Apebi or initiation lodge, which houses the ancestral deity, is where all the rituals and coronation rites are performed in Yorubaland, after his 'demise'. Hence, the Oba is regarded as the personification of the kingdom and the reincar-

nation of past ancestors of the town, as well as the titular head of all religious cults in the kingdom (Smith 1976: 141–142; Falola and Akinrinade 1985: 12). Dennett gave an account of his experience in Ilaro after the death of a King that, ‘just before dark, as the market people were assembling, an ‘Egun’ presented himself before my tent, and told me that he was the father (deceased) who had come from heaven, and what was I going to give him’ (Dennett 1968: 29–30). From the above, it is clear that, the Yoruba ancestors are in their territories. However, there is a dearth of literature on Yoruba traditional kings in exile or on medical tourism. Against this background, this study is an attempt to examine the origins of tourism, deposition, and exile; factors responsible for the trips undertaken by Yoruba traditional rulers in the colonial and post-colonial era, whether forced or voluntary. Efforts will also be made to address the purpose for which such exiles and tours were undertaken.

EVOLUTION OF TOURISM, DEPOSITION AND EXILE AMONG THE YORUBA OBA, c. 1476–1950

With the first contact between European and pre-colonial societies in Africa, there was no doubt that such contacts would have an enormous impact on the African people. Although, a lot of studies have been done on the impact of European contact and British colonialism on African culture (Kwarne 2010), or on health care in Africa (Afolabi 2011: 229–247), few works have focused on how African traditional leaders were affected by this phenomenon. Although, it was normal for private individuals to travel outside their territories for visits during the pre-colonial era, this was not the case for the traditional leaders. The question to begin with is, why colonialism in the first place? One of the reasons given for colonialism was the fulfillment of the white man's burden. This meant that Europeans were destined to restore civilisation and modernity to African culture. But why was it culture that was most affected?

Since culture suggests a comparatively equal distribution or mass appropriation, it is always a primary target of attack by an invading force (Soyinka 1982: 237). The early contact between the pre-colonial entity and the European was what one scholar termed the onset of the moment of decay, where contact between the Portuguese and West Africa in general began as a result of the slave trade (Onabamiro 1983: 4). The decay further brought about deformation of the traditional way of life by the incursion of Western technology, modernisation and political independence (Solanke 1982: 27). In an attempt to

solidify and consolidate the trade in the fifteenth century, the Portuguese encouraged the Oba of Benin to leave his kingdom, but the Oba,⁹ instead sent his son in what became one of the first diplomatic exchanges between Portugal and the old Benin Empire (Kenny 1983: 45–47), that is, Afro-European relations. This relationship was essentially based on the slave trade, which made many kings wealthy and powerful. Some other kings who benefited were the King of Dahomey, the Oba of Lagos and some Efik chiefs. They acquired wealth through the possession of foreign goods like clothes, beads, iron rods, liquor, and ammunition etc., which were brought in as barter (Onabamiro 1983: 9).

However, when the slave trade was abolished in 1807, the British took on the role of enforcers to stop the barbaric act. In this attempt, the British invaded Lagos, which had been labelled a notorious transit and beneficiary of the trade, as testified by the British naval officer, Commander Broadhead, before the Commission of Enquiry on the West African Coast in 1841 (Onabamiro 1983: 10). Meanwhile, in Lagos, there was a leadership struggle between King Akitoye and his nephew, Prince Kosoko.¹⁰ The new Oba, Kosoko, was a very independent-minded potentate and hostile to the missionaries, who themselves lost no opportunity to plot against him. He rejected an offer of friendship from the British and on the 25 November 1851 the British attack on Lagos began (Elegbede-Fernandez 1992: 16; Adebayo 1994), but the main bombardment took place on Christmas Eve.¹¹ Oba Kosoko left for Epe as a reigning king with his close supporters, and Akitoye was quickly brought from Badagry (Onabamiro 1983: 43; Ejiogu 2004: 219), until his sudden ‘death’ on 2 September 1853 after a protracted battle with the formidable Kosoko (Elegbede-Fernandez 1992: 21). The following day, his son Dosumu assumed the throne of his late father.¹² Subsequently, Lagos under King Dosumu was ceded to the British in August 1861¹³ and annexed in 1862. With this development, the traditional ruler's position began to be compromised.¹⁴ However, while the exchange between the Portuguese and the Benin prince marked the beginning of tourism, the scenario in Lagos marked that of deposition and exiles.

BEYOND LAGOS

The British, having established contacts with the Benin Empire and Lagos, was the next to look to the hinterland. In pre-colonial Ijebu-land, the ruler, Awujale Fidipote, in anticipation of his disposition and consequent death in the capital, Ijebu Ode, went into self-imposed

exile to Epe in 1883.¹⁵ From there, he promoted discord at home so as to prepare for his return back to Ijebu, but before his plans came into fruition, he died in Epe in 1885, with his supporters suspecting regicide (Oduwobi 2002: Ch. 40). However, by the time the British scramble and partition of the entire 'country' began, other kingdoms from Ijebu to the Oil Protectorate had been invaded. These were: Opobo under Jaja, eventually exiled to Old Calabar and the West Indies in 1887; Ijebu Remo in May 1892;¹⁶ Itshekiri, under Nana Olomu was exiled from Calabar to Accra in 1894;¹⁷ and Oyo, bombed in 1895, among others. However, a descendant of the Yoruba ancestors, the then Oba of Benin, Ovonramwen N'ogbasi, was also involved in the Anglo-Benin war of February 1897, following tragedy of the then Acting Consul General, Mr. Phillips, on 4 January, 1897. At the trial of Oba Ovoramwen, the Consul General, Sir Ralph Moor, declared that the white man was now in charge and the owner of the country (Igbafe 1967: 180; Edo 2009: 136). This imperious arrogance was what a Benin scholar described as purely economic in its basic impetus (Osadolor 2001: 213). Oba Ovonramwen was subsequently deposed and exiled to Old Calabar, where he subsequently died.¹⁸ While these Oba were forcefully deposed,¹⁹ others voluntarily embarked on leaving their shadows, not only to attend meetings even outside their domains,²⁰ even as the old long tradition began to break down. This explains the reason why the Oni of Ife did not want to attend a meeting in Lagos so as to avoid face-to-face contact with the Akarigbo or the Elepe at a meeting organised by the Colonial Governor of Lagos, Sir William M. MacGregor, in 1903 to discuss whether the Elepe could wear a beaded crown.²¹

Oba Gbadebo I of Egbaland, who reigned from 1898–1920, travelled to England in July 1904²² with his son, Prince Oladapo Ademola, who later became the Alake; Mr R. B Blaze, and Mr Adegboyega Edun, the then Secretary of the Egba United Government (EUG), and the subsequent presentation of the delegation to King Edward VII by his Excellency, Governor Macgregor, the then Governor of Lagos; the incorporation of the Egba National Council into the EUG with the grant of autonomous home rule (Adeola 1980: 12–13). According to an annual report, the visit was an interesting episode in the history of the protectorate and made a deep impression on both the Alake and his people.²³ Even though the maxim, *Oriade ko gbodo sun ita* (the crown must not sleep outside its territory) was broken, these trips could be seen as politically and economically important to the Egba people. But what about in the first quarter of the twentieth century, when most part of the country was under colonial rule and the protectorates had been

amalgamated into Nigeria? Were the subsequent visitations by Yoruba traditional rulers official or personal?

The British administration did not deviate from its distortion of the once revered traditional institutions, although it gave them a kind of pseudo-power far beyond what they had enjoyed in pre-colonial times. This was because they were no longer subject to the scrutiny and control of the kingmakers (Atanda 1970: 216–217; Falola and Akinrinade 1985: 14). One scholar suggested that Lord Lugard derived the legitimacy of his authority to levy taxes, depose and create kings (Kirk-Greene 1965: 126–127) in Hausa land from a single source: the right of conquest, which the Fulani themselves had claimed a century earlier (Kirk-Greene 1965). Although, now subject to the whims and caprices of the British residents, the Hausa rulers (sultans and emirs) worked for the British exploitative aims.²⁴

Ijebu land was not spared from the British political and cultural usurpation. Akarigbo Oyebajo, who ascended the throne in the last half of the nineteenth century, had problems with his chiefs together with then District Commissioner, H. F. Duncombe. When the government asked Duncombe in January 1915 to find a replacement if necessary, he approached Oyebajo's opponent, who suggested Chief Awolesi. By May 1915, Awolesi was installed while Oyebajo protested against his unceremonious removal. He and his supporters were sentenced to jail terms at Ijebu Ode with hard labour.²⁵ The ex-Akarigbo, Oyebajo, made desperate efforts to return but hit a brick wall as he was subsequently re-arrested and exiled to Calabar in March 1921, where he remained until he was released on health grounds after spending 11 years.²⁶

In 1925, the Alake of Egba was alleged that land had engaged in money lending business in Lagos which the colonial administration queried. Although he claimed that he had closed it down, the government did not believe him, as they believed that one Otun was fronting for him.²⁷ In fact, the case was quietly investigated by the Criminal Investigation Department to ascertain whether one Jibola was a registered money lender or fronting for the Alake.²⁸ The significance of this is that the colonial government even dared to investigate an Oba, the Alake of Egba land, in this matter.

Similarly, Awujale Theophilus Adenuga suffered a similar fate in 1928 when he was first asked to vacate the palace by the resident, Mr P. A. Talbolt, after which he moved to his personal residence in his maternal hometown of Igbeba. From there, the trial of the many allegations leveled against him began.²⁹ A Judicial Commission of Inquiry was set up to examine the allegations from 7–11 January, 1929

and the report was submitted on 18 January. By 31 January, the government had received the report's recommendation that the Awujale should leave the province within three days to a place of his choice outside the Yoruba-speaking part of southern Nigeria. On 4 February, Talbot announced the deposition of the Awujale at a public function. Indeed, this was degrading to an Oba and drew an outcry from Lagos as unnecessarily cruel.³⁰ The next day, Adenuga went into exile in Ilorin. From there, it was revealed that he planned a comeback through spiritual means.³¹ Although, it was easy to depose a king in the northern part, it was difficult and cumbersome in the southern part. It was this complexity that made the government to enact Ordinance No 14 of 1930 to fast-track the appointment and deposition of chiefs.³²

In November 1931, at the Egba Council, the issue of bastardisation of native customs (names, titles, palaces among others) by the Europeans was raised. It was at this meeting that the Balogun of the Christians, Durojaiye. Sowemimo³³ opined that the craze for foreign names and things was because when people dressed in native clothes, they were abused by their people. The then Alake, Oladapo Ademola concluded that a resolution would be made to discard all foreign names and titles and wished that foreigners interested in the affairs of Egbaland would also use them.³⁴ In fact, the then Resident, Mr A. E. F. Murray, not only supported the resolution, but explicitly stated that, 'the Egba people have genuine titles and designations of their own which have no exact equivalents and are therefore incapable of accurate expression in any other language...'³⁵ He continued that any attempt to deprive them of the inherent dignity and true significance of which, like dress and language, their titles are honoured by tradition and transferred to them as a heritage of which they should be proud of. The resolution having been put to vote resolved that:

The use of European titles, designations and forms of address by the Alake and the Egba people shall cease forthwith. Henceforth, customary native titles, designations and forms of address only shall be used. It is the earnest desire of the Alake and the Council that all those outside Egba land, who have the true interests of the Egba people at heart, will observe this principle and thus maintain with dignity the best traditions of their people in the press or elsewhere.³⁶

From the foregoing, it is clear that even the British supported the veneration of African culture and tradition, just as Africans believed in patronizing local and indigenous products and things. But, was this

a general and altruistic feeling, and did it extend to the medical and economic fields?

In a New Year's message in 1935, King George V conferred the honour of Commander of the British Empire (CBE) on the Alake Oladapo Ademola and it was announced by the Resident, Captain E. J. G Kelly, who boasted that the Alake II was privileged to be on the list of more than four hundred million subjects of the British King.³⁷ However, this was during the world economic depression that affected the country. The Alake thus acknowledged:

I must thank you for your suggestion to render me out of the Administration Revenue a financial assistance for my proposed visit to Europe..., but when considering the present financial state of the Administration Revenue, generally caused by the general depression which has necessitated cuts in the salaries of the Administration staff. I feel I should have decided to decline as we need funds for the water and electricity light scheme which is to benefit my people at large.³⁸

The Alake planned to visit in March, but it was reported that the King of England was on holiday resting, but a proper time was re-scheduled where the Alake and the Governor of Lagos would sail together to England to see the King.

Few years later, at the Council meeting in February 1937, the Alake hinted that he was travelling to Britain for health reasons, but as it coincided with the coronation of His Royal Majesty, King George VI,³⁹ he would kill two birds with one stone.⁴⁰ In March, he reminded the Council and declared that the Oluwo of Ake Township, Olola Kusimo, as head of the Ogbonis, would act as regent, supported by the Balogun of the Egbas, Idowu Soyoye, and a select committee. On 8 April, he reiterated this⁴¹ and on the 13 April he delivered his farewell address to the Council before leaving for Europe.⁴²

At the first Council meeting after the Alake's return, he recounted his experiences abroad, and the Acting Resident, I.W.E. Dods, Esq. acknowledged that the Alake's visit to Britain was to popularise the town for the world.⁴³ But could such popularisation not have been done from home or was it not a way of promoting tourism to Europe?

In 1938, there was a problem with the restriction of the Governor's power of removal to paramount chiefs, which led to a very anomalous situation. When the subordinate chiefs opposed the British who were spoon-feeding Olubadan, the British even had to suspend the subordinate chiefs. A similar stick was used on the Ewusi of Ma-

kun, who was suspected of collecting bribes.⁴⁴ In fact, it was even suggested that kingmakers should be removed because they sometimes became apolitical when problems arose with the Oba.⁴⁵

On 3 January 1949 in Abeokuta, the deposed Alake went into self-exile in Oshogbo as a result of the pressure from the women of Egba, orchestrated by Mrs Funmilayo Kuti. He was even paid about £1,000 a year as approved by the Budget Office of the Western House of Assembly.⁴⁶ He returned in 1950 with the help of the British colonial government after an armistice was broken.⁴⁷

BEYOND EUROPEAN DEPOSITION AND EXILES: THE YORUBA OBA FROM THE ERA OF SELF-RULE TO POST-INDEPENDENCE

From the inception of regional administration to post-independence in Yoruba land, the migration and exile of the Oba outside their territories was not only politicized, as it was during the colonial administration, but in some respects self-inflicted. The then Alafin of Oyo, Oba Adeniran Adeyemi II, was deposed and exiled by the regional government of Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group as a result of the allegation that he was involved in the death of an AG steward, Chief Bode Thomas, as well as his sympathy for Dr Nnamdi Azikwe's National Congress of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), to Ilesha in 1954 before he later moved to Egerton Street, Lagos Island, where he died in 1960 (see Ajasa 2016). Conversely, he was not alone among the deposed Yoruba kings, especially in post-self-rule era.

Sir Olateru Olagbegi II (Olowo of Owo), a member of Samuel Akintola's then Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP – 'Demo'), suffered a similar fate in June 1966 when he was suspended by Adekunle Fajuyi regime in the Western Region. Although Olagbegi II fought for his return on 8 February 1968 during the Nigerian Civil War, he failed, leading to mayhem in the town. This incident forced the subsequent military government of General Adeyinka Adebayo to depose and exile him to Okitipupa. After the creation of Ondo State from the then Western Region in 1977, Olagbegi II tried again to stage a return but failed until the 'death' of the then Olowo of Owo, Adékola Ogunoye⁴⁸ on 22 March 1993 and his burial on 1 April. It was then that the civilian government of Michael Bamidele Olomilua restored the former Oba (Ajasa 2016).

In 2010, the then Deji of Akure, Oba Oluwadare Adepoju Adesina, was deposed for physical confrontation his wife, Olori Bolanle Adepoju Adesina, and also asking his guards to whip her in public.⁴⁹

The kingmakers subsequently declared his act as a complete desecration of the Royal Stool of the Deji of Akure, so also the Ondo State Council of Oba, headed by Oba, Folagbade Olateru Olagbegi, the Olowo of Owo. Adesina was subsequently banished from the town.⁵⁰ The question is, did the oracle choose him in the first place? If so, what did the oracle predict for his reign?⁵¹ Could this be one of the reasons why, P. C. Lloyd attributed the choice of the modern Oba as an emergent from the middle class (Lloyd 1970: 225) rather than the wishes of the oracle?

It should be noted that the analysis so far shows that prior to colonialism, any deposed Oba had to commit suicide to maintain the sanctity of the office. British colonialism changed this, as even when deposed, the Oba was paid in exile. Little wonder that a scholar of African history claimed that the British created conditions that changed or modified old customs (Falola 2001: 18) and that if an elected Oba was from royalty, he must have been the choice of the colonial administration (Falola 2001: 218). In fact, he had no doubt that the nature of Colonial power and administration would affect African culture (Falola 2003: 5). Meanwhile, rulers who opposed the British policies were deposed and exiled. Indeed, some 'died' while in exile, no doubt it was not of their own making as compared to the practice in recent times when these traditional rulers now join their ancestors abroad without being exiled.

WHEN GODS RETURN IN BODY-BAGS: MANIFESTATIONS OF SOME OBA 'JOINING THEIR ANCESTORS' ABROAD

The late Justice Obaseki (JSC) once said, '...Man is fallible, so also is the thought of man...'⁵² In the same vein, the Oba are human, so they are fallible and as the constitution enshrines, they deserve the right to pursue happiness anywhere in the country or the world like every other citizen.⁵³ However, as custodians of the culture and tradition, is it ideal to travel out of one's ancestral land to visit, even to the extent of joining one's ancestors there? Over the years, political leaders in Africa have been traveling abroad for medical tourism,⁵⁴ likewise those in Nigeria.⁵⁵ One would then think that it should not be a ruse from denying traditional rulers from doing the same since 'what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander'.

As it turns out, these traditional rulers and custodians are humans. The first reported case in modern times was the Ayangburen of Ikoroduland, Oba Salaudeen Afolabi Oyefusi (Oguntade II) who, after being flown to the United Kingdom for medical attention in May

2014, joined his ancestors on 2 August after a protracted illness (Adeseri, Akoni, and Adelaja 2014). As if this was going to be the last of such anomalies, another occurred the following year.

But this time, it was the spiritual head of the Yoruba race, the Ooni of Ile Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade, Olubuse II, who was flown to London on Friday 24 July, 2015 for health reasons but who joined his ancestors there. This was seen as an anomaly as the palace initially denied such a passage to join his ancestors in a foreign land for days (Adebayo 2015: 1). However, the body was secretly flown into the country so as to conclude the final passage. Since it was becoming a norm, another Yoruba Oba, the Akarigbo of Remoland, Oba Michael Sonariwo, who was then the incumbent Chairman of the Ogun State Council of Oba, was flown to London on 17 July, 2016. It was reported that he joined his ancestors in the presence of his Olori who accompanied him on the medical trip. The irony of the situation was that the corps of the reposed Oba was stranded abroad. A prominent ruler in Sagamu, the Ewusi of Makun, Oba Timothy Akinsanya, had to appeal to the Ogun State Government that the Remo Traditional Council needed eight thousand pounds (£8,000.00) to fly the remains of the demised Akarigbo and paramount Ruler of Remo land back into the country to commence the passage rites. He puts it succinctly:

We have delegated the Asiwaju of Remoland to meet with the governor in a bid to help us in raising the £8,000 cost of bringing the monarch back home. We are really waiting for the government to help us now. The sooner we get the government's support, the better (Awoyinfa 2016).

Although help later came and the corpse (body bag) of the 'late' Akarigbo returned home, the usual rites that follow the demise of such a figure were delayed, affecting the traditional rite of passage. The study revealed that those who joined their ancestors abroad recently did so while on medical tourism, while those who did so earlier did so after their deposition and exile. This shows the social dynamics of time, culture and identity. But why are these traditional leaders not getting such healthcare at home?

The healthcare system in Nigeria is one of the most debilitating on the continent. In 2000, the World Health Organisation (WHO) ranked Nigeria as 187th out of 191 nations, in descending order of overall health system performance (WHO 2000: 154; Ajenifuja 2011). Although the 2001 Abuja declaration called for all African countries must allocate 15 % of their annual budgets to improving of health sector.⁵⁶ But has Nigeria been able to sustain this? To answer this question, it is

necessary to examine the challenges facing the country's healthcare system and the efforts being made to address them. While many studies have analysed some of the challenges of the healthcare system to include: manpower shortage, brain drain syndrome, corruption, politicization of the sector, conflicts arising from hierarchical issues, between failure to develop teamwork and professional rivalry between doctors, nurses or doctors, pharmacists, late payment of salaries even, if paid at all, shortage of drugs, physical decay of infrastructure, lack of basic amenities such as electricity and water, access roads, stagnation in cadre development, incessant strike activities, lack of equipment, among others.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, efforts to promote and tackle these challenges remain rhetoric and often lack the political will, even as politicians over the years have promised to turn the situation around and never engage in medical tourism so as to set a good example. Little wonder that in 2016, out of six billion dollars spent on medical tourism in Africa, Nigeria had the largest share of about two billion dollars. More so, from the budgetary allocations from 2016 to date, the allocations for healthcare remain bantam. In the 2017 budget, the government allocated N304 billion, which is only 4.17 % of the N7.298 trillion budget.

Despite the damning report by the WHO on maternal mortality in 2017, which placed Nigeria at 814 per 100,000 live births, ranking only 4th behind Sierra Leone, Central Africa Republic and Chad; it was reported that 35 % proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel, 108.8 rates of under-five mortality and neonatal mortality per 1,000 live births, just behind Angola, Chad, CAR, Sierra Leone and Mali; and more than 23.60 ratio of HIV infections among adult cases (WHO 2017: 52–55). Only 340.45 billion naira out of the 8.612 trillion was allocated for the 2018 budget. Undoubtedly, this is still below the WHO recommendation of 11 % of GDP and, like most allocations, it is misprioritised and mismanaged through corruption. This has led to an increase in medical tourism to countries like the USA, UK, Germany, Switzerland and even India (Omoluabi 2014: 14). In addition, there are only about 0.3 doctors for every 1,000 people, a situation caused by the emigration of about 700 medical professionals from Nigeria annually (Omoluabi 2014: 18). All these failures reared their ugly heads during the coronavirus pandemic and again when solutions were proposed by traditional rulers and local healers, the government did not take them seriously, preferring to spend billions of the country's scarce foreign exchange on foreign-made vaccines.

CONCLUSION

It has been noted that an Oba who hardly left his kingdom began to do so during the Yoruba internecine wars but was further encouraged by the colonial administration for economic, political, diplomatic and social reasons. Undoubtedly, this was for the realization of the colonial exploitative objectives (Abimbola 1985: i–iii; see also Kelles-Vitanen N.d.: 1). Before and during the colonial era, the joining of their ancestors in foreign lands was as a result of their first being deposed and later forced into exile by the colonial administration. They also embarked on tourism as a result of the exigencies of statecraft to promote commerce, trade, diplomacy and sightseeing.⁵⁸ Today, going broad is no longer the result of forced exile, but voluntary. This voluntary migration is basically a result of the country's moribund health services, creed for foreign healthcare, greed and bastardized traditional rule succession processes, effect of globalization, choice, necessity of today's statecraft, among others. In the process, some of the Yoruba rulers (Oba) have embarked on journeys of no return to join their ancestors, with its slowly permeating intermittent implication.⁵⁹ Indisputably, this may eventually happen someday with this craze for medical tourism abroad.⁶⁰

While there is every reason to travel abroad, except for medical tourism, its cast a shadow on African traditional institutions as some of these once custodians of tradition and culture are now being buried in the euphoria of secular underpinnings as a result of change, global acculturation and modernity. It also makes a mockery not only of our health system and traditional institutions, but also a waste of tax payers' money when incurred by the state, a desecration of Africa's value and traditional system. Be that as it may, there may be fire on the mountain as one of these Oba's 'corpse' may eventually be seized abroad. This is an eventuality that may have social, political, economic, traditional, and cultural implications for the country.⁶¹ Hence, this should be a rally for self-reflection for the Yoruba nation, the country and Africa as a whole. Little wonder, the South African Minister of Health, Aaron Motsoaledi, accused African leaders of being the only ones who leave their continent for medical care (BBC 2017). If this is true, then the Yoruba, Nigerians and Africans at home and abroad need to do some introspection by looking inward.

Among Asians, China in particular has proved that synchronizing traditional and western medicine can be a blessing, as it boasts one of the highest life expectancies in the world.⁶² This can be replicated in

Nigeria and Africa as a whole by investing in social welfare, education, harnessing traditional and western medicine, promoting social inclusion, encouraging the return of professionals from the diaspora and providing incentives to make home homely for them.

NOTES

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¹ There are myths that Oduduwa came from the East; descended from the sky; as a lost Benin Prince called Idoduwa. See Atanda 1980: 2–4.

² Hence the saying, *iku baba yeye* (one who controls death) accorded the Alafin, Igbakeji Orisa (second to the gods); *Mom n'Obanedo Ukuakpolokpolo* (the Mighty that rules) in Benin among others. These are words to mystify their positions.

³ Johnson 2001 [1921]: 46; Even in colonial era, it was reported that at the Lagos Agriculture Show in November 1905, the Alafin did not show up, even when other representatives from Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast did, although he sent the prince, the Aremo. See Colonial Reports-Annual 'Southern Nigeria Protectorate, 1906, Chapter XXII, 90. There is also a proverb among the Oyo people that, '*Orun Oyo kokanju, Alafinko re ibikan*' which means 'the Sun in Oyo town is not in a hurry, the Alafin does not leave the palace'.

⁴ Although he has a personal physician in the palace, the people usually believe that the King was immune to disease.

⁵ The Oyomesi were the kingmakers in Oyo Kingdom, in other *Yorubaland*, the Ogboni were the facsimiles of the Oyomesi.

⁶ This is to go and commit suicide. It was used to checkmate authoritarian Kings as well as to maintain their sacredness, since the character is permanent. See Munoz 1977.

⁷ Without the death of a king, he cannot be succeeded, or you cannot use the skins of a monkey to make a drum without killing it.

⁸ This will be substituted with Africa Indigenous Religion based on Wande Abimbola's claim. See Wande Abimbola, 'I was ridiculed for returning home a poor senator – Prof. Wande Abimbola' (*Punch*, 16 September, 2016).

⁹ *Oba ehियewe* – The Oba does not leave his palace. This happened during the reign of the Oba Esigie in the late fifteenth century.

¹⁰ During this royal struggle, in June, 1851, Prince Kosoko ousted his uncle, Akitoye in 1841 and became King while the latter was in exile in Badagry. Since he was not a crowned Oba, one could not say he has committed the taboo (*ewo*). See Elegbede-Fernandez 1992: 14–16.

¹¹ All Saints Church Yaba, *The Journey So far at 80: The History of All Saints Church Yaba*, (Lagos: Concept Publications, 2012), xii. The British must

have learnt this culture of deposition and exile from their long trading relationship with the people.

¹² Elegbede-Fernandez 1992. It should be noted that it was not until 1854 that a diplomatic arrangement was worked out between the Permanent Consul in Lagos, Mr Benjamin Campbell and Kosoko, known as the Treaty of Epe, which recognised Kosoko as the ruler of Epe and ownership of Palma.

¹³ It was described as Docemo. See Dennet 1968: 8; although another source states that it took place on 30 July 1861 on the British warship, *H.M.S. Prometheus*; see Onabamiro 2006: 45.

¹⁴ It should be noted that when an Oba abdicates a throne, he must commit suicide, but since he was forcefully ousted, could this continue? What about the maxim, '*Oriade ko gbodo sun ita?*' Is it still applicable? No doubt that the British changed this tradition, as later deposed *Oba* were not allowed to do so.

¹⁵ By exile, it was within the country. Not abroad (outside the shores of Africa).

¹⁶ In fact, the Ijebu were used as a sample to other nations that might oppose their activities. Hence, other *Oba*, such as Ekiti, Ibadan, Ijesha and Oyo complied by entering into treaties of friendship with the British (Gueye and Boahen 1892: 108).

¹⁷ Jaja of Opoboo later died in 1891. It was reported that with the fall of this powerful merchant king, other delta states such as Old Calabar, New Calabar, Brass and Bonny were in turmoil. About Opoboo, see Rosenberg 1991: 3; on other delta states, see Gueye and Boahen 1892: 135.

¹⁸ The Oil Protectorate has not been explained because they are not *Yoruba* Oba, although Benin, which is a Yoruba 'nation', is believed to have given birth to Itshekiri. Note that it was not until the death of Ovonramwen that monarchy was established in the Benin Empire. He died in 1914. See Edo 2009: 134.

¹⁹ Being deposed means that they left as ordinary citizens and not as *Oba*.

²⁰ Some of the meetings were the Central Native Council comprising of the First Class Oba in the Southern Protectorate usually held in Lagos.

²¹ In fact, some Lagos chiefs told His Excellency that the Oni would not come. See, National Archives 1903: 165.

²² He sailed from Liverpool on 8 July, where he was presented with a Bible by King Edward the Seventh. See, *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, July (1904), 524, 628. He was expected back on 29 July, 1904; *Ibid.*: 766.

²³ Colonial Reports-Annual 'Lagos' No 470, Report for (1904), 21–22.

²⁴ For them the aim was to civilize the continent, but at a price (commodity/mercantilism). See Carland 1985: 64-70.

²⁵ His rivals (chiefs) were: Bademowo, the Lisa and his second-in-command, Awofala, the Losi and Odufuwa, the Oloogben and one Oluwole, a former court clerk. See Oduwobi 2003.

²⁶ He was released in May 1932, returned to Sagamu on 23 June and died on 11 July 1932. Oduwobi 2003: 559.

²⁷ NAI, C5/1925. The Otun was J.B. Majekodunmi. Secretary, Southern Provinces, Lagos to the Resident, *Abeokuta* Province, *Abeokuta*. 8 July, 1925.

²⁸ NAI, C5/1925. See Officer-in-Charge CID, Lagos to District Officer Abeokuta, 18 December 1924.

²⁹ The alleged crimes were: bribery, influencing succession procedures, concealment of a murder case in his native court among others.

³⁰ NAI, IjeProf. 2, File No. C. 17/9, Ag. Secretary, Southern Provinces to Resident, 7 March 1929.

³¹ One of his fanatical followers, Yesufu Idimota, was arrested for attempting to assassinate the new Awujale, Adesanya. The ex-Awujale, Adenuga, was repatriated and tried, convicted and sentenced to four year's imprisonment in *Abeokuta* prison on 18 February 1935. He died in exile in Cameroon on 13 November 1950.

³² As in the cases of Awujale of Ijebu Ode and Eshugbayi of Lagos, NAI, IjeProf 2, File C57, 'Minute of His Excellency'.

³³ He abandoned Coker Michael for Durojaiye.

³⁴ National Archives *Abeokuta* (hereafter NAA), File ECR 1/1/54 vol.3, Nos 269-410. Minutes of Thursday 12 November, 1931, 10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ NAA ECR 1/1/67 Vol. 1 Nos 1-105. Minutes of Thursday 3 January 1935, 1-2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁹ The previous King, Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David aka King Edward VIII (January – December 1936), had abdicated the throne after insisting on marrying Mrs Wallis Simpson, an American divorced woman with two living ex-husbands.

⁴⁰ NAA, ECR 1/1/80 vol. 1 nos. 1-95. Minutes of Friday 19 February 1937, 1.

⁴¹ NAA, ECR 1/1/80 vol. 1 nos. 1-95. Minutes of Thursday 8 April 1937.

⁴² NAA, ECR 1/1/80 vol. 1 nos. 1-95. Minutes of council Tuesday 13 April 1937, 1-4. The Alake was to return on 29 July 1937, which he did.

⁴³ NAA, ECR 1/1/80 vol. 1 nos. 1-95. Minutes of 5 August 1937, 7-8.

⁴⁴ NAI, IjeProf 2 File C57. 'Minutes by His Excellency', 2. It should be noted that The Native Authority Ordinance, 1943' Section 10 enabled any person to be removed from office as a Native Authority.

⁴⁵ NAI, File C.57The Native Authority Office to the Resident, Ijebu Province, Ijebu Ode, 7 September 1948.

⁴⁶ NIA, Oyoprof 1, 4772. Ag Sec Western Provinces Ibadan to the Resident, Oyo Province 21 June 1949.

⁴⁷ He abdicated the throne on 3 January 1949. See Annual Report of 1949-51. File No 11875/vol.xvi, NAI; see also Johnson-Odim 2009.

⁴⁸ He was described as a man of supernatural and magical powers.

⁴⁹ The incident occurred on 30 May while he was removed in June 2010. *Ibid*; *Punch Newspaper* 11 June, 2010.

⁵⁹ Although a few years later he claimed he to be a changed man and wanted to be reinstated.

⁵¹ The *Igbaiwa* (calabash of disposition) is a coronation ritual in which the Oba chooses between two covered calabashes. One is filled with the local currency and the other with leaves, signifying wealth for the kingdom and peace respectively. These days, however, a local medicine man says that marks are placed on the calabash so as to help the future king. Mathew Akindele, 50 years, interview at his residence in Ake, *Abeokuta*. Today, there are alleged cases of *Oba* engaged in fights with shorts (boxers) in the streets of *Yorubaland*.

⁵² Gbaniyi Osafire V. Paul Odi (1989), 29.

⁵³ Federal Republic of Nigeria. The 1999 Constitution. Section 38.

⁵⁴ Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola travelled to Spain for medical treatment; Robert Mugabe travelled to Singapore; President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria travelled to France; Patrice Talon of Benin Republic also travelled to France for medical tourism. See Akinnaso 2017.

⁵⁵ Yaradua was treated in Saudi Arabia and Babangida in France. General I.B. Babangida travelled in the 1990s for leg pain, Musa Yaradua travelled and was reported dead; and Muhammadu Buhari also recently travelled to the United Kingdom. In Buhari's case, the amount spent on the maintenance and keeping of the Presidential Jet and entourage has never been explained, even if it was taxpayers' money. Recently, a former Vice President, Chief Dr Alex Ekwueme, spent about £200,000 in a London hospital. However, this is not the focus of this study, but rather the case of traditional rulers as ambassadors of traditional values demands questioning.

⁵⁶ OAU, Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related Diseases' Abuja, Nigeria, 24–27 April 2001 par 26, 5.

⁵⁷ CPED, Perspectives on Primary Healthcare in Nigeria: Past, Present and Future, CPED Monograph 10, (Benin City: CPED, 2014); Osibogun, 2004: 1–7; Omoluabi 2014: 7.

⁵⁸ But it was not recorded that any had joined their ancestors in the process.

⁵⁹ He stated that these effects have led to political, social, health, spiritual, economic and moral decay. Matthew Akindele, (aka Alagba) about 50 years old. Indigenous Medicine Man, interview held at his residence, Ake, *Abeokuta*. 22 June, 2016.

⁶⁰ It should be noted that this has cost the country more than \$1 billion (£800million). This is despite the huge sum allocated to the Aso Rock Hospital in the 2016 budget (Zane 2017).

⁶¹ Aside from the amount spent on medical tourism, so many rituals at home are left undone, investment is stalled and the town or nation is divided. An example of this is the long gap in the kingship struggle in Ikenne Remo, 1984–2012. Even after a king emerged, there are still ongoing agitations that he was not the rightful heir to the throne. Such act leads to division and bitterness and they do not augur well for the development of any town or society. See Thompson 2011: Ch. 5.

⁶² Monaco and some Asian and Australian countries have the highest life expectancy compared to some wealthy European countries in the Western world. This is because they invest in health care. Why cannot Nigeria and the Yoruba nation do the same?

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