

Deposed Rulers under the Colonial Regime in Nigeria: The Careers of Akarigbo Oyebajo and Awujale Adenuga (Dirigeants déçus sous le régime colonial au Nigeria. La carrière de l'Akarigbo Oyebajo et de l'Awujale Adenuga)

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Deposed Rulers under the Colonial Regime in Nigeria

The Careers of *Akarigbo* Oyebajo and *Awujale* Adenuga

In pre-colonial Yoruba society, a deposed king (*oba*) was expected to die. From a spiritual perspective, the *oba* was considered a sacred figure. Hence, as L. J. Munoz (1977: 33) has pointed out, "his sacred character does not allow him to go on living after his deposition, precisely because that 'character' is permanent". But there were other practical considerations as well. A deposed *oba* was required to die in order to obviate opposition to his successor, and hence make for a peaceful reign. A deposed *oba* alive could constitute the focus of agitation and disaffection, thus endangering the security and survival of the state if he was the paramount king¹, or that of his town if a subordinate king². Hence, the traditional adage that without the death of a king, he cannot have a successor; or that a king's reign is only legitimised after the funeral obsequies of his predecessor must have been completed. In the traditional belief therefore, the notion that a deposed *oba* should die was not only because of the immanent nature of his sacred character, but also that he constituted a potential risk.

The idea that a deposed king should be made away with was jettisoned during the colonial period by the British who considered the practice obnoxious. Against the background of the discontinuance of the old practice, as well as the fact that traditional rulers continued to be politically relevant under the British dispensation, an attempt is made in this paper to examine two instances of deposition and their fallout.

1. There was the case of the Ijebu king, *Awujale* Fidipote, who in a bid to pre-empt deposition (and death) fled his capital and went on self-exile to Epe in 1883. Here, he promoted disaffection in the state, endeavouring to overawe the regency council in the hope of creating an enabling environment for his safe return home. He eventually died in Epe in 1885, with some of his supporters suspecting regicide masterminded by the regency council (ODUWOBI 2002).
2. Among the Yoruba, the term *oba* was not exclusive to the head of the kingdom; some high-ranking subordinate rulers in the kingdom were also similarly referred.

Cahiers d'Études africaines, XLIII (3), 171, 2003, pp. 553-571.

The territorial area of discussion is Ijebu³. Before the advent of British rule, the Ijebu territory constituted a single kingdom under the titular headship of the *Awujale* whose seat of government was the town of Ijebu-Ode. The western section of Ijebu was, and is still, locally referred to as Remo. During the nineteenth century, many Remo towns, as a result of the disturbed conditions in Yorubaland (Ajayi 1974: ch. 5), coalesced to form composite towns for defence purposes. The most notable in this respect was the town of Sagamu, which was founded in about 1872, and comprised some twelve hitherto separate communities. One of the Sagamu communities was Ofen (now Ofin) whose titular ruler was the *Akarigbo*. The *Akarigbo* enjoyed the status of *primus inter pares* among the rulers of Ijebu-Remo.

The Ijebu territory came under British political control after the military expedition of 1892 (Aderibigbe 1960; Ayantuga 1965: ch. 7; Smith 1978: 172-203). Two years later in 1894 Ijebu-Remo was politically detached from the rest of Ijebu when it was declared a British protectorate; also excised between 1892-1894, were the southern and lagoon portions of Ijebu extending from Ikorodu to Epe, which were annexed by the British. These detached portions were administered as Ikorodu and Epe Districts, the Ijebu-Remo Protectorate forming a part of the Ikorodu District. The rest of Ijebu was administered as the Ijebu-Ode District (see map p. 552).

In 1914, following the amalgamation of Nigeria, the Ijebu-Remo protectorate area of the Ikorodu District was merged with the Ijebu-Ode District, which now became known as the Ijebu-Ode Division. In 1921, the Ijebu-Ode Division was upgraded into provincial status as the Ijebu Province. The local administration, called the Ijebu Native Administration, was headed by the *Awujale*, who was designated Native Authority. He was assisted by a body of traditional authorities in a council called the Judicial Council⁴. Superimposed over the local administration for supervisory purposes were British political and administrative officials styled Resident, District Officer and Assistant District Officer.

The foregoing formed the colonial administrative milieu within which the two principal figures of this essay reigned (Oduwobi 1995: 47-58, 79-82, 90-93).

Akarigbo Oyebajo (1891-1915)

Oyebajo was in his mid-twenties⁵ when he acceded to the throne late in 1891 (Ellis & Johnson 1974: 5; Epega 1934: 19). His exertions on the

3. The term "Ijebu" is used for both the territory and its people. The Ijebu are a sub-group of the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria.

4. The Judicial Council performed executive, legislative, and judicial duties.

5. National Archives, Ibadan (NAI), CSO. 1/1, vol. 13, Carter to Knutsford, 17 August 1892.

Lagos government⁶, represented by Ademuyiwa Haastrup⁷, won British recognition for the *Akarigbo* stool, the titular headship of Ijebu-Remo in the aftermath of the British conquest of Ijebu in May 1892 (Oduwobi 1995: 49-57). With the *Awujale's* central authority, for the moment, emasculated by the shock of the conquest, an enabling environment was provided for the idea of a central head for Ijebu-Remo. It was in these circumstances that the Lagos government repeatedly stressed the need to promote the *Akarigbo* stool as the paramount authority for Ijebu-Remo. In 1894, Governor Carter deplored the lack of a central political head for Remo, as "there were too many kings in Ijebu-Remo"⁸. McCallum, his successor, was even more assertive when in 1897 he told the *Akarigbo* in Lagos: "I must tell you that those Gentlemen who bear so-called coronets I do not care for them at all. You are the king, we do not want a lot of other kings"⁹.

British recognition of the *Akarigbo's* paramouncy was formalised in an agreement with *Akarigbo* Oyebajo establishing a British protectorate over Ijebu-Remo in August 1894. Based on this recognition, another agreement was at the same time concluded with the *Akarigbo* ceding the Ijebu-Remo town of Ikorodu and its environs to the British Crown (Oduwobi 1995: App. III and IV A/B). Furthermore, in February 1902, the *Akarigbo* was made a member of the Central Native Council¹⁰. A year later, in 1903, the Elepe, titular head of one of the constituent sections of Sagamu, was fined by the Lagos government for using a crown in a bid to challenge the *Akarigbo's* paramouncy¹¹.

The ascendancy of the political status of the *Akarigbo* stool in Ijebu-Remo had a parallel effect on Oyebajo's disposition. Under the indigenous system of administration, a ruler governed in association with his council of chiefs. The extent to which he tilted the balance of government in his favour depended on his ability to manipulate the variables of power, namely, political, economic and religious factors (Lloyd 1968: 48-52). But the new British dispensation expected or devolved greater individual initiative on

6. Lagos was the headquarters of the emergent colonial administration.

7. Ademuyiwa Haastrup was a Lagos auctioneer with some maternal connections with the *Akarigbo* royalty. In recognition of his advancement of the interests of Ijebu-Remo with particular regard to the office of the *Akarigbo* since the 1880s, *Akarigbo* Oyebajo bestowed him with the royal honorary title of *Otonba* (now *Otunba*) in March 1893.

8. NAI, CSO. 1/1, vol. 14, Carter to Ripon, 28 February 1894.

9. NAI, IjeProf. 1, File No. 406, "Proceedings of a Meeting between the *Akarigbo* of Ijebu-Remo and His Excellency Major H. McCallum, Governor of Lagos, 1897".

10. *Colony of Lagos Gazette*, Saturday 24 May 1902, p. 372. It was an advisory body to the Lagos governor on chieftaincy and related issues in Yorubaland, which after 1900 came under the control of the Lagos government. The council was consisted mainly of nominated members drawn from Lagos and its districts.

11. See *Colony of Lagos Gazette*, Saturday, 28 February 1903, pp. 165-171; Saturday 7 March 1903, p. 221.

the part of the ruler in governance¹². It was against this background that the youthful *Akarigbo* Oyebajo sought to secure an upper hand over his chiefs in administration. In the event, he was increasingly confronted with dissensions.

A significant illustrative index of the new situation was Oyebajo's reluctance to share the stipend he received from the Lagos government, which his chiefs felt entitled to a part. While the *Akarigbo* conceived himself as the *de facto* ruler for which he received pecuniary remuneration, the chiefs clung to the old notion of government as a collective effort and for which they were entitled to its financial rewards. Oyebajo refused, in the words of a British officer, "to divide his stipend with those who by Native Custom are entitled to expect a portion"¹³.

Dissensions subsequently developed into animosities from 1904 when Oyebajo caused the arrest and arraignment of four of his principal chiefs on a charge of conspiracy. They were acquitted of the charge, but relations between the *Akarigbo* and the chiefs widened, and in 1911, the chiefs had their revenge when they had the *Akarigbo* prosecuted for larceny and extortion. The *Akarigbo* was eventually acquitted, but the fact that he had in the process been detained in prison custody rankled in his chest.

Oyebajo's position was not helped by the fact that he was not on friendly terms with the District Commissioner, H. F. Duncombe, who had ordered his detention. Duncombe had received a public official rebuke for his overzealousness, but the *Akarigbo* overplayed his hands by becoming discourteous to the District Commissioner. As a result, he was sanctioned by the reduction of his stipend for some months in 1912. The hostility between Oyebajo and his principal chiefs also continued unabated, leading by 1914 to the emergence of two factions. Ranged against Oyebajo were Bademowo, the *Lisa* and his second-in-command; Awofala, the *Losi*; and Odufuwa, the *Oloogben*. There was also Oluwole, a former court clerk. Oyebajo's main supporters were Oguntoye, Ali, Adebayo and Amusan, all of whom were untitled.

By mid-1914, the two opposing camps had levelled sundry cases and instances of felony, one against the other; but Oyebajo's opponents got the better hand in August when they succeeded in establishing cases of judicial misconduct against him. He was reported to have received bribes in order to influence suits brought to the newly established Native Court of which he was president¹⁴.

12. During his first visit to Sagamu Governor Carter felt insulted that the *Akarigbo* was required to address him through a spokesman, "the king himself apparently not being allowed to open his mouth" (NAI, CSO. 1/1 vol. 13, Carter to Knutsford, 17 August 1892).
13. NAI, IjeProf. 3, File No. C. 39/15, District Commissioner to Colonial Secretary, Lagos, 15 October 1911. The *Akarigbo* was by the 1894 agreement granted an annual sum of £100.
14. Part of the new measures introduced following the 1914 amalgamation was the institution of Native Courts presided over by local rulers.

As earlier mentioned, in 1914 the Ijebu-Remo protectorate area became part of a new Ijebu-Ode Division. It was unfortunate for Oyebajo that late in 1914, his old foe, Duncombe, who had received a different posting since 1912, was brought back as the British officer in charge of the new administrative unit. Duncombe lent his support to the accusations of judicial misconduct levelled against Oyebajo, and eventually he was requested by the government in January 1915 to find a replacement for him if he considered it advisable. Not only did Duncombe determine that Oyebajo was to be deposed, he intended to humiliate him in the process. He held consultations with Oyebajo's opponents, and a choice was made in Chief Awolesi, the Alase. The selection received official approval in March.

Since he had received no official notification of deposition, Oyebajo regarded the purported appointment of a new king as a ruse. It all dawned on him in early May when an installation ceremony, at which Duncombe was present, was conducted for Awolesi, and where he was informed of his deposition. His protest against this unceremonious exit resulted in his arrest and three of his supporters for breach of peace. They were all sentenced to jail terms at Ijebu-Ode with hard labour. Oyebajo and two others received a year each, while the fourth person, six months.

Oyebajo was released four months later in September following representations made to the government on his behalf by T. H. Jackson, editor and publisher of the popular tabloid, *Lagos Weekly Record*. The release was based on Jackson's assurances that not only had he secured Oyebajo's promise of good conduct, but his agreement to retire to his farm, Igbofa, some kilometres outside Sagamu. Thus rusticated, it was expected that he would be unable to exert much influence on political developments in the town (Sagamu). Jackson also assured that he impressed upon Oyebajo the likely consequences of renegeing on his promise. According to him:

"... I have even ventured to hazard what would be the probable consequence of any intentional breach of this compact as entailing not only a longer term of imprisonment than hitherto but also deportation to some remote and uncongenial spot, possibly in the Calabar District and away from the territorial limits of Yorubaland"¹⁵.

It was to be most unfortunate for Oyebajo that this turned out to be his fate.

Awolesi, the new *Akarigbo*, never enjoyed any lengthy period of good health; and was clearly under the influence of Oyebajo's archenemies, principally Awofala, the Losi, and Oluwole. The incidence of factionalism therefore remained. By December (1915) Oyebajo's supporters had begun to agitate for his reinstatement, arguing that Awolesi had been imposed with the support of the local British officials headed by Duncombe. The ranks of the pro-Oyebajo faction had also swollen as a result of the support of

15. NAI, IjeProf. 3, File No. C. 39/15, T.H. Jackson to Governor's Deputy, 8 September 1915.

an increasing number of chiefs who had become alienated by the excesses of Awofala and Oluwole.

The clamour for the restoration of Oyebajo came to a head when Awolesi died on 25 February 1916, spending only nine months in office. By this date, it was clear that the pro-Oyebajo faction was in the majority. However, while the local British officials under P. V. Young were decidedly against the reinstatement of Oyebajo whom they believed could not be reformed of avarice and cupidity; neither would they have a successor like Awolesi who in their opinion was a weakling¹⁶. Their preference was for a younger man who, they reasoned, was apt to be more responsive to enlightened and modern ideas. But when the pro-Oyebajo faction insisted on his restoration, their opponents led by Awofala sponsored the candidacy of a young man in the pro-Oyebajo camp called William Christopher Adedoyin, a public letter writer in his mid-thirties who had once served as Oyebajo's clerk. This was an astute and calculating move, aimed at shoring up their weakening position. They thereby proposed the selection of a man that fitted the preferences of the local British officials. The officials supported the choice, and in September, after the pro-Oyebajo faction had been prevailed upon to signify its assent, Adedoyin was installed as the new *Akarigbo*.

Oyebajo was, in the spirit of reconciliation, permitted to return to Sagamu; but he felt betrayed that an erstwhile supporter had allowed himself to be induced into taking over his office. "The Paramount Chieftaincy being taken from [him] to another man junior and in every respect lower in rank"¹⁷ was, as he later complained, mortifying. By 1918, his activities in the town had begun to give the local authorities serious concern. The British officials became more alarmed when he began to claim association with Herbert Macaulay (an early Nigerian nationalist) who was considered and disliked by the colonial authorities as a political agitator. Eventually, he and six of his supporters were arrested and convicted for conspiracy in March 1921. He was recommended for deportation to Calabar! Oguntoye and Ali, his two long-standing supporters, were similarly sentenced. The Governor approved the sentence, and in May, the three men were exiled to Calabar.

Life in a distant and foreign land soon began to have its effects on the men. Oguntoye died three months after their arrival in Calabar on 6 August. Ali died the next year (1922) following the rejection by the Governor of an appeal for clemency in which they expressed regret at their action¹⁸. Thereafter, especially after 1926 when another plea for clemency

16. This opinion was reinforced by developments at Ijebu-Ode where the officers deprecated the fact that an old man of weak personality was reigning as *Awujale* since November 1915.

17. NAI, CSO. 26, File No. 17423, Oyebajo and Ali to Governor, 25 May 1922.

18. *Ibid.*: "We did not know that it would result in so severe a punishment as deportation", they pleaded, "we hereby beg Your Excellency on our knees for forgiveness; that we will not in any way give offence to any kind regarding the chieftaincy."

was declined, Oyebajo suffered depression and his health speedily deteriorated. The government eventually granted one more appeal he made in May 1932, supported by the Resident of Calabar Province on health grounds¹⁹.

Oyebajo returned to Sagamu on 23 June 1932²⁰, only to die about three weeks later on 11 July 1932²¹. Certainly, the eleven years of exile during which he received a monthly maintenance allowance of £3 had taken their toll on the *ex-Akarigbo*.

Awujale Adenuga (1925-1929)

Adenuga was born in 1892 (few months after Oyebajo became *Akarigbo*) to *Awujale* Tunwase (1886-1895). He had three years of Western education during which he was baptised with the name Theophilus. Between 1920 and 1925, he worked in a number of trading firms as a shop clerk. Although he was appointed as *Awujale* in November 1925—adopting the royal name of Folagbade—his political career may be dated to 1915. In that year, it had been the turn of his family, the Tunwase, to provide a candidate for the throne, and he had been the only available qualified candidate to fill the position²². But the *odi*, the kingmakers, citing experiences of the preceding reign, had considered him too young to occupy the post at the age of twenty-three years²³. Consequently, the next family on the succession line was considered where Ademolu, a septuagenarian was appointed²⁴.

The Tunwase were loud in protest, as they made several complaints to the local British officials that the *odi*, who were also the *Awujale*'s palace officials had chosen Ademolu, generally believed to be weak in character, for their political advantage²⁵. More importantly was the apprehension of

19. *Ibid.*, Secretary, Southern Provinces to Chief Secretary, 26 May 1932.

20. NAI, IjeProf. 4, File No. J. 98, Assistant District Officer to District Officer, 24 June 1932.

21. *Ibid.*, *Akarigbo* to District Officer, 12 July 1932.

22. The succession rules required that a prince should be an *abidagbaa*, i.e., born during the reign of the father; have a freeborn Ijebu as mother; and suffer no anatomical deformity.

23. The previous ruler, Adeona, had been reported to be "about 43 years of age" when he acceded to the throne in 1906 (NAI, IjeProf. 9/2, Letter Book, 1904-08, C. Hornby Porter to Colonial Secretary, Lagos, 19 February 1906). The accusation against him, which they "attributed to his comparative youthfulness", was that he often brushed aside the opinion of his traditional council—an attitude possible under the new British dispensation (NAI, IjeProf. 2, File No. C. 17/10, Olisa and Others to Lugard, November 1916).

24. He was about seventy-six years old (NAI, IjeProf. 3, File No. C. 20/1924, District Officer to Resident, 19 September 1924).

25. One of the chiefs, on being informed of Ademolu's selection is reported to have expressed: "They have chosen a man who cannot even settle a quarrel between two fowls in his own house" (NAI, IjeProf. 3, File No. 134/1916, "A Meeting of some Members of the Ijebu-Ode Native Court with the District Officer", 31 March 1916).

the Tunwase that the royal status of the family might lapse should Adenuga, its only qualified candidate, suffer premature death. Indeed, there were suggestions in some quarters that this was the ulterior motive of the *odi* in recompense for the alleged collaboration of *Awujale* Tunwase (the family's forebear) with the British in the conquest of Ijebu.

At the head of the Tunwase protest was Adekoya, Adenuga's elder brother, who had put up his candidacy when the *odi* rejected Adenuga. But apart from the fact that his candidacy was rejected on technical grounds²⁶, he was unpopular with the *odi* as haughty²⁷. However, the progressive dissatisfaction of the British officials with the performance of Ademolu tended to make them sympathetic to the protests of the Tunwase²⁸. It thus appeared to them that the Tunwase had been unfairly passed over. An opportunity to redress the situation came in August 1916.

Acting upon a government directive to all administrative officers to encourage formal education for the sons of traditional rulers or heirs-apparent in order to prepare them for modern administrative duties²⁹, the officers in Ijebu decided to send Adenuga to school in Sierra Leone. On 28 August, the senior British official, P. V. Young, requested to see Adenuga. However, a reply came that his mother, with whom he was staying in the village of Igbeba, a few kilometres away from Ijebu-Ode, would not release the young prince. Convinced, however, that he had not received enough co-operation on the issue from the local authorities, Young proceeded to the palace where he evicted the *Awujale* and declared him deposed. He then announced Adekoya as his replacement.

The chiefs were alarmed. With the help of Bishop James Johnson in Lagos, they forwarded representations to the government, which were eventually favourably considered. Hence, in January 1917, Adekoya was removed and Ademolu reinstated. The government, however, expressly stated that Ademolu's successor would at all events be selected from the Tunwase family. This was to allay fears of any ulterior motive to nullify the family's royal status.

Ademolu died in October 1925. The Tunwase immediately expressed their preference for Adekoya. But the *odi* and the government turned this down on the grounds that he was by traditional considerations ineligible.

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26. He was not an *abidagbaa*; his mother was not a freeborn Ijebu; he had a malformed toe and hand.
 27. "Adekoya", went a report, "used to spit on the heads of the Odi and treated them as servants" (NAI, IjeProf. 3, File No. 134/1916, "A meeting... with the District Officer").
 28. An official remarked later of him: "Ademolu possesses no marked characteristics beyond his longevity and complete inability to perform his duties as head of the Native Administration" (NAI, IjeProf. 3, File No. C. 20/1924, District Officer to Resident, 19 September 1924).
 29. NAI, IjeProf. 3, File No. C. 18/1915, Commissioner to District Officer, 8 November 1915 (AFIGBO 1972: 144-145; Lord LUGARD 1970: Memo 4, Paras 9 and 20, Memo IX, para 39).

Reluctantly, the family supported the candidacy of Adenuga, who was appointed late in November³⁰.

As earlier indicated, by 1921 when the Ijebu Province was created, there had already been in operation a local government bureaucracy called the Ijebu Native Administration. Its head, though under the supervision of the Resident and his subordinate British officials, was the *Awujale*, who was designated the Native Authority. In this capacity, the *Awujale* wielded wide executive, legislative and judicial powers. Adenuga was thirty-three years old when he was appointed as *Awujale*, and would seem to have lacked the maturity to contend with the enormous statutory powers conferred on his office; for he abused all these powers right from early on in his reign. He was only a few months in office when he received an official reprimand for extortion of forestry fees³¹. Two other instances of graft also earned him official caution in 1928. In one, he unduly influenced succession to the stool of the Onipe of Ibu in February³²; and in the other, he was implicated in an attempt to conceal a case of homicide in March³³. The climax came in October when he sought to use his judicial powers to get rid of an anti-corruption crusader, one Joseph Igu (a.k.a. Frugality) who had been a thorn on the side of his administration. Frugality received the maximum and cumulative sentence of thirty years for the three offences for which he was charged. He was in addition to be banished from the Ijebu Province after the expiration of the jail term³⁴. Yet as it was soon discovered, Frugality had been framed-up by one Tijani. There was indeed some suspicion of the *Awujale*'s complicity in the plot; but it was glaring that the judgement of the *Awujale*'s court had been vindictive. He was consequently suspended from his judicial duties.

In the course of the next two months, many more discoveries were made concerning the *Awujale*'s abuse of political and judicial powers. His accomplices were also exposed, principally two members of his Judicial Council—Olubajo, the Olisa (the *Awujale*'s second-in-command) and Lawani, the Kakanfo. Also exposed were J. A. Fowokan, the Judicial Council clerk; J. O. Osibogun, the *Awujale*'s clerk; and many others all of whom acted as the *Awujale*'s intermediaries in various cases of extortion.

Meanwhile in the face of growing allegations against him, and as a result of statements made by the Resident, P. A. Talbot, that the *Awujale*

30. NAI, CSO. 26/2, File No. 15888, vol. 1, enclosures in Resident to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 16 November 1925.

31. NAI, IjeProf. 2, File No. C. 17/14, Ag. District Officer to Resident, 29 July, 1926; Resident to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 12 October 1926.

32. NAI, IjeProf. 2, File No. C. 17/15 Resident to *Awujale*, 27 February 1928; CSO. 26/3, File No. 22405, vol. 1, Resident to *Awujale*, 10 June 1928.

33. NAI, IjeProf. 2, File No. C. 17/15, Resident to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 29 October 1928.

34. He was accused of being in possession of a counterfeit coin; a counterfeit-coin making device; and an attempt to sell the device. The sentence on each charge, carrying a maximum of ten years, was to run consecutively.

might face prosecution and deposition, Adenuga secretly left for Lagos in the early hours of 4 November to forestall this eventuality. It was common for aggrieved rulers to seek the audience of superior colonial authorities at headquarters to lay complaints against local officials. As it turned out, however, the *Awujale* seemed to have been advised against this course of action by his hosts in Lagos³⁵, and so returned to Ijebu-Ode on 6 November.

The Resident was incensed that the *Awujale* had left Ijebu-Ode without permission, as he suspected his intentions. At any rate, the rumour was rife that the *Awujale* had been assured by the Lieutenant Governor in Lagos that he would not be deposed. This began to affect the success of the Resident's on-going investigations, as witnesses dwindled and those who had already given evidence either withdrew them or eloped for fear of retaliation should the *Awujale*'s authority be upheld. In the circumstances, all the Resident could do to remedy the situation was to ask the *Awujale* to vacate the palace. Adenuga moved to his personal residence in his maternal home town of Igbeba.

In trying to explain the general unsatisfactory state of affairs, the Resident, in a report to headquarters, was critical of the operational system, which conferred enormous and wide-ranging statutory powers on a single individual. He suggested the formation of an executive council comprising both chiefs and representatives elected from among the educated elite. This would forestall the arbitrary use of power with its attendant evils.

The Resident's suggestion indeed anticipated a later approach impelled on the colonial authorities by the force of events. But, for the moment, the Resident was sharply upbraided for his criticism, which amounted to a reversal of the established indirect rule policy of utilizing strictly indigenous authorities and structures. The present unsatisfactory state of affairs in the Ijebu Native Administration, the Resident was told, was attributable to the laxness of his supervision on the *Awujale* and the administration in general.

The government was decidedly against the institution of legal proceedings against the *Awujale* while still in office. Such prosecution ran counter to the official policy of upholding the sanctity of the traditional institution. Besides, credible public witnesses as the Resident's reports indicated might not be forthcoming. An easy way out was found in the institution of a judicial commission of enquiry which was to provide a general assessment of the Ijebu Native Administration with regard to the *Awujale*'s style of governance.

35. This advice must have been borne on the reports of the Lagos press (especially the *Lagos Daily News* and *Nigerian Advocate*) which gave extensive publicity to the *Awujale*'s misrule. Hence, the authorities in Lagos were unlikely to be favourably disposed to an audience with the *Awujale*. Indeed as the Lieutenant Governor informed the Resident in a correspondence: "(I) naturally would not have seen him without referring to you" (NAI, IjeProf. 2, File No. C. 17/15, Secretary, Southern Provinces to Resident, 12 November 1928).

The commission comprised Major William Birrell Gray, the Administrator (Resident) of the Lagos Colony, and Mr Walter Morgan, the acting Secretary for Native Affairs. Sitings were held in Ijebu-Ode between 7 and 11 January 1929, and on 18 January, a report was submitted to the government. The report noted with dismay the high incidence of corruption that pervaded the Ijebu Native Administration; and the *Awujale* was held responsible for this state of affairs. With the Olisa and the Kakanfo as his principal abettors, the *Awujale*, it was explained, surrounded himself with a number of disreputable characters in the conduct of government business. The result was that honest officials were forced to retreat into the background. The continued stay of the *Awujale* in office therefore, would only lead to further deterioration. It was consequently recommended that the *Awujale* be deposed and be moved away from the Province. The report also recommended the dismissal from office of the Olisa and the Kakanfo, the *Awujale*'s chief accomplices, adding for good measure that the succeeding *Awujale* "should not be encumbered with chiefs and officers of known disrepute"³⁶.

The government accepted these recommendations, and on 31 January, instructions were sent to Resident Talbot to notify the affected persons in writing. In addition, the *Awujale* was within three days of notification to leave the Province to any place of his choice outside the Yoruba-speaking section of southern Nigeria.

Contrary to instructions, however, Talbot announced the *Awujale*'s deposition at a public assembly on 4 February, with the *Awujale* in attendance³⁷. This publicity drew a sharp rebuke from the Lieutenant Governor as "unnecessarily cruel"³⁸. But the Resident argued that the circumstances required a demonstrable indication that justice was done, and an illustrative precedent to discourage corruption in the Native Administration³⁹.

On 5 February, the deposed *Awujale* proceeded to Ilorin on exile. The choice of Ilorin in northern Nigeria was no doubt due to its being principally

36. NAI, CSO. 26/3, File No. 22405, vol. II, section I.

37. The humiliation of the *Awujale*, as described in the *Nigerian Advocate*, Saturday, 16 February 1929, p. 9, is worth quoting *in extenso*:

"The *Awujale* who came from Igbeba his town-village that morning took his seat in the centre on the raised platform. Adenuga, the *Awujale* himself who brought his staff of office with him to the meeting seemed to be very hopeful of a favourable verdict and anticipated a very big victory... At the fall of the hammer of the sentence of the Order of Deposition, the staff of office was taken from Adenuga... and was forthwith ordered off the *Awujale*'s state chair to another seat among the commoners."

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

39. In his crusade against corruption, not only did the Resident succeed in persuading the government to dismiss two other rulers (Sotinwa, the *Ewusi*, and Situ, the *Bale* of Ijebu-Igbo) implicated in the enquiry, he prevailed on the Judicial Council to banish seven other known accomplices of Adenuga from the Province.

a Yoruba-speaking town, as well as its propinquity to the rest of Yorubaland in the south from which he had been barred.

It was established official policy to exile a deposed ruler should it be considered politically expedient. As the case of Oyebajo examined above would serve to illustrate, a deposed ruler constituted a potential security risk. He was apt to be a focus of agitation through the activities of supporters and sympathisers. In the case of Adenuga, it was to be most unfortunate that the political atmosphere in the Ijebu Native Administration area through the 1930s and 1940s made it inauspicious for a favourable reconsideration of his matter. Indeed agitation in his support formed part of the initial problems, and his implication only weakened his case before the government.

Adenuga's successor in 1929 was Ogunnaike, an octogenarian who died in January 1933. His demise was followed by a protracted and bitter succession crisis involving two ruling houses that contended for consideration. To this was added the clamour of Adenuga's supporters for his reinstatement. A successor, Adesanya, was eventually appointed in September who, in view of the disaffection engendered by the succession crisis did not have popular favour. Even more significant was the fact that his eligibility was dubious; but he had received the support of the local British officials because he was the most literate contestant (Oduwobi 1995: 108-121). The new *Awujale* was therefore faced with some opposition at the beginning of his reign; but his anxiety was heightened by the surreptitious activities of Adenuga's supporters to have him restored. An accidental discovery in May 1934 of a collection of letters addressed by one Jonathan Adebajo to Adenuga exposed schemes to employ spiritual means to secure the restoration of the deposed and exiled *oba*. The new *Awujale*, it was hoped, would either be deposed or suffer premature death. Following this revelation, the acting Resident, D. S Cook, recommended that Adenuga be moved further away as his "being at Ilorin [was] far too near for quiet and peaceful development of the new *Awujale*'s rule at Ijebu-Ode"⁴⁰. The government accorded little significance to these apprehensions and declined the request⁴¹.

A high point was reached on 20 October of the same year (1934) when one Yesufu Idimota, a fanatical supporter of Adenuga, attempted to assassinate the *Awujale*. Although he failed, his gunshots caused sufficient damage to *Awujale*'s right hand as to be subsequently amputated.

Consequent investigations led to the arrest and prosecution of eleven men including Adenuga, as Idimota's accomplices. They were charged

40. NAI, CSO. 26/2, File No. 15888/S.1, vol. I, Ag. Resident to Lieutenant Governor, 9 June 1934.

41. The Lieutenant Governor in fact had a simplistic impression of the episode. "It may quite possibly have been concocted", he opined, "either to frighten him (the *Awujale*) or to cause trouble to the ex-*Awujale*" (*ibid.*, Lieutenant Governor to Resident, 24 July 1934).

with conspiracy and incitement to commit murder. Their arraignment was essentially based on the discovery of a number of written correspondence between them and the *ex-Awujale*, as well as witness accounts. Although it was clear that they did not wish the *Awujale* well, the attempt at assassination had been Idimota's unilateral decision⁴². However, on 18 February 1935 they were all convicted and sentenced to varying jail terms with hard labour at the Abeokuta prison. Adenuga received four years.

The convicts appealed against the sentences in the West African Court of Appeal (Lagos); but Adenuga's experiences, in the interim, were perhaps to mark the saddest moments of his life. While at the Abeokuta prison, he was engaged in mat making; then when in May he and the others were transferred to the Lagos prison for the hearing of their appeals, they were on arrival marched through the streets of Lagos manacled. The vehicle, which would have conveyed them from the arrival point to the prison, was said to have been unavailable. At the Lagos prison Adenuga, went an official report, "was employed in cleaning feeding pans and restraining gear [manacles]... He also cleansed his own night latrine pan and took his turn in carrying the latrine buckets from the cell corridor to the main laterine"⁴³. From the government point of view indeed, for one who had been sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour, Adenuga had been treated lightly. His mat-making while in Abeokuta prison was described as "work of an industrial nature"; that he took turns to dispose human waste in the Lagos prison was simply "a part of the daily routine of every inmate of the prison"; and that he was manacled while being led to prison on the streets of Lagos "was in accordance with normal prison routine... restraining gear was necessary to prevent escape from warder escorts armed only with batons"⁴⁴. The *ex-Awujale* would no doubt have found these experiences distressful.

All the convicts had their sentences nullified by the appeal court on 27 May 1935. Between then and 1941 Adenuga's lawyer, Sir William Geary, unsuccessfully mounted pressure on the government to have the deportation order revoked or modified on financial considerations. He contended that the annual sum of £96 or £8 per month paid to the *ex-Awujale* as maintenance allowance was insufficient. The revocation or modification of the deportation order, he argued, would enable the *ex-Awujale* to monitor his business concerns at home closely, thereby boosting his financial position⁴⁵.

42. During his trial Idimota refused to make any disclosures. He was sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment on 14 November 1934, but died shortly afterwards.

43. NAI, CSO. 26/2. File No. 15888/S.1, vol. II, A report to the Chief Secretary to the Government.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Geary's request was rejected on political grounds. According to the governor, "to allow him to return to Ijebu-Ode even temporarily, he would become inevitably, even if quite unwillingly, the focus of disaffection and intrigue" (*ibid.*, B. H. Bourdillon to J. H. Thomas, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 January 1936).

While in office, the *ex-Awujale* had been on an annual salary of £1,050; and at his deposition, the government had suggested an annual sum of between £150 and £200, to be defrayed by the Ijebu Native Administration. The suggested amount was, however, opposed by the British officials of the Ilorin Province as excessive from the local point of view. "It will create considerable trouble among Ilorin chiefs and office holders", they argued, "if the allowance paid to the *ex-Awujale* exceeds the salaries received by the former"⁴⁶. The payment of a comparatively large sum to the *ex-Awujale*, they explained, was fraught with political implications as he may keep a large retinue and maintain a flamboyant life style, thereby offending the sensibilities of the indigenous authorities. "An allowance of £8 per month", they assessed, "would be ample"⁴⁷.

The argument of the Ilorin British officials may have been informed by the impression which Adenuga himself created on arrival in their domain. Talbot, the Ijebu Resident, who initially opposed the recommended sum of £8 as insufficient, eventually concurred, in view of local reports. He wrote:

"I have been informed that Adenuga took away a large sum of money with him and it also seems to be the general opinion that a smaller allowance such as the £8 p.m. mentioned by the Resident of Ilorin Province, would be ample under the circumstances"⁴⁸.

However buoyant Adenuga might have been at the time of his deposition, his financial position was weakening six years after in 1935 when Sir Geary took up his case. At an interview he had with the Governor in 1936, Sir Geary explained:

"The *Ex-Awujale* has a very little means of his own at present in view of the fact that as he is an exile, he is precluded from operating his farmlands which were at one time very productive but at the moment subject to the unscrupulous supervision of people who claim relationship with him. Had he been on the spot he would be in the position to look after his affairs"⁴⁹.

Sir Geary argued that should the government still be unwillingly to revoke the deportation order on the *ex-Awujale*, then his allowance should be reviewed from £96 per annum to £500, or £1 per day.

The government was not averse from Sir Geary's request for an upward review in principle, but it referred the matter to the *Awujale*, head of the Ijebu Native Administration, who opposed it. The government concurred⁵⁰.

46. NAI, IjeProf. 2, File No. C. 17/9, Ag. Secretary, Southern Provinces to Resident, 8 February 1929.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*, Resident to Secretary, Southern Provinces, 4 March 1929.

49. NAI, CSO. 26/2, File No. 15888/S.2, W. Neville M. Geary to Chief Secretary to the Government, 23 November 1936.

50. The £96 per annum, it was retorted, was "sufficient to maintain him in reasonable comfort" (*ibid.*, Secretary, Southern Provinces to Chief Secretary to the Government, 15 February 1937).

The ex-*Awujale* was subsequently to make two urgent appeals. The first was in 1941, when after pressure mounted on his behalf in the British parliament by Sir Geary, the Ijebu Native Administration was induced to increase the allowance to £120 per annum. The second was late in 1949. Again, the Native Administration granted the request in August 1950, increasing the allowance to £180 per annum. It was however, to take effect from April 1951. But this was not to be. Adenuga died in the afternoon of 13 November, 1950⁵¹.

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Under the colonial dispensation, the fate of the deposed *oba* produced a dilemma around which revolved two contrasting viewpoints. One was the traditional demand for the death of the deposed *oba*; and the other, the colonial discontinuance of the practice. Deriving from the traditional view was the adage that a new *oba* could not be appointed without the death of his predecessor. With regard to the two deposed *oba* examined in this paper, the dilemma emanated from the fact that their supporters employed this adage to argue for their reinstatement⁵². As traditional rulers were the cornerstone of British indirect rule policy, no official consideration was given to the idea of filling the intervening period (between the deposition and death of an *oba*) with the appointment of a regency council, as would have been the case in pre-colonial times. The British choice was to ignore the traditional viewpoint and fill the vacuum (created by deposition) with a new candidate.

Still on the fate of the deposed *oba*, the official approach to the issue of deposition was banishment, either to avert or in response to political complications. An early statutory provision on the subject states *inter alia*:

“When a Native Chief... has been deposed... the Governor may, if... satisfied that it is necessary for the re-establishment or maintenance of peace, order and good government..., direct that such Chief... shall leave the area over which he had exercised jurisdiction..., and that he shall not return to such area without the consent of the Governor”⁵³.

51. NAI, IjeProf. 1, File No. 991, Emir of Ilorin to *Awujale*, 13 November 1950.

52. In 1915, Oyebajo's supporters told the British that “it was absolutely against their custom for a new king to be elected whilst the old one was still alive” (NAI, IjeProf. 3, File No. C. 18/1915, Meeting of the Odi of Shagamu and the Chiefs of Offin Quarter of Shagamu called by the Commissioner Mr P. V. Young at Shagamu, 8 December 1915). Adenuga's supporters in 1933 drew government's attention to the “Native political maxim that ‘unless an Oba dies another cannot reign’” (NAI IjeProf. 2, File No. C. 17/4/1, Bakare, the Chief Imam and Others to Governor, 20 February 1933).

53. The Deposed Chiefs Removal Ordinance, 1917, No. LIX of 8 November 1917. It was subsequently modified as the Ex-Native Office Holders Removal Ordinance, No. 64 of 1933. See respectively, *Laws of Nigeria*, 1923, pp. 822-823; *Laws of Nigeria*, 1933, pp. 313-317.

The more intractable the problem presented by a deposition was, the further afield would the deposed ruler be moved. In the case of Oyebajo for instance, his presence in Sagamu after he was initially allowed to return in 1916 led to political problems, as he was actively involved in schemes to have him reinstated. Calm was only gradually restored after his exile to Calabar, hundreds of kilometres away. Also, in 1934, following the assassination attempt on the *Awujale's* life, the idea was mooted that in view of the alleged complicity of Adenuga, he should be removed from Ilorin to Buea in southwest Cameroon, "Where communication with Ijebu-Ode would be more difficult"⁵⁴.

The financial implication of deposition and banishment was another issue. As the years wore on, life in exile, where they were not in close touch with their commercial holdings, rendered insufficient the allowance paid to Oyebajo and Adenuga. In his appeal in 1941 for an upward review of his allowance, Adenuga drew attention to the fact that he had ten school-going children, and that their education constituted a considerable strain on his finances⁵⁵. By 1949 when he made another appeal, he complained that some of them had been compelled to drop out of school on account of his meagre means⁵⁶. The payment of the allowances was the responsibility of the Native Administration, which was usually reluctant taking on additional financial burden. Hence, when in 1942 Adenuga's allowance was raised from £96 to £120 per annum in response to his appeal of the previous year, it was expressly made clear to him that "this increase in the allowance should not be treated as a precedent to further demands in the future"⁵⁷.

It is indeed tempting to conclude that at the time of the death of the two deposed rulers, the reality of deposition with its attendant implication of impecuniosity was a contributory factor in their demise. Aged about sixty-five years, Oyebajo's health was so bad when he was allowed to return home in 1932 that he died shortly afterwards. Dying at the younger age of fifty-eight years in exile, Adenuga cannot be said to have had a better experience than Oyebajo.

A final observation is the fact that the two personalities considered here were both young when they assumed power; and that they reigned under dispensations, which invested their offices with novel rulership concepts. They operated within a system, which infused royal or political authority with an autocratic bent. But for our two personalities, the power conferred on them seemed to have exceeded their youthful experience. Although it

54. NAI, CSO. 26/2, File No. 15888/S.1, vol. I, Lieutenant Governor of the Chief Secretary to the Government, 24 October 1934.

55. *Ibid.*, vol. III, Ex-*Awujale* Folagbade to William Geary, 22 January 1941.

56. NAI, IjeProf. 1, File No. 991, Theophilus Adenuga Tunwase to Chief Commissioner, 17 November 1949.

57. NAI, CSO. 26/2, File No. 15888/S.1, vol. II, Secretary, Western Provinces to Chief Secretary to the Government, 28 March 1942.

is not explicitly indicated in the available records, Oyebajo's long-standing supporters such as Oguntoye and Ali may have exerted a strong influence on him, and as such playing a significant role in the initial power struggle between Oyebajo and his chiefs. In the case of Adenuga, it is clear that he was from the outset of his reign heavily influenced by two of his chiefs, the *Olisa* and the *Kakanfo*, with whom he was dismissed in 1929. There was also a third person. This was Chief Akumayabikan who with the *Olisa* was involved in shady land deals in 1921⁵⁸. Adenuga may have been avaricious, but it could also be argued that his more elderly abettors aggravated it by taking advantage of his immaturity⁵⁹.

The point in all this is that, by discarding the checks and balances of the pre-colonial system, by limiting indigenous restraints on executive authority, and until the 1940s when attempts were made to correct these lapses, the British established a system, which made the executive office vulnerable to abuse⁶⁰. An Assistant District Officer highlighted this defect in 1935 when he noted: "... In more than one case, a strong personality has attached himself to [a ruler] and has eventually completely controlled him"⁶¹. In many respects, his observation epitomises the tragedy of Adenuga, and, presumably, Oyebajo.

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58. The *Olisa* was suspended for three months as a result, while Akumayabikan was jailed six months. Akumayabikan played the role of an intermediary for Adenuga in the collection of bribes.

59. An official impression of Adenuga in the early period of his reign was that he was "very inexperienced and diffident" (NAI, IjeProf. 7/2, Confidential Annual Report, 1926).

60. The colonial administration in its various ramifications is, of course, the subject of many detailed studies. However, for a panoramic presentation of British attempts at reform in the 1940s (Lord HAILEY 1951).

61. NAI, CSO. 26, File No. 31216, A. F. Abell, "Intelligence Report on Ijebu-Remo District of Ijebu Province", 1935, para. 51.

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ABSTRACT

Traditional rulers were the cornerstone of the British colonial system of Indirect Rule. Essentially, traditional rulers were, therefore, government officials who could be removed from their offices for misconduct by the colonial authorities. In pre-colonial Yoruba society, a deposed ruler was required to die to avert his being a potential focus of opposition to his successor. This was conceptualised by the belief or adage that a king had to die before a successor was enthroned. The concept or notion of death after deposition was abrogated under the colonial administration. The deposed ruler became an ordinary citizen. This created an anomalous situation and legitimacy problems for the successor since traditional rulers retained political authority under the colonial dispensation. This paper examines the attendant difficulties through a consideration of the careers of two deposed rulers in the Yoruba society of Ijebu.

RÉSUMÉ

Dirigeants déçus sous le régime colonial au Nigeria. La carrière de l'Akarigbo Oye-bajo et de l'Awujale Adenuga. — Les dirigeants traditionnels étaient au centre du système colonial britannique de « gouvernement indirect ». Il s'agissait essentiellement de fonctionnaires qui pouvaient être démis de leurs fonctions par les autorités coloniales pour mauvaise conduite. Dans la société précoloniale yoruba, un dirigeant déchu devait mourir pour éviter qu'il devînt un centre d'opposition face à son successeur. Cela était conceptualisé par la croyance selon laquelle « un roi devait mourir avant que son successeur fût couronné ». Toutefois, le concept ou la notion de mort après déposition fut abrogé sous l'administration coloniale, et le dirigeant déchu devint alors un citoyen ordinaire. Cela créa une situation anormale et suscita des problèmes de légitimité pour le successeur dans la mesure où les dirigeants traditionnels maintenaient leur autorité politique sous le régime colonial. Cet article se penche sur les difficultés provoquées par cette situation à travers la carrière de deux dirigeants déçus dans la société yoruba des Ijebu.

Keywords/Mots-clés: Akarigbo, Awujale, Ijebu, Remo, Yoruba, deposed, exile, native administration, oba (king)/Akarigbo, Awujale, Ijebu, Remo, Yoruba, *dirigeants déçus, exil, administration indigène, Oba (roi).*