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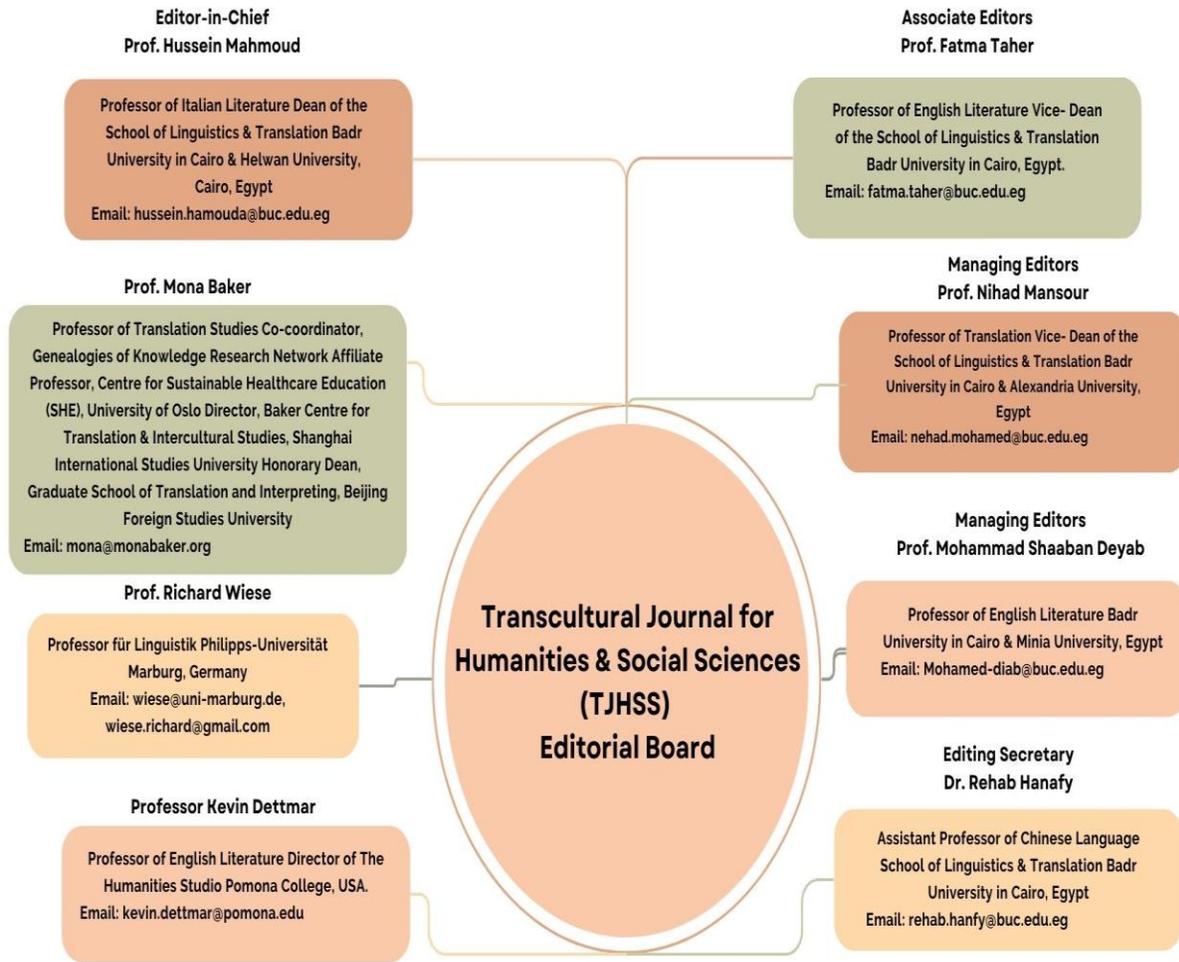
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Survival Strategy of an Emerging State beyond Warfare: Diplomatic Practices in Ilorin Emirate, Central Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century

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Abstract: The use of diplomacy as a statecraft was visible in precolonial Africa. It was primarily concerned with relations among states to achieve mutually beneficial agreements. Diplomacy in precolonial Africa included trade treaties, protection, supply of weapons, war pacts and alliances, defence accords and boundary delimitations. This study examines the dynamics of diplomatic practices in nineteenth century Ilorin Emirate. It adopted a historical research method, comprising the use of oral interviews and relevant written sources. Due to Ilorin's heterogeneity, the first diplomatic move was to ensure harmony among its diverse groups. This internal diplomacy fostered peace among the federating units in the emirate. Externally, Ilorin made friends with adjoining emirates in Nupeland like Lafiagi and Bida, and distant states like Sokoto and Gwandu. Elements of Ilorin diplomacy included the long distance trade, Islam and Jihad, appointment of political and trade representatives, war pacts and alliances, particularly in the course of the Yoruba civil wars. Ilorin's diplomacy was primarily to promote her political cum economic interests, even sometimes with political rivals as witnessed in Ilorin-Ibadan alliance at the Batedo war in 1844 and Opin war in the 1850s. Indeed, diplomacy was a strong factor in the process, which turned Ilorin's diversity to strength. Appointees of the emir, such as fief-holders, *Ajele*, *Babakekere*, *Magajis* and *Alangua*, ensured the loyalty of vassal states and kept the influence of Ilorin alive in areas outside the metropolis. Diplomatic maneuvers contributed substantially to the survival of Ilorin Emirate in Yorubaland in the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Diplomacy, Dynamics, Ilorin Emirate, Survival, Warfare

1. Introduction

Ilorin is located in the savannah, midway between southern and northern Nigeria. The city is fondly described as a gateway between the two geographical zones due to its location. Majority of Ilorin's inhabitants are Yoruba of Old Oyo extraction with a mixed population of Fulani, Hausa, Nupe, Bariba, Gobir, and Kanuri, who migrated to the town (Yahaya Oral interview, 05/05/2023). The town was a military outpost of the Old Oyo Empire, located in the extreme north of Yorubaland under *Ààre* Afonja, commander of the old Oyo imperial army. The fall of the old Oyo Empire created a vacuum in Yorubaland, which shook the balance of power in the region and contributed to Ilorin's emergence as an emirate. The Jihad of 1804 in Hausa land extended to the south among the Nupe and Yoruba areas leading to the emergence of emirates in the states as the southern frontiers of the caliphate system. The Nineteenth Century could safely be described as a revolutionary period in Ilorin's history, not only because of her role in the collapse of the Old Oyo empire, but more fundamentally, due to her subsequent rise to prominence and participation in the Yoruba warfare of the period. Three inter-related themes, which affected Ilorin during this period, can be identified. These are: *Ààre* Afonja's efforts to make Ilorin independent of Old Oyo; Fulani ascendancy in the area, which ultimately culminated in a new political order – emergence of her emirate in the 1820s; and the struggle to

nurture the young emirate, which led to several battles of survival, expansion and consolidation. Muri, maintains that the Sokoto caliphate was confronted by four major antagonists. These were the dissenters, bandits, apostates and unbelievers. (Muri, 120) These four elements constituted constant internal and external challenges to the Sokoto caliphate. The survival of the Ilorin emirate in the early period thus rested on effective defence mechanism, which largely rested on the ability of its leaders to thwart attacks, coming mainly from dissenters. Meanwhile, Yoruba resentment of the emirate intensified as it became clear at some point that the motive for Ilorin's expansion was more political and economic than religious. To survive this volatile circumstance, Ilorin did not rely solely on warfare, but she also employed diplomacy.

Peace and war, even though are contrary conditions of humankind, share one important characteristic - both are aspects of relations among societies. (Smith, 7). Similarly, Carl Von Clausewitz, a famous Prussian Army General, sees war more or less as a continuation of politics, which intends to compel an opponent to accept and fulfill one's wishes. He states "War is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse, with a mixture of other means...War can never be separated from political intercourse, should it be, then all the threads of different relations are broken and we have before us, a useless thing without an object"(Clausewitz, 65). Since the ancient period, war and peace have been means to an end in the pursuance of state objectives. War and peace are also the outcomes of the relationships among states. Thus, when and where peaceful relation ends, war begins.

The thrust of this study examine dynamics of diplomatic practices in Ilorin Emirate in the 29th century. This study adopted a historical research method, relied on both primary and secondary sources. Primary source comprised the use of oral interviews and archival material retrieved from National Archive Kaduna, Nigeria. While the secondary source includes books, journals and other relevant written materials. The article was able to make an overview of the dynamic of diplomacy in Ilorin Emirate in the nineteenth century.

A Brief on the Concept of Diplomacy

Diplomacy, the fundamental means by which foreign relations are conducted and foreign policy implemented, is not a modern creation. (Smith, 7) Rather, it is a practice that had existed since antiquity and was even visible among some of the very traditional communities in the world, including those in precolonial Africa. Diplomacy has a wider spectrum beyond the prevention of war. In its more generic form, the practice, apart from the question of war and peace, also includes the conclusion and observance of treaties, the making, maintenance and breaking of alliances, the establishment of boundaries, the development and protection of trade and the payment of tributes. Indeed, according to Smith, it is clear from the reports of early travelers that West African states were in the habit of sending representatives on diplomatic mission to each other. They usually described the officials as ambassadors, though words like messengers, linguists, emissaries (especially in the Gold Coast) were also used.

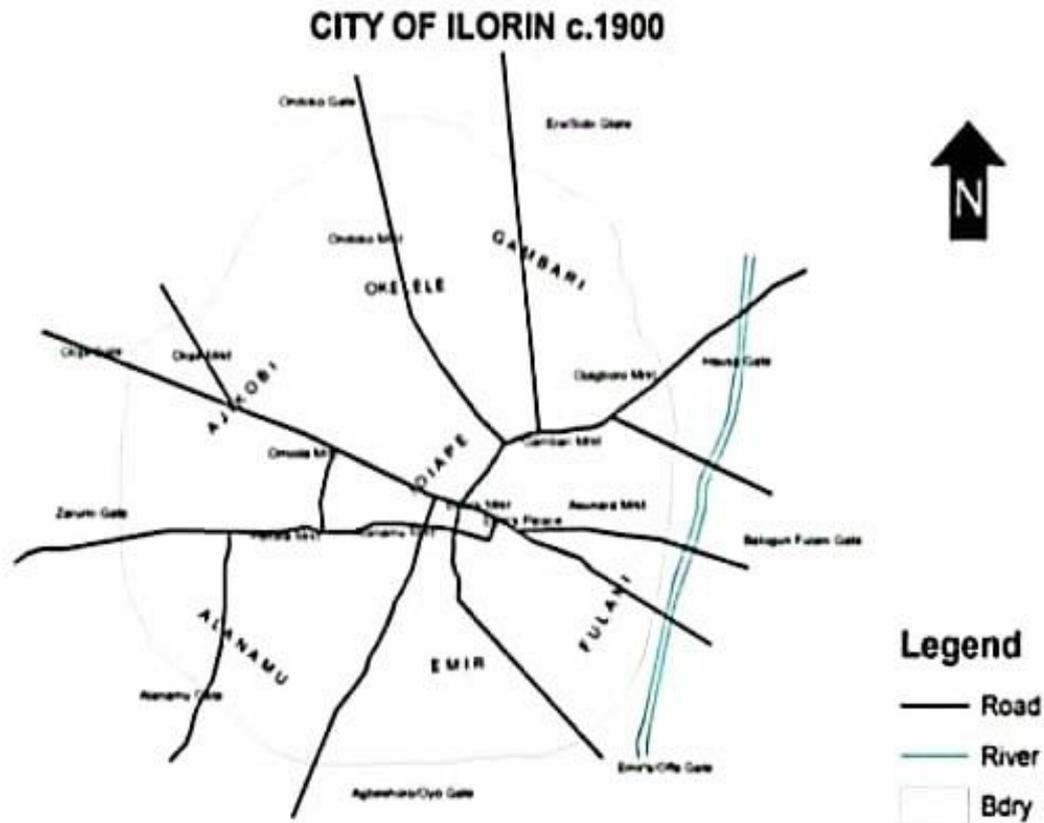
The Ilorin emirate authority adopted internal and external diplomatic instruments to defend its territories and to consolidate her influence. Ilorin had a catalogue of officials for keeping internal and external relations. The *Galadima*, was the official in charge of the affairs of the capital. The *Sarkin Dogari* was the head of the police; the *Maaji* was the treasurer; the *Sarkinfada* was responsible for the administration of the palace, while *Sarkinsalama* was the protocol officer in charge of receiving official guests of the emir.

2. Internal Diplomacy and Cohesion in Ilorin

The first major step taken by Ilorin leadership was to build a strong united front among its diverse groups to ensure harmony and solidarity internally. In this regard, diplomacy was paramount as an instrument of the Ilorin political leadership and the ability of the emirate to survive. (Jimoh, 50). Indeed, the employment of diplomacy by rulers of Ilorin could be traced to the pre-emirate period, when *Ààre* Afonja made some efforts to strengthen his military base in the town. This motive prompted him to enlist the support and loyalty of Hausa slaves and men from Ilorin surrounding villages. Diplomatic ploy was employed by the first emir in the early days of the emirate to consolidate his position. Emir Abdulsalami (1823-1842) used a combination of diplomacy and military force to deal with his rivals. (Law, 47). He employed tact and diplomacy in dealing with Bako, the then *Sarkin* Gambari at Ilorin. However, he combined diplomacy with force against Solagberu, the Yoruba Muslim leader at Oke-Suna. (Hermon-Hodge, 68). With time, the strategy was broadened because Ilorin henceforth pursued a greater objective of extending her influence to new areas of Yorubaland. Nevertheless, peace among the various groups in Ilorin was fundamental to the success of external missions; hence, internal diplomacy was first pursued.

Internally therefore, leaders of the major linguistic groups were co-opted as military generals (*Balógun*) and members of the emirate political structure as part of the emirate council. Four *Baloguns* were appointed, representing the major linguistic groups within the Ilorin emirate. These were *Baloguns* Ajikobi, Alanamu, Fulani and Gambari. Figure 1 show different leaders especially Balogun representing each ethnic groups in Ilorin Emirate in 1900.

Map 1. Showing Ward and Leaders of Each Ethnic Groups in Ilorin Emirate by 1900



Source: Ann O’Hear (1997).

The Ilorin leadership regarded this as expedient considering the strategic importance of the non-Fulani groups such as Yoruba, Bariba, Nupe, and Kanuri, in the survival of the young *emirate*. For instance, Fulani leadership’s adoption of *Balógun*, which is a Yoruba title for army general, is apparently in recognition of Yoruba role in the establishment and consolidation of the young emirate, and was in itself, a strategy for cohesion. This was also extended to the other groups to enlist their loyalty for the Fulani leadership. This move was expedient because as the Nupe were needed as blacksmiths to fabricate weapons and horse accoutrement, the Bariba were valued for their marksmanship in archery, horse tending and charms making. Hassan Alagbede, a Nupe man recounted how his great grandfather, named Nmoh, came to Ilorin on the invitation of Emir Abdulsalam, in the 1830s. (Hassan Oral interview, 15/06/2023)

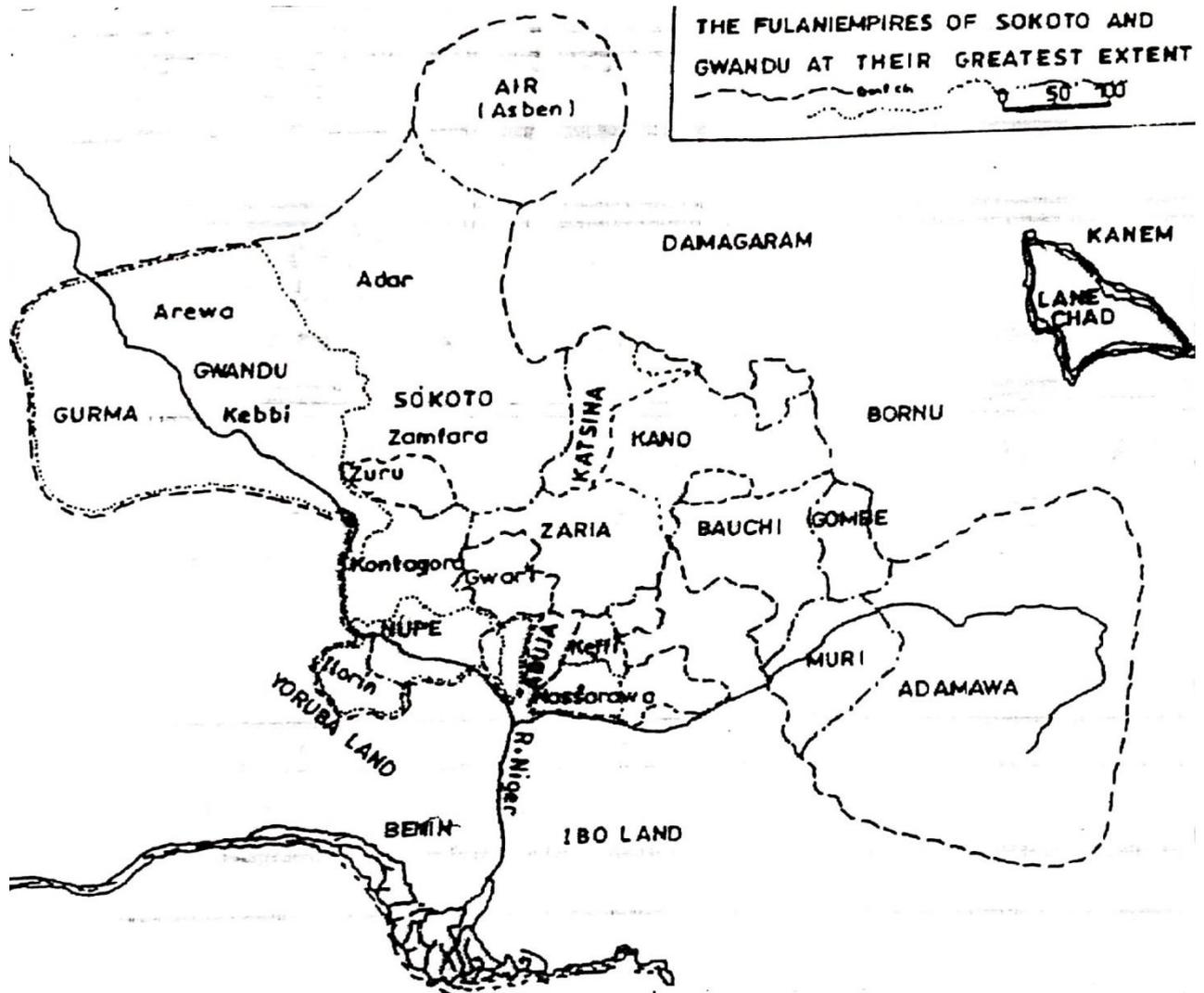
Another source given by one Baba Elegbeji, claims that his ancestor, Baba Ijesa Jakota Alagbede, popularly known as Ijesa, migrated to Ilorin following constant encouragement from the Magaji Oju-ekun, a powerful warrior in the town. Before then, Baba Ijesa, being a professional blacksmith, always supplied iron implement to Ilorin people from Ijesa area, in what later became Osun State. In addition to his smiting activities, Baba Ijesa was reported to be a powerful hunter, who had great metaphysical powers. (Baba-Elegbeji Oral Interview, 25/05/2023)

Indeed, one unique impact of diplomacy on Ilorin military was the emergence of different military titles with various names depicting the multiplicity of groups in the city. For the record, while *Balógun* was a Yoruba title referring to military commanders and was adopted in the emirate, possibly because of the numerical strength of the Yoruba group, there was an array of Hausa titles, which also indicated the contribution of the group to Ilorin military in the early period. Some of the titles are *Maiyaki/magayaki* (leader of a scout or surveillance team of an army) *Madaki/Ubandawaki* (commander of cavalry). (Suleiman Oral Interview 18/06/2023). These military positions afforded the bearers the opportunity to partake in political decisions of the emirate and they became partners in the land holding hierarchy of the emirate and by extension, had territories and people under their watch. This new strategic cum diplomatic arrangement resulted in greater measure of success for the Fulani led Ilorin Emirate and enhanced her victories in the battles against Oyo, which climaxed with the latter's eventual defeat at the *Eleduwe* (Borgu) war c. 1835. (Alabi, 178).

This strategy also accorded the Yoruba greater recognition based on their numerical strength in the leadership and administration of Ilorin Emirate. This this approach increased the loyalty of the Yoruba group for the Fulani authority in Ilorin, especially as they also had benefits to reap from its survival. With this internal diplomacy, the *Balóguns* were expected to raise warriors within their domains anytime there was a campaign. Ilorin emirate's internal cohesion resulted in two fundamental achievements. The first was loyalty of the other groups to the new authority as headed by the Fulani, and the second was a boost in the Ilorin emirate's defence capabilities. This diplomatic move was further strengthened by the appointment of some war commanders as fief-holders representing the emir in the outlying territories. This brought about better inter-group relations among Ilorin's diverse groups.

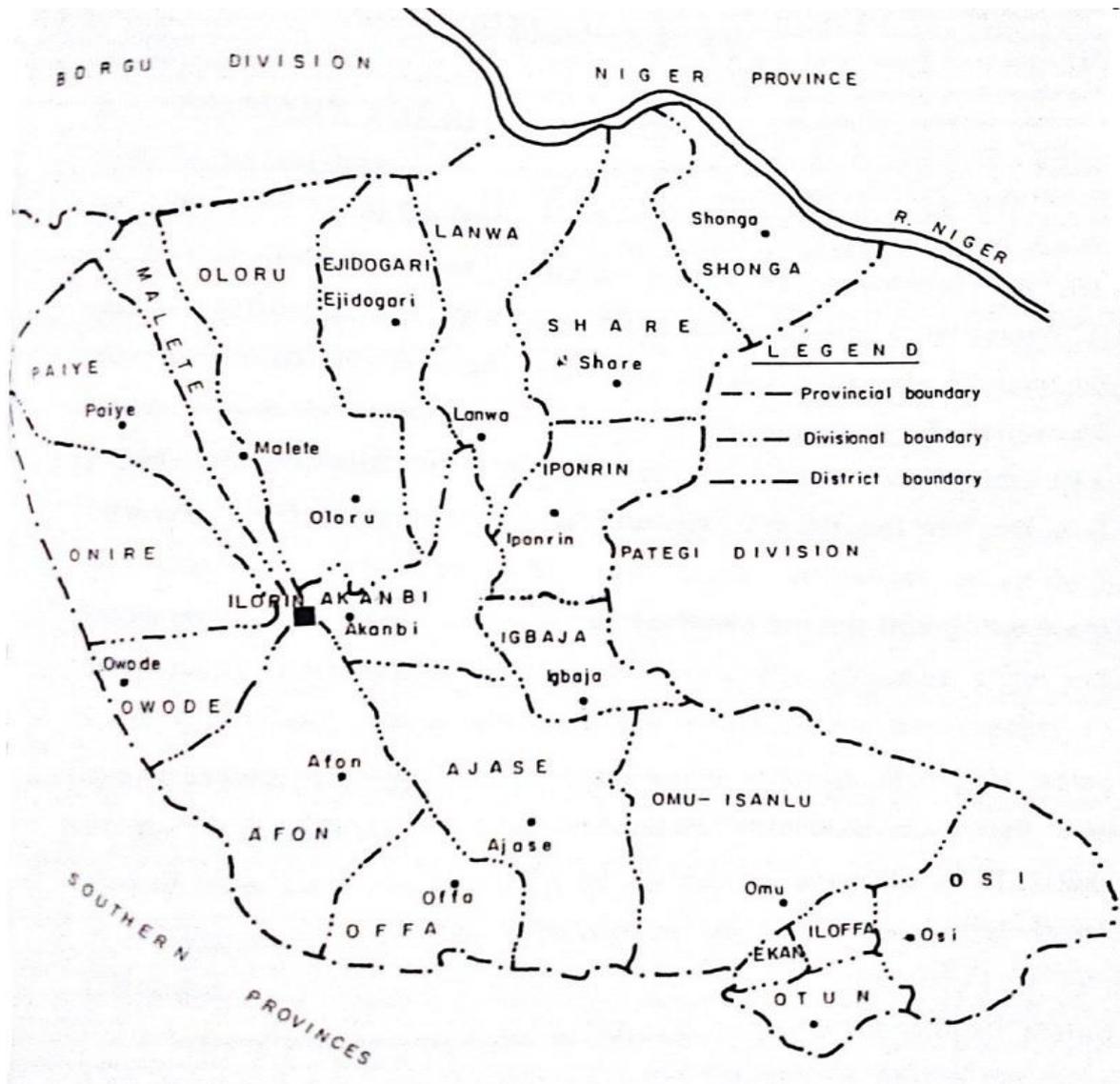
3. External Diplomacy and Alliances in Ilorin War Efforts

Ilorin war strategies also incorporated friendship and alliance with other communities, particularly after the establishment of her emirate. A sterling diplomatic move was the letter sent to Sokoto, through Gwandu, by Ilorin's first emir, Abdulsalam, which reiterated Ilorin's undivided loyalty to the caliphate and sought her support. With Sokoto's recognition, of the Ilorin emirate started to relish the support of the caliphate in military assistance and logistics including the supply of soldiers, weapons as well as diplomatic relations. (Balogun, 92). As a frontier emirate of the Caliphate, part of Ilorin's functions of was to ensure further extension of the sphere of Islam to the south, particularly, among the Yoruba. Thus, Islam provided the justification for the series of territorial conquests and annexation by the Ilorin political elite in this early period. Zubair, the third emir of Ilorin, described these chains of conquests as attempts to "dip the *Koran* into the sea". (Johnson, 338).



Map. 2. Territorial Extent of the Sokoto Caliphate in the Nineteenth Century

Sokoto's goodwill was also a significant impetus in the expeditions embarked upon by the emirates including Ilorin. In the course of the wars, Ilorin sometimes received support from other emirates like Lafiagi and Gwandu. Gwandu, which was in charge of all other emirates south of the caliphate, often offered suggestions to Ilorin on Islamic jurisprudence and administrative matters. In acknowledgement of this role, the Ilorin emirate sent presents and gifts to Gwandu annually. As a result of this grandiose external relations, by the 1850s, the Ilorin emirate had expanded, covering several hundred square kilometers. It shared common borders with some major states like Borgu to the northeast, the rest of Yorubaland to the west, south and east, and Bida, Shonga and Lafiagi to the north. (Balogun, 216).



Map 3. Territorial Limits of Ilorin Emirate as at 1920,

Source: Danmole, H. O. "The Frontier Emirate: a History of Islam in Ilorin" Ph.D. Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1980.

Another veritable aspect of Ilorin diplomatic efforts in the Nineteenth Century was her relationship with the Nupe authorities at different periods. Ilorin made herself relevant in Nupe politics for more than four decades through diplomacy, and where friendship failed, she resorted to military expeditions. Ilorin's diplomatic relations with the Nupe aristocrats was also facilitated by religious factor of Jihad, which provided a strong basis for comradeship among certain factions of the contenders for the Nupe leadership. The outbreak of the Nupe war and its subsumption into the Sokoto Jihad, resulted in the division of Nupeland among five emirates. These included Rabah/Bida, Lapai and Agaie, all to the north of the Niger, and Shonga and Lafiagi, to the south. (Dupigny, 9). Temporarily at least, a new king in Majiyya, and a new capital at Raba, emerged in Nupe. Jimada's son, Idrisu, the heir to the Gbara throne, and Makolo, late Jimada's military commander, together with some supporters, sought refuge in Ilorin. (Elphinstone, 30). At Ilorin, the refugees entered into a rapprochement with Idrisu, heir of the late *Etsu* Jimada and became allies in opposition to *Etsu* Majiyya. Ilorin's role in the emergence of Idrisu as the *Etsu* Nupe

meant that she could also count on their support in when the need arose subsequent campaigns.

A good example of such accord was the co-operation between Ilorin and Nupe on slave raids in the Nineteenth Century. Prior to 1900, the joint slave raids of Nupe and Ilorin on Yagbaland resulted in the presence of Yagba people in Ilorin. Masaba, one of the contenders to the throne of Nupe Kingdom, while on campaign in Yagbaland to acquire slaves between 1833 and 1840, had to abruptly put an end to the campaign due to revolt in Lafiagi to force him out of Lade, his base capital. He escaped to Egbe, a Yagba community where he raised army to regain his capital, which he reoccupied in about 1845. (Apata, 22). Between 1850 and 1857, another rebellion by Umar Barbushe forced Masaba to flee to Ilorin. From there he intensified his military campaigns in Yagbaland with the collaboration of Ilorin.

Thus, the Fulani of Ilorin were imbued with the idea of spreading the religion of Islam. Hence, there were joint Nupe-Ilorin attacks on the Yagba communities. Apart from this religious motive, Yagbaland was attacked in order to collect tributes and acquire captives to cultivate crops thus, the forceful influx of Yagba people into Ilorin. The joint Nupe-Ilorin attack brought about oppressive systems with massive burdens imposed on the subjects. In fact, Nupe-Ilorin domination of Yagba communities with its excessive taxation forced many of the Yagba people to abandon their towns for inaccessible hills. This prevailing situation had made Ilorin to become quite relevant in Nupe politics and she took adequate benefits from the friendship. Indeed, as time went by, a good number of people of Nupe origin began to move to Ilorin to settle. These included warriors, spiritualists, horse-tenders, blacksmiths and Islamic scholars. (Saliu, 55).

In a similar fashion, a fundamental aspect of diplomacy in Ilorin war strategies was to capitalize on the prevailing lack of unity among her opponents, particularly, among Yoruba leaders. Johnson adequately reported the precarious situation of Yoruba society after the fall of the Old Oyo Empire. He states:

The power of the Fulani (Ilorin) was now great and they aimed at nothing short of the subversion of the whole Yoruba country and short-sighted Yoruba chiefs were playing the game for them by their mutual jealousy of one another. One expedition followed after another and the result was the devastation and depopulation of the country...Jealousy and rivalry among the chiefs prevented unity of purpose. Allegiance was no longer paid to the King, not even in the capital. (Johnson, 240)

One such occasion, which Ilorin adequately profited from, was the conflict between Toyeye, the *Kákánfò* at Ogbomoso and Adegun, the *Onikoyi*, two of the most prominent Yoruba war chiefs who could have united to save the country. Indeed, when their petty jealousy eventually resulted to open war, the Ilorin authority found a better ground to further aggravate their differences, since the two states were now independent with the fall of Old Oyo. Thus the *Kákánfò* formed an alliance with the *Oluwo* of Iwo, the *Timi* of Ede and Solagberu of Ilorin and besieged the *Onikoyi* in his city of Ikoyi.

With this heavy host, Ikoyi was nearly taken when Asegbe, the *Olofa's* *Ìlári*, whose master was then a refugee at Ikoyi, came up with a cunning diplomatic tact, which saved the city. Asegbe took a message to Abdulsalami that Ikoyi was besieged because the *Onikoyi* declared his allegiance for the Emir. With this message, the Emir

at once ordered the withdrawal of Ilorin troop from Ikoyi. Even though Solagberu, because of personal vendetta with the *Onikoyi*, refused to heed the Emir's instruction, Ilorin used the opportunity to enlist the *Onikoyi*'s loyalty. Ilorin thereafter organised a powerful force, which eventually raised the siege on Ikoyi. Prominent Yoruba leaders who fell in this war were the *Timi* of Ede, the King of Erin, chief Aina-Abutu Sogu, and Awope, (Johnson, 242). The implication again is that through this strategy, the Ilorin authority further weakened the cohesion among the Yoruba leaders to prevent any formidable opposition.

For the better part of the long struggle between Oyo/Ibadan and the Fulani of Ilorin, the latter capitalized on internal dissension and petty jealousies among the former. Disaffected Yoruba chiefs often betrayed the plan of campaign or else deserted at critical moments. For instance, on one occasion, certain Oyo chiefs sent to the Emir, a symbolic message of soap, flesh, and camwood used for preparing a bride for wedding night. (Hogben, 291). The significance of this message, we are bringing the bride (in this case the *Aláàfin*) to her husband, was not lost on Ilorin. This schism always assisted Ilorin in her campaigns. Indeed, Ilorin's success in the Nineteenth Century resulted from her open door policy to diplomatic avenues as long as such would provide positive results. In reality, the state was ready to take sides with Ibadan, her bitterest foe in Yorubaland when she felt necessary and was prepared to abandon the alliance whenever a more beneficial friendship was available. For example, at the Batedo war, 1844 and Opin war in the 1850s, Ilorin allied with Ibadan. (Danmole, 126). Ilorin also joined forces with Ibadan warriors to despoil Ekiti and Akoko towns in 1848 and 1875. Ilorin was also prepared as well to take part in Ibadan's raid on Egba farms in 1877. (Stephen, 43). However, during the Ijaye war (1860-1865), Ilorin fought against Ibadan with the objective of acquiring more areas of Yorubaland. The behaviour of Ilorin during the Ekitiparapo war (1878-1886) was also not different. She suspended the overtures of friendship with Ibadan for a more profitable motive of benefitting from the war. However, Ilorin's political and diplomatic efforts to extend the frontier of her emirate were not successful because Ijaye was destroyed in 1865 and colonial government's intervention made the Ekitiparapo war inconclusive. (Danmole, 126).

Another aspect of Ilorin's diplomatic ploy was her involvement in various alliances in the nineteenth century. Generally, the Yoruba states hardly fought their wars alone but in alliance. The preponderance of wars during the Nineteenth Century also precipitated the emergence of more alliances. Perhaps the most elaborated of the alliances were the Ife-Ijebu Alliance against Owu in 1821, the Ijaye Egba Alliance in 1860 and the Ekitiparapo Grand Alliance against Ibadan in 1878. (Oguntomisin, 99). However, for Ilorin, the Ekitiparapo Grand Alliance seemed more significant because of its motives. The Ekitiparapo Alliance was essentially intended to weaken Ibadan, which had, in the course of its expansion, subdued several Yoruba kingdoms. Ilorin also considered enlisting in the alliance as a means of obtaining booty in the ensuing battles. Ilorin's more important motive in the Ekitiparapo Alliance, however, was to re-impose control on her former Igbomina vassals and to bring the Ekiti towns under her political sphere. This intention had been subtly expressed in Ilorin's message to *Ààre* Latoosa, ruler of Ibadan in 1878. The message reads: "if a man's wife deserted him and afterwards repented and came back to him, is not the husband justified in receiving her back?" (Oguntomisin, 99). By Ilorin's calculation therefore, this alliance was part of the diplomatic maneuvers to regain her lost territories among the Igbomina and Ekiti groups in the southern part of Yorubaland.

Indeed, Mustain's suggestion that the Ilorin war chiefs regarded the Ekitiparapo war as a means of increasing their wealth and influence is quite acceptable. (Mustain, 99) Ilorin, like the modern states, demonstrated that there were neither permanent friends nor permanent enemies in diplomacy, rather, there was permanent interest. For instance, Aliagan's literary piece, *Oba Mama*, even though a drama, illustrates Ilorin's use of diplomacy through the sending of gifts to the King of Oyo. The following is an extract from the book:

To the King, Alafin of Oyo. Greetings from the great emirate of Ilorin. We hope this communication meets you well. No doubt, our *wothiqaat*, (message) shall come to you as a surprise because your kingdom and our emirate had not been best of allies. Your kingdom had suffered great devastation from the exploits of our army. By Allah, we intend to redeem the past and build a new bridge of friendship. We do not want you to misconstrue our offer as a show of weakness. Far from it. However, because of our shared ancestry – we have no motive of sustaining enmity with your kingdom. We hope that our proposition shall sound reasonable to you. Please accept our gift of two horses fully embroidered. They were just brought by our trading partners. Should it please Your Highness, our palace is open to receive you anytime. Signed, *Sarkin Musulumin* of Ilorin (Emir). (Aliagan, 47)

In continuation of her diplomatic moves, Ilorin, during the reign of Emir Mama, also welcomed Carter, the Governor of Lagos on his visit with Captain Bower in 1893. During the visit, terms of peace between Ilorin and Offa were arranged even though certain personalities, chief among whom were *Baloguns* Alanamu and Gambari, did not support such reconciliatory moves taken by the emir. (Hermon-Hodge, 72). The foregoing are clear example of external diplomatic efforts by Ilorin rulers at various time in the precolonial period.

4. Role of Diplomacy in Ilorin Army

The use of espionage through making friends with some members in the enemy camp was also employed by Ilorin in her campaigns as witnessed during Ilorin's 10-Year siege of Offa beginning in 1878. It was reported that vital military intelligence were obtained by the Ilorin camp led by *Balógun* Karara, who had friends (informants) among the Offa group during the siege. However, this breach of Offa security intelligence resulted from disunity among Offa people in the course of the campaign. According to Abdulrahman, the discord was due to the protracted nature of the war as well as the imposition of *Oba* Adegboye Atoloyetele, after *Oba* Okunoye. (Adetunji, 70).

Following these developments, a section of dissatisfied Offa, led by *Ojomu* Orisasona, was in close relation with the Ilorin army under *Balógun* Karara. They served as Ilorin's "eye" on Offa military strategies and were reported to have divulged vital military intelligence to the Ilorin camp. Indeed, *Ojomu* Orisasona was reputed for his visits to *Balógun* Karara's camp amidst his supporters to announce the withdrawal of Ibadan soldiers from Offa. This was a strategic information in Ilorin's campaign against Offa and *Balógun* Karara was said to have capitalised immensely on

this hint. Meanwhile, Ibadan soldiers' eventual withdrawal from Offa was largely due to this constant security loop-hole in Offa society and failure of efforts to forestall its recurrence. In fact, this security breach led to Ilorin's ambush of some Ibadan warlords like Enimowu, Salako, Winkule and Malade and ultimately prompted Ibadan War Council to withdraw from Offa. (Adetunji, 70)

5. Diplomacy in Trade and Commerce

R. Smith has emphasised the pivot role of commercial relations in the process of developing *ad hoc* diplomacy and in the expansion of foreign relations into a deliberate and long lasting foreign policy. The practice of maintaining resident representatives abroad was part of indigenous diplomacy in West Africa. However, most of such representatives served as supervisors for commercial activities to ensure proper payment of tributes and taxes to their principal back home. For example, Leo Africanus reports that Askia, (King) of Songhai, in the early sixteenth century, had some of his courtiers permanently residing in Kano for the receipt of the tribute due to him from the kingdom. (Smith, 9)

According to the Smith, there are indications that the *Aláàfin* appointed ambassadors to pay diplomatic visits to, and possibly reside in Dahomey in the latter part of the eighteenth century in order to collect tribute due to him, and to report any Dahomean military successes so that he might demand a share of the spoils. In the same vein, the Oyo government stationed agents (*Ìlàri*) in Egbaland, while latter was tributary to Oyo, a relationship that was probably broken towards the end of the eighteenth century.

Another significant aspect of diplomatic relation between Ilorin and other peoples in the Nineteenth Century was trade, which was both intra and inter regional in scope. Locally, the Gambari quarter in Ilorin was a popular trade centre, which attracted merchants from the north. Indeed Gavin, describes Gambari, in the Nineteenth Century, as an international market where northern caravans discharged their goods. (Garvin, 6), There, they found the lodging house-keepers, the brokers, the dealers and the *mallams*, who saw to their wants, directed them to buyers, provided finance as required, helped to find return cargoes and advised the merchants generally about the local environment. As a polyglot city, Ilorin was prompt to cater for the needs of any group of wealthy guests. Ilorin was well placed to perform the function of an entreport between different zones with variety of rich products such as Nupe brass, glassworks, textiles and leather goods and high grade mats.

This influx of traders of northern origin also provided opportunity for weapons and other accoutrements of war to be obtained by Ilorin's warriors. Merchants also brought horses from Sokoto, Borno, Adamawa, and Nupeland. In the early 1830s Laird and Oldsfield noted that the finest horses in Nupe were brought from Sokoto by Arab traders. Two decades later this horse trade between Sokoto and southern frontier emirates of Nupe and Ilorin, was still flourishing. (MacGregor, 11). Indeed, the trade in horses supported Ilorin emirate cavalry force and contributed immensely to the success of her army. This commercial relation was nurtured by the friendly disposition between the two southern emirates. Adamawa and Benue valley with its tin antimony and ivory, powerful textile tailoring and leatherworking industries, also contributed to Ilorin commerce.

To Ilorin's south lay the old markets of Benin with its brass work and red camwood dyes and new markets in the super riches of Yorubaland, where rising new classes created a growing demand for luxurious goods. These areas offered kolanuts, rich textiles, ironwork and indigo as well as light textiles and specialised goods

ranging from needles to guns, in exchange for palm oil at the coast from the agents of industrializing Europe. The role of diplomacy and friendly relations in bringing Ilorin to this state of commercial significance cannot be overemphasized. It was imperative for the Ilorin authority to provide conducive atmosphere for this interregional trade to thrive. These include of security for traders and their merchandises, ensuring strict compliance with the terms of trade, especially, payment of appropriate taxes and guaranteeing the traders' comfort throughout their stay in Ilorin.

Furthermore, a considerable proportion of Ilorin city's economic wealth came from areas outside the metropolis. This was in the form of royalties or tributes paid by farmers as land rent. Such payments were made through intermediaries or representatives of Ilorin authority called *Babakekere*, who were very keen to get farmers to come to them as each visit probably means a gift. It is from this fief holding that the *Balóguns* in particular, drew the bulk of their income as landlords in the conquered territories. For instance, the *Balógun* Gambari had fiefs in Oloru, Ejidogari, Akanbi, Ajasse and Osi Districts while Ajikobi controlled Iponrin, Apado, Banni, Megida, and Bakase (Hermon-Hodge, 37) As more areas were conquered, the *Balóguns'* economic power and influence increased.

6. Political Residents as Instruments of Diplomacy in Ilorin

A veritable instrument of diplomacy employed by Ilorin leadership in the precolonial period was the use of fief-holders to oversee the outlying territories on behalf of the emir. The Ilorin emirate was parceled out into holdings, or fiefs under the control of chiefs, cadet branches of the ruling house, powerful slaves, or occasionally chiefs of the indigenous group who had accepted the emirate's authority. These fief holders were however compelled to live in the capital and to present themselves almost daily before the emir, or at least to attend the regular Friday celebration at the emir's mosque. The emir employed this strategy to monitor and check the excesses of his subordinate chiefs. Parts of the Ibolu and Igbomina areas of present Kwara State were under one Ilorin *Balógun* or the other between 1832 and 1897, after which the colonial administration introduced the district system (Hermon-Hodge, 37).

Indeed, as a demonstration of mutual respect and interest, some of the areas conquered by the respective war leaders were given as tributes to the *Emir*, who in turn appointed members of his family as *Daudu* in the areas. The title of *Daudu*, according to (Omoiya, 52), was commonly used for the appointees of the emir to illustrate that they were his relatives. The major role of the *Alangua* (Owner of the land), *Baale* (Landlord) or *Daudu* (provincial ruler) as the case may be, in the conquered areas, was to represent the interest of his benefactor, who remained in the metropolis to receive periodic updates about the area. He collected royalties on behalf of his master and passed instructions from the lord in Ilorin to his subjects. A local Resident was also expected to assemble soldiers within his domain to join the *Balógun* during military expeditions. Indeed, the British found the system of fief holding in Ilorin quite useful in their administration with some modifications.

In pre-colonial Ilorin, an official who interceded between the people and the authority was commonly referred to as *Babakekere*. He related with the authority on economic and political basis and his function was defined in relation to either land or occupation of the people. The *Babakere* institution was thus a vital instrument of diplomacy in precolonial Ilorin emirate. Indeed, for easy and proper payment of tributes or royalties, each occupation, vocation or trade had its own *Babakekere*. These officials saw to the collection of tribute from subordinate towns and income taxes of between 5 and 10% on craft workers, hair platter and goldsmiths (Banwo,

165). The *Babakekere* might be the tenant's own fief-holder. Alternatively, he might be the most powerful fief-holder in the area as was in Ologbondoroko, where tenants of other fief-holders were under the Magaji Zarumi (one of the Ward heads under Balógun Ajikobi of Ilorin) and gave him presents periodically.

The *Babakekere* might also be the fief holder's agent or even his agent's agent. (NAK ILOPROF). He might be in some other way connected with the fief-holder or might be someone else altogether. For example, in Ogele, which was held by the emir, free tenants looked to the emir's slaves, his sons, or the *Sarkin Dogari* (a major palace official) or *Magaji Baboko* all in the city. It was further reported that in Odo-Ode, tenants paid rent to the fief holder, who descended from the pre-Jihad landlord, but their *Babakekere* was variously the *Balógun Fulani*, *Balógun Gambari*, the *Magaji Are* (descendants of Afonja) and a son of the *emir*. Furthermore, the Liman Agbaji was Babakakere to many farmers in Oke-Moro, the lands to the northwest of Ilorin (O'Hear, 69). Moreover, slaves of the Emir, in some cases, served as *Babakekere* for residents of the city. In 1912 for instance, a British official reported that money from compound tax was handed over to the *Babakekere* or patron of the *Maiangua*, some slave of the emir. Each craft also had its *Babakekere*, through whose hands the tax passed before reaching the emir.

Outside the Ilorin metropolis, the military and political importance of the *Babakekere* institution was amply felt as illustrated by the history of Ajagusi District. In the pre-emirate days, the area was under Old Oyo and the Alajagusi paid tributes to the *Aláàfin*. However, the land was overran by the Nupe, whereupon its leader fled to Ilorin. The Nupe were driven back by the Ilorin forces and thereafter, the Alajagusi placed himself under the protection of the *Balógun Fulani* and through the latter's intercession was allowed to return to his land. Through this, other tenant of Alajagusi district also found themselves beholden to the *Balógun Fulani*. Hermon-Hodge states that:

Other men wishing to be granted small fiefs followed a big chief or slave of the Emir... and when they took up land, asked to get the sanction of the Emir for so doing. This was done and a yearly gift was given to these men for protection's sake and to further their interest in the court, should they have occasion to bring in some case for settlement. (Hermon-Hodge, 169)

It must be emphasized that military service also played role in the suitability of the candidate appointed as *Babakekere* by the fief-holders. Thus, the conquered territories outside the metropolis had *Babakekere* appointed for them, who either administered them directly or appointed his own trusted officials known either as *Ajele* or *Daudu* to oversee on his behalf. Fulani influence on parts of Igbomina and Ekiti areas had been consolidated with the setting up of imperial administration based on political representatives. For instance, the Fulani representatives or District Heads at Oke-Ode, Igbaja and Omu-Isanlu were known as *Shaaba*, *Maiyaki* and *Ajia*, respectively.

The fief-holder resided in the capital, Ilorin and delegated local administration to his representatives or agents in the district. In addition, the District Head also had representatives or agents in almost all the district's towns and villages. He exercised his power through these agents. However, the agents, in addition to exercising their functions as revenue collectors for their masters in the metropolis, were most times in the habit of overstepping their traditional privileges. For instance, local traditions

prevalent in Igbomina and Ekiti areas blamed the Fulani District Head system for the oppression and the hardship it brought upon the people.

Well documented is the presence of numerous representatives of the District Heads in the region. In some villages, they are said to have been as many as twenty, allegedly living with and preying on the people, and committing series of atrocities. Their nefarious activities and licentiousness made the Fulani rule (or Ilorin rule) more intolerable and unacceptable. E. C. Duff, who was the Resident for Ilorin Province in 1912, while commenting on the Igbomina area before the advent of British rule maintained that the District Head and his agents “were a terror to the lives of the people. No one was safe from them....They behave with perfect impunity, causing great misery and discontent among the people”. (Afolayan, 85).

Elsewhere in Offa, the *Babakekere* was reported to have enjoyed unprecedented privileges. He received regular gifts apart from the mandatory tributes and taxes being paid to the emir through him. It was further reported that these agents (*Balógun*, *Babakekere* or *Ajẹlẹ*) practically took over the administration of the town. The *Olofa*, at some point, could not coordinate his Ward Chiefs and could not adjudicate in his native court; he became a mere puppet and toothless bulldog. (Olaoye, 22).

In addition, it was possible that the presence of Ilorin representatives in these areas led to cultural exchange particularly in the economic, social and political lives of the people. Furthermore, as crises and warfare were deepening in the Nineteenth Century, especially, the pressure from Ilorin and other Fulani groups, the Igbomina, who had initially lived in political particularism, began to evolve alliances, which later transformed to political union for stronger security. For instance, it is reported that the leader of the *Ajagun* (fighters) group traditionally reputed and deified for its earlier military achievements, emerged as the paramount ruler to be assisted by chiefs selected from the other groups. (Vandeleur, 289).

From another perspective, the Islamic faith was a veritable instrument of diplomacy employed by Ilorin rulers in the Nineteenth Century. Indeed, the spiritual efficacy of Quran prompted some people outside Ilorin to accept the new religion. This fact has been supported by evidence of the conversion of some members of Igbomina royal houses to Islam. For instance, *Olupako* Oyadeyi of Share was converted to Islam by *Alfa Kokewukobere* from Ilorin; *Elesie* Babalola *Egunjobi I* was converted by Alfa Yusuf Abolarin; *Elesha* Salih of Oke-Ode was converted by *Alfa* Uthman Dikko; *Oloro* Ayangusi of Oro was converted by Emir Zubair of Ilorin and *Olomu* Durotoye Abegunde of Omu-Aran was converted by Emir Zulkarinaini Gambari of Ilorin. (Adeoye, 24).

However, many of the Igbomina rulers only paid tacit allegiance to Islam while they continued with their pre-Jihad ways of life. For instance, the acceptance of the Muslim turban by Igbomina rulers such as the *Olupo* of Ajasse-Ipo and the *Elese* of Igbaja, did not indicate a religious conversion of these rulers or their people. This was largely an exercise of political authority rather than a determination to convert these traditional rulers as there is no other exact evidence to suggest that it was a conversion ceremony. The turban ceremony was the instrument used by the emirate authorities to signify the acceptance by a people, of Ilorin rule. Indeed, there is evidence in areas outside the metropolis of the Ilorin emirate that traditional practices survived even in the face of threats from foreign religions of Islam and Christianity. In Igbominaland for instance, there continued to be traditional healers and custodians of traditional religion such as priests and diviners, who took care of the objects of

worship. To underscore the strength of traditional worship in Igominaland, songs were composed thus:

*Imole k'ope k'eni ma
soro, Egungun ma l'oro
ile wa o. Igbagbo k'ope
k'e'ni ma soro, Egungun
ma l'oro ile wa o.*

Meaning:

Islam does not forbid one from celebrating *oro* (festival), *egungun* (masquerade) is our family's festival. Christianity does not forbid one from celebrating *Oro* (festival), *Egungun* is our family's festival. (Raji, 24)

Besides, the pervasive state of insecurity of the Nineteenth Century and the excesses of Ilorin agents and representatives did not work to the advantage of Islamisation in the region. Indeed, allegiance to traditional religion remained very strong. When, for instance in the 1860s *Oloro* Ayegusi, in a bid to please the *Emir* Zubair of Ilorin, adopted the religion of Islam, against the wish of his people, he was deposed and exiled. A new *Oloro*, committed to the sustenance of traditional religion, came to the throne. (Afolayan, 85).

The point being stressed here is that in spite of the pressure from Ilorin on the Igbomina society, traditional religious practices remained very strong among its people. Even though, there were converts to Islam, such did not put a halt to the traditional religious practices as would have been expected of a society where a religious revolution (Jihad) had taken place.

7. Conclusion

Diplomacy was a significant factor in the survival of Ilorin Emirate in the nineteenth century. Two key factors were responsible for this. First, Ilorin comprised people of different linguistic groups, who migrated to the city for different reasons such as trade, scholarship, agriculture, iron smiting, pastoralism, and warfare. After the collapse of the old Oyo Empire, Ilorin's establishment of an emirate system based on the Islamic principle was considered an affront against the established tradition of the Yoruba people. Indeed, Ilorin was confronted with dissenters from different parts of Yorubaland, the chief being Oyo and Ibadan. Therefore, diplomacy rather than warfare could guarantee the survival of the emerging emirate. Ilorin's first step was to promote unity among its diverse groups to stimulate in-house cohesion in the city. Thus, internal diplomacy was pursued as a paramount strategy to unite the various groups. This was achieved through the appointment of leaders of the major linguistic groups in the emirate as *Baloguns* (Military Commanders) to secure their loyalty to the Fulani-led leadership. Secondly, the Ilorin leadership employed external diplomacy in the expansion of the emirate's territories particularly as it became one of the southern frontier emirates of the Sokoto caliphate in the 1820s. Ilorin's political, social and economic progress relied heavily on the ability of its leadership to make friends with as many external groups as possible. Thus, in trade, merchants from wide areas were regularly hosted in the Gambari quarter of the emirtae. Similarly, Nupe smiths and scholars, Bariba archers and cavalrymen, Hausa, Kanuri and ultimately Yoruba groups, all contributed to the survival of the Ilorin emirate due to her craft in diplomacy. This unity in cultural diversity sustained the Ilorin emirate in the Nineteenth century and promoted peaceful inter-group relations in the community in the subsequent periods.

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