THE TRAVAILS OF KING OKOJIE AND POLITICS OF CENTRIFUGAL AND CENTRIPETAL FORCES IN COLONIAL UROMI, ISHAN DIVISION OF BENIN PROVINCE, NIGERIA, 1919-1931

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Abstract

There seems to be a general rendition that colonial conquered African kings (Chief) accepted their new status and therefore collaborated with the colonial regime in the governance of African conquered states. Some sampled literature on African resistance and eventual workings of colonial administration gives such impression of a docile and incapable chieftaincy that served the colonial authorities without any visible form of protest and resistance. This impression may not be correct as there are evidences to suggest that the African chieftaincy was not as submissive to colonial rule as observed in the case of king Okojie of Uromi, Nigeria who was exiled from his community by the British colonial authorities between 1919 and 1931. The circumstances of Okojie’s deportation and continued colonial policies to keep him outside Uromi created two opposing forces; the centrifugal forces, which represent colonial collaborators while the centripetal forces where those who resisted colonial policies as they concerned the deported Okojie. The research adopted a content analysis approach of colonial archival documents, oral interview and other related literature to interrogate the nature of king Okojie’s resistance to colonial rule in Uromi. The findings reveal that though,Okojie’s circumstances of birth might have influenced his harsh style of governance in the colonial created Native Authority, a fact which was used as an excuse by the British colonial authorities to depose him, however, the actual rationale for his banishment from his land of birth was because of his continued resistance to colonial rule in form of civil disobedience. The discussion raises the need for scholars to research on the nature of responses of the African chieftaincy to their colonial status, and concludes that the deportation of king Okojie should be understood from the broader perspective of the fate of African kings (chiefs) that refused to accept the reality of their tamed authority and powers with the advent of colonial rule.

Keywords: Colonialism, Monarchy, Tradition, Uromi, Deportation

INTRODUCTION

In the period of slave trade and later legitimate trade, there existed a trade understanding between Europeans and African kings. However, this understanding began to experience tension from the mid 1880s when Europe decided to take over the sovereignty of
African kingdoms. African kings adopted various means to resist the loss of their sovereignty and by extension power over their regions. Some adopted diplomacy; others resulted to religion, while majority embraced arms. For example, in 1891, Menelik of Ethiopia sent an appeal to Queen Victoria of Great Britain to restrain advancing British army from his territory.¹ Mogho Naba Wobogo, the Mossi king made some religious sacrifices by slaughtering some animals and a black slave with the hope it would aid him in his war with the French army.² The likes of Samori Ture, Nana Prempeh of Kumasi, Nana Olomu of Niger Delta, Behanzin of Dahomey, Lat Dior of Senegambia, Oba Ovonranmwen of Benin and the relatively unknown Okojie of Uromi thought that armed struggle would guarantee victory over European colonial enterprise. Little did those resistors understood the ferocious character of colonialism as diplomacy, religion and fire arms proved ineffective against colonial motives, army and conquest at the close of 1900. The failure of active and frontal confrontation against colonial conquest did not mean all the conquered territories were pacified as some territories continued with passive and non frontal resistance to the loss of sovereignty, prestige and power in their colonised territories. Some of the passive means of protest were rebellion/revolt (Mamadou Lamina of Senegal, and Yaa Asantewaa rebellion in Ghana), migration (great movement from Dahomey to Nigeria, Senegal to Gambia), strikes/boycott (Dockers at Conakry port in Guinea), and petitions (These were sponsored by elite and tribal associations created in colonial era).³ Several works exist on African resistance to colonial invasion and eventual administration, but most of these works tend to focus on the early resistance to the detriment of resistance of African chiefs within the colonial administrative structure as noted with the experience of king Okojie in colonial Uromi.

Uromi is one of the earliest communities with over twenty villages geographically located in the northeast of Esan, while Esan, popularly called and spelt as Ishan has over
thirty three communities in the region east of Benin City, which is the capital of Edo state that has three major geo-political ethnic blocs made up of the Bini, Esan, and Afemai. As soon as Uromi was conquered by the British colonial forces in 1901, its crown Prince Okojie of Uromi was arrested and exiled to Calabar in Nigeria. According to W. Fosbery (the Political Officer that accompanied the Expeditionary Force), Okojie was expelled because

Ekwoge (sic) [Okojie] had been the prime mover of all the trouble, that he was a source of danger to the peace and good order of Uromi [emphasised] and that to effect a speedy settlement of the country his removal was necessary for at least one year.  

Okojie was shortly recalled in the same year as his release was part of the post invasion peace deal between the colonial authorities and Uromi people. He was lucky to have been recalled within a very short time as some others in his category did not enjoy such privilege and was enthroned as the Onojie (king) (Onojie singular, Enigie plural) of Uromi and President of the colonial created Native Court as part of the Native Administration. This was after he had performed the necessary funeral rites for the late Onojie (king Okolo Aitual), his father, who was murdered by the colonial forces. In 1918, he was deposed and deported to Benin City in 1919 in the first instance and later relocated to Ibadan in 1925. Justifying the action of 1919, the colonial authorities claimed as a matter of fact with the exception of his own quarter, the Uromi villages refused to obey any order conveyed through him and no efforts to effect a reconciliation were of any use.  

In Okojie's absence (1919-1931), his heir, Prince Uwagbale was enthroned as the new sitting king of Uromi by the colonial authorities in conjunction with Uromi king makers. However, Uwagbale's deliberate collaborative actions to frustrate his father's early recall from exile remains a point of controversy in contemporary Esan historiography. Okojie was eventually recalled to Uromi in 1931 to continue with his kingship until he died in 1944. Why was Okojie deposed? This study is an attempt to answer the question. To achieve the
objective, we shall begin with literature review, some explanation on Okojie’s circumstances of birth, the British conquest of Uromi, Okojie’s administrative style, and the complex interplay of centrifugal and centripetal forces in colonial Uromi. The centrifugal forces were made up of Okojie’s enemies including Prince Uwagbale as encouraged by colonial authorities, while the centripetal forces were Okojie’s sympathizers, which also included the Uromi royal extended family members.

OVERVIEW OF SOME SELECTED LITERATURE

A brief review of some related literature on African kings’ resistance to colonial rule shows two patterns: a high concentration of studies on resistance to colonial invasion, and a general impression that conquered kings addressed as chiefs in colonial times submissively collaborated with the colonial authorities in order to secure their positions in the colonial created Native Administration. Carried away with the intellectual passion to document African resistance to colonial rule, most of these studies, in the process, neglected the possibility that African chiefs may have continued with their resistance within the colonial regime they were appointed to serve.

For example, writing in 1964, Crowder did a comparative study between French and British colonial administrative styles and argues that chiefs were better treated in the British than French colonies. That the British through the colonial created Native Administration preserved African traditional institution, which accorded more powers and liberty to chiefs to govern the natives within their pre-colonial traditional boundaries, unlike the French colonies where chiefs were treated as mere errand boys without freedom. Crowder would therefore give the impression that chiefs in British territories were administratively contented because they were accommodated in the new colonial scheme. Crowder thesis is too general to assume that all was well with chiefs within the native administration as there were chiefs,
though heads of the native administration, like Okojie of Uromi who resisted colonial limitations to their powers and privileges.

Crowder continued his discourse in another work published in 1968 on the futility in African armed resistance to colonial invasion, and reiterate his earlier position that chiefs submissively collaborated with the colonial authorities in West Africa. He posits that Chiefs in the French territories became agents of raising labour for construction, cultivation, and were themselves tax collectors to the extent that he changeover of the position of the chief from the symbol of the collective unity to his people to the most hated member of that community. Yet the chief did not protest this humiliation? However, Crowder cited a report that notes the progressive suppression of the chiefs and the parceling out of their authority in the French territories, which is an indication that there was some form of protest which Crowder does not give details why those chiefs had to be suppressed. In contrast, Crowder states in the British territories The British administrators kept aloof from the people he was meant to be protecting. He was like a headmaster of a public school who left the discipline of the boys to the Senior Prefect and only interfered with it if abuse of power became too flagrant thereby allowed chiefs in the native administration to be in charge. What Crowder and the colonial authorities might have considered as abuse could well have been a form of protest or rebellion against colonial rule that have not been thoroughly investigated.

Contributors to the UNESCO sponsored General History of Africa VII with the title Africa Under Colonial Domination 1880-1935 published in 1985 contains 30 chapters, and 8 of them are dedicated to African initiatives and resistance to colonial imposition. A brief summary of the content of these 8 chapters may suffice to demonstrate the lop-sided nature of research on African resistance to colonial rule. Ranger did an intellectual appraisal of the nature and quality of preparedness of Africans to colonial invasion and concludes that
African resistance was primarily determined by the need to protect and preserve their territorial sovereignty, but the reaction of appointed chiefs into colonial government is not discussed.\textsuperscript{16}

Ibrahim and Laroui worked on North-East and North Africa and the Sahara respectively. Ibrahim discussed the several efforts made by the people of Egypt, Sudan and Somalia to confront British colonial invasion and eventual occupation. Mention is made of the British created Provincial Council in Egypt but nothing is said about the African operators in the Council. While the people of Sudan and Somali combined armed resistance with Islamic religious sentiment to confront the British but to no avail.\textsuperscript{17} Laroui focused on how the European powers of France, Spain and Italy attacked Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Algeria, and how those respective African states resisted the invasion until they collapsed before superior European military power.\textsuperscript{18}

MâBaye Gueye & A. Adu Boahen discussed the West African colonial invasion by the French and British and the West African resistance from two perspectives. The first phase was between 1880-1900, which covered the period of armed resistance, and the second phase of between 1900-1924 witnessed the conquest and occupation. The first phase was a general experience for the whole of Africa, while the second phase discussed the various forms of protest and rebellion of Africans in colonial West Africa but those agitations had nothing to do with the new roles of chiefs.\textsuperscript{19}

Mwanzi x-rayed the British invasion and armed resistance in the states of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda in East Africa and concludes that though armed resistance failed, the people continued with other forms of resistance such as boycott and protest. However, these protests were responses to some colonial policies and not for the ill treatment and displacement of African chiefs.\textsuperscript{20}
The resistance narratives of Isaacman and Vansina on Congo (Zaire), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Nyasaland (Malawi), Angola and Mozambique against Belgium, Britain and Portugal 21 are not fundamentally different from that of Chanaiwa on Southern Africa,22 and Esoavelomandroso on Madagascar. 23 The authors discussed the heroic but failed attempt by Africans to defend their sovereignty against colonial invasion and domination. None of them pointed out any major protest or rebellion organized by displaced African chiefs, rather the onus of liberation from colonial rule fell on the western educated Africans. Conclusively, the 8 chapters neglected the discourse on the possibility of chiefs' revolt against their colonial status.

Tibenderana continued the discussion in 1989 on how British colonial policies reduced the influence and privileges of chiefs (emirs) over the talakawa (commoners). In fact Tibenderana notes that òindeed, to say the least, the mere imposition of British rule on northwestern Nigeria made the emirs' traditional authority very precariousó Therefore, their main concern was to execute the British administrationó policies,ó [as] this was the only way they could ensure the longevity of their tenure of officeó Chiefs who were not seen to be loyal were deposed.25 Tibenderana thesis gives the impression that African chiefs were sheepishly submissive in spite of the loss of power, however efforts should be made to interrogate why chiefs were recalcitrant as this would enhance the literature on African resistance to colonial rule.

Anshan Lió discussion on the destoolment of chiefs by the Asafo, a local organization traditionally empowered to sanction unruly chiefs in Ghana became a menace to the colonial authorities. Chiefs who were regarded as loyal to colonial policies to the displeasure of their local polity were constantly deposed to the extent that the colonial authorities had to enact the Native Administration Ordinance in 1927 in order to protect the chiefs.26 In this presentation, destooled chiefs seems to be too docile to contest the action of
the Asafo, which may not necessary be the case if investigation is directed at understanding chiefs reaction to destoolment.

Wamagatta argues in his 2008 article that the successful erection of colonial structure in Africa was due to the degree of collaboration between Africans and colonial authorities. Using chief Waruhiu in colonial Kenya as an example, Wamagatta demonstrates how some African chiefs did everything and anything to be appointed into the colonial regime as such appointment opened the door of privileges and opportunity for them. This would mean, by implication, that the degree of African chiefs resistance to colonial rule subsided once they were appointed as chiefs. Wamagatta's thesis is in agreement with Crowder postulation, but this should not be assumed as a general African chief mentality in colonial Africa as shall be observed with the activities of Okojie of Uromi.

THE CONTROVERSY OF OKOJIE’S BIRTH

An understanding of the cultural circumstances that produced Okojie as the eventual king of Uromi may give an insight into why he governed the people with high handedness, which provided the excuse and other reasons for his deportation. According to Ojiefoh’s oral narrative as a non professional Uromi historian, a traditional doctor who visited the palace at the request of king Okolo (Okojie’s father) to find a cure to a mysterious illness in the community was ill-treated by the senior wife of the king. She served the doctor his meal without some traditionally considered essential parts of the slaughtered goat used to prepare the meal. In disappointment, the traditional doctor refused to eat until king Okolo called another of his wives named Agboilolo to prepare another meal for the visitor. Agboilolo dutifully carried out her assignment and served the meal with the essential parts of the slaughtered goat including the animal’s heart as traditionally required.

In appreciation of Agboilolo’s services, the traditional doctor, who with his spiritual powers knew that both women that served him were pregnant, opted to bless Agboilolo with
the assurance that her 30 days pregnancy would produce a male child that would be the next King of Uromi after Okolo. The traditional doctor, therefore, spoke to his calabash of charm (Ukokule) in the following words,

the first woman who made us hungry, you and I have become her enemy, she should not deliver the baby she is carrying in her womb until this good woman who has become your friend and feed you well has delivered her male child.

As the narratives goes, it was the intervention of another traditional doctor that revealed to the first wife what had transpired and why the other wife delivered her baby first. The two children were named Okojie and Iyoha. The awareness of this intrigue made Iyoha to bear animosity against Okojie from childhood, but all his attempts to eliminate Okojie failed. Out of frustration, Iyoha went on self-exile to the village of Ekekhen, brooding that Okojie usurped his position to be the heir to the Uromi royal throne.

In accordance with Uromi primogeniture cultural practice of succession, the eldest surviving son succeeds his departed father. In the case of the Uromi monarchy, two practices have been identified that have determined the right to succession. The first is by male seniority of birth by the king’s legitimate and culturally recognised wives, and the second is by announcement. Okojie succeeded his late father Okolo because of seniority of birth, just as Uwagbale succeeded his father, Okojie, because he was the undisputed eldest surviving son. However, Uwagbale’s successor was determined by announcement and not by seniority of birth. The rules of succession by announcement provides that if more than one male child is born at the royal home within the same period, which ever child’s birth that is first announced to the king can be the heir to the throne if the king so desired. Two sons were delivered at the same period by Uwagbale’s wives.

A message of the birth of the first male child was caused to be delivered to the king but the messenger delayed in informing the king as he joined in the merriment he met at the
palace and therefore forgot his mission. Another message was soon after sent to the king announcing the birth of the second male child and the messenger did not delay in delivering his message before joining the party at the palace. As soon as the first messenger witnessed what transpired, he then apologised and explained his mission, but the king pronounced that since he heard the news of the second born before the first born, the second born male shall be his heir. He named the first born Ekenhon (meaning-not heard on time) and the second he called Aidenojie (meaning-a king cannot be replaced). Aidenojie succeeded Uwagbale in 1960 and died in 1978.  

In the case between Okojie and Iyoha, seniority of birth separated them but Iyoha refused to accept reality. When Iyoha was seen with the British expeditionary force that invaded Uromi, the people assumed, and believe to this day that it was Iyoha who invited the British to Uromi with the hope ìfo undo Prince Okojie Okolo and straighten his way to the throne of Uromi.Ô Although Iyoha expressed his desire to be king when Prince Okojie was exiled in 1901 his bid was rejected by the king makers because it was not in line with tradition. If Okojie did not have a male child, the culture permits that his brother, Iyoha might have been considered. However, it is important to interrogate the allegation whether Iyoha actually requested the presence of the British colonial expeditionary forces to invade Uromi in order to achieve his kingly ambition as postulated in some of the available literature on Uromi and Esan. 

THE BRITISH CONQUEST OF UROMI

The invasion of Uromi by the British colonial forces remains an issue of contention that has not engaged scholarly research within Edoid historiography. Attempt is made here to briefly explain the Uromi encounter with British colonial forces. The colonial army deployed brutal force to subjugate and finally conquer the Benin kingdom in 1897. While the Benin invasion lasted for thirteen days (February 2-21, 1897), that of the Uromi lasted for about
forty-five days (March 15-April 30, 1901). The formidable resistance of the Uromi people was made possible by the military command of Prince Okojie.

Major W. G. Heneker led the Ishan Expeditionary Force and reached the Ishan region on the 13th of March 1901. On the following day the commanding officer was introduced to Iyoha, the second son of Onojie Okolo of Uromi and step-brother to Okojie that was on self-exile in the Ishan village of Ekekhen in the present Igueben region of Edo State as earlier indicated. The chance meeting of Iyoha at Ekekhen by the British Expeditionary Force consequently compelled Iyoha to guide the Force into Uromi, but that he was a willing participant in the conspiracy to invade Uromi is open to debate, even if he might have thought of benefitting from the invasion. The interpretation of available colonial reports and the circumstances of Iyoha’s meeting with the British, suggest that Iyoha was only a victim of a determined colonial force ready to get to Uromi with or without him. The accusation that Iyoha conspired with the British was influenced by the events that led to his migration from Uromi. However, long before the Expeditionary Force met Iyoha, Major Heneker had decided to march into Uromi on the account of searching for water. In his words:

> Although my original intention was to march direct to ULIA and subdue that part, I found on arriving at IKEHEN that on account of the scarcity of water near ULIA and the fact that the only supply which I could get was in Uromi territory I decided to march into the Uromi country first.

It is probable that the Expeditionary Force might not have intended to violently invade Uromi as stated in Ralph Moor’s memorandum of instruction, the Commissioner and Consul General of the Niger Coast Protectorate that:

> the patrol from time to time must do everything in their power to avoid collision with the natives and to establish friendly relations, at the same time convincing them by any determined attitude that the Government is firmly established, and that its orders must be obeyed or certain punishment will follow.
Ralp Moor further emphasised the need for the troop to employ the use of diplomacy in soliciting compliance and co-operation from the people. In his words,

I should impress upon the political officers and the officer commanding the patrol that the object is to avoid collision with the natives if possible, and to open friendly relations with them . . . [by] explaining the position as regards the Government, and settling any difficulties by peaceable means.\(^\text{45}\)

Ralp Moor’s strategy was probably altered due to the intelligence report on Uromi gathered at Ekekhen. The intelligence contained the information that Uromi was prepared for war and confident of their ability to repel the Whiteman.\(^\text{46}\) The intelligence from the villages of Igueben, Irrua, Ugbeugn and Opoji heightened the anxiety of the British when they were told that Uromi was a powerful state that had displayed hostility to most Ishan towns, and had become more coercive and distrustful of the presence of Europeans.\(^\text{47}\)

Without verifying the content of the intelligence gathered at Ekekhen, Major Heneker and W. Fosbery, the Political Officer that accompanied the Expeditionary Force, justified the attack on Uromi on a faulty premise. As recorded by Fosbery:

In the face of this information which I had every reason to believe, I decided that it would be mere waste of time to again approach these natives with words of friendship, and indeed it would have been impossible to do so as I could find no one willing to venture into their country.\(^\text{48}\)

Therefore, when Iyoha was exposed to the British as an indigene of Uromi, he became the obvious choice to engage his invaluable services of leading the British to Uromi as no other person accepted the invitation to escort the British.\(^\text{49}\) Was Iyoha a willing participant in invading Uromi, or a victim of circumstances? Though any answer provided may be speculative, what is not in doubt is that it seems to be a coincidence of events. Iyoha’s sustained grievances coincided with colonial invasion of the Ishan region, but was dragged to Uromi.\(^\text{50}\) In fact, Iyoha was even said to have vehemently protested the shabby manner he
was treated when he had committed no offence.\textsuperscript{51} In other to achieve its political and strategic goals, the British organized an expeditionary force of four hundred and fourteen military personnel (414), but eventually deployed two hundred and twenty six (226) to invade Uromi.\textsuperscript{52} The British reached the village of Ebhoiyi (also Ebhoyoma) in Uromi on March 15, 1901, without any resistance. The bloody clash between the British and Uromi forces actually began the following day. The British quickly adopted a scorched-earth military strategy destroying everything on sight. Justifying the strategy, Locke comment that, \textit{\ldots} a splendid example has been shown of what a small force can do to any natives who will hear of the defeat of the Uromis.\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} (sic)

The colonial forces demanded the immediate surrender of the king and Prince as a condition for peace.\textsuperscript{54} The British were surprised that despite the heavy collateral damage inflicted on the people, it did not reduce the spate of guerrilla attack. In a change of military tactics, the colonial forces focused on capturing king Okolo, the Onojie of Uromi, with the expectation that his arrest would weaken the Uromi resistance. In the course of hostilities, the colonial forces received intelligence reports that Prince Okojie and not the king was the driving ideologue of the armed resistance.\textsuperscript{55} Despite the arrest of the king on March 20, 1901, and even with his death eight days after the arrest, the resistance did not subside.\textsuperscript{56}

Unaware that his father had died, Okojie continued to resist the British and refused to disarm. The obstinate disposition of the Uromi soldiers and refusal of Okojie to surrender further provoked the British and heightened their impatience. It made the Expeditionary Force to begin a spree of looting, destruction and burning of Uromi villages and farms for about 20 days (21st March to 9th April, 1901). Villages such as Efandion, Utako, Awo, Amedokhian, Onewa, Ivue, Erhor, Ukoni, Arue and Ebhoyoma were badly damaged. Of all the battles fought between 16th March and 19th April 1901, the village of Ukoni gave the toughest resistance to the extent that the British had to build one of their military forts in that
village and requested for re-enforcement of about 60 more men to replace causalities and slightly augment the Force.57

The wide publicity of the king’s arrest (unknown to the people that the king had died) had a demoralizing effect as most villages began to surrender but that did not deter Okojie and his troop. Eventually, the people called for a truce where the British demanded Okojie’s presence at the meeting as a condition for an effective implementation of the truce. Okojie’s acceptance of the invitation was predicated on the news that his arrested father (king Okolo) would be released to him.58 Unfortunately, just as king Jaja of Opobo was tricked by the British in 1887 when he was invited on board a British ship for a parley but arrested and banished to Accra before finally sending him to the West indies,59 so Okojie was tricked. As soon as he arrived at the venue of the purported peace meeting, he was arrested, tried, found guilty of inciting the people of Uromi against the British and was subsequently banished to Calabar on 30th April, 1901. The quality of resistance from the Uromi forces has been attested to in the report of Major Heneker which states:

I consider, it was only by the leveling of the towns and cutting the bush on the sides of the roads that the Uromi people have been brought to their knees so soon for they are a fine manly people....60 (emphasis).

The treatment meted on Okojie was not peculiar to Uromi as other African communities, which experienced high level of armed resistance to colonial invasion had their own dose of colonial brutality. The likes of Samori Ture, and Nana Prempeh were defeated and exiled in 1900 to Gabon and Seychelles respectively, while Behanzin, king of Dahomey was deposed in 1894 but were never recalled to their territories61 unlike Okojie.

OKOJIE’S ADMINISTRATIVE CONTRADICTION

The nature of relationship between colonial authorities and the African chieftaincy institution has not been fully addressed as earlier mentioned. However, it is germane to state
that colonial rule imposed what is popularly referred to as ‘colonial order’ in conquered territories. Colonial order represents the deliberate imposition of colonial laws sustained by the artificially created colonial state necessary for economic exploitation of the colonised. The colonial-colonised relationship could best be described as a master-collaborative servant relationship. The relationship was deliberately structured in such a way that the colonial (master) authority dictated responsibility and also defined administrative limits for the colonised (collaborator). It has already been expressed elsewhere that:

As soon as a society was conquered, the head of the existing political structure was deposed and a collaborative replacement installed. Those with political ambition that wished to belong to the class of ruling elite became available instruments in the hands of colonial authorities to truncate concerted efforts of restoring the overthrown potentate. Therefore, the traditional chieftaincy institution was manipulated to serve colonial interest.62

This kind of relationship set the boundary of authority and power for the chieftaincy as the British colonial governance in West Africa created the Native Authority system to administer their conquered territories through the Native Administration. The idea of administering through the Native Authority otherwise called indirect rule was that the administering power uses the local Chiefs to rule the areas in which they were known and respected before the administering power took over.63 To achieve that purpose in Nigeria, the country was divided into administrative Provinces headed by Residents and the old Benin kingdom was made a Province. The Benin Province was administratively divided into four divisions including Ishan (Esan) supervised by District Officers (DO), while traditional kings were appointed as Sole Native Authority and Presidents of the Native Courts in their respective divisions. As soon as Okojie was recalled back from Calabar in 1901, he was appointed the President of the Native Court and charged with administratively assisting the DO in overseeing the Uromi territory on behalf of the Colonial authorities.
Between 1901 and 1917, Okojie’s seemed to have lived up to colonial expectations as Uromi had the highest number of primary school enrolment in the Ishan Division, increase in revenue generation especially fines from the native court and high level of citizen participation and collaboration in colonial activities. For his cooperation he was recognized among the other Esan kings and subsequently commended in 1914 and 1916. However, that did not mean that Okojie submissively surrendered his kingly authority as he continued to exert royal privileges from the Uromi people while meeting colonial goals. Ojiefoh has accused Okojie of governing the territory like a pre-colonial lord administering a conquered property without recourse to stated laws, compelled all to kowtow to his whim and no citizen dared to deride him in public. While Omorogie describes him as an; Onojie without inhibitions, and a supreme lord without comperssê . he was over-bearing on the people he ruledê . he terrorised them ê [as] their lives were not theirs to enjoy. Their wives were not theirs to hold. Their personal effects were not theirs to preserve. The disaffection around Onojie Okojieê rose like stench, so that the colonial rulers became increasingly afraid of a rebellion in Uromi. To avoid such a consequence the colonial authority deposed himê .

That Okojie displayed such level of authority within the colonial boundaries should suggest that he refused to recognize his monarchical limits with the conviction that he was still in control of his sovereignty, which is an indication of his passive resistance to colonial presence in his domain. One of Okojie’s direct sons described his father’s administration as a love-hate relationship with his people: loved for his resistance to colonial rule and disliked for his iron fist rule, the later prompting the people to agitate for his deportation in 1918. The villages of Amendokhian, Awo, and Efandion led the protest against Okojie because they felt they were most affected by his harsh rule. Agitation against Okojie had been brewing over time but Mr. A.E Hanson, Mr. E.E. Potter and Mr. H. G. Aveling who were successive
DOs seemed not to have considered such agitation as a veritable threat to colonial peace, until 1917, when W.B. Rumann was appointed the DO.

It is my argument, and as shall be demonstrated, Okojie’s deportation in 1919 (not 1918) was influenced by W.B. Rumann’s intolerance of Okojie’s monarchical attitude of a sovereign under his colonial watch more than the agitation of the people. There is no serious allegation from the colonial end that Okojie refused to collaborate with the colonial authorities under W.B. Rumann, but there were early indication that Okojie would have some difficulties with W.B. Rumann, the new DO who queried him in 1917 on allegation that he collected bribe to exclude some persons from being recommended to the colonial authorities for services in faraway East Africa. Not much is known about Rumann but he is described as taciturn and always a legal minded man who was known to oppose any form of challenge or threat of challenge to his authority and was a staunch Roman Catholic. A combination of Rumann’s social mind frame and religious sentiments as a Catholic, no doubt, would have made him a dogmatic adherent to constituted authority. While Rumann predecessors might have tolerated Okojie’s excesses as it were, it was clear that Rumann was a no nonsense man not given to Okojie’s monarchical disposition.

The pre-colonial Uromi royal tradition entitled the king to receive tributes from his subjects, confiscate properties of those who died without an heir, sanction burial ceremonies before they were celebrated, and other privileges. The king was also entitled to communal free labour and not exploitation, but for the dislike of his administration, his actions were considered untoward in colonial Uromi and his court pronouncement were also considered as biased. He was also accused of disrespecting chiefs and only accorded them respect at his pleasure. Okojie’s activities were therefore considered as flouting the order of his pay master, the colonial authorities as represented by the DO. Although Okojie might have been harsh, it was however the reports brought to the notice of the DO by some of the protesting
villages and aggrieved chiefs that provided the justification for the termination of Okojie’s administration. Only one authority was required in colonial Uromi and W. B. Rumann was that authority in Ishan Division. The Resident justified the sack of Okojie when he said this of Rumann:

I know no officer who could have exercised more tact in attempting to make a settlement than Mr. Rumann, but he told me in January [1919] that he felt sure that troops would be necessary to enforce the orders of the Enogie and knowing that the Enogie had been repeatedly warned without effect.76

Kings in colonial Africa held their offices at the discretion of the colonial authorities, for example, Abdullah, who was the District Head (DH) of Zamfara in the Sokoto emirate, was deposed because he refused to completely obey British instructions in colonial Northern Nigeria.77 Chiefs in colonial Ghana faced series of destoolment once they were considered rebellious,78 a situation that was not different in Kenya as troublesome chiefs were sacked from the colonial government.79

It is reasonable to argue that Okojie was banished from Uromi in 1919 because either he did not understand the character of colonialism or he decided to ignore it as he also considered himself an authority. Be that as it may, an appreciation of the circumstances that produced Okojie as king is germane to understanding why he was tyrannical. Okojie kingship was challenged by Iyoha based on the earlier narrative of their circumstances of birth.80 Therefore, from the outset; Okojie knew his enemies and opposition and was convinced they were ready to devour him in collaboration with the colonial power. One of the ways he thought he could handle them was to instill fear and govern with tyranny. He felt insecure, and like all leaders of Okojie type in world history with insecurity complex, the instrument of brutality has always been a veritable weapon in their hands for asserting authority.
Out of the need for personal protection and safety, Okojie became involved in mysticism to the extent that he hung live tortoise as amulet over his chest.\textsuperscript{81} However, it should be stated that Okojie, in his bid to secure his throne pushed his luck too far and in the process collided with the colonial authorities. Okojie’s style of governance created a crisis situation that provoked some pocket of protest. It was therefore desirable for Okojie to be taken off the scene in order to avert a rebellion capable of compromising colonial peace necessary for cooperation and exploitation.

**OKOJIE IN EXILE AND THE POLITICS OF CENTRIFUGAL AND CENTRIPETAL FORCES**

The exit of Okojie created two different forces in Uromi: the centrifugal and centripetal. The centrifugal forces were made up of Okojie’s enemies, the colonial authorities, and Prince Uwagbale. While the centripetal forces were Okojie’s sympathizers, which also included Uromi royal extended family members. As soon as Okojie was deposed, the Resident, who was the head of the colonial authorities in the colonial created Benin Province of Nigeria, announced that Chief Oliha [Oniha of Uromi] would act with full powers until the new *Enogie* was elected. . . [that] they must obey the Oliha.\textsuperscript{82} It would have been culturally acceptable for Chief Oniha to act for a maximum of three months if king Okojie had died, but the king was only deposed and not dead, which could have made Uromi king makers to oppose the continued stay of Oliha.

It was the royal family from Ebhoiysi that appealed to the colonial authorities that Prince Uwagbale should replace his deported father pending the resolution of the deportation.\textsuperscript{83} The colonial authorities were anxious to prevent any eruption of violence from the people, so the District Officer (DO) in Ishan Division, W.B Rumann had to recommend to the Resident that Uwagbale was a fine gentleman, matured enough to take charge of Uromi in place of his father. The request for the coronation was sent in February 12, 1919 and
approved in June of the same year after the Resident had convinced the Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) that Wagbari [Uwagbale] the eldest son of the Enogie Okojie of Uromi should be recognised as Enogie.\textsuperscript{84}

Uwagbale was eventually installed on 16th June, 1919 ending the tenure of Chief Oniha.\textsuperscript{85} The report of the installation as recorded by the DO and sent to the Resident is worth quoting in some details because it captures one of the gravest sacrileges committed by Uwagbale against his father and the royal practice in Uromi. As reported by the DO, the event took place in the presence of other monarchs from Ubiaja, Ugboha and Irrua, which are Esan towns. He went further to add details of the coronation rites stating that:

The Enogie's family tried to obstruct the ceremony until they were definitely told that chief Okojie would never return to Uromi. Wagbari, first had to make the sacrifice of a bull to OKONOGIE his great ancestor on returning to the Council chamber the new Enogie was placed on his seat and blood from the sacrifice was brought and smeared on the throne. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the District Officer presented the late Enogie's [Okolo] staff to Wagbari who was admonished to rule wisely and consult his chiefs.\textsuperscript{86}

There are some fundamental issues the DO's report brings to the fore, one of which is the opposition of the royal family to the coronation. It would seem contradictory that the royal family that appealed to the colonial authorities to accept Uwagbale as replacement for his deported father would protest the installation. The family knew that the nature of coronation ceremony was wrong with the introduction of the OKONOGIE rite, which is performed for the soul of the departed Enogie to seek their permission and blessings to ascend the throne, but in that instance, Okojie was not dead. Besides, the royal family only suggested Uwagbale to the colonial authorities as a Regent and not as a substantive king.\textsuperscript{87} The protest against the installation was a continuation of the people's resistance to colonial
interference in what they regarded as exclusive cultural practice. Taken into consideration the royal dispute of seniority between Okojie and Iyoha, and given the fact that Iyoha had made several attempts at the throne, it could have been reasoned by the elders that Uwagbale’s emplacement would prevent Iyoha or his descendants from laying claim to the throne.

The DO reported the event in his quarterly report for that year dated 30th June, 1919 that Okojie was removed because of acts of oppression and misrule and the appointment of his eldest son as Enogie of Uromi. The new Enogie is doing well and has the support of all his titled chiefs. The newly crowned king wasted no time in consolidating his position as he employed diplomacy to reconcile the monarchy with the villages of Amendokhian, Awo, and Efandion. His action delighted the DO that he informed the Resident how the whole of Uromi united under the authority of the new Enogie Wagbari who I trust will show himself to be a just ruler. Therefore, in 1920, the DO sent a request to the Resident that Uwagbale should be appointed into the native court to replace his deported father.

Colonial structures were successfully erected in regions were collaborators supported colonial rule for selfish motives. These collaborators cut across all walks of life as long as their personal interest co-insides with colonial interest. Uwagbale enjoyed colonial support because he was a willing collaborator who did not allow moral persuasion or family ties to becloud his ambition. Uwagbale’s action is typical of ambitious individuals who are willing to compromise in order to attain political and economic relevance in any government. For example, Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kung’u had perfected plans since 1920 to discredit his nephew, Chief Waweru wa Kanja who was head of the Ruiru region so that he would be appointed to replace his nephew as chief in colonial Kenya.

Not long into Uwagbale’s appointment, the DO received a correspondence from the Resident that the Colonial Secretary would wish to grant Okojie freedom on the condition that the whole of Uromi would guarantee that he would relinquish his interest for power. The
DO replied that nobody, not even the chiefs wanted Okojie back as that was the political reality in Uromi. Given the pleasant relationship between Uwagbale and the colonial authorities, it is expected that any request to bring Okojie back would be rejected because Uwagbale was useful in the colonial scheme. Okojie refused to be intimidated as he continued to protest his deportation and insisted that he was needed by his people and accused Uwagbale of frustrating all efforts to release him, though he promised to be a private man in line with the Colonial Secretary’s suggestion.93

Okojie’s petition and resistance provoked another round of tension in Uromi as the euphoria of the appointment of Uwagbale as Onojie had not died down when in 1920, about 20 important Uromi chiefs from all the villages who led the centripetal forces petitioned the colonial authorities for the wrongful enthronement of Uwagbale. They based their grievances on four premises:

1. that the purpose of the protest against Okojie was to draw the DO’s attention to his misdemeanor with the hope of reconciling the aggrieved and not to depose their king;
2. that by the tradition of the people, Uwagbale ought not to be enthroned as long as Okojie was alive. Therefore, Uwagbale lacked the spiritual sanction to perform any form of rite for the well being of the community;
3. that Uwagbale, due to two above, lacked the authority to impose his leadership on the people and be obeyed, especially with regards to other levels of traditional authorities;
4. Okojie should be released from exile and be re-installed as the authentic king of Uromi. 94

The content of the petition challenged the views in the various colonial reports that Okojie was hated and unwanted in the community, while Uwagbale was cherished. The colonial
authority in the Esan region continued to encourage Uwagbale to hold on to power, even in the face of increased pressure and petitions from the people that Okojie should be re-called.

The people remained undaunted and continued in their resistance that there would be no peace in Uromi until Okojie was released. In a swift reaction, the Resident organised a meeting with the people of Uromi to ascertain the genuineness of the petition. Records of the meeting suggest that the meeting was strategically meant to intimidate the centripetal forces loyal to Okojie. Most of the chiefs that signed the petition were absent and the few present either denied knowledge of the content, or said that their names were used without their consent. It was only Chief Iyasere and three other chiefs who admitted support for the petition. To drive home the position of the colonial authorities in the Benin Province against Okojie, extract from the meeting is worth quoting to establish the fact that it was an anti-Okojie summons. According to the Resident:

> the people were then warned again that it had been distinctly laid down on several occasions that the Ex-Enogie should never return to the town as Enogie and that in future, any one, who agitated for his re-instatement would be punished. I suspended the warrant of the Iyashare (sic) for three months and warned him most strongly of the consequences which would befall any further agitation against the present Enogie. I would severely ensure the Ex-Enogie for his part in the affair and would inform him that I would recommend his deportation to Calabar if he did not at once cease all intrigues against his son and his attempts to return to Uromi.\(^{95}\)

The Resident was really determined to impress the implication of ever raising the issue of Okojie again in the District when he remarked that because of his interference with the administration of the town, he (the Ex-Enogie) would not be allowed to come to Uromi in any capacity for several years, and that anyone, who before another five years began to agitate for his return, would be dealt with.\(^{96}\) The reference to Okojie as Ex-Enogie meant that the colonial authorities thought that Okojie’s absence would calm the community. In
Esan cultural ethos, a king is born and not made, and a properly crowned king whether on the throne or dethroned does not obliterate the cultural fact that he remains a king. The culture assumed that the Onojie moved with the throne as demonstrated when Okojie was exiled. Even in exile, Okojie knew the amount of internal pressure on the centrifugal forces that kept him in exile to restore their true king back to the throne. The realization of that fact sustained his resolve to resist any form of intimidation including threat to send him back to Calabar as he insisted in all his petitions that he was needed back home to provide leadership for his people.\(^{97}\)

Okojie continued with his resistance and in 1922 wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor, Southern Provinces to remind his Excellency on his (Okojie) acceptance to be a private citizen if that might free him from the present state of confinement.\(^{98}\) The Lieutenant-Governor refused to honour Okojie’s request, and in a bid to silence him suggested that more of Okojie’s wives be sent to him in Benin.\(^{98}\) The continued agitation prompted the DO to seek protection for Uwagbale when he recommended to the Resident that District Heads in the Ishan Division including Uwagbale should be protected under the Criminal Code Ordinance of 1922.\(^{99}\) Similar collaborators in other parts of Africa also enjoyed the special protection accorded to Uwagbale as Governor Clifford in Ghana expressed in 1914 that it was the duty of Government to strengthen the powers of chiefs so that they could have control over their subjects.\(^{100}\)

The courage of Okojie to continue his agitation stems from the fact that he never actually accepted the reality that he had lost his rights and sovereignty as he remained undaunted and at the end of 1922, wrote another letter to the Resident with the complaint that he had wasted four years of his life doing nothing in Benin. He then pleaded with the Resident to allow him go back to be under house arrest in Uromi than to remain in his present state of despondency. However, the Resident sought the advice of the DO on Okojie’s request
and W. B. Rumann, replied that nobody wanted Okojie in Uromi as his presence would be a threat to the peace in the District.\textsuperscript{101}

The continued support and protection Uwagbale enjoyed from the colonial authorities sustained his hold on power, even when he was accused of frustrating all efforts to re-call his father. In response to the accusation, the DO reported to the Resident that the allegation was false, that the people and chiefs of Uromi were unanimous in their agreement that Okojie should not be allowed to come back to the town. He also added that the people had pledged their support for Uwagbale but that Okojie had become the main distraction to the new Onojie. The tension, protest and demonstration for Okojie’s re-call continued to mount even after five years (1919-1923) in exile. The DO, W.B. Rumman was convinced that Okojie was responsible for the tension in Uromi and therefore expressed his worry in 1923 to the Resident that:

\begin{quote}
Personally I am convinced that it would be suicide on the part of the present Enogie and District Head to allow his father to return to any part of Uromi and that his mere presence would cause the disruption of the whole District and Native Administration as far as Uromi is concerned. As I have pointed out before, the presence of the Ex Enogie even at Benin City is a certain menace, and it would pay the Administration to raise his allowance if he could only be sent to Calabar.\textsuperscript{102}
\end{quote}

In spite of colonial prompting and protection, the people sustained their protest and resistance against Uwagbale and questioned the traditional legality of his kingship. In 1924, the people of Ewoyoma (a royal town) wrote to the Colonial Secretary through the DO that Uwagbale was not the true heir of Okojie and was therefore wrongly enthroned and so demanded that Uwagbale be removed to avert calamity in the town.\textsuperscript{103} The petition was occasioned by Uwagbale’s opposition to the return of his father, which the people considered as culturally bizarre of a son. The DO made his remark on the petition before sending it to the Resident that he had interacted with the people of Ewoyoma and their spokesperson told
him that they wanted Okojie back to come and swear if Uwagbale was truly his heir. The DO further stated that when he demanded to know from the petitioners why they did not raise the issues when Uwagbale was installed, they replied they attempted twice in 1920 and 1922, but on both occasions, they were accosted on the way by Uwagbale. The DO again concluded that the petition lacked merit as it was the brain child of Okojie and therefore, should not be given serious consideration. The Resident wasted no time in forwarding the DO’s observation to the Colonial Secretary, noting that ‘he petition appears to be merely a strategic (sic) move on the part of Okojie, the Ex. Enogie of Uromi, whereby he hopes to return home. He was deported to Benin some years ago for perpetrating gross outrage in his town.’

It is important to briefly explain the nexus between the people of Ebhoyoma also called Ebhoiyi or Ewoyoma, which was originally called ‘Eubonaeyomorhie’ (the place where the children live) with the monarchy. The tradition holds that when a (king) Onojie dies, and by the law of primogeniture, his eldest surviving son succeeds him. The deceased king’s children and household would have to emigrate from Eguarre, the traditional village where the king resides, to Ebhoiyi, a place designated for the departed king’s children and household. It is this cultural privilege that informed the people to earlier suggest Uwagbale as a suitable replacement for his deported father as the eldest and heir apparent to the throne.

Despite the DO’s position, Okojie remained undaunted in his protest after about six years (1919-1924) in exile. In a petition dated 16th September 1924, Okojie expressed fears and pleaded with the authorities to tamper justice with ‘British mercy’ so that he could be released but his appeal fell on deaf ears. At the time Okojie wrote his appeal in September 1924, W.B. Rumann had become the Resident, Benin Province. Rumann maintained his earlier position that Okojie was dethroned for oppression and misrule and was not yet remorseful of his crimes, therefore he should be left in Benin. By 1925, Rumann was convinced that Okojie’s proximity to Uromi provided him the opportunity to interfere in
Uromi political affairs. He therefore sent a strongly worded letter to the DO to take drastic action against those forces working for Okojie against the interest of Uwagbale. He warned that should this state of passive persistence to the Enogie be continued or any sign of active resistance appear, the chiefs responsible must be prosecuted before the Ishan Council and I have given them due warning.  

A new Resident was later appointed in 1925, G. Falk, who also believed that Okojie’s proximity was still dangerous to the peace and tranquility of Uromi. Falk, therefore recommended that Okojie be transferred from Benin to Ibadan in Oyo Province. Okojie left Benin on June 1925 with the instruction not to return to either Benin or Warri Provinces except permitted by the Governor. The Resident, Oyo Province facilitated Okojie’s resettlement and accommodation challenge in Ibadan. The relocation further from Uromi did not weaken his resolve nor reduce his vehemence to be released as he wrote to the Resident, Benin Province that his allowance was insufficient to take care of his needs. He made an interesting remark in the letter that perhaps mocked the Resident or scorned his (Okojie) own predicament. He said any good friend, since the year 1919, I have been touring here and there by the wave of time, away from my home and families, yet I have been quite submissive under the political aggression’ and then went further to protest his poor financial status in Ibadan. That Okojie could complain about the manner he was treated without privileges gives credence to the contention that he disliked his situation and therefore demanded he be treated with respect. However, Okojie’s financial request was approved and by the end of 1925, his allowance had been increased twice.  

From Okojie’s disposition, it is indicative that colonial policy had not really broken his spirit of resistance but there were signs that he was home sick as expressed in his letter written on 17 March, 1926 where he explained that he wanted to go back home as he grew older and fragile. He promised that he would not be interested in the position of the Onojie;
willing to, and encouraged others to be loyal to Uwagbale while he would live a private life devoid of politics. He concluded his petition on an anticipatory note that he was waiting \textit{patiently and anxiously} for his request to be granted by His Excellency, but the Resident, Benin Province, denied Okojie his request because he believed that it was not conducive for Okojie to be released from exile.\textsuperscript{108}

The denial prompted Okojie to escape from Ibadan in 1926 to publicly show himself in Uromi without considering the implication of his action. Villages came to pay homage and presented gifts to him in the residence of a relative at Ebhoyi, which is an indication of his conviction that he was still the authority in Uromi in spite of colonial presence. There is no doubt that Okojie\textquoteleft s unannounced presence in Uromi posed a big challenge to Uwagbale and the colonial authorities in the Benin Province. It is believed that Uwagbale and some of his loyal chiefs drew the DO\textquoteleft s attention to the presence of Okojie who was therefore invited by the DO for a brief chat. Okojie bluntly refuse to honour the invitation as he considered himself a Lord in his sovereignty, which led to an unsuccessful man hunt for him by a detachment of policemen.\textsuperscript{109} As soon as information got to Okojie that his hide out had been exposed, he left Ebhoiyi for Uwalor, another village in Uromi, only to realise that he was not also safe there and therefore decided to surrender himself.\textsuperscript{110} The frustration of his inability to defend himself in the face of renewed colonial aggression compelled him to plead for clemency from his colonial tormentors but again his plea fell on deaf ears as he was sent to Benin for about three months before his deportation back to Ibadan.\textsuperscript{111}

Shortly after Okojie had been arrested and sent back to Ibadan, his son Uwagbale the usurper began to fall out of favour with the colonial authorities as the new DO, V.C.M. Kelsy wrote to the Resident in 1927 that Uwagbale\textquoteleft s conduct had become a hindrance to the administration. He was accused of bias judgments in court; misrepresentation of facts, deliberate misinformation, dis-information and proclivity to lies. He was therefore suspended
from Council by the Resident for three months with effect from 1st July 1927. In the absence of Uwagbale, the DO took direct charge of the native court before he was replaced by Mr. H. Maddocks who sought permission from the Resident to re-instate Uwagbale, which was granted in a memorandum dated 3rd December, 1927. The actions of Mr. Kelsy and Maddocks demonstrate that the administrative limits of chiefs were often determined by the proclivity of the sitting DO more than performance of the appointed chiefs. This line of thought also support the earlier position that Okojie was deposed because Mr. Rumann did not just like his person other than oppression and misrule.

In 1927, the colonial authorities increased taxation for adult male in the whole of Southern Nigeria, which provoked a widespread anti-tax riots in the region including Uromi. As a result of the riot, the authorities undertook the native administration reforms in the 1930s. Uwagbale’s inability to manage the anti-tax riots and fall out of the tax reforms once again pitched him against the DO. The centripetal forces in Uromi which included Okojie’s allies used that occasion of tax reforms to cause violence and accused Uwagbale of bringing hardship to the community. In the heat of the uprising, the Resident, Benin Province, Mr. Bewley and the DO Ishan Division, V.C.M Kelsy, had a meeting with the people of Uromi including Uwagbale, the chiefs and elders where the demand for the release of Okojie was repeated. The colonial authorities therefore thought it wise to release Okojie in order to prevent avoidable crisis. Okojie was eventually released from exile in July 1931, got to Uromi in August amidst jubilation, and was re-admitted back to the Council in September 1931. From a political realist perspective, it could be argued that Okojie’s recall was the only pragmatic option open to the authorities because Uwagbale had proven to be a disappointment to colonial concerns.

Interestingly, there is no archival or related record to suggest that there was any form of altercation between Okojie and his son Uwagbale before the king was exiled from Uromi.
The chances of envy and altercation would have been limited because of the royal practice that separated a reigning king from culturally interacting with his heir apparent. In accordance with the Uromi royal tradition, the heir apparent stays in another village outside where the king resides. The Oyomo village is designated as the village that hosts the heir apparent to the throne before becoming the king. This cultural practice is similar to the Benin monarchical practice where the Edaiken, the heir to the Oba of Benin resides at Uselu, some distance from Oredo, which is the seat of reigning Oba.

If Uwagbale was ambitious, it was never publicly expressed before he got the opportunity to act as king. Uwagbale's royalty position was supported by majority of the people, but his later style of governance, antics and perhaps un-cultural rascality surprised many to the extent that his kinsmen rebelled against him. What were the forces that probably influenced Uwagbale's actions and reactions? It has been argued by one of Uwagbale's direct brothers that Uwagbale was fickle minded and as such allowed a few individuals to corrupt his mind for power. The claim is that as Uwagbale began to derive benefits from the privilege of kingship, he began to collaborate with chiefs, and other identified enemies of his father to entrench his hold on the people and secure the throne for himself. He therefore conferred chieftaincy on his cronies and supporters as well as ruthless with opposition. It should therefore be understood that Uwagbale's friendly disposition toward colonial presence in Uromi was part of his grand design to win colonial support, sympathy and protection, which he enjoyed until 1931. Uwagbale character fits into Crowder's observation that willing or created chieftaincy were imposed on the people by the British colonial authorities for colonial gains.

King Okojie enjoyed the support of the colonial authorities until his death in 1944. The authorities refused to act on the series of allegations against him such as kidnapping one Mrs. Omokhua from her husband and also confiscating the said Omokhua economic trees in
1934. King Okojie also threatened to kill James Ologolo’s cow in 1935 if he did not take it away from Uromi. In 1938, Okojie, his son Iyere, and others were accused of minting counterfeit coins. While Okojie was acquitted and discharged, though warned, others were punished with various terms of imprisonment. These actions of Okojie is a further confirmation that he resisted the limitations placed on him by the colonial authorities and continued to tread on the same line of action that earlier provided the excuse for his deportation.

The 1941 hand over note from the DO, Mr. R.C.H Wilkes to the new DO, T.B. Bovell-Jones demonstrates the support for Okojie and also smack of hypocrisy in colonial reportage. Wilkes praised Okojie and condemned Uwagbale stating that “the Onogie [Okojie] was the most progressive minded member of the Council and his son and heir a worst reactionary”. The same Uwagbale that was pampered with colonial support later could be described as a reactionary, while the dreaded and hated Okojie had become a friend and ally, which shows that the colonial authorities were more concerned about those who could meet colonial demands and Okojie was equal to the task until his death in 1944. Uwagbale was then properly installed as king with no protest from the people because Okojie, before his death, had forgiving Uwagbale and reconciled with him so that the people would know his successor in order to avoid succession blackmail and crisis in Uromi.

CONCLUSION

The conquest of Uromi by Britain in 1901 introduced a new style of alien governance into the community. Prince Okojie who later became king was earlier sent on exile after the conquest was recalled to participate in the indirect rule governmental system in colonial Uromi. Okojie refused to accept the limitation placed on his traditional rights and privileges and used the rest of his life to passively resist the takeover of his sovereignty by the British colonial government. His resistance resulted in his banishment from Uromi between 1919
and 1931, and in his absence, his son and heir apparent, Prince Uwagbale was enthroned as the new king. Rather than use the support he enjoyed from colonial authorities to work for the recall of his father, Uwagbale, instead, collaborated with others to frustrate the early release of his deposed father, the king from exile because of personal gains. Uwagbale’s friendly disposition to colonial rule in opposition to the wish of the majority of the people created the centrifugal and centripetal forces in colonial Uromi between 1920 and 1931. On the long run, the resistance of African kings to colonial invasion and domination as demonstrated by king Okojie were futile to curb the loss of their sovereignty, rights and privileges. One of the several impacts of colonial rule in Africa is the collapse of empires and kingdoms and rise of modern state system built along lines European models. The end of colonial rule in Africa did not revert back the state system or brought back the splendor of kingship, rather, the European state system and subjugation of the monarchy to civil authority seems to remain an irreversible legacy of colonial rule in Africa.
NOTES


4. National Archives Ibadan (NAI), Colonial Secretary’s Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No. 131. From Officer Commanding Ishan Expeditionary Force to High Commissioner, Southern Nigeria, 7th April, 1901.


7. NAI, Benin Province (BP) 94/19 Uromi Political Papers: Minutes of the Meeting held at Uromi on the 22nd January, 1919, sent by the District Officer (DO) Ishan Division to the Resident, Benin Province Dated 24th January 1919.

8. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers: Memorandum from the Colonial Secretary’s Office deporting Okojie from Benin to Ibadan dated 15th June, 1925, and memorandum from the Resident Benin Province, to the CSO dated 22nd September, 1919.


10. Details of the circumstances surrounding the deposition of king Okojie have been articulated in S.O. Ehiabhi’s “The Old Vs the New: The Uromi Monarchy and the Reality of Political Power Shift in Contemporary Nigeria.” en route.


34. Prince Ernest Khuemen Okojie, *HRH Okojie Okolo N’Ogbidi*, 34.


38. National Archive, Ibadan (NAI), Colonial Secretary Office (CSO), 1/13/15, No 131 Southern Nigeria Dispatches to the Colonial Office in 1901.

39. N.A.I. Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No 131 From Officer Commanding Ishan Expeditionary Force to High Commissioner Southern Nigeria, 7th April, 1901.

40. N.A.I. Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No 131 From Officer Commanding Ishan Expeditionary Force to [High Commissioner Southern Nigeria](http://example.com), 7th April, 1901.

41. N.A.I. Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No 131 From Officer Commanding Ishan Expeditionary Force to [High Commissioner Southern Nigeria](http://example.com), 7th April, 1901.


43. N.A.I. Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No 131 From Officer Commanding Ishan Expeditionary Force to [High Commissioner Southern Nigeria](http://example.com), 7th April, 1901.

44. N.A.I. Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No 131 Memorandum of Instructions.

45. N.A.I. Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No 131 Memorandum of Instructions.

46. N.A.I. Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No 131 Copy of a Report from Resident Benin City to Divisional Commissioner Western Division dated 5th May, 1901.

47. N.A.I. Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No 131 5th May, 1901.

48. N.A.I. Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No 131 5th May, 1901.


52. NAI, CSO, 1/13/15, No 131 Southern Nigeria Dispatches to the Colonial Office in 1901, Memorandum of Instructions, and report from Officer, Commanding Ishan Expeditionary Force.

53. NAI, CSO, 1/13/15, No 131 Southern Nigeria Dispatches to the Colonial Office in 1901, Memorandum of Instructions, and report from Officer, Commanding Ishan Expeditionary Force.

54. Ibid., Copy of a Dispatch from the Divisional Commissioner Western Division to the High Commissioner, by Ralph F. Locke Divisional Commissioner, dated 26th May, 1901, and report from Officer, Commanding Ishan Expeditionary Force.


56. N.A.I. Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No 131, report from Officer Commanding Ishan Expeditionary Force.

57. Ibid., Copy of a Report from Resident Benin City to Divisional Commissioner, and report from Officer, Commanding Ishan Expeditionary Force.


60. N.A.I. Colonial Secretary Office (CSO) 1/13/15, No 131 Copy of report from Resident Benin City to Divisional Commissioner, and report from Officer Commanding Ishan Expeditionary Force.


64. NAI BP: 330/15 Quarterly Report on the Ishan Division, June 30th 1915


69. Mr. Matthew Oiboh, interviewed on 15 September, 2017 at Uromi.

70. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers Memorandum from the Resident Benin Province, to the CSO dated 22nd September, 1919.

71. This charge was one of the compliant made by the DO against Okojie justifying why he should be deposed. See NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers covering memo of the Resident attached to the cases against Okojie sent to the CSO on 22nd September, 1919.


76. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers, see covering memo of the Resident attached to the cases against Okojie sent to the CSO on 22nd September, 1919.


82. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers: See covering memo of the Resident attached to the cases against Okojie sent to the CSO on 22nd September, 1919.


84. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers: Reply of the District Officer (DO) to the Residentâs inquiry dated 27th February 1919, memorandum from the Resident, Benin Province, Benin City to the District Officer, Ubiaja dated 12th February, 1919, and reply of the DO to the Residentâs inquiry dated 27th February 1919.

85. Ibid., memorandum from the Resident, Benin Province to DO Ishan Division dated 29th May, 1919, and report from the DO to the Resident on the Subject Wagbari Enogie of Uromi Enthronement of dated 18th June, 1919.

86. H.L.M., Butcher, *Intelligence Report on Uromi Village Group of Ishan Division of Benin Province*. Published by the National Archives, Ibadan, 1982, 242.


89. NAI BP 94/19: Memorandum from the DO Ishan Division, W.B. Remann to the Resident, Benin Province dated 2nd September 1919.

90. NAI BP 91/1919: Ubiaja Division Native Court changes of membership, Uwagbale was appointed on 5th January, 1920.


39

93. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers: Correspondence from the Resident to the DO on the condition of release of Okojie, dated 31st March, 1920, reply to the Resident’s correspondence by the DO, dated 8th April, 1920, and letter from Okojie in Benin to the Resident 20th May, 1920.

94. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers: letter of petition from some Uromi chiefs to His Excellency, the Governor General through the Resident, asking for the Re-instatement of Okojie dated 20th October, 1920.

95. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers: letter written by people of Uromi to the Resident dated 25th October, 1920. Memo from the Resident to the DO dated 18th November, 1920


97. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers, Okojie’s letter to the Resident dated 4th May, 1921.

98. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers, Okojie’s petition to the Lieutenant Governor dated 20th February 1922, and reply from the Resident to the DO dated 23rd February, 1922.

99. NAI BP 128/1922: Chiefs to be protected on the Criminal Code list of 1922, this was sent by the DO Ishan Division to the Resident dated 4th May 1922.

100. Anshan Li, *ÂAsafo and Destoolment in Colonial Southern Ghana, 1900-1953* 354.
101. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi political papers, Okojie’s letter to the Resident dated 21st December, 1922. The DO was consulted on 23rd December 1922 as stated in his reply to the Resident’s memorandum. Reply from DO to Resident, 29th December, 1922.

102. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi political papers, memorandum from the Resident Benin Province to the DO Ishan Division dated 29th December, 1922. Reply to the Resident’s Memo from the DO dated 23rd January 1923

103. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi political papers, letter of petition from Ewoyoma village to the CSO on the illegality of Uwagbale’s enthronement, dated 8th April, 1924, and comments of the DO on Ewoyoma’s petition sent to the Resident on the Subject Petition from the People of Ewoyoma Quarter of Uromi, Against their Enogie, Chief Uwagbari. Forwards. Dated 16th April, 1924.

104. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi political papers, memorandum from the Resident, Benin Province to the Colonial Secretariat on the subject of the petition by Ewoyoma village. The memo is dated 23rd April, 1924.

105. H.L.M., Butcher, Intelligence Report on Uromi Village, 247.

106. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi political papers, Okojie’s letter of petition to the Lieutenant-Governor dated 16th September, 1924, Rumann’s covering note on Okojie’s petition sent to the Colonial Secretariat dated 4th December, 1924, and memorandum from the Resident to the DO dated 9th January, 1925.

107. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi political papers, memorandum from the Colonial Secretary’s Office deporting Okojie from Benin to Ibadan dated 15th June, 1925. There were series of correspondences between the Benin and Oyo Residents on Okojie spanning from 23rd June to 18th September, 1925. Included is petition from Okojie through the Oyo Province to Benin Province, dated 10th August, 1925, reply to
Okojie’s petition dated 18th August, 1925, and memo from Benin Province to Oyo Province that conveyed increment of Okojie’s allowance dated 1st October, 1925.

108. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi political papers, Okojie’s petition dated 17th March, 1926, and comments of the Resident Benin Province to the Colonial Secretary, Southern Provinces dated 22nd June, 1926.

109. A.P. Ojiefoh, *Uromi Chronicles*, 72. Ibid. 72-73


112. NAI BP 94/19 Uromi Political Papers, report on Uwagbale sent by the DO to the Resident dated 22nd June, 1927, memorandum from the Resident to the DO communicating the suspension of Unwagbale dated 15th July, 1927, memorandum from DO to Resident, on the suspension dated 10th November, 1927 and memorandum from the Resident to the DO approving the re-instatement of Uwagbale as Onojie in Council dated 3rd December 1927.


114. A.P. Ojiefoh, *Uromi Chronicles*, 75-6 and NAI BP 39/28B, Ishan Division Personnel of Native Court in-memorandum from the DO to the Resident seeking for permission to reinstate Okojie, dated 21st September, 1931 and approval granted to DO to re-instate Okojie, 29th September, 1931.


120. NAI ID 719 Vol I: Handing over notes 1941.