

Ekiti People of Southwestern Nigeria and Socio-Economic Self-Reliance Before 1900

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Abstract

The Ekiti people had all the needed infrastructures of civilization and, therefore, development before the implantation of colonial rule in Ekiti Division of the old Ondo Province of Western Nigeria. The territory was well organized with highly functional socio-developmental structures that naturally or organically formed the foundation of colonial rule. People's settlement patterns acknowledged the effort of high civilization. Also, socio-culturally, socio-politically, spiritually, artistically or technologically, the land was self-reliant. This was why the first Travelling Commissioner to Ekiti, Major W.R. Reeve Tucker, concluded in 1899 that the Ekiti people already had all the basic, though traditional, infrastructures that would facilitate modern development. The system of education was morally and professionally assuaging. Their religious practices were efficacious and focused on people's survival, while various progressive social and administrative activities acknowledged the success of a stable and organized society. Technologically, many craft and artistic experiences, for which they were known, gave them technical power over their material environment. Apart from having its own system of currency and efficient trade activities, Ekiti also had workable judicial and other systems that made it a complete state before colonization.

INTRODUCTION

The Ekiti people, before colonization, already had the basic infrastructure that made them self-sufficient and productive.¹ The organisation of the whole area now known as Ekiti ensured the maintenance of law and order. And generally, the people's economy was built mainly on agriculture, trade and industry, needed to make the people's social, cultural and political experiences more practical, radiant and assuring.

On the eve of the colonial rule, Ekitiland had already been visited by many Europeans, who were mainly missionaries, explorers, traders and treasure hunters. The contact with the Europeans could be taken back to about the middle 1850s.² However, during this period of contact with the British, the Ekiti cultural traditions were not really adulterated by foreign influences. It is good to examine the social life of the people during this period. Some writers like D. Philips, Bolanle Awe, S.A. Akintoye, Paula Brown, P.C. Lloyd and H. Oluwasanmi, among others, have written, either in bits or indirectly, on Ekiti pre-colonial cultural, political and social experiences. This essay will, however, present a much more indepth or elaborate study of the people, particularly as regards settlement patterns, religion, government and economic experiences.³

Settlement Pattern

Being a completely homogenous society, made up of different family units within households that were also within districts, all the districts within each town were headed by an *Oba* or king whose chiefs were usually heads of these districts. The chiefs were special advisers to the king who also had minor chiefs in charge of, for example, wars, purification of the society or religious rites, community work and judicial problems. The Ekiti people on the eve of the "colonial era were living in houses made of mud walls and palm leaves or other leaves for roofing".⁴ Nearly all the buildings had the same "design and size, all of which were determined by the utilitarian and domestic needs of the Ekiti people".⁵ However, generally:

The buildings were all bungalows and were built in compounds known as Agbo – Ile (a group of houses). The compound was usually circular in shape enclosing a large area. Each compound was divided into several compartments serving the need of all the families and their dependants. In the open space in the centre of the compound, "Aede", were kept goats, and sheep at night to prevent leopard from destroying them.⁶

Every compound had an entrance near a urinary called *ojuto* or a gutter. Within each compound were also different areas for cooking, bathing and other activities like night story telling. It was not in the people's tradition to pass stools within a compound. Instead, each household, made up of several compounds, had a separate area, distant from the compounds, for this. To avoid any plague, this area was always burnt to ashes, periodically. Sanitation was an important aspect of Ekiti's communal settlement. For example, "it was very mandatory for all the young boys and girls in each compound to sweep the grounds within and outside the

compound every morning”.⁷ And very periodically also, all male adults in every district used to clear and burn the areas where refuse was dumped.

Religion

Like the other Yoruba groups, the Ekiti believed in one “Supreme Ruler, the creator of all things – pure – as to be unapproachable”⁸, and who abhors sin and wicked practices. He was known as *Olodumare* (God), who was far removed from human beings, but had mediators known as *Orisa* who were worshipped and served as a communication medium between man and God. Some of *Orisa* were *Ogun* (god of iron), *Sango* (god of thunder), *Esu* (god of creativity), *Osanyi* (god of herbology) and *Ifa* (god of divination). The people also had several deities and cults like *Egungun* (spirits of the dead). All these minor gods and deities were worshipped by the Ekiti people. However, individual towns had their own additional deities who were unique to them. For example, the Ikere people worshipped the *Olosunta*, the Ado-Ekiti worshipped *Olua* and *Orisa Ojudo*, the Igede worshipped *Osun* and *Elemi*. The Ogbese River was worshipped in Ise. Other deities worshipped generally by the Ekiti people were *Olokun*, *Obalufon*, *Ereju* and *Orisanla*.

For religious efficacy, sacrifices, including human sacrifice, were made to these gods and deities either for pacification or for various requests. Through these various gods and deities, prayers were offered to *Olodumare*. The nature of Ekiti religion made it necessary to have various priests who were in charge of various shrines in nearly every corner of Ekiti. The people so much believed in the efficacy of their religion that the European missionaries initially found it difficult to introduce Christianity to them. No doubt, the traditional religion of Ekiti brought moral discipline to the daily experiences of the people. Their religion influenced, through constant oracular consultations and spiritual atonement, the socio-economic life of the people. The Ekiti religion and other cultic activities, patronized for medical, social, political reasons, among others, by people, improved the economic conditions of the people, particularly the priests and the herbalists.

Education

Education among the pre-colonial Ekiti was through apprenticeship; where young boys or girls were made to serve under experts for a specified period, learning various trades like medicine, music, body adornment or scarification, blacksmithing, weaving, dyeing, carving, beading, trade or commerce, hunting, among many others. Some of these trades could be learnt through parents or family’s tradition. Generally, however, moral education or, more particularly, “the education of women was the natural responsibility of parents who always made sure that their female children were adequately prepared not only for successful marital life but also for productive careers in the society”.⁹ Various social, creative or artistic events or occupations were more regularly learnt by association. And this takes one to the Ekiti’s marriage tradition.

Marriage

In the pre-colonial Ekiti, marriage system was highly laborious and methodical. This was seriously tied to the economic level or power of the bridegroom to be. In fact, three things were necessary for getting a wife: moral character, hard work and financial strength. According to tradition, marriage essentially took three stages which, according to Elizabeth Oni, were the introduction, the betrothal and the final marriage.¹⁰ All these were set in motion after the families of both man and woman had agreed to the marriage. The introduction, called *Ana*, could take place after the man, parents and friends might have met the parents of the girl formally with kolanuts and palm wine. The acceptance of the gifts was followed by prayers from the girl’s parents after which a day would be fixed for the betrothal called *Idana*, which, usually, should be within nine to 12 days.

Idana was a day of celebration and merriment, because it was when various food items, including kolanuts, palmwine, goat, yams as well as loads of clothes and other properties which the girl would need, were brought to the bride’s house by the bridegroom.¹¹ At the occasion, all the relations of both the man and the woman would be in attendance, and it was the occasion that the man would show whether or not he was financially very strong. It was during the *Idana* that the dowry, which was usually a very small amount in cowries, was paid. Marriage, called *Obuntun*, could follow any time, depending on the agreement between the two families. The marriage day was the most elaborate in celebration, with various musical bands and more than enough to eat. At the end of the whole ceremony, the parents of the lady would pray for her before following her husband to his house at night. By tradition, the lady would be followed by one of her younger female relations who was supposed to stay or live with her for as long as she wished.

Government

Before the colonial era and even after, every town in Ekiti had the same system of government based on Kingship. All administrative, judicial, military and cultural powers were invested in the kings who had many slaves, messengers and numerous court attendants who all affirmed the next-to-god image of these rulers. The kings, who were also graded or classed according to some cultural, military, medicinal and population criteria, dominated all the social, economic, political, religious and cultural lives of their people. They even had the power of death over their subjects. Atanda records that:

The Chief (King) had around him civil officers – who serve as public criers to make known laws or publish temporary enactments; he appoints over

every department of labour or business, principal men who are to act in their respective spheres; and then he has regular officers of a police character --- who are so detected --- that it is difficult for anyone to thwart them in their vigilance. Hence the order and regularity characteristic of these town governments.¹²

The administration of each town was made possible through a well organized system that took its root from the heads of family units through the heads of households to the heads of the districts who, automatically, were the senior chiefs to the kings. Each chief had his special role as demanded by tradition and the king. Every town had one palace where all the kings lived in succession, and kings were selected from ruling houses according to age-old tradition. Kingship stool could not be bought in anyway in Ekiti land. Every ruling house “produced the person next in line for the kingship stool, no matter how financially poor he was”.¹³ That is why, till today, many Ekiti kings are not very rich financially, though their subjects always elevate them materially, placing them very comfortably among the notable elite in the society.¹⁴ For good governance, various cultural experiences were also practised. For example, there were many festivals in each town in which young men and women as well as old people participated. These festivals could be for the peace and development of the town; they could be for land fertility, protection from witches and wizards, procreation and for preventing premature deaths.

Land Tenure

Though symbolically, the land belonged to the king, the custodian of all lands, he did not get himself involved in any family or household land unless there was a problem. The king was, however, in charge of all the community land. Land in the pre-colonial Ekiti was hereditary and therefore the male children of a man inherited all his land after him. The land was shared among them if the man had more than one child.

It was not the tradition of Ekiti to sell any portion of their land, because no person outside the family was allowed to permanently own a land within the family’s land. Rather, land could be given to a distant relation on trust on agreed terms and for a specified period, after which the land was returned to the owner. Such land was given after the person had given a gift of kolanut and wine to the family. In fact, each lineage had the right to land which, according to tradition, belonged to their ancestor. Such land was in charge of the head of the household who would make sure that the land was shared among the family heads who, in turn, would also make sure that the family heads shared the land appropriately.¹⁵ There was no tradition of land pledging in the pre-colonial period.

Agriculture

The pre-colonial Ekiti was a completely agricultural society, and farming was their main occupation. With very few and simple agricultural implements like cutlass, hoe and axe, the Ekiti farmers were able to produce more than enough food for their families and the people. According to Captain Anderson in 1899:

With few, simple and primitive implements, these hard-working people (Ekiti) have been able to produce a variety of food crops that are displayed in segmented units like Egyptian pyramids in the markets that are customarily located near the kings’ palaces. One is not surprised because very early in the morning, by 6 a.m., the farmers and their male children are seen trooping to the farms with cutlasses, hoes, baskets and, at times, wood torches needed to make fire in the farm for food.... And in the evening, around 4 p.m., the people usually return home in groups, this time including women carrying heavy loads on their heads while men are seen carrying fire wood on their shoulders.... Evidently, there can be no Ekiti without farming.¹⁶

It is very clear from the above observation that the pre-colonial agriculture “though without all the appliances of civilization, produces fine results”.¹⁷ In addition, “with ... simple instrument, large trees are felled, the forest cleared, the wood cut and split and thousands of acres prepared for tillage”.¹⁸

Since some cash crops were not yet really introduced to Ekiti, the main crops grown were tobacco, kolanut, maize, yam, cocoyam, beans, gourds, calabashes, melon, okro and a variety of vegetables, which, at times, grew up unplanted among planted crops. The common vegetables were *ewe dudu*, *tete*, *rorowo*, *edu* and *egure* (water leaf). A variety of pepper was also cultivated, in addition to plantain, cassava, potatoes, cotton and pawpaw. Palm oil and palm kernels were also part of Ekiti’s agricultural products, in addition to palm wine. It was the duty of the men to clear the bush, till the land with hoes and plant the crops. It was the responsibility of the women to harvest farm products and bring them home and for sale in the market.

The Ekiti farmers reared animals like goat, dogs and pigs. The animals were allowed to roam about freely after being fed in the morning. Apart from pigs which were not allowed to enter a house, dogs and goats were free to mix with people. In fact, a dog was treated like a human being and was allowed to even sleep

within a house and close to people. Dogs were used for hunting and for other domestic purposes. Fowls were raised both at home and in the farm. While the men were responsible for rearing fowls in the farm, women were mostly in charge of rearing them at home.

Another important aspect of the agricultural life in the pre-colonial Ekiti was hunting. During this period, and the situation still remains the same till today, nearly all the farmers were also hunters, using locally made guns, different types of traps, wires and catapults. Apart from individual hunting, there were also periodic collective hunting expeditions made up, at a time, of about 20 to 30 or more, hunters hunting various animals and birds. Such games, resulting from hunting, were usually shared according to age and contribution either for food or for sale.

One practice was very common among Ekiti farmers before 1900, though this was carried over to the colonial period. This was the practice of selling some crops in the farm without the sellers or the owners of such farm products being around. About this method of selling, Anderson also commented in 1899:

The amazing thing about the Ekiti farmers, both men and women, is their strange method of selling farm products without the presence of the sellers. This is a lesson for we British because I cannot but wonder how this method can work among us in Britain. At the entrance or gateway to a farm is usually found items like ripe plantain, tomatoes, yams, roasted rats and snakes and other things that were displayed on skeletal wooden beds resting rectangularly on four wooden sticks that were firmly driven into the ground. What the buyers do is to pick any of the items displayed and put the cowrie money there. Nothing is ever stolen.¹⁹

Ekiti people called this practice *kosoloja* or remote selling.²⁰ *Kosoloja*, or *ko si oloja*, means the seller is not around or very distant from his market. Chief Jonathan Agunbiade of Ado-Ekiti explained the working of "remote selling". According to him, "remote selling was a custom that, among other things, helped teach and promote moral decency among the Ekiti people".²¹ People believed that it was a curse for anybody to steal or take any of the displayed items without dropping the price money near the product. However, for a prospective buyer to know the price of each product displayed for sale, according to Agunbiade, a price was put very close to each item for sale. What the buyer needed to do was to first count the amount of money, usually in cowries, beside the item he or she wanted to buy and then drop the exact amount in front of the product.²²

Bosede Ajayi, a 67-year old trader at the Oja Oba, King's Market, in Ado-Ekiti, has further explained the commercially creative nature of "Remote Selling" among the Ekiti traders. For example, it is still the practice that when somebody buys any food item in the market or in a yard, it is customary for the seller to generously add to or top what has been bought with small and free extra. This small extra or gift was known in Ekiti as *eni* or what the Igbo people call *mmezi*. However, Bosede has been able to recollect the same practice with remote selling in the farm. To her, though not all the remote sellers were practising this, many farmers usually put extra foodstuffs on the right side of other foodstuffs for sale. No money or amount was placed near this at all, meaning that it was *eni* or free gift.²³ What happened was that if, for example, a bunch of banana was placed on the extra portion of the stall, one was free to take one or two from the bunch after buying an item.

Nobody had the right to touch the extra gift if the person had not bought anything from the stall.²⁴ To Oluwatoba, the method of putting *eni* or extra on many stalls was a way of attracting patronage.²⁵ This now makes it necessary to discuss the amount for and the currency used in remote selling. It is necessary here to understand that the main and most popular currency were cowries followed by precious beads called *ayun*. About the remote selling, the quality and quantity of the foodstuffs usually determined the number of cowries placed near each item by the seller. However, it is good to point out that, occasionally, people could exchange food item for another food item.

Art and Craft Industry

Long before the British occupation, Ekiti was creatively powerful for its strong tradition of wood carving. Nearly every district in a town had wood carvers who were revered not only for their ability to create images of the gods but also more importantly for their closeness not only to the powerful chiefs but also to the kings who were their major patrons. Culture was the life of the people, and religion was the soul of this life. All the daily activities of the people were tied to religious practices which were totally controlled by the worship of their gods. Hundreds of religious activities had been sustained and associated with very many shrines that also had to be constantly equipped with art images or carved figures and other objects. All over Ekiti land, the chiefs' houses and the kings' palaces or courts had thousands of religious and secular art images and objects, all of which served the spiritual and material objectives of these powerful elite in the society.

Individuals also commissioned various art images for protective, therapeutic, economic and other social reasons. Different types of musical instruments, domestic objects and other occupational objects were carved by the wood carvers. Many of the carvers were also traditional doctors or priests, and these positions brought considerable patronage to them. Wood carvers were generally very wealthy, bringing “this very popular saying that carvers never lack”.²⁶ In fact, what made the carvers’ position more financially lucrative than those of many professionals was the belief that any commissioned religious or cultic objects must be paid for once; not instalmentally. There was also no room for credit buying. It was believed that any art image that was not fully paid for at once might not be spiritually efficacious or potent.

Many wood carvers did not specialize in carving images and objects but focused on wood ornamentation or design. In fact, on the eve of the British rule, Ekiti had three types of wood carvers. One was known as “agbere”, the person who carved human and animal figures; “agbena”, a wood carver who made wood or furniture very ornamental with patterns, motifs and other creative designs. There was also “agbegi” who produced only domestic and other non-figurative secular wood objects without any trace of design or ornamentation.²⁷

The influence of wood carvers on the Ekiti society before 1900 was so great that both the Christian missionaries and the colonial administrators descended heavily on these “carvers who were accused of making idols in Ise, Ado, Iyin and Igede and were locked up, though without any physical harm, in the D.O’s Quarters (Ado) for two weeks”.²⁸ This was because it was discovered that “many of those gigantic carved human figures, some about seven feet high, holding carved swords and carved human heads with fearful big eyes and soaked with human blood were produced by them”.²⁹ Like many other idols, human sacrifices were made to purify and energize the powers of these images. This was why the traditional wood carvers were also feared in the pre-colonial Ekiti.

However, there were other forms of art which, in fact, formed the backbone of Ekiti local industries. These were blacksmithing, weaving, dyeing, pottery, beading, cap – making and mat weaving. The Ekiti people were adept blacksmiths who, before colonization, produced a variety of cultic, hunting and domestic objects for the community. Like in other Yoruba ethnic groups, iron ore was available and obtained from the mountains that abound in Ekiti. This was smelted in furnaces before being sold to blacksmiths who used them to produce a variety of implements and instruments. According to W.H. Clark:

Every town has its complement of blacksmith shops (workshops) that may be known by their circular tops where the sound of the hammer and anvil may from day to day be heard. The implements used are a rock for anvil, a small oblong piece of iron tapering to a handle for a hammer, one or two pairs of tongs similar to those in common use, a pair of bellows made out of raw hide in a circular shape – with handles of wood inserted so as to be raised perpendicularly – (for firing). Coal made from wood is generally used though shells of the palm nut are used in case of necessity.³⁰

Blacksmithing was an important and indispensable industry before colonization, because without their products, there would be no implements for agriculture and no instruments to fight in wars, among other experiences.

Weaving was another industry of Ekiti before colonization. With the use of vertical and horizontal looms, Ekiti women were able to produce enough cloths for people to wear. The process of weaving began by obtaining thread for weaving from cotton wool from which cotton seeds had already been removed. These seeds were removed by a thin iron rod called *obibo* that served as a roller. After all the cotton seeds had been removed, the cotton was beaten into a light and thin form, before being spun into threads with a spindle that had a round, heavy object at its bottom end. The heavy object could be circular in shape. The threads could be dyed in different colours, while others were used in their white colour. There were women whose occupation was to produce threads for weaving. Weaving with vertical looms was the exclusive occupation of the Ekiti women.

They were very dexterous on their looms and very fast in turning out yards of cloth in one day. This was why weaving of cloths was already a part of Ekiti culture long before the 19th century.³¹ Dr. T.E. Rice, the Acting District Commissioner for Ekiti in 1899 knew this when he said that the “Ekiti’s sense of pride is clearly noticeable in their fashion --- with special clothes for farming and different ones for recreation, paying visits --- and for special ceremonies”.³² He observed further that “apart from children who occasionally troop out, particularly when it rains, you cannot see anybody nude on the street. But in individual homes or indoor one occasionally sees aged women pounding yam barebreasted only”.³³

Dyeing was another industry that went hand in hand with weaving. In nearly every district were found dyeing cottage industries which were usually carried out by women only. With indigo leaves, usually obtained from the farm or bought in the market, dye was prepared. It was easy to locate the dye establishments with many big pots and heaps of ashes that had been used during processing. Dyeing produced shades of blue because of the natural indigo colour. Other common colours were purple and green.

Pottery was another popular Ekiti industry. Unlike other industries which were commonly found around every town, pottery industries were found only in towns where clay was available. These towns were Ara, Isan, Afao, Obo, Igbara-Odo and Okemesi, among others. Despite the fact that only few Ekiti towns produced pottery, the few pottery industries were able to even produce surplus pottery wares with locally made instruments and traditional techniques. Again, like many other industries, pottery was an exclusively female occupation. Another home industry, monopolised by women, was cap-making and beading.

Many Ekiti towns, before 1900, were known for the production of elite caps, used mainly by the chiefs, kings and very wealthy people in the society. With strong threads or horse hair, these caps were dexterously sewn with needles produced by blacksmiths. In fact, during the pre-colonial era, the status of a man could easily be measured by the type of cap he wore. These caps produced by women definitely could not be bought or worn by ordinary people, and the people were aware of this. There were also royal caps, or crowns, which were exclusively for kings. These were expensive and prestigious. The kings' crowns were usually heavily beaded with various ornamental, pictorial or sculptural designs. This type was known as "ade". Of course, caps were also produced for the ordinary people in the society.

Mat weaving, like pottery, was an industry that strongly affected the lives of the Ekiti people generally. In the pre-colonial period, when there were no modern beds, mats were the major materials for sleeping; followed by animal skins. Even when raised mud beds were in use by some wealthy Ekiti, mats were still needed to spread on them before sleeping. During ceremonies like marriage, masquerade rituals, child naming, death rites and special thanksgiving to the gods for success in some endeavours, mats were usually spread on the ground for children and boys and girls to sit on, while grown up people or adults were given wooden or palm frond stools to sit on. On occasions, when these stools or benches were not enough, mats were also used by the adults for sitting. Like pottery, mat weaving was practised in only a few Ekiti towns. However, the volume of production by these industries was enough to meet the consumption demand of the people. What made the products of these mat industries very unique and acceptable were their aesthetic attractive geometric designs and colours.

Roads, Transportation and Trade

Before 1900, Ekiti had road infrastructures that connected the town people to their various farms that could be between five to twenty kilometers away. The roads which "branched out from each town to many geographical corners of the town were footpaths that were not only very narrow but also very curvy in many places, with side bushes that occasionally made some animals close on, on people".³⁴ On the roads, agricultural and hunting activities were carried out. In fact, therefore, two types of road existed in every town. These were the farm and hunting roads. The farm roads were very narrow and long while the hunting roads were narrower, rough and short. However, "many of these hunting bush paths later developed into farm roads, particularly because of constant trailing of animals that occasionally escaped from traps or after being shot".³⁵

The major Ekiti roads were, however, those that connected towns to one another. Though the roads were also narrow and very tortuous, they were wider and cleaner than the farm roads. These roads were always maintained by the communities mainly because they were trade routes to different destinations. The roads met the needs of the people, because they were only for head portage or leg transportation. Through these roads, people carried their agricultural and industrial products to distant markets.

Ekiti, before 1900, had many trade commodities like the industrial and agricultural products, all of which made Ekiti a commercial centre. There were both domestic and external trade this period. Ekiti operated a five-day market cycle or periodicity, and various farm products like yam, cocoyam, plantain, pepper, palm oil, among many others, as well as goats and fowls were sold in the markets. Trade was conducted either by barter or with cowries. Values of goods used to change from time to time, and this also made the value of cowries change accordingly. The following can give one an idea of what cowries could buy around 1900:³⁶

40 cowries	=	1 string (British ½ penny)
50 strings	=	1 head (British 2 shillings)
10 heads=		1 bag (British 1 pound, 10 shillings)

Cowries were carried in baskets to and from trade centres by hired men and women who were also paid for their services. To be able to have enough money as security for social and commercial activities, the Ekiti adopted the traditional banking system known as *esusu* which made a group of people join together to contribute a specified amount either every market day or every moon period. Such money, after a period, was always returned to members in full. Without doubt, in their own traditional way, the Ekiti people had a well structured trade system which made the commercial experiences of the people very productive. However, despite the largely domestic nature of the Ekiti pre-colonial economy, it is good to also know that there was limited contact between Ekiti and some European merchants on the eve of colonial era. This was why, in fact, in "the whole of Yorubaland, production for export was by no means a new experience that came in the wake of colonial imposition"³⁷. The activities of the European traders before 1900 evidently showed that "export production antedated the formal imposition of British colonial rule".³⁸

Slave Trade and Wars

Without doubt, slave trade and wars were the greatest humiliating and destructive experiences on the lives and economic activities of the Ekiti people. Slave had its most tragic effect on Ekiti from the beginning of the 19th century. During this period, when hundreds of Ekiti men and women had been captured and taken as slaves, people were, however, able to fashion their own methods of avoiding being captured, particularly by the Fulanis and some powerful Yoruba kings who became the agents of the slave dealers. Part of the means of escaping the slave raiders was shifting some settlements temporarily to far away into the interior forest where the raiders could not easily locate. Women, young boys and girls were made to reside in these settlements, while the men, armed with charms and weapons and who could resist capture, would come to the town. According to Chief Bakare Arije, slave raids were not carried out daily and were not focused on a particular area; because the raiders knew that they could be fought back and even captured themselves. The slave raiders used to strike unexpectedly at the areas least expected at a particular period.³⁹

However, Ekiti was also engaged in local and external wars. Some of these were the Benin war, Ogotun war, Aaye war, Ikoro war, Aramoko war, Oro war, Wokuti war and Ise-Emure war. Others were Ikere war and the greatest of them all, the Kiriji war, also known as Ekiti-Parapo war, against Ibadan. All these wars were fought between 1810 and 1886.⁴⁰ The wars, no doubt, aided slave trade. However, inspite of the destructive wars, which also brought the Ekiti into contact with other cultures or ethnic groups, the Ekiti people were able to build a well organized society and with sound economic, social and political experiences. However, on the eve of colonial rule, slave trade had diminished considerably.

CONCLUSION

As seen in this essay, the Ekiti people already had age-old well structured or organized society before the British occupation. Socio-culturally, socio-economically and creatively, they had acquired such indigenous experiences that gave continuity to their existence. It was not surprising, therefore, that the colonial administrators generally acknowledged the people's level of development as, particularly, regards settlement patterns, highly workable or organized social activities, government, occupational experiences, military capabilities, various industrial experiences and greatly unique and innovative commercial ventures. All the above were without external or foreign influences which made the District Commissioner for Ekiti, Mr. W. G. Beanish, state in 1912 that "though some natives' practices may be far from high (British) civilization, these hard-working and culturally proud people have already acquired the administrative, judicial, economic and diplomatic mastery of a complete modern state".⁴¹

It was very clear that the colonial administration realized the self-reliant nature of various pre-colonial experiences of Ekiti; which was why it was very easy for the British to administer the Division as a colonial territory, except for Christianity which was initially rejected and which led to the persecution of some religious traditionalists and traditions.

References

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2. See J.A. Atanda (ed.), *Travels and Explorations in Yorubaland, 1854-1858*, by. W.H. Clarke (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1972).
3. See Bolanle Awe, *The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power, 1851-1893*, Ph.D Thesis, Oxford University, 1962, p. 127; S.A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893* (Ibadan: Longman Group Ltd., 1971), p. 5; Paula Brown, "Patterns of Authority in West Africa", *Africa*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1951, pp. 261-2264; P.C. Lloyd, "Traditional Political System of the Yoruba", *South-Western Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 4, No. 10, 1954, pp. 366-384; H.A. Oluwasanmi, *Agriculture and Nigerian Economy* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 20-25. Also, that the pre-colonial Ekiti experiences were still very strong during the colonial period is evident in the subsequent chapters.
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