

# Crisis of Supremacy Among Indigenous Nigerian Communities: Ankpa And Idah Since The Pre-Colonial Period

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## Abstract

Crisis has been an integral part of human relations. Right from the early period the contest for supremacy especially among the ruling house(s) has shape and shall continue to reshape relations amongst clans and lineages who hold claim to certain indigenous political institutions. Such contest emanates out of claims and counter claims as to who rightly succeeds to any vacant throne in the event of the demise of the sitting ruler. The respect accorded to the stool and the political and economic benefits associated with it generate serious crisis in such contest. It is against this backdrop that this paper intends to take a historical look at the political relationship between Ankpa and Idah beginning from the pre-colonial period.

## INTRODUCTION

Traditions hold that the royal stool of Ankpa and Idah are relatively one just like every other traditional stools in Igala land. However the two royal houses tend to be so antagonistic of each other in almost every matter. This crisis is traceable to the succession dispute between two supposedly grand children of Idoko the progenitor of Igala royal throne during the early phase of Attah's stool in Idah.

## PRE-COLONIAL ANTECEDENCE OF ANKPA AND IDAH POLITICAL CRISIS

The antagonism which culminated in the creation of what appeared to be a rival stool to that of the *Attah* began long before Colonialism. The *Onuh* Ankpa royal house claimed to have equal if not superior position to that of the *Attah* at Idah. This claim emanated from the belief and contention arising out of the people's claims that the position of *Attah* was supposed to be that of *Atiyele* believed according to Ankpa tradition to be the eldest son of Idoko.<sup>3</sup> It was further explained that as the first or eldest son, *Atiyele* by tradition was not supposed to live in the same place with his father for the fear that he could collaborate with the King Makers to either kill his father or plan his dethronement.<sup>4</sup> In line with this principle, *Atiyele* left the vicinity of Idah to Ankpa where he established the *onuh Ankpa* institution.<sup>5</sup> At the death of the reigning *Attah*, the tradition also holds that a message was supposed to be sent to call or invite the eldest son back home and by implication made to succeed his father.<sup>6</sup> But in *Atiyele*'s own case, such was not adhered to because no invitation was sent to him. This provided an enabling environment to his younger brother *Ayegba* to take or step into their father's position as the *Attah*. This action was viewed by *Atiyele* as a sellout and/or betrayal on the part of the King Makers. Thus, it was asserted that this non conformity with the principles of succession as earlier said was instrumental to the bitterness and rancour and the lack of respect for the stool and position of the *Attah* by the royal house of Ankpa. This age long acrimony was adduced as the reason why the Ankpa royal house consistently demanded for self autonomy even during the colonial period.<sup>7</sup>

As a way of pacifying himself *Atiyele* and even those who succeeded him created a serious line of demarcation and by implication instituting a dichotomy which metamorphosed into self autonomy for the people and the throne of *Onuh Ankpa* as an "Independent" institution far from the control of the *Attah* who controlled the Central institution. The traditional political conflict was intensified under the successor of *Atiyele*.<sup>8</sup> Another account is that given by Boston. This account holds that *Atiele* a younger brother of *Ata Ayegba* came to the Ankpa area trading. The people of *Ojja* who settled there gave him a wife called *Anagba* who was the mother of *Oguche Ekwo*. She was a relation of a local chief called *Agbaji*. *Oguche Ekwo* got so strong eventually that *Agbaji* gave up his title and later *Oguche Ekwo* went to Idah and was given beads by the *Ata*.<sup>9</sup>

However, another tradition holds rather different explanations to the emergence of the title of *Onuh Ankpa* and later *Ejeh of Ankpa*. This tradition holds that certain man named *Atiyele* believed to be the elder brother of *Ayegba* who by accident could not succeed his father *Idoko* because he was away when his father (*Idoko*) died and for the fear of leaving the stool vacant enthroned his younger brother, *Ayegba*.<sup>10</sup> Even though *Atiyele* was not happy with the development, he reluctantly succumbed to the plea from the elders. But incidentally the gentleness and acceptance of what happened failed to go down well with *Atiyele*'s eldest son *Ogwuchekwo* who left his maternal home in Ankpa to visit his father at Idah. *Ogwuchekwo* was described to be hard, bold, hot tempered and intolerant and so failed to make things easy for his uncle *Ayegba*. The exhibition of this character sent fear into the minds of both *Ayegba* royal family members and elders of the kingdom. In order to stop the tide from escalating and also not to jeopardize the peace of the kingdom, a decision was arrived at to send *Ogwuchekwo* back to his mother's place and possibly created a *niche* for him in that far area, where he

could exercise a sovereign authority possibly devoid of any homage to the authority of the *Attah* at Idah. This of course marked the beginning of the title of *Onuh Ankpa*.<sup>11</sup> According to this source, this arrangement provided the historical basis for the people of Ankpa's claim to political sovereignty and autonomy within the Igala kingdom.<sup>12</sup> From the emergence of *Ogwuchekwo* as the *Onuh Ankpa*, both the title and the territory he ruled remained an autonomous entity free from any interference from the central authority at Idah.

Another source holds a different view from the expressions from the earlier traditions. This source argues that it could not have been possible for the *Onuh Ankpa* to remain independent of Idah because, for any traditional title to enjoy legitimacy and authority such title must be given the symbol of authority from the palace of the *Attah*. According to this tradition, it was said that the royal beads, the horse tail, the red feather cap and all other spiritual and political paraphernalia that go with such titles must as a matter of fact receive the blessing of the *Attah* who usually decorates the beneficiaries.<sup>13</sup> This source points to the fact that just like all the other royal thrones of the area, the *Onuh Ankpa* still received their symbol of authority from the palace of the *Attah*. Therefore, the issue of sovereignty and autonomy of the *Onuh Ankpa* from Idah perhaps may not be wholly total. Boston asserts that, at the turn of the century the Ankpa group rejected the *Ata's* authority in political matters by refusing to accept the king's choice in the succession to the headship of the subclan.<sup>14</sup> However, this source corroborated other sources by accepting that people of Ankpa and not just the royal houses hardly accept in totality decisions emanating from Idah. The source is of the view that it was the built up hatred, and the high handedness of *Attah*, coupled with the belief that he was not struggling for the development of other areas of Igalaland except Idah that led to the ill-feelings, rancour and acrimony between Idah and Ankpa and this eventually metamorphosed into the agitation for self autonomy and the eventual emergence of *Ejeh* title perceived to be a rival throne to that of the *Attah* of Igala.<sup>15</sup> In a rather corroborative statement, Boston stated that Ankpa has tended to regard the seniority of the Idah branch as being spiritual rather than political in character.<sup>16</sup>

## THE COLONIAL ANTECEDENCE

The realization of the long time dream of the royal house came to the fore later in the 1960s. After hard and long struggles to relocate the traditional headquarters of the Igala kingdom from Idah to *Atanegoma* (*Ochaja*) perceived to be centrally located failed following both verbal and written protests from members of the royal house and the Igala elite generally, the Ankpa royal throne did not relent in its struggle for self autonomy. It was stated that the existence and operations of Ankpa as an autonomous territory with a sovereign power came to limelight during the reign of *Adaji Itodo Akpa* (1916-1925).<sup>17</sup> He was said to have wielded an enormous power that covered the present Ankpa, Olamoboro and some parts of the present Omala Local Government Area. His reign was described as great and assumed a dimension similar to that of the *Attah*. He was said to have answered the royal greeting "*Agabaidu*" just like the *Attah* in place of "*Doga*" as it should be and equally enjoyed all the royal privileges as accorded the *Attah* such as blowing of the trumpet (*Okakachi*), flutes (*Okpacina*) and beating of the royal drums and praises.<sup>18</sup>

The action of the *Onuh Ankpa*, *Adaji Itodo Akpa* generated a deep sense of disloyalty and disrespect for the throne of the *Attah* believed to be the father of all. In response to this show of insubordination, the *Attah* *Atabor* *Ijomi* questioned the justification for the action of the *Onuh Ankpa*. According to him, there cannot be two fathers in the kingdom. This generated serious conflict between the two rulers and their followers to a point that the colonial authority became restless. In order to settle the two rival chiefs the colonial authority summoned a meeting of the two traditional rulers at *Atanegoma* perceived to be a neutral ground and perhaps central to the whole of Igalaland.<sup>19</sup> In the *Atanegoma* meeting the need for one single central authority as a sinequanon for effective Native Administration system was discussed.<sup>20</sup> In pursuance of this, it was contemplated that the seat of the *Attah* and the headquarters of Igalaland be moved to the area (*Atanegoma*) for its centrality and as a way of pacifying the aggrieved Ankpa people. But as earlier stated, the reaction and plea of the people made the colonial authority to rescind such decision. This action was not in the best interest of Ankpa delegates to the meeting and the *Onuh Ankpa*, *Adaji Itodo Akpa* described the action of the colonial authority as a betrayal and vowed to continue with the struggle.

Despite the agitations, Ankpa people were forced against their will to joined the Igala Native Authority and be loyal and submissive to the authority of the *Attah* of Igala. This action became necessary because having studied the traditions of the people, the British colonial authority came to terms with the fact that within the Ankpa area were other royal chiefs who were the direct descendants of either *Ayegba* or children of *Ayegba*. Such groups who were branded as *Amomata* (children of the royal house) takes their titles from Idah and remained unequivocally loyal to the *Attah*, as was the case of *Emekutu*, *Enjema*, *Emani*, *Inyelle* and *Ade*.<sup>21</sup> These junior branches of the royal clan where ever they are located in Igalaland not only regarded themselves as independent of the subsidiary provincial clans, but also compete with them politically; this was also obtainable in Ankpa.<sup>22</sup> The lack of support from these very groups and the need to maintain peace and orderliness, coupled with the commitment for a successful Native Administration System led the British Colonial Authority to take the step and action they took by ensuring a single Central Native Administration for the people as a panacea for

peace, good governance and effective colonial taxation regimes. However, the clamour for autonomous native administration for the Ankpa people continued unabated all through the colonial and post colonial periods.

### POST-COLONIAL ANTECEDENCE

The attainment of Nigeria independence in 1960 and the various agitations for power which was characterized by coups and counter coups and the eventual civil war in away provided an opportunity and an enabling ground for the people of Ankpa to actualize their dreams. The military regimes that took over the mantle of leadership in august 1966 after the demise of the first republic and the short lived regime of General Aguiyi Ironsi, headed by General Yakubu Gowon, had on its agenda policies aimed at addressing various grievances and equally to bring government closer to the people. This initiative of the government provided the much needed opportunity to Ankpa people to clamour for a separate and independent Ankpa traditional council out of Igala traditional council headed by the Attah, with the headquarters at Idah.

Thus, the first step towards the realization of this dream came in 1968. From this period the clamour for the creation of a separate administration for Ankpa people reached an alarming stage with series of protests, complaints, and petitions to the Kwara State Military Government. This round of protests was led by the District Head and the Onuh of Ankpa then Alhaji Yakubu Adaji. The protest and clamour for autonomy by the Ankpa people took into consideration the move by the military government to abolish the Native Administration System and the creation of Local Government Councils in its place. The Ankpa people utilized this opportunity to call for the creation of a separate Local Government independent of Idah. This call saw the light of the day when the Military Administration in Kwara State merged the seven Districts representing Ankpa area into a Division called Ankpa Division with the Divisional headquarters at Ankpa.<sup>23</sup>

It could be recalled that the basic problem that metamorphosed into incessant antagonism between Ankpa and Idah was not actually the creation of a Divisional Council or headquarters, but that which had to do with the throne of the *Attah*. Therefore, the granting of a separate Division for Ankpa was just a step toward realizing the age long dream of having a separate and autonomous traditional authority independent of the *Attah of Igala* which became a reality in 1969.<sup>24</sup>

### THE EMERGENCE OF EJEH TRADITIONAL INSTITUTION

The result of the long squabble and acrimony between the *Attah* and the *Onuh Ankpa* perhaps was reduced or laid to rest with the emergence of a traditional institution named “Ejeh” in Ankpa. The creation of Ankpa Division and the upgrading of the stool of *Onuh Ankpa* to a second class status served as a platform or a launching pad from which the dream of a separate traditional council for Ankpa was realized. The name “Ejeh” which literally means Leopard represents power in Igalaland. Among the Igala people, Leopard or Tiger carries names such as “*Ikpali*”, “*Ejeh*”, “*Eko*”, “*Omataina*”, “*Agagu*”<sup>25</sup> etc, the animal is known to be fearless, wild and courageous. This informed the choice of the title “Ejeh”.<sup>26</sup> Another tradition holds that the choice of Ejeh title was informed by the fact that it was the name of the founding ancestors of Igala ruling dynasty Abutu-Ejeh.<sup>27</sup> Whichever way one views it, what appeared important in the choice of the title was perhaps the need to drive in some measure of legitimacy and as a way of justifying their link to the founding ancestor of the Igala ruling dynasty. The first Ejeh was the District head and the *Onuh of Ankpa*, Alhaji Yakubu Adaji.<sup>28</sup> The emergence of Yakubu Adaji coincided with the creation of new Local Government Council in Kwara State in 1968. The creation of Ankpa Local Government Council was a prayer answered because Ankpa people for long had been agitating for autonomy and a separate council from Idah. With the creation of the Local Government Council, Yakubu Adaji the *Ejeh* was made a Second Class Chief and Chairman of the newly created Ankpa Local Government Authority’s Council from 1969-1976.<sup>29</sup>

The new Local Government Reform of 1976 tended to reverse the existing structures and power of traditional rulers in the Local Government. The reform provided the position of elected Councillors who invariably took the position of traditional rulers in the local government. In the Kwara State local government reforms of 1976, it was stated that:

At the moment, the paramount traditional chief in each Division is the chairman of the interim local government authority council set up last November. This arrangement is purely adhoc pending election of councilors into local government councils. The interim councils under the traditional rulers will have to be dissolved as soon as the first phase of current re-organization exercise in completed. When this stage is reached and elected councils replace the interim local government councils, over which they now preside, the chiefs will then become ceremonial heads of elected councils.<sup>30</sup>

This reform in away provided the needed autonomy, but this was shortlived again when agitations and counter agitations trailed the existing structures with the creation of Benue State in 1976. The *Ejeh* who had been

enjoying the canvassed autonomy under the military regimes of Kwara and later Benue State was soon to face another round of discontentment in Benue State.

With the creation of Benue State, the institution of *Ejeh* and indeed the notion of autonomy for Ankpa people which they had enjoyed under Kwara State were soon to face another crisis of legitimacy. As earlier discussed, the Local Government Reforms of 1976 caused Traditional Councils to be established in addition to the Local Government Authority Councils, the Benue State Government in pursuance of this reforms took steps to establish Traditional Council in the state. These steps heralded yet another round of protest and/or agitations from some traditional rulers in Ankpa Local Government including the then *Onuh Ankpa* Usman Odiba.<sup>31</sup>

In a series of petitions to the state government the various Traditional Chiefs in Igala land expressed their desire to either remain as one single Traditional Council or have separate Traditional Councils. In this various petitions, Idah and Dekina peoples and their chiefs unanimously agreed to remain under Igala Traditional Council with headquarters at Idah, while the people of Ankpa and Bassa were agitating for a separate Traditional Council. In reaction to these agitations, the then military governor of Benue State Colonel Abdullahi Shelling approved the establishment of a single Traditional Council for Idah and Dekina, while Ankpa and Bassa were to have separate Traditional Councils.<sup>32</sup> In a letter signed by S.M Onekutu, the Secretary to the State Government, it is stated that:-

I wish to refer to His Excellency the Military Governor's letter...which was addressed to their Highnesses the *Attah of Igala*, the *Ejeh of Ankpa*, the *Onuh of Abocho* and the *Aguma of Bassa Komo*. As you are aware, since the issue of that letter, there have been subsequent consultations with traditional council members, local government chairmen and supervisory councilors from Dekina and Idah, following representations by His Highness the *Attah of Igala* and members of the Igala community...the entire Idah members and the majority of those from Dekina expressed their desire to have one traditional council. In view of their persistent desires the government decided to modify its decision...by merging former Idah and Dekina traditional councils and re-naming the new body "Igala Traditional Councils". Ankpa and Bassa Traditional councils remain as previously approved.<sup>33</sup>

This, of course, was an indication of three separate traditional councils in Igala area. However, the decision of the government was not wholly acceptable to the people. The government decision generated yet other petitions especially from Traditional Chiefs who were council members of Ankpa separate traditional council. In a petition filed in by the *Onuh Ankpa* and *Onuh Ojoku* in response to the government approval of a separate traditional council for Ankpa, these two traditional rulers, with other ungraded traditional chiefs or rulers at the background petitioned the state government over what they termed anomalies. These traditional rulers' petitions were based on historical antecedents and traditions as bases for their argument. In what these traditional rulers termed irregularities in traditional council in Igala land, they were opposed to separate traditional councils for Igalaland. In their statement "we the two chiefs in Ankpa Division the *Onuh of Ankpa* and the *Onuh of Ojoku* strongly object to the creation of separate traditional council for Ankpa, we the two traditional rulers therefore appeal to the government for our merger with one Igala traditional council under the chairmanship of the *Attah*".<sup>34</sup> These chiefs went further to explain why they were against a separate Traditional Council for Ankpa. According to them:

The future and our membership with Ankpa separate Traditional Council will not serve our traditional rites better because *Onuh Ankpa* and *Onuh Ojoku* are sons of Ogwuchekwo who hails from Ayegba-Oma'idoko, we have nowhere to go and perform our traditional rites or to receive our beads other than from the *Attah*. And from time immemorial our fore fathers performed all their traditional obligations at Idah, and for that we see no reason why the *Onuh Ankpa* and the *Onuh Ojoku* should cut off from the *Attah* or from one Igala traditional council.<sup>35</sup>

From all indications, this petition seems like a house divided against itself. Because the two traditional rulers of Ankpa and Ojoku were supposed to be part of the inner members of the Ankpa traditional council, if such important and vital members of the new council decided to opt out of the council, then the council perhaps might not stay or last. However, despite this agitation, the State Government went ahead to inaugurate a separate Ankpa Traditional Council in November 1977 in complete defiance of the view of some members of the council.<sup>36</sup>

This action marked yet another beginning of a serious controversy which degenerated to its highest point with the elevation of the title of *Ejeh* to a first class status during the tenure of Lt. Colonel Fidelis Makah the Military Governor of Benue State in 1990.<sup>37</sup> This elevation gradually generated serious bickering because having made *Ejeh* a first class chief he no longer sees the *Attah* as occupying any special position. Consequently,



the display of arrogance and the power play that was involved led to the proliferation of *Ejeh* institution in Igalaland.

### THE PROLIFERATION OF EJEH INSTITUTION IN IGALALAND

With the death of the first *Ejeh* Alhaki Yakubu Adaji on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1990 and the emergence of his son Colonel Hassan Yakubu, (Rtd), as the *Ejeh* the same year, the traditional rotational principle of succession as agreed upon by the various Districts that constituted the old Ankpa Local Government was jettisoned. The first thing that worked against this rotational principle was the creation of Local Governments in 1991. Olamoboro and Omala were created out of the old Ankpa Local Government thus excising these areas out of the entire arrangement. The contention for the position of *Ejeh* ordinarily should have been a contest between Adaji family and other families that lay claim to the stool of *Onuh Ankpa*. But on the long run, the whole arrangement changed, leaving the occupation of the stool of *Ejeh* as a sole prerogative of the sons and descendants of Yakubu Adaji the first *Ejeh of Ankpa*.<sup>38</sup>

The succession to the stool of *Ejeh of Ankpa* needed no elaborate discussion here since there was no competition or agitation from the other ruling houses of *Onuh Ankpa*. It appears that other members of the *Onuh Ankpa* ruling houses are not too keen or perhaps felt contented with the *Onuh Ankpa* which the belief is traditionally recognized. This may explain why on two consecutive periods the sons of the first *Ejeh* Yakubu Adaji succeeded themselves to the throne of *Ejeh of Ankpa*.<sup>39</sup>

In discussing the proliferation of the title of *Ejeh* in Igalaland, it may be necessary to discuss the background crises that degenerated into the proliferation of the title in other local government areas of Igalaland. The emergence of Hassan Yakubu, a retired Colonel with a military background, known for his fearlessness, doggedness and resilience and above all a man who felt the Igala people were not given the desired traditional political leadership by the *Attah of Igala* portends danger and a challenge to the authority and personality of the *Attah*. The emergence of Hassan Yakubu was greeted with serious ovations, especially from youths, and other disenchanting persons from Ankpa and Dekina Local Government Areas. These groups of persons were indeed ready to give Hassan Yakubu the needed support and encouragement. This action was evident when the Igala people were denied any new Local Government when more States and Local Governments were created in 1991. The new *Ejeh* then Hassan Yakubu was prepared to lead a protest and delegation to Abuja, even though other prominent Igala sons and daughters were not virtually seen to have supported the struggle. The *Ejeh* had the full support of youths and other elders who felt the Igala's were cheated in the scheme of things.<sup>40</sup>

This perhaps, became the first litmus test and an action that tended to project and popularize the person and personality of Hassan the *Ejeh* of Ankpa as a popular figure, who appeared to have won the heart of the majority of the people. Above all, his elevation to a first class status meant a challenge to the authority of the *Attah*. And having in mind the various protests and agitations that culminated in the emergence of *Ejeh*, coupled with the call for a separate traditional council for Ankpa people, and the agitation for the relocation of the headquarters of Igalaland from Idah to *Atanegoma (Ochaja)* believed to be the centre of Igalaland in the early 1930s, the power that be at Idah was not prepared to experience that power struggle as did his predecessors. Therefore, there was the need to curtail the rising power and ambition of the new *Ejeh*, if the traditional seat of power at Idah was to remain the same.

On this premise, what appeared to be a land mine was set. It was just a matter of time for the new *Ejeh* who was viewed as power drunk and over ambitious to step his foot on the landmines. The land mine was stepped upon and consequently its explosion under the regime of Alhaji Abubakar Audu the Governor of Kogi State between 1999 and 2003.

Sources available states that "the offence of the traditional ruler, the *Ejeh* was that he was accused of indiscriminate use of siren without regards to due protocol to Government House.<sup>41</sup> Another source was of the view that "the *Ejeh* failed to accord the Deputy-Governor in person of Ola Akande the desired respect as the second in command in the State when the latter paid official visit to the *Ejeh* in his palace.<sup>42</sup> Yet another source was of the opinion that "the faceoff" between the *Ejeh* and the government was because of what the government viewed as apparent lack of respect for the institution of *Attah*, who, of course, was and still is the Chairman of Kogi State Traditional Council.<sup>43</sup>

On the whole, a closer examination of the various reasons adduced vis-a-vis the ancient opposition to the authority of the *Attah* by the fore fathers of the *Ejeh* perhaps may account for why there was no generational shift in behaviour by the *Ejeh* in relation to the position of the *Attah*. The action of the *Ejeh* may be seen as that of somebody who probably was out to justify the claim that the descendants of Atiyele were not in any way subordinate to the descendants of Ayegba-Oma' Idoko. Following various allegations, the government dethroned Hassan Yakubu as the *Ejeh of Ankpa* in 1993.<sup>44</sup> But what remains unclear and perhaps needs further research is what actually was the bone of contention between the *Ejeh* and the State government that warranted the removal of the *Ejeh* from the throne? Could it be the total disregard of the authority of the *Attah* or that of the State Government? In which ever ways, the pendulum tilted, the aftermath of the action and inaction of the parties

metamorphosed into the emergence and/or duplication of the same title or stool in some Local Government Areas of Igalaland with the same First Class Status.

The proliferation of *Ejeh* in Igalaland was according to government source meant to redress imbalances in the traditional institutions in Igalaland. As earlier indicated in this work, the people of Ankpa had long been an apostle of autonomy or independence. Therefore, the action of the government even though meant to weaken the monopoly of the title by the Ankpa people but in another way it became a sign of fulfillment. The government gazette clearly stated that all the *Ejeh*'s were of first class status and thus made chairmen of their various local government traditional councils.<sup>45</sup> However, this action does not vitiate the centrality of the Igala Traditional Council headed by the *Attah* as all matters that have to do with the culture and traditions of the people are to be discussed before the *Attah* in Council. Suffice to say that the new arrangement gave the various local units some measures of autonomy while preserving the sanctity of the centre headed by the *Attah*. But for how long this arrangement will endure is essentially a function of time.

With the proliferation of the *Ejeh* title in almost all the local governments in Igala land with the exception of Idah where the *Attah* resides and presides over as Chairman and Omala where the *Ojogba* preferred to maintain his ancestral title, all other ones had either their nomenclature changed or a new one given like the case of Dekina Local Government where there is no resident second class titled chief in charge of the area except in Abocho and Egume respectively. This warranted the appointment of Usman Obaje as the first *Ejeh* of Dekina. While the non adoption of the title of *Ejeh* in Omala according to a source is meant to maintain the sanctity of that title.<sup>46</sup>

The proliferation of *Ejeh* title left an impact on the economic and socio-political landscape of Igalaland. In the first place, the title created a new class of rulers who were placed over and above their contemporaries (those who were on the same class of titles before) but were abruptly elevated to first class status because of the new title. This ofcourse qualifies them to receive better salaries, residential or palace buildings and enjoys political patronage at both local and state levels. In addition, they were given official cars (jeep) that befit their new titles, beside other unannounced privileges enjoyed by this class of rulers. Politically, they became important personalities to be consulted on issues that border on both their localities and the state as the constitute members of the state traditional council.

Socio-culturally, holders of the title play key roles in the various cultural traditions (festivals) and also have serious impact on the direction of social activities of the area. They occupy special position and attract special attention on such occasions.<sup>47</sup> This special privilege however, generates envy, hatred and other uncompromising attitudes from members of the other royal clans and some educated elites who felt they are more suitable for the throne. Similarly, the proliferation as earlier stated led to the emergence of new class of rulers whose siblings see themselves in comparison with the other subjects as unequal and therefore, walks with that aura of royalty. This created a sort of class conflict between the *Ejeh*'s siblings, the disgruntled elites and the children of other traditional rulers who have no such opportunity. It also engenders a new class of oppressors, as Igala people were made to contend with loyalty to the new class of rulers and also loyalty to the other traditional rulers who were either of second class or third class status in their various areas. Nevertheless, this new class of rulers (*Ejeh*), are all strategizing and working to see that they are wholly accepted by their subjects and by implication, stamp their relevance in the traditional political history of Igalaland. In order to justify government action, new districts were also created in Igalaland from 2003. The appointment of persons to the post of district heads was equally marred with forceful impositions as appointments into these offices were based on political affiliations and support. Therefore, one of the eligibility for this appointment was one's degree of support for the government that be at that period (2003). This led to the adoption of double standard in the selection and appointment of heads to these districts. While in some the serving traditional chiefs of the area were made the district heads, in others, new persons were forced on them as district heads. This propelled hatred, chaos and insubordination and significantly contributed to heating up the political system.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it could be seen glaringly that the action and reaction and the power play that led to the emergence of the institution of *Ejeh* in the 1960s had ushered dynamism in the entire traditional political institutions in Igalaland, and the emergence of such title and its proliferation in the various Local Government Areas. In Igala land, there is a clear picture of institutional change and continuity as reflected in Igala traditional political institution. It also shows that certain actions which might be portrayed as negative could turn out to generate an action that could be translated into positive human and institutional developments as seen in Igalaland. The agitation for autonomy and the reaction of those who wanted to maintain status quo has, in its own way led to the elevation and development of some group of persons and the birth of a new set of class in Igalaland.

## END NOTES

1. Oral interview, Abuh Sani C.76yrs, farmer, Ankpa, 23/02/2010
2. Oral interview, Abuh Sani C.76yrs, farmer, Ankpa, 23/02/2010
3. Oral interview, Ochuma Edogbanya, 90yrs, Traditional ruler, Okura, 6/2/2010
4. Oral interview, Ochuma Edogbanya, 90yrs, Traditional ruler, Okura, 6/2/2010
5. Oral interview, Abeni Omada 80yrs, trader, Ogbapiala, 6/2/2010.
6. Oral interview, Abeni Omada 80yrs..., 6/2/2010.
7. J. S. Boston, *The Igala Kingdom*, Ibadan:Oxford University Press, 1968. 47
8. *The History of the first Ekeh of Ankpa*; unpublished manuscript. 20
9. *The History of the first Ekeh of Ankpa...* 20.
10. Oral interview, Onuh Abuh 65yrs, farmer, Emekutu, 12/2/2010
11. Oral interview, Usman Akagwu 80yrs, titled Chief, Anyigba, 3/3/2010
12. J. S. Boston, *The Igala Kingdom...* 48
13. Oral interview, Usman Audu 75yrs, farmer, Emekutu. 6/ 3 /2010
14. J. S. Boston, *The Igala Kingdom...* 48
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