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The Politics of State Creation and Yoruba Nationalism in Western Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT - This paper examines how state creation in Nigeria, between 1967 and 1997 has prevented pan-Yoruba nationalism from evolving to a coherent and unified political force in Nigeria. It is argued in the paper that despite the colonial and early Yoruba nationalists' efforts at inventing pan-Yoruba nationalism among the Yoruba sub-ethnic groups in Western Nigeria, the fragmentation of the region in the name of state creation did not allow the effort to yield into sustainable and formidable voice, which one can refer to as pan-Yoruba nationalism. Instead different sub-Yoruba groups, especially between 1967 and 1997, having secured their local autonomies through state creations, pursued their provincial nationalism instead of the regional (pan-Yoruba) nationalism which was the vision of the Yoruba colonial and early political elite in the early 19th and 20th centuries. The paper further argues that between 1967 and 1997 when the whole western Nigeria was broken into six states, the "emerging" Yoruba nation becomes problematic due to the fact that each of the states that were created from the Yoruba region are now pursuing their local interests rather than the regional interests, which they pursued when they were together as Western Region. Thus, the proposition that administrative structure may weaken cohesion becomes a reality as shown in Yoruba nationalism.

Key words: State creation, nationalism, Yoruba, politics, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Whether Yoruba is a nation or not continues to provoke debates among political anthropologists, political scientists as well as among the analysts of Yoruba politics. The contention is that is Yoruba a nation considering socio-political diversities among its sub-groups? The work of Samuel Johnson in 1921, literate Christian Yoruba elite, sparked off this debate¹. Johnson submits that before colonialism, the present day Yoruba society in western Nigeria consisted of different sovereign kingdoms, although with certain homogenous cultural identities in terms of social and cultural ideologies, yet economy and politics differed greatly among these different pre-colonial kingdoms (in form of states) that formed the Yoruba land. The political history of Yoruba society also revealed that following the incidence of colonialism with the annexation of Lagos in 1861, the British colonial masters first initiated a conscious effort at unifying the sovereign Yoruba kingdoms for the purposes of: (i) easy colonial administration of the region; (ii) putting a stop to inter-tribal warfare and rivalries common in Yoruba society, prior its colonialism; and (iii) creating access to free trade. Also, unconsciously, as the British colonial masters put a stop to slave trade and allowed the freed slaves from Western Indies to come back to their African origin especially in Sierra Leone, British Colonial masters then provided opportunities for the Yorubas among the freed slaves to see themselves as sharing some cultural affinities and thus establishing common consciousness and awareness in creating a common aspiration. Hence, the creation of a Yoruba nation in Nigeria can be said to be a craftwork of the British colonial government, which the influence of Christianity sped up². Although the colonial government still had some contrivances against the invention of pan-Yoruba nationalism especially beginning from the 1930s when the government carved out some parts of the pre-colonial Yoruba state such as Ilorin and Offa in the Northern Yoruba region and the Eguns and Fons in the Southern Yoruba coastal territory, from the colonial Yoruba state, yet the British colonial administration encouraged Yoruba Christians and colonial elites to pursue Yoruba nationalist enterprise. And so through literary work and "co-fraternal" political agitation in the colonial era, pan-Yoruba nationalism seemed to evolve. But then to what extent has Yoruba society been sustained as a nation? Are there any common aspirations pursued by Yorubas that qualify it to be called a nation? What are the impacts of state creation and its attendant politics on Yoruba nationalism? These are the critical questions, which this paper examined, under the background that as the centre experiences fragmentation in its administrative structure central cohesion becomes problematic to maintain.

To carve a nation out of western Nigeria saw Oyo, Igbomina, Ekiti, Ondo, Ilaje, Egba, Awori, Ife, Ijesha and other Yoruba sub-cultural groups coming together as Western Region of Nigeria as from the 1900s. The colonial unification of different

cultural and sub-cultural groups as evidenced in the western Nigeria was not only limited to the region, but also extended to both Northern and Eastern Nigeria. In colonial northern Nigeria, which later became the Northern Region, cultural groups like Hausa, Fulani, Tiv, Idoma, Junkun, Kanuri, Gwari, Adamawa and Beribe to mention a few were unified to form regional nationalism; while in the east, Ibo, Ibibio, Kalabari, Ibirom, Ogoni, and Yakur among others were also "enmeshed" to form the Eastern region. Through this, British colonial administration evolved only three political regions in its effort to evolve a single nationhood from each of the three regions. Thus, in the East, the Ibo dominated as Hausa/Fulani dominated the North and Yoruba-Oyo cultural identity was superimposed in the Western Region (Some Yoruba sub-groups such as Ife, Ijesa, and Ekiti may not agree that Oyo cultural identity was/is superimposed on them. This is still one of the controversies on pan-Yoruba nationalism). This colonial idea and practice was maintained till Nigeria got independence in 1960. Up till 1963, the country still maintained only three dominant regions with the cultural identity of each of the dominating cultural groups in each of the regions predominantly express as a common regional aspiration. By 1964, following the dissenting views of the minority groups in the Western region; Mid-western region was created in recognition of the voices of the Itsekri, Edo, Urhobo, and Ijaw in the Niger-Delta area of Nigeria. Of particular note is that up till 1967, each socio-political region pursued regional nationalism and unity despite the socio-cultural differences found in each of these regions.

The experience in Yoruba society between 1967 to date (2006), following the creation of many states (Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Osun, and Ekiti) from the old Western region, leaves one in doubt as to if pan-Yoruba (regional) nationalism in political and economic contexts still exist. As maintained above, there is a contention on the formation of Yoruba nationalism especially between Peel³ and Doortmont⁴. While Peel links the colonial formation of Yoruba nationalism only to the influence of Christian missionaries, Doortmont is of the opinion that Christian missionaries were only fragments of many conscious actors that made Yoruba nationalism possible. Other actors included the large communities of liberated slaves in Brazil and Sierra Leone; the need to end the incessant intra-tribal wars among the Yoruba Kingdoms and the missionary and colonial presence in Yoruba kingdoms, setting boundaries within which all the actors were allowed to play their respective roles⁵ in the formation of Yoruba nationalism. The arguments here compliment each other and serve as an extension of knowledge about the formation of Yoruba nationalism from Peel's cultural works⁶ to Dortmont's socio-political works⁷. Hence, Yoruba nationalism was maintained between 1900 and 1960 purely as political and social unification of former Yoruba kingdoms of Oyo, Egba, Ife, Ijesa, Igbomina, Ekiti, Ondo and many others, and not as cultural unification in

terms of creating a unified cultural code, customs and cultural aspirations among the Yoruba sub-groups. This was manifested, as Yorubas were then preoccupied with asserting their political and social superiority against other ethnic groups especially the Hausa/Fulani and Ibos in colonial Nigeria rather than building a strong internal cohesion among its diverse sub-groups. Even the literary expressions as reflected in music (juju) and theatre (travelling theatre) were characterised by distinctive cultural boundaries in Yoruba region. As argued in the paper, Oyo culture (in terms of Yoruba language and politics, other aspects of culture are distinctively maintained among the groups), which was super-imposed as the expression of Yoruba cultural nationalism was only expressed as the Yoruba identity to maintain its socio-political space in Nigeria. In other words, that identity was used to sustain the Yoruba people as a political entity among other ethnic groups in the colonial Nigeria.

As state creation generally aims at ethnic fragmentation in federalism, promoting ethnic consciousness and creating respect for cultural diversities, it suggests that state creation in federalism intends to foster tribal loyalty but diffusing ethnicity, if regional autonomy is guaranteed. Much has been said on state creation in Nigeria, but from political and economic perspectives. Politically, state creation in Nigeria between 1967 and 1997 was seen as divide and survival strategies used by military governments in Nigeria⁸. The military governments often resulted to state creation when there were needs to break regional discontents against their governments' legitimacy and stability. That explains why military governments had always found it easy to create states in Nigeria. Many other scholars on state creation in Nigeria maintained that state creation has economic implications. To them, the call for state is driven by the needs from local groups to have access to oil revenues as monthly allocations to states from federal government in Nigeria⁹. Some other studies focussed on the effects of state creation on citizenship and ethnicity in Nigeria¹⁰. They maintained that state creation in Nigeria aggravates ethnicity and impinges on Nigerian citizenship, as there are more attachments to the states of origin instead of national attachment. This is made possible because states lack regional autonomy in Nigerian federalism. The above shows that very little attention is committed to how state creation has undermined cultural (regional) nationalism in Nigeria, especially with particular reference to pan-Yoruba nationalism in western Nigeria.

Cultural nationalism is in itself a feeling by a group of people, sharing the same cultural forms in terms of social norms, political goals, cultural heritage and common aspirations, that they have a right to self-determination. It is apparent that it revolves around the development of emotional attachment to one's ethnic group. It has to do with individual's conviction of "what is my cultural heritage?" In this context, emotional affiliation to a particular cultural group is not simply a concern

for self-determination, but also, it is the sum of how individual feels about one's culture. While cultural feelings and perceptions of a group as distinct from others is ethnic consciousness, emotional affiliation to that feeling, which involves promoting, defending and exerting such feelings on others, is what is known as cultural nationalism. It is an expression of cultural determination, aspiration and self-determination.

On Yoruba nationalism, discussions have ignored the implications of state creation on the dynamics of Yoruba nationalism. Attentions are usually focussed on the implications of religions on Yoruba nationalism as evident in the work of Peel, and Barber^{1 1}, and the prebendal politics^{1 2} and Yoruba ethnic militia on the reinvention of Yoruba nationalism^{1 3}. The gaps therefore exist on the link between state creation and the dynamics of Yoruba nationalism in western Nigeria, since most researches on contemporary Yoruba nationalism are based on detailed and individually conceived case studies, which present problems for comparative approaches and generalisation of findings. This particular paper as a product of ethnographic study in Yoruba land on the dynamics of Yoruba nationalism, critically examines several of the arguments put forward on state creation in Nigeria and establishes their implications on Yoruba nationalism beyond the very important-context of local history.

This paper is a part of the report of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Yoruba society in western Nigeria between 2003 and 2006, under the broad title of Yoruba cultural nationalism in the 21st century. Qualitative methods and data were used in the research. The primary methods of data collection included key informant interview using semi-structured interviews triangulated with in-depth interviews, which employed open-ended questionnaires. The fieldwork was conducted in Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, and Ogun states, where two communities (urban and rural) were purposively selected from each of the selected states. In-depth interviews were conducted only in Ekiti and Oyo states, while the use of key-informants interviews was restricted to only Osun and Ogun states. Some of our key informants were also located in Ondo and Lagos states. Thus, the study covered all the states in Yoruba land with the exception of Kwara and Kogi states. Reasons for non-inclusion of Kwara and Kogi states are obvious. Although Kwara and Kogi have Yoruba people as dominant population (62% and 48% Yorubas are in Kwara and Kogi respectively)^{1 4}, yet these two areas at the lower Niger belt in Nigeria have being regarded as part of the Nigerian Northern Region since 1954. And their nationalism often reflects more of the Hausa/Fulani being the dominating ethnic group in the north.

The selection of Oyo (Ibadan and Oyo towns), Ekiti (Ado-Ekiti and Ikere Ekiti) states for in-depth interviews was motivated by two reasons. Ibadan, since its foundation was regarded as the heartbeat of Yoruba politics, following its

ascendancy of political superiority from old Oyo Empire in 1830s¹⁵. During the colonial era, it became the administrative headquarters of the old Western region. Besides, Ibadan is a creation of many Yoruba sub-ethnic groups such as Ijesa, Oyo, Ife, Egba, Owu, Ijebu, Igbomina and Ekiti to mention a few. Hence, a proper ethnographic study of Ibadan reflects a micro-study of Yorubas in western Nigeria. As for the selection of Oyo town, it is regarded as the culture area of modern Yoruba nationalism since its cultural identity and ideologies were made as the dominant Yoruba culture since the late 19th century¹⁶. Similarly, on Yoruba nationalism, focus on Oyo Township provides both material and ideological evidences on the hegemonization of Oyo culture in Yoruba land as well as the dynamics of its cultural nationalism in the 21st century. The selection of Ekiti for depth interview was also motivated by the fact that Ekiti state provides a clear case-study of Yoruba discontents against regional nationalism in favour of provincial nationalism, as shown in its demand for state creation between 1983 and 1997. Thus, for clear understanding of the link between state creation and Yoruba nationalism, Ekiti state provides rich and latest evidences.

The creation of Ogun state 1976 and Osun state in 1991 and their subsequent implications on Yoruba nationalism, also provides opportunity to understand the diminishing status of the earlier Yoruba nationalism in terms of spatial coverage and hegemonisation of Oyo culture, and that makes their inclusion in the study desirable. The study's reliance on key-informant and in-depth interviews as methods of data collection was due to time and funding constraints. But these methods proved effective due to the complementary data sourced from archives and media documents.

Respondents were chosen from Oyo and Ibadan in Oyo State; Ilobu and Osogbo in Osun state; Abeokuta and Ikenne in Ogun State; and in Ondo town and Efon-alaye (Ondo State) and some areas of Lagos state where some key informants were also located as a result of their prominence in Yoruba socio-political discourse. In total, 591 respondents were interviewed through key-informants (114 respondents), and in-depth interviews (377 respondents), cutting across diverse social and economic status such as education, sex, religion, sub-ethnic groups, age, income and marital status.

YORUBA NATIONALISM IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Cultural nationalism is a feeling by a group of people sharing the same cultural forms in terms of social norms, political aspirations and goals, cultural heritage and common feelings that they are distinct from other groups. This feeling is an aspect of cultural awareness in every human being, and thus, the Yorubas are not in exception. To Yorubas it is emotional attachment to Yoruba values, heritages and their common aspirations, which has to do with their convictions that such

values, aspirations and heritages must be protected and expressed¹⁷. This awareness is of late invention through the colonial contact with the Yorubas, as the Europeans had the idea of forging a nation on language boundaries. It is also argued that Christianization of Yoruba land in the early 19th century created the Christian elites who became church officials such as clergies¹⁸, and these crops of elites invented the spirit of Yoruba nationalism, as they were aware of sharing similar aspirations and values as new converts. Hence, their conscious attempts to defend their interests acted as forces (Christians) to reckon with by their counterpart European missionaries. Similarly, as part of the thesis for the invention of Yoruba nationalism, the freed slaves from Brazil and Sierra Leone also acted as major actors in the invention of nationalism for the Yorubas. The recognition by these freed slaves that they were from the same region awoke in them the consciousness of similar cultural traits expressed as collective defence of their rights as freed slaves, must have been the utmost drives to invent the spirit of commonness, and their expression of Yorubanness. Since they all felt like going back to their home base in Yoruba land, there was a constant need for the expression of their common feelings for their nostalgic experiences in Brazil and Sierra Leone. By early 19th century it had become apparent that for Europeans to successfully govern the Yoruba land there was the need to stop the inter-tribal warfare prevalent among the people then, so the British colonialist, with the notion of inventing a nation based on language boundaries had to work towards unifying all the sub-Yoruba groups in the lower Niger belt of the present day Nigeria. For the invention of Yoruba nationalism in the early 19th century, the above-mentioned multiplicity of factors, most of which lacked the express intentions of the local people to unify as a nation acted together. At one level it was the intention of the newly created Yoruba elites who as Christians, freed slaves (elite in their own right as they had contact with outside World) and the few educated Yorubas in Lagos and Abeokuta as at then, established themselves as a group of people with similar cultural identities and aspirations. Hence the invention of Yoruba nationalism cannot be said to be intentional among the Yorubas. That explains why contentions still exist on Yoruba nationalism. The contention however is situated on theoretical domain of cultural nationalism as expressed by Hobsbawn¹⁹ who proposes that for any culture to be invented into group culture and becoming cultural nationalism, there must be clear expression by the groups of their intention to do so. Of course the nationalism in the case of the Yorubas is not self-evidently expressed as argued by Hobsbawn.

Before the colonial occupation of the Yoruba land it was evident that different sub-ethnic groups legitimised their different cultural identities and traditions in their different local domains²⁰. Oyo was seen as Oyo with its vast political kingdom, while Ife, Ijesha, Ekiti, Igbomina, Ijebu, Egba, Remo, Awori, Ondo and Ilaje were also seen as distinct socio-cultural groups different from one another.

Although there are certain ideological cultural practices, which seemed and still seem to be homogenous among all of them, yet each of the groups still maintains distinct ecological and cultural boundaries clearly differentiated from one another. An example of such homogenous ideological cultural practices as shown in Yoruba belief system includes the belief in polytheism, yet there still exist distinct attachments to different deities across different sub-Yoruba groups. In Ijebu, *Orisa agemo* is highly propitiated while in Oyo the belief is more in favour of *Sango* and Ondo believes more in *Ogun*. Apart from this, marriage system also seems homogenous, but still with local variations such as in rule of descents that vary from matrilineal to patrilineal, and local endogamy among the *Ogbagi* people in Akoko group of Yorubas in the present Ondo state, where cross-cousin marriage is allowed as against the strict exogamous marriage practiced among many other Yorubas. One other common diverse culture commonly expressed differently among the Yoruba sub-groups is different local foods. While Ondo can eat dog, Ekiti are more favourable with pounded yam, and Ijebus are more at home with *Ikokore* and *Ebiripo*, which are exclusive diets among the Ijebus and Remos in the present day Ogun state. Undoubtedly, all these cultural differences are capable of making provincialism stronger than regionalism, which the early nationalism intended to promote. Thus, it is believed that prior the colonialism there was no evidence of mutual relationships among the Yorubas in such a way to have invented the ideas of Yorubanness, even as at 2006 it is not probable that such has been successfully invented as many of the sub-groups still show disaffections against each others. They refer to one another with derogatory terms such as Oyo and Igbomina who usually call Ijesa as *Osomaalo* (shylock), while Ijesa in turn refers to Oyo as *Oyo elete* (tricksters) and Ibadan is usually referred to as *Ibadan ole* (lazy people).²¹ Despite the close proximity to one another, in terms of socio-economic and political relationships, many of the sub-groups do still nurse malice against one another. That also explains why there are still incessant inter-communal clashes usually on access to land resources. The ageing Modakeke/Ife crises have such historical connection, in that Modakekes are Oyo variations as against the Ifes. Similarly Ijesa and Ekiti have ensued in such clashes in the past. Hence inter marriages among some Yoruba sub-groups was and is not common in Yoruba land. Ijesa would hardly marry Ijebu, while Ijebu would hardly venture into marrying Ekiti. Similarly, Oyos believe that both Ijebu and Ijesa symbolise bad and worst people respectively. Thus a town in Ijesa land calls Ijebu-jesa, in the mind of Oyo assumes a bad derivation. The Oyo people see anybody claiming Ijebu-jesa origin as a combination of "bad and worst", simply because: *Ijesa o da, Ijebu o sunwon, iwo lo tijebu jesa wa. Tani ko mo pewo gan laida ati aisunwon*²². This is translated to mean that we said that Ijebu is bad and Ijesa is worst, then you said that you are from Ijebu-jesa, who does not know that you symbolise both bad and worst.

The above were parts of the Yoruba perceptions of one another before colonialism, and many of these perceptions are still presently held despite the attempt to invent a unified Yoruba nationalism in western Nigeria. It is amazing that a key informant, who is an Ekiti man with a PhD degree in Educational Management, confirmed that in, 1992 he refused his daughter to marry her fiancée who was said to be an Ijebu man on cultural differences, yet both Ijebu and Ekiti are Yoruba sub-groups. Such cases are still common among some Yoruba sub-groups. Another informant who is an Oyo man resident in Ibadan detested living in the same house with Ijesas because they are *alagidi* (stubborn)^{2 3}.

These misperceptions and cultural discontents among the Yoruba sub-groups might have evolved due to their experience of intra-tribal warfare and inhuman raiding, which was prevalent in the precolonial Yoruba society, thus creating acrimonies among the groups despite their mythological attachment to the same progenitor (Oduduwa). The collapse of theocracy in the earliest century in pre-literate Ife state^{2 4} is likened to the fall of Babel in which the disintegration of the premogenous society was made possible, and each of the groups trying to defend its legitimacy and cultural hegemony in the space where they found themselves^{2 5}. And so, there was no expression of intention to invent pan-Yoruba nationalism in the pre-colonial Yoruba land. Even at the earliest beginning of colonialism, when Yoruba Oyo was introduced as modern Yoruba orthography used in formal education, its usage was still restricted to communications and writing in schools. Each of the dialects in Yoruba land is still dominant in their different ecological zones. Nonetheless, as there were inter Yoruba state trade activities in the pre-colonial Yoruba states, there seemed to be some degree of historical unity among the people, which continued to strengthen their attachment to Oduduwa myth. Yet, such trade relationship failed to result to what could be termed as pan-Yoruba cultural nationalism. It can therefore be argued that attempts to end all the above mentioned contrivances among the different sub-Yoruba groups prompted the invention of Yoruba nationalism in the late 19th Century. In addition, early Yoruba Christian missionary with the help of formal education helped in setting the stage for the evolution of the colonial Yoruba nationalism.

The colonial stability in Yoruba land, following the stoppage of Ibadan warriors in their incessant intra-tribal warfare^{2 6}, brought a new dimension into Yoruba nationalism in its invention and expression. At this time (early 19th century), Yoruba land as in most other parts of west Africa had started to witness the creation of elites acting as culture brokers between the Europeans (mostly the British) and the indigenous people especially in the hinterland. Initially, as African intellectuals, acting as missionary assistants and clergies, and later as both colonial administrative assistants as well as indigenous political elites, in the cases of Macaulay and Awolowo much later in the early 20th century. These people together with other

actors on pan-Yoruba nationalism invented the spirit of nationalism in their attempts to establish a common ground through which they could appeal to the generality of the Yorubas within the context of their diverse cultural traditions and consciousness as distinct sub-cultural groups.

By 1890, Yoruba nationalism had started to blossom, especially in Lagos and Abeokuta where many of these elites such as Lijadu, E.M; George, J.O; Charles Phillips; James Johnson; and E.T Johnson are prominently found and as maintained by Barber, "above all Samuel Johnson". Their perception of Yoruba nationalism was to create "from a vast dynamic and heterogeneous indigenous groups, a set of values, exemplary texts, cultural monuments and touchstones, that could stand in opposition to the European culture"²⁷, which these elites had assimilated. At this time, expression of Yoruba nationalism was based on literary production featuring writing of Yoruba origin and history as reflected in the works of Lijadu (1897, and 1908), James Johnson (1899) and Samuel Johnson (1921)²⁸. Samuel Ajayi Crowther's translation of English Bible to Yoruba, using Oyo Yoruba dialect as the modern Yoruba orthography, legitimised the expression of Oyo sub-Yoruba culture as cultural codes for pan-Yoruba nationalism. Thus, the Oyo dialect and worldview became the Yoruba cultural codes against other sub-cultures in Yoruba land. At that time, Yoruba nationalism was invented to galvanise the different Yoruba sub-groups into recognising that they are indivisible lots and to foster the myth of origin that all Yoruba groups evolved from the same descent traced to Oduduwa, which all accepted as their common progenitor.

It should be noted that the perspective of Yoruba nationalism at the pre-colonial and colonial era was based on defining a group against others in terms of power. To Yoruba people at pre-colonial, the dominant states (mostly Oyo and Ibadan as in the early 19th century) defined itself by exerting power on the less dominant states. At the colonial period, it was power definition against the outsiders who were the colonial masters and other ethnic groups in Nigeria then, principally the Hausa/Fulani of Northern Nigeria and the Igbo of Southern Nigeria²⁹. Throughout these periods the idea of nationalism was still constructed on cultural pride using persuasive and less-violent means through education and politics. The trend continues into the transitional period, which evident the emergence of new groups.

The transitional period represents the mainstream of Yoruba cultural consciousness, which is partly ideological. This time, the definition of nationalism is economic and political. It is not on the sense of otherness, but on resources, and access to have control of resources, which the Yoruba people are supposedly entitled. Thus, the historical consciousness about Oduduwa, and the historical Yoruba identity are redirected to the desire to protect the resources, correcting the sense of injustice, fighting the strict sense of social alienation and political

marginalisation within the statehood of Nigeria³⁰. From the desire to control what the Yoruba are supposedly entitled, cultural nationalism changed from the previous colonial perspective defined in cultural terms to purely changing and restructuring the political and economic structure of an emerging state (Nigeria). The idea of nationalism refocused from literary production to self-determination, and to the actualisation of sense of control within Nigeria. The concept of emerging state was construed in two senses. Firstly, the newly independent Nigeria, and of course, the possibility of evolving a sovereign Yoruba nation should the newly independent Nigeria failed. Thus, the interest was vested on controlling huge resources and committing such to building the contemplated Yoruba nation, and competition with other ethnic groups in Nigeria, for the sharing and control of national resources in Nigeria.

The exit of the colonial masters, beginning from the late 1950s, marked a change of order in Yoruba nationalism. Between this time and early 1960s, the historical consciousness drawn from Oduduwa legacy had started to fade, as the pre-independence Yoruba political nationalists were engaged in different political disagreements. Examples can be mentioned of political rivalries between Ooni of Ife and Alaafin of Oyo, and between Awolowo and Akintola, which broke the Yorubas into two political rivals of Awolowo/Ooni and Akintola/Alaafin camps. Even though the emerging Yoruba nationalists capitalised on Oduduwa myth to establish nationalist movement such as Egbe Omo Oduduwa in 1940s, which was later changed to a political party – Action Group in 1949³¹, yet by the late 50s and 60s it had become difficult to use the same myth to foster a unified coherent voice projecting pan-Yoruba nationalism. This cultural attachment later in the late 60s, as it was used in the late 50s constructed platforms for the transitional cultural nationalism despite its weak structure. The nationalists like Awolowo used the platforms to introduce new phases of development in the Yoruba region. Such developmental phases were not witnessed in other ethnic regions in Nigeria. The introductions of free education in 1955, the first Television Station in Africa, and the first University in Nigeria, were all executed in Yoruba region, relying on pan-Yoruba nationalism to get them done. These served as cultural prides, which made and still make the Yoruba people to feel that they are superior to others, and that if they are left alone to control their resources, they could manage the resources better. They feel that they should be in the position to define their own mission and their own future.

Unlike the other periods, the use of conflicts and militarism was dominant in transitional nationalism among the Yoruba. Firstly, the political riot of 1964–65, tagged *wild wild West*, was targeted against the imposition of Hausa/Fulani political agenda on the Yoruba people. Following this was the *Agbekoya* crisis of 1970s, where the slashing of cocoa price by the Federal Government of Nigeria was

resented with violence. Cocoa was regarded as Yoruba resource as groundnut and palm oil were to the Hausa/Fulani and Igbo respectively. "Yoruba could not understand why the purchasing price of cocoa should be slashed without being extended to groundnut and palm oil"³². The Yoruba explanation of the situation was that since the funding for developmental projects in the Western (Yoruba) Region accrued from the proceeds on cocoa, the slashing down of cocoa price was an intention by the Federal Government of Nigeria to cripple the development of Yoruba nation, thus, a militaristic resistance in form of nationalism was involved. The brutal and wicked manner, with which the Federal military government dealt with the Yoruba nationalists, then, seemed to have changed the violent nationalism to internal consolidation of Yoruba nationalism in the 1980s and 1990s. This period also marked the era of military governments, whose various leaders were Hausa/Fulani extractions. Thus, the Yoruba people then always contrived socio-political marginalisation, which they often blamed on centralisation of power characterising the military governments then³³.

The centralisation project of the State-consolidation in Nigeria under the Military regimes between 1967 and 1999 subjected the Yoruba people to cultural devaluation, political repression, and economic deprivation in Nigerian political community³⁴. Although Yoruba people both collectively and individually still participated in all the military governments between 1967 and 1979, yet the people generally perceived their marginalisation in Nigeria, such that was explained in terms of Yoruba having poor access to political power and economic resources, which the people believed that has dwindled their social prestige in Nigeria. Majority of our respondents (80.4%) believed that Yoruba people do not have access to political power in Nigeria, while only 70.7 % believed that Yoruba people do not also have access to economic resources in Nigeria. Even when the Yoruba people produced the president for the country as it were the cases between 1976 and 1979; August 1993-November 1993 and between 1999 and 2006 (when this paper was produced), the Yoruba people still believed that the Yoruba was not in control of both the political and economic resources in Nigeria. They believed that by virtue of the Hausa-Fulani people who had ruled Nigeria for a longer time, the Hausa-Fulani had created strong institutions of perpetually controlling both the politics and economy of Nigeria. The periods in which the "Yoruba has presented the leaders for Nigeria are too small to balance the gap"³⁵. Furthermore, their belief is that in a global, moral and intellectual milieu, which has become very sensitive to abuse of group and individual rights and other excesses of centralised states, such dispositions need to provoke both domestic and national strictures. Principally, in culturally fragmented community like Nigeria, group identity exerts a powerful and autonomous emotional, psychological, symbolic or consumatory actions. By so doing ethnic affiliations naturally tend to acquire greater salience

and attraction since Yoruba people find it increasingly prudent to mobilise against historic and contemporary inequities and injustices in the socio-political processes of heterogeneous state of Nigeria.

Cultural nationalism among the Yoruba in the 90s operated on the above channel and thus, led to the escalation of self-determination struggles in Nigeria, with the Yoruba being more vocal and forceful. The situation became unpleasant to many centrist military governments in the country. The military governments between 1967 and 1997 embarked on many strategies to break the Yoruba regional agitation, which on many occasions threatened the federal government legitimacy. The most effective tool which military governments found favourable was state creation exercise. Through state creation, they were able to contain self-determination pursuit of the Yoruba nationalism, as presented below.

POLITICS OF STATE CREATION IN WESTERN NIGERIA

No sooner than Nigeria got independence, than the country entered into the problem of national integration and unity among different ethnic groups that formed the federation of Nigeria. In this quest there were (are) agitations from different ethnic groups for local autonomy and in many occasions group self-determination and self government as evidenced in 1967, when the aborted Biafran Republic was declared from Eastern (region) Nigeria, in 1990 when the Ogoni Bill of rights in the Niger-delta area was published and in 1995, when the Western region aimed at establishing O'odua Republic³⁶. Such were the experiences over the years since Nigerian independence in 1960. These experiences underscore the fact that regional consciousness in form of nationalism is very strive among the constituting elements making up the federation of Nigeria. Thus, explaining their lopping together in the ways they were/are as an error.

To resolve the incessant rippling of violent cultural nationalism emanating from different ethnic groups in Nigeria, successive military governments that ruled Nigeria between 1966 and 1979 and 1983 and 1999 resulted into fragmentation of popular discontents against the state forces of centripetalism, using sub-local boundaries in the exercise of state and local government's creations. The first experience was in 1964 when the Niger-delta area was excised from the old Western region, and carved into Mid-western region. Although this was done under the first post-independence civilian government, yet it shared a similar objective of containing Yoruba nationalism by reducing the political influence, which the Yorubas had on the minority groups in the Niger-delta area³⁷. The creation of Mid-western region reduced the political alliance, which the old Western region (invariably the Yorubas) hitherto enjoyed from Edo, Itsekri, Ijaw and Urhobo, who dominated the then newly created Mid-western region. It should be recalled as the Yoruba people continue to claim that it was Yoruba affinity traceable to the

founder of Edo Kingdom, who was said to have migrated from Ile-Ife, the Yoruba sanctuary, which the foremost Yoruba nationalist of the 20th century – Awolowo employed to establish his political influence in the Niger-delta in 1960s^{3 8}. The established spirits of commonness as often being the case in the expression of cultural nationalism seems to be an intoxicating bound used in both political and economic aspirations. Thus, realising this element of cultural nationalism, Awolowo for example used the Yoruba affinity with the minority groups in Niger-delta to extend his political frontiers.

As was the experience in 1964, following the declaration of Biafran Republic in 1967, Gowon's government responded by fragmentation of the existing four regions in Nigeria to twelve states. In the western region, Oyo and Lagos states evolved. Lagos state covering the crown colony as was its status during the colonial period and still dominated by the Yoruba population mainly the Aworis being the original indigenes, and Ijebus, Egbas, Igbominas, Oyo, Ijesas and many other Yoruba sub-groups who had since migrated to many parts of the newly created Lagos. Some of them, before colonialism, while many others at the earliest period of colonialism, principally to be accessible to coastal trade^{3 9}. Oyo state until 1976 when more states were created in Nigeria covered the remaining sub-Yoruba groups consisting of Igbomina, Oyo, Ijesa Ijebu, Remo, Ekiti, Ondo, Ikale, Ilaje, and Oke-ogun. Each of them, still expressing their local identities in their different local domains, and expressing their Yorubanness using Oyo cultural codes both socially and politically through: (i) the use of Oyo Yoruba dialect as pan-Yoruba language, and (ii) the introduction of Oyo palace administrative system featuring the positions of Iyalode and Akogun/Balogun in many Yoruba towns as from 1930s. And more importantly, Ibadan is still regarded as the centre of Yoruba political nationalism as the city had being the centre of Oyo culture since the collapse of Oyo Empire. And it continues to accommodate edifices of Yoruba commonness, such as Cocoa house, which was built in Ibadan to express the Yoruba economic nationalism drawn from the cultivation of cocoa between early 1950s and 1980s, when the plantation of cocoa flourished in Yoruba land. It should be noted that despite the fact that it was Ondo and Igbomina people that were prominent in cocoa plantation then, since they all agreed to one descent, one aspiration, and one vision and goal, the Ondos and Igbominas did not express any discontent against such projects in Ibadan^{4 0}. That is, a common allegiance to Oyo as the expression of Yoruba nationalism. Cocoa house is one of the examples of such nationalistic edifice in Ibadan. Other examples included Mapo hall earlier constructed through direct labour supplied by different Yoruba sub-groups between 1920 and 1925^{4 1}, confirming that Oyo social and political legitimacy is accepted by the entire Yoruba and given credence to pan-Yoruba political nationalism. That incidence perhaps established the Yoruba joint investment on the expression of

their nationalism in Ibadan. Also, Premier hotel, the headquarters of *Agbonmogbe* (later changed to National bank) and Cooperative bank were cited in Ibadan. All these projects are joint investments of all the Yorubas in Western Region, expressing the acceptance of Ibadan (invariably Oyo culture) as their regional headquarters for the expression of pan-Yoruba (cultural) nationalism. Similarly many important political meetings where Yoruba common political decisions were (are) made, were (are) usually held in Ibadan, and it can also be added that many violent expressions of Yoruba discontents on national issues also have their origins from Ibadan. Typical examples included the popular *wild-wild west*⁴² saga of 1964, which erupted from Ibadan and led to the collapse of the First Republic in Nigeria, the *Agbekoya* crisis of 1971⁴³, and the 1983 turbulent political crisis, also started in Ibadan, and in particular, 1983 crisis got an end to the Second Republic in Nigeria⁴⁴. All these explain Ibadan position in the expression of pan-Yoruba nationalism beginning from 1950s as against Abeokuta and Lagos, which were the earlier foci of Yoruba nationalism. It is doubtful, if various military governments in Nigeria would accommodate all these activities. In consequence, state creation was used to break the Yoruba conscious of their oneness, with which they continue to torment federal military governments.

In 1976 and 1991, further break-ups were experienced in Oyo state due to more state creations from the state. The 1976 state creation saw Ogun and Ondo states excised from Oyo state. Ogun state mainly comprised of Egbas, Ijebus, Remos, and the Egbados (Egba watersides), while Ondo comprised of the Ondos, Ekitis, Ilajes, Ikales, Owos and Akokos. In 1991, Osun state dominated by Igbominas, Ifes, and Ijesas was also created from what was left of Oyo state; and in 1997 Ekiti state was created from Ondo state. Apparently as these states were created on local cultural boundaries, there was decentralization of Yoruba nationalism, and the regional nationalism now gives sway for provincial nationalism. At present the Ekiti people as pointed out in the subsequent discussions in this paper, see themselves first as Ekiti and rarely as any other Yoruba; while the Yorubas in Osun and Ogun states also see themselves more within the context of their local identities distinguished by their state (local) boundaries.

It should also be noted that agitation for state creations were often engineered from the Yoruba sub-groups themselves on the acquisition of their marginalisation by Oyo in its pursuit of pan-Yoruba nationalism⁴⁵, and in addition, the need for the local people to be accessible to national resources. Hence, there is often an expression of strictures on their commonness under Yorubanness. It is equally clear that they all claim to be Yoruba as their newly invented ethnic identity in Nigeria⁴⁶, but only expressed as a common political sphere till 1960s. Whereas as from 1960s other Yoruba sub-groups have started to resent the imposition of Oyo cultural codes, such as Oyo dialect and Oyo political legitimacy, as an

expression of their commonness as Yorubas, on the ground of their distinct identities. It is this crack in pan-Yoruba nationalism, which the military governments in Nigeria understood and employed to further break them apart through incessant creation of states.

From regional nationalism to provincial nationalism: Evidence from Ekiti state.

Topmost on the agenda of pan-Yoruba nationalism since 1983 were the agitations against their political marginalisation in Nigeria by the Hausa/Fulani in the north who has dominated the Nigerian political power since independence. And at this time it has been apparently difficult for the Yorubas to have access to political power at the national level of Nigerian government, since military ruler held on to power, and there were no Yoruba top military officers in the army who could head military coup. To hear their views, pro-democracy organisations in western Nigeria, and many eminent Yoruba elite employed media organisations to express the Yoruba discontents against various military governments' contrivances against the Yorubas. They created apprehensions for military governments as the expressions of these discontents sometimes resulted into political conflagration in the region. Successful military governments interpreted the political situations in the country and so between 1983 and 1999 they involved divide and rule tactics in form of state creations to suppress this dangerous nationalism. There were two goals, which the military governments achieved in state creations. Firstly, it was successfully used to divide oppositions. Secondly, it was used to attract new ranks of supports for military governments. However, state creation also benefits the local people, in the sense that it provides opportunity for the emergence of local political elites who rely on their state governments for their economic survivals, and so the generality of citizens in the newly created states also see state creation as their own shares from national resources. So, the sub-groups who have chances of lobbying the national government for state do that at the expense of their regional aspirations and nationalism, and without minding the intentions of military governments in creating states. The creation of Osun and Ekiti states in 1991 and 1997 respectively under two different military governments is a clear illustration of trading for provincial nationalism against regional nationalism through the politics of state creation in Nigeria.

The proposal submitted for the establishment of Osun state in 1991 read that Oyo state had marginalized the Osun people, and that there are more cultural affinities among the Ijesas, Igbominas and Ifes that constitute Osun state than the affinity shared with Oyo sub-group dominating Oyo state⁴⁷. This argument of course negates the thesis, which traced the origin of all Yorubas to Ile-Ife, the thesis that was part of the invention of early Yoruba nationalism. But, for the fulfilment

of state creation, the Osun people pushed the argument before Babangida military government who was then perfecting strategies for the elongation of his regimes amidst several agitations from the western region, calling for the return of civilian rule in Nigeria. This undermined the Yoruba agenda to end their political marginalisation in Nigeria. The cracks in Yoruba tent became so obvious to "Maradona"⁴⁸ and the government penetrated the Yorubas by creating Osun state in 1991. Through this, the federal military government achieved slowing down the on-going transition to civilian rule, which was the agenda of Yoruba nationalism and succeeded in dividing the Yoruba fronts against the federal government, through the use of Osun state as a new ally to federal military government. The creation of Osun state was one of the major reasons why the return to civilian government was postponed till 1993. The government argued that the new states that were created in 1991 needed to be stable before the conduct of election as political wards and constituencies were not yet delimited in those states⁴⁹.

Similarly, agitation for Ekiti state obviously reflected that Ekiti people are Yoruba, but having their sub-cultural autonomy and privileges, as was the case before colonialism. Ekiti was (is) a make-up of confederal kingdoms with homogenous cultural values, traditions and customs, which the people believe and express as slightly different from that of any other Yoruba sub-group in Nigeria. As in many other sub-Yoruba groups, the Ekiti dialect is distinct. So the people see the invention of Yoruba nationalism as an erosion of their local autonomy and privileges⁵⁰ as Ekiti people. When they were under Oyo state together with Ondo people, they complained of marginalisation and that they were far away from the centre of Oyo state power (Ibadan). Similarly between 1976 and 1997, when Ekiti people were under Ondo state, the same complaints were made against Ondo. Hence, the context is always in favour of provincial autonomy, which automatically weakens regional nationalism, because the power of space and people in terms of vastness and demographic strength gives force to expression of nationalism. As expressed in one of the proposals submitted for the creation of Ekiti state, Ekiti people maintained that they are "historically homogenous, culturally identical, geographically contiguous, similar in religious practices and speak a common dialect as the confederation of Ekiti as we were prior 1900". They also expressed in the document that the creation of Ekiti state, "will eliminate once and for all the incessant frictions and social rivalry between the Ekitis and non-Ekiti in Ondo state"⁵¹. This proposal was submitted to State creation panel in 1991, but the proposal failed. The failure, which the people of Ekiti attributed to the handiwork of some influential Ondo people serving under Babangida government, who felt that should Ekiti state be created, monthly allocations to Ondo state will be affected, and it would also diminish the Ondos' political influence among the Yoruba sub-groups in that part of Yoruba land⁵². If this argument is true, it further explained

that pan-Yoruba nationalism in the 20th century had become fragmented into provincial nationalism, and it is rooted on cleavage manipulation. As Oyo Yoruba manipulated the concept of Yoruba nationalism to develop its space, so also Ondo used the same concept to develop its own space.

Despite its tactics to keep on to power, Babangida government yielded to pressures from pro-democracy groups echoing the democratic agenda in Yoruba nationalism, by conceding to the conduct of election in 1992. Elections, which were staggered, were held successfully in the local councils and states between 1991 and 1992. The federal election was also held in June 12, 1993. For the first time in Yoruba history, the people supported a presidential candidate (Chief M.K.O Abiola) as the expression of their regional nationalism to end their political marginalisation. The election was free and fair and produced Chief M.K.O Abiola as the winner, but the annulment of that election did not allow the winner becoming the president. Yoruba saw this as discontents and conspiracy to continue marginalising them. It hurt their general feelings and re-established in them, a common consciousness that, may it be Ekiti, Oyo, Egba, Ijebu, Remo, Ijesa, Awori, Ife, Igbomina, and in whatever sub-group, Yoruba is one group. They then formed a common aspiration of pressurising Babangida's government to de-annul the election and announce the winner of the election as the president of Nigeria. They exerted stiff opposition against the government in 1993 and their actions produced stiff ferments against the government and against Nigeria as a state, as expressed in active protests and oppositions, which were intense in all the states in Western Region^{5 3}. Babangida again fell to Yoruba nationalistic pressures by "stepping aside"^{5 4} from the government and handed-over to Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Earnest Shonekan who is also a Yoruba from Abiola's hometown. It should be recalled that the protests and oppositions against Babangida were staged by Yoruba-based pro-democracy groups such as "Afenifere", and National Democratic Coalition (NADECO); Pan-Yoruba socio-cultural groups such as Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE) and Lagos-based human rights campaigners.. The stepping aside or handing over of Babangida to the Interim National Government was another victory signifying the cohesive expression of pan-Yoruba nationalism, which could have split Nigeria.

The handling over of government to Earnest Shonekan did not please the Yorubas, even though Shonekan is also a tribesman to Abiola, and hailed from the same Egba Yoruba community of Abeokuta, yet Yoruba believed that Shonekan's government cannot be a replacement of the democratic expression of Yoruba nationalism as done in June 12th election. They also believed that Shonekan was put in government as a temporary measure to pacify the Yoruba and as another divisionary tactics of military governments to weaken Yoruba nationalism. An approach similar to that of state creation, which previous military governments

Ajala

including Babangida's government had used in the past to divide Yoruba opposition against their governments. As both Shonekan and Abiola are Yorubas the violent nationalistic expression was changed to gradual and persuasive approach. The approach to persuade Shonekan to leave the power for the democratically elected president was later marred by another military government headed by General Abacha, who hijacked the power from Shonekan in November 1993, having perceived that Shonekan was under Yoruba pressure and was about to hand-over to Abiola.

Yorubas seriously opposed the 1993 coup headed by General Abacha and there emerged more Yoruba nationalist movements expressing Yoruba nationalism everywhere in Yoruba land. The most notable that seemed to be widespread among the people is O'odua Peoples' Congress (OPC) established in 1995 in the spirit of reinventing Yoruba common struggles to end the Yoruba political and economic marginalisation as the people's common complain in Nigeria. Approach to nationalism became widespread and violent everywhere in Yoruba cities and villages to the extent that Abacha's government was seriously threatened, thus the government between 1993 and 1996 employed various tactics to break Yoruba nationalism without success⁵⁵. In 1994, the government embarked on state creation project. The Ekiti people who had for long been complaining of their political and economic marginalisation by Ondos saw the opportunity to end their sufferings and swung into actions to reach Abacha and lobby for the creation of Ekiti state. They re-energised Ekiti Parapo⁵⁶, which met and decided to seek audience with Abacha's government. The Ekitis sent delegates comprising of some Obas in Ekiti land to General Abacha, in defiance to Yoruba calls that no Yoruba should have anything done with Abacha's government. The call, which the Ekiti people believed was violated by some Yoruba people who had elected to work with Abacha as ministers, so Ekiti could not abide by that call⁵⁷. Abacha saw his new relationship with Ekiti, as an opportunity to enter the Yoruba opposition camp against his government, and he pledged creating Ekiti state should Ekiti people showed their loyalty to his government. Ekiti people on the other hand pledged Abacha that should Ekiti state be created they would dissociate from Yoruba opposition against Abacha's government. They sealed agreement and forbearance was expected from both sides. Ekiti started by uprooting all elements of oppositions against Abacha government in Ekiti state. A typical example was Ekiti denouncing their membership of NADECO, and closing down the NADECO office in Ado-Ekiti. This was followed by warning to all obas in Ekiti that none of them should permit anti-Abacha's meeting in their communities. Also, there was a warning against Ekiti people attending any meeting against Abacha government either in Ekiti or outside Ekiti with any other Yorubas. All these were fulfilled to the letter, and it all had effects on Yoruba nationalism. Most significant effect is low

participation of Ekiti people in some nationalist movements that were founded during Abacha regime in Yoruba land. Typical of these movements is O'odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), which even till today has fewer Ekitis among its national leaders. In 1994, Ekiti people sent representatives to Abacha's constitutional conference in Abuja and in 1996, there was a pro-Abacha rallies held in Ado-Ekiti also in defiance to pan- Yoruba and nationalistic decision not to have anything done with Abacha government.

As political bargaining involves give and take, Abacha had no option, having seen the Ekiti loyalty to his government, rather than to accede to the creation of Ekiti state. A reward system for Ekiti, that broke the Yoruba nationalistic pursuit in favour of the revalidation of June 12 election victory of M.K.O Abiola as a way of ending their political marginalisation in Nigeria, and perhaps their self-determination struggle, which was epitomised in OPC agenda between 1995 and 1997. It was believed that had Ekiti not embraced Abacha's government, the self-determination pursuit of the Yoruba nationalism could have led to the creation of O'odua Republic or the release of the then incarcerated M.K.O Abiola who was arrested by Abacha government in 1994 having declared himself as the President of Nigeria^{5 8}. It should be reiterated here for the purpose of emphasis that it is not that Ekiti people were not conscious of their Yoruba identity and the need to support pan-Yoruba nationalism. They were also in support of the creation of O'odua Republic if it could be possible, but they believed that a bird at hand is better than one thousand in the bush. They therefore felt that before the establishment of O'odua Republic, it was necessary to end their political marginalisation in Ondo state. As Abacha promised, Ekiti state was established embodying all the pre-colonial Ekiti confederations.

As also being the rule in political bargaining, one cannot eat his cake and still have it. It therefore became apparently impossible for Ekiti to join Yoruba forces against Abacha, neither was it easier for Ekiti to still express their support for Yoruba nationalism during Abacha's regime, instead Ekiti started to pursue its own regional nationalism as against pan-Yoruba nationalism, like other Yoruba sub-groups who had enjoyed state creation in the past. Thus, the creation of Ekiti state established a scene in Yoruba nationalism, where everyone goes to his tent and God acts for all⁵⁹.

IMPACTS OF STATE CREATION ON YORUBA NATIONALISM

There are four major problems, which state creation caused on Yoruba nationalism. Firstly, it has reduced the Yoruba political influence on Nigeria as a state. As many states are being created from Yoruba land, as they are less concerned about national political issues affecting the entire Yorubas. Each state tends to pursue its own aspirations within the context of its own local boundary. Thus, to

Ajala

exert regional force on Yoruba demands from the national government now becomes difficult. It is also difficult for the Yoruba to reach a common consensus among the different political cleavages which state creation has established in all the new states created from the old Western Region. These cleavages usually worked to circumvent pan-Yoruba nationalism if their local interests are affected in such pan-Yoruba agenda. As noted by one of my key informants who pleaded anonymity "it is difficult for Yorubas to have a united voice again. Today, there are many of us pursuing our local interests in our states. I see myself having the chance of been appointed as a minister, if I support the federal government against the Yoruba interest. Who are mine not to do so"⁶⁰? Another respondent maintained that it is only God that can now defend the Yorubas. The Yorubas have divided and they no longer speak with one voice anymore. "Our situation now is like that of different birds in the bush, singing different songs in different voices and flying at different directions for the same purposes of what they will eat and how they will survive"⁶¹.

Secondly, it is increasingly difficult for a pan-Yoruba leader to emerge. State creation has succeeded in creating many leaders with local attachments promoting their local interests instead of regional and pan-Yoruba interests, as was the case in 1950s and 1960s. Part of the interview held with one of my informants is presented as follows in support of this argument. The informant was asked to tell the interviewer who was the Yoruba leader as at year 2005:

Key-informant: ...but can you also tell me, who is the Yoruba leader now?

Interviewer: Chief Abraham Adesanya.

Key Informant: He is regarded as Ijebu leader, that is why he could not resolve the crisis in *Afenifere*⁶² camp.

Interviewer: what of late Chief Bola Ige?

Key Informant: He had the potentials of becoming one, but he did not enjoy the majority support and of course he has died, the dead cannot lead.

Interviewer: What of Asiwaju Bola Tinubu?

Key Informant: *Asiwaju awon wo?*⁶³ You mean Lagos state governor? How can a serving governor be an acceptable leader of Yoruba, when he was elected into power by those who belonged to his party. What of others not in his party?

Do they also accept him as the leader? In your own view, does he have the leadership qualities befitting of Yoruba leader? Does he have up to 5% of the leadership qualities in Awolowo? He went to Ekiti, he was stoned. Does that imply that Ekiti accepted him as a Yoruba leader?

Interviewer: What of you?

Key Informant: I am an Ibadan man, and my political influence does not go beyond Ibadan here. Yorubas would even tell you that I am an illiterate. How many times have you heard me talking about Ekiti, or Awori or Egba and the rest of them. I talk about Ibadan.

Interviewer: But, what of Chief Bisi Akande?

Key Informant: His political influence does not go beyond Osun.

Interviewer: Is there no one as a Yoruba leader among the educated, the business and religious men and women?

Key Informant: You are also a Yoruba man, and I am sure you are more than thirty years of age, and you said that you are a lecturer with PhD degree. Among your colleagues in your University, who can you put forward as a Yoruba leader? (*The interviewer remained silent for about a minute and the Key informant continued*). Yes, it is the same problem everywhere. As you do not have confidence among yourselves in the academic, so the same among the politicians.

It is only God that can save the Yorubas in Nigeria. There is no leader among us, I cannot deceive you⁶⁴.

Thirdly, there is a continued growth of lack of commitment to regional development as against the case between 1951 and 1960, when there were edifices expressing Yoruba nationalism in terms of infrastructural developments in the region. Such included the establishment of free education throughout the western region, the building of cocoa house and premier hotel in Ibadan in 1955, the establishment of University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in 1962, the establishment of O'odua group investments in 1964 and many other institutions, which expressed the Yoruba nationalism as at that time. All these institutions have virtually lost their pan-Yoruba attachments, and now display the expressions of local attachments of where they are located in terms of operations and their recruitment of manpower. This is due to state creation with its attendant asset sharing politics.

Fourthly, there is evidence of attachment to local interests in education and civil service in Yoruba land. Following the state creation, all the newly created states established their state-own universities who place priorities on admitting students who are indigenes of individual states owing the University. Most of these universities have between 62 and 80% of their students being indigenes of the states where each of the Universities is located. For instance Ibadan Polytechnic, which was, sited in Ibadan, when the state was made up of Oyo and Osun states now has 65% of its students being indigenes of Oyo state. The same thing happens in Lagos State University own by Lagos state, and Adekunle Ajasin University in Ondo state. There is also disparity in payment of school fees in these state

Universities where non-indigenes pay higher than indigenes. Yet, they are all Yorubas. Similarly, civil service in Yoruba land is localised to the extent that there is no civil servant in Yoruba land that can work outside his or her state of origin.

Evidence of provincial nationalism as indicated above seems to be a reinvention of sub-group consciousness of the Yoruba people, which was prevalent in the pre-colonial era. Thus, among the people, local autonomy distinguished by dialectic variations and strong pre-colonial state formation remains a strong force influencing the invention of pan-Yoruba nationalism.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As I started, Samuel Johnson is still relevant in the foregoing discussion, in that he was one of the first to refer to many kingdoms located at the south-western lower region of River Niger in Nigeria as Yoruba nation, and since then, the people have come to see themselves as such; only when they faced socio-political marginalisation, at first due to British colonial administration, and later due to repressive military governments that operated in succession between 1967 and 1999, mostly involving Hausa/Fulani hegemonic power. Against this backdrop it is difficult to refer to Yoruba as a nation putting in mind the socio-political understanding of the term –Nation. Nation in Yoruba equivalent is *orile-edé* meaning peoplehood in terms of shared values such as land and language, aspirations and goals and traditions and customs. Arising from the above understanding is that, is Yoruba qualified to be called a nation? Taking into the considerations that the people we refer to as Yoruba today only enjoyed shared value only on few occasions when there were threats against their common political interests as shown in the data presented above. Also, the term Yoruba which now becomes their ethnic name is known to be an adulteration of “YARABA”, which Hausas called the Oyo people, when they first had contact with the Yorubas from the Old Oyo northern border and through the Fulani occupation of Ilorin during the reign of Afonja as the head of Ilorin border of the old Oyo Empire in the late 18th century^{6 5}. So, the term, Yoruba does not imply the generality of the people comprising of Ife, Igbomina, Ekiti, Egba, Ijebu, Ijesa, and other Yoruba sub-groups other than Oyos. The etymology of that term cannot be traced to any original dialectic lexicons of these distinctive groups; hence, it neither has meaning nor linguistic origin in any of the known Yoruba dialects.

It is equally evidential that from their history of association as a “Yoruba nation”, elements of regional political hegemony as was in the early 19th century was preceded among many political formations, which spread their influence to hinterland that they only dominated for a while^{6 6}. As the Oyo kingdom spread its influence through conquest, government and trade, was the Kingdom of Ife much admired as spiritual and cultural capital by various peoples beyond its small domain,

including the Benin people in the east and the Aja-Fon and Egun speakers in the west, usually at different times of their prominence. So also the Ijebu state, Ekiti confederacy, Ondo Kingdom, Ijesa kingdom, and many others have being in existence with their supreme powers within their different locations. Therefore, Yoruba as a cultural and political identity symbolising Ife, Oyo, Egba, Ekiti, Ondo, Igbomina, Ilaje, Awori and many others is not their creation. Hence, the socio-political fragmentation of the “Yoruba” people in the 20th and 21st century due to state creation in Nigeria is a reinvention of their local statehood as was the case before the British occupation of the area.

As stated above, the spirit of pan-Yoruba nationalism was invented abroad by Oyos, Egbas, Egbado^{6 7}, Ijebus and Ijesas who were slave captives in Brazil in the 18th and 19th centuries. In Brazil, they came to recognise themselves as similar as slaves’ traders recognised them as such, since they were transported from the same port of embarkment to Brazil. They named them “Nago”^{6 8}, which is now adulterated to “Anago” in Yoruba lexicon, the term commonly used by Oyo and Igbomina to describe who cannot pronounce Oyo Yoruba correctly. Thus, a shared name and social identity is formed based on their common experience as deprived people, captives and despairs in Brazil, which established in them a collective awareness hitherto unknown in their African land of origin. This perspective of pan-“Yoruba” (foreign-based) nationalism is similar to their 20th and 21st perspectives of their nationalism in Nigeria, in the sense that their collective nationalism (pan-Yoruba nationalism) is usually reawakened when they faced state political deprivation and marginalisation in Nigeria as were the cases in 1993 under Babangida regime and between 1994 and 1996 under Abacha’s regime.

In their resistance against their inhuman treatment in Brazil, the Muslims among them always headed the insurrections and conspiracies against their slave masters. This is another characteristic of the 21st century pan-Yoruba nationalism where it is evident that Muslims are more prominent and more violent among the leaders of cultural nationalist groups. An example can be mentioned of OPC having more that 80% of its state and local leaders as Muslims apart from its militant factional leader-Ganiyu Adams also being a Muslim. This religious factor also influences low support, which this group enjoyed in Ekiti, since majority of Ekiti people are Christians⁶⁹.

The above suggests that as more states are being created from “Yoruba society”⁷⁰ along the local boundaries of the pre-colonial kingdoms in Yoruba society, the reinvention of their spirit of provincial nationalism becomes possible. Pan-Yoruba nationalism therefore exists as ideological construction, subject to changing socio-political conditions and always subjected to the changing interests of their contemporary interlocutors, such as British colonial government before Nigerian independence and military governments between 1967 and 1999.

Ajala

In the final analysis, the need to account for how different factors have influenced and continue to influence the construction of pan-Yoruba nationalism is a desirable area of further research. The present paper has accounted for the influence of state creations between 1967 and 1999 on pan-Yoruba nationalism. The influence of religion is yet to be deeply interrogated, thus it is necessary for a better understanding of pan-Yoruba nationalism in the 21st century.

ENDNOTES

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37. Alhaji Adedibu Lamidi .2005. Personal interview in Ibadan, July 16th.
38. Chief Anthony Enahoro. 2005. Personal interview in Lagos at PRONACO Conference, November 17th
39. Prince Adesoji Akintoye .2004. Personal interview at Isale-Eko (Iagos), November 15th.
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42. This was a political riot in Western Nigeria to resent Yoruba discontent against the 1964 election in Nigeria.
43. The Yoruba violent revolt against the slashing of cocoa price in 1970s.
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45. **Goke Oguniola** .2005. Personal Interview, Ilobu in August 16th.
46. **As mentioned above** this invention became clear in 1920.
47. **Proposal submitted** to State creation panel, for the creation of Osun state by **Osun Solidarity Front**, Osogbo in 1991.
48. **This is a media name** given to General Babangida due to his maverick style of military administration in Nigeria. He also admitted this name as he always referred himself to as evil genius.
49. **Chief Omigbodun**, Interview held at Osogbo, March 25th, 2005.
50. **Chief Odunbaku Nathaniel**.2006. Personal interview in Ado Ekiti April 17th.
51. Part of the proposal submitted for the creation of Ekiti state in 1991, PP:4-5.
52. **Agunbiade Akinlowo** .2006. Personal interview at Ikere Ekiti, 16th February.
53. **Kraxberger, B.** 2004. Op. Cit.
54. This is the term used by General Babangida to announce his handing over power to Interim National Government headed by Chief Earnest Shonekan in August 1993.
55. The tactics included state organised Killings, torturing, arrest and detention of government opponents especially among the Yorubas
56. **Ekiti Parapo** was a dormant socio-political group of all Ekiti people in Ekiti land before 1990s. It was the agitation for state creation that resuscitated the group.
57. **Chief Bode Fijabi** .2005. Personal interview in Ise-Ekiti, February, 17th
58. **Kola Adeoti** .2005. Personal interview held in Lagos August 27th.
59. **Tell Magazine (Lagos)**, June 12,1998.
60. Personal interview in Ibadan, March 26th,
61. **Pa Alayande Emmanuel**.2005. Interviewed in Ibadan, December 27th
62. **Afenifere** seems to be a pan-Yoruba socio-political group, which had leadership problem since 2000 and the problem led to its being factionalised into two camps, without resolution till 2006.
63. **Asiwaju** in Yoruba language means Leader, and it is one of the numerous chieftaincy titles of Governor Ahmed Bola Tinubu of Lagos state. So, when the interviewer referred to Tinubu as **Asiwaju**, the key informant was furious and he asked the interviewer: *asiwaju awon wo?* Translated to mean leader for who?
64. **Adedibu, Lamidi** .2005. Personal interview in Molete, Ibadan , November 13th.
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imperialism in the era of Slave Trade. Oxford:Clarendon Press. Awde,N. 1996. *Hausa: Hausa-English, English- Hausa Dictionary*. New York: Hippocrene. Matory, L. 1999. "The English professor of Brazil: On the diasporic roots of the Yoruba nation". *Comparative studies in Society and History*, Vol.4(1),PP:72-103

66. Babayemi, S.O.1979. "The Fall and Rise of Oyo C.1760-1905: A study in traditional culture of an African polity". A PhD Dissertation, University of Birmingham, UK.
67. Egbado are the Egba waterside who are also different from Egbas in Abeokuta. This term appears here for the first time as some of them who were slave captives in Brazil referred to themselves as Egbado, but at present at home they call themselves mostly Egba watersides. They are also agitating for state creation from Ogun state.
68. Matory,L. 1999. Op.cit.
69. Ajala,A.S and Nolte,I.(forthcoming). Yoruba ethnogenesis revisited: Popular perceptions of Yoruba cultural nationalism, political ethnicity and OPC in western Nigeria.