

Akoko Resistance to External Invasion and Domination in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

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Abstract: - This study examined the nature of Akoko response to external invasion and domination by some neighbouring and distant Nigerian groups and communities in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Data for the study was obtained from primary and secondary sources and were analysed using qualitative methods of analysis. The primary sources are archival materials and oral interviews with informants who were purposively selected due to their perceived knowledge about the subject of study. Secondary sources included relevant textbooks, journal articles, thesis, dissertations and long essays, some periodicals and internet materials. It noted that Akoko communities were invaded severally by some of their immediate neighbours like Owo; Ado-Ekiti and Ikole- Ekiti between the 15th and 18th centuries; as well as some imperial lords from Benin, Nupe and Ibadan in the 19th and 20th centuries. It found out that these incessant invasions were due largely to the search for political hegemony; demand for slaves and for personal aggrandizement of some soldiers. The paper noted further that, in spite of their limited population, the Akoko people fought vehemently for survival as a people and eventually maintained their self identity and succeeded in shaking off the yoke of their imperialist powers. The paper highlights the various strategies adopted by the Akokos in their quest for survival and emancipation. It concluded that unity of purpose and total commitment to collective survival as a people were at the heart of their success story against external domination and subjugation.

Keywords: Akokoland, Invasion, Political hegemony, Nupe, Imperialism

I. INTRODUCTION

It has been observed that the histories of most ethnic and dialectical groups, particularly in the eastern Yoruba land, have not been adequately studied¹. This was partly due to the concentration of early historians of African origin on the study of expansive and extensive empires and kingdoms such as Oyo, Benin, Kanem-Bornu and many others, while those of the sub-ethnic groups were overlooked, if not outrightly neglected. If this assertion is true, perhaps it could be argued that the most neglected among them is the history of Akoko people, a group who, despite its limited population, fought for survival, self-identity and self-determination amidst incessant pouching by her numerous hostile neighbours as well as intimidations, exploitations and harassment of external attackers who invaded the area for human and material resources between the 15th and 19th century. This explains the reason why Akoko was described by a review of Yoruba

historiography carried out in 1988 as “a virgin land for research.”² Since then, nothing seems to have changed significantly.

It is essential to note that the origin of the word “Akoko” is shrouded in mystery. Local traditions attribute it to the persistent invasions of the area by external forces, particularly the Ibadan warlords; who then described the area as *Akorikotan*³ or *Akokotunko*, both of which refer to inexhaustible source of slaves and booties. If this tradition is anything worthy of consideration, it could therefore, be said that Akoko derives its present generic name from persistent invasions of the external forces in the pre-colonial era.

The experience of Akoko communities in external raids and invasions require intensive search-light of history, if only to draw the attention of the people to the unusual determination of a group to survive in spite of hostilities. It is also important to explore the various attacks suffered by the people and the strategies they adopted in their quest for survival and emancipation. Atanda listed prominent communities in Akoko to include Irun, Ogbagi, Arigidi, Akungba, Ikare, Erusu, Oke-Agbe, Ifira, Ikaram, Supare, Oba, Oka and Isua⁵.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Akoko is a generic name for some communities in the present Ondo State of Nigeria. The area lies between longitude 5⁰E and 6⁰E latitude 7⁰N and 7¼⁰N in the North of Ose River and it occupies an area of 753 square miles⁶. By the population censuses conducted during the colonial era, the area has a total population of 29,806 in 1912⁷, 70,752 in 1931⁸ and 307,635 in 1963⁹. The area occupies the hilliest and most rugged part of Yorubaland¹⁰, and as observed by Beeley, Akoko area has circular plateau of about 2,000 feet above the sea level on which some towns are situated¹¹. He notes further that:

the mountainous nature of the area created a barrier for expansion of the settlements at the expense of the other. hence, no prominent kingdom ever emerged from the area¹².

III. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

According to Olusanya (1985), local histories are of great value, as long as they are seen in their proper context and without a view to glorifying one group over and above the

others but in bringing to light the histories and culture of the various groups, particularly in a country like Nigeria which is so rich in diversity¹³, to this end, it is important that the past experiences, challenges and accomplishments of the past be unveiled through historical researches, with a view to fostering understanding, national pride, self-identity and appreciation of the known and unknown heroes that have contributed to actions that determine what we are and what we represent today. On this note, any efforts at historical regeneration and redefinition of a group like Akoko could not suffer justifications. On the one hand, such researches would facilitate a better understanding of the people and their ways of life, without which, the dynamic and peculiar socio – political institutions and structures of the people cannot be understood. On the other hand, the unusual determination of the people for survival of inclement weather of hostile neighbourhood may be glossed over. The frequency of external raids on Akoko country and the efforts made by the people to attain self-determination and autonomy deserve sufficient attention of historians and proper documentation.

IV. CHRONOLOGICAL PROBLEM IN THE HISTORY OF AKOKOLAND

Existing literatures on the history of Akoko have presented incongruous and, in some cases, conflicting records of external invasions of Akoko communities. Writing in 1934, J.H. Beerley opines that Akoko people had been under the suzerainty of Bida and Nupe invaders for 150 years¹⁴. In likewise manner, Eghareva is of the opinion that the Benin Kingdom had imposed its lordship over some 201 communities in Eastern Yorubaland, Akoko inclusive, since the reign of Oba Ewuare of Benin¹⁵. The periodization of these events requires intensive search–light.

While the menace of these great empires has attracted modest recognition, it is important to look beyond these by investigating the challenges posed to Akokoland by her immediate Yoruba neighbours from the time immemorial and the peculiarities of each Akoko town. The traditions of origin of the various Akoko communities indicate that the area was a melting point of people of diverse origin and culture. While communities such as Oka, Supare, Upe, Oba, Oge, Aje and Ora claim direct migration from Ile-Ife¹⁶, Ogbagi, Omuo, Irun, Akungba, Erusu, Oyin and Igasi claim early interaction and inter-relationship with Ekiti towns. Communities such as Arigidi, Isua, Ifira, Afa, Ipesi, Afo, Ikun, Epinmi and Afin claim Benin origin, while Anga, Kakumo, Ise, Boropa, Uro, Sosan and Ugbe accept early affiliations with Afema¹⁷. Ikaran, Ojo, Akunna, Daja, Ifira, and Esuku traced their origin to Ijumu / kaba¹⁸. These traditions notwithstanding, Akoko as a geographical entity seems not to exist before the boundary delineation exercise conducted between December 1894 and January 1895 by Captain Bower of the Lagos Protectorate and Captain Lugard of the Royal Niger Company which cut-off communities such as Omuo, Oyin, Iro, Afin, Ese, Irun and Ogbagi within the sphere of the Royal Niger Company.¹⁹In

fact many of these communities still regarded themselves as belonging to Ekiti. For example, in a letter forwarded by the Onirun of Irun to the District Officer in 1935, the monarch asserts that the town was an Ekiti community. This was supported by the records of Rev. Philip which claimed that Irun was the last town to merge with Akoko in 1894²⁰. So also, during the constitution of the Ekiti council of Obas in 1900, Ikole was regarded as Akoko town. So also, Omuo remained an Akoko community until 1967 when she joined her Ekitikith. In likewise manner, the Olowo of Owo, through a petition dated 25th August, 1918 addressed to His Excellency, Sir Fredrick Lugard, claimed that Akoko communities of Oba, Akungba, Supare, Ikun and Afo as well as many Akoko-Ede towns were under his suzerainty ‘‘from the time immemorial before the Europeans from the Northern Province came this way and joined us to Benin District’’²¹It is therefore difficult to say precisely which community was Akoko and which was not owing to constant adjustment of boundaries and delineation of District Councils. Referring to these phenomena, Akinyele notes that the British colonial administration adopted the principles of ethnicity, established traditional jurisdiction and administrative conveniences in the delimitation of administrative units.²²

V. EXTERNAL INVASIONS

Perhaps the first group of invaders to make inroad into Akoko territory was the Owo soldiers who invaded the area repeatedly even before the eighteenth century. Being the immediate neighbour of the Akoko in the North, the Owo armies and marauders invaded Akoko communities in search of booties and slaves for their use. Owo tradition claims that Akoko, during this period, was invaded not less than twenty-seven times²³, confirming this, Akomolafe was of the opinion that;

there were occasional invasions of some Akoko village and the neighbouring districts of Kabba and Afemai by Owo armies under Ajaka, an Owo prince and warrior, towards the close of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, such invasions were merely part of the general practices of some Yoruba war leaders who participated in the slave raids of the time with a view to obtaining slaves for export. Such villages as Oba, Ikun, Afo, Supare, Akungba, which by virtue of their nearness to owo, were constantly harassed by Owo and paid tribute to her.²⁴

The relationship of Ekiti and Akoko communities in the 19th century could also not be described as cordial, even though Akoko communities such as Ogbagi, Irun, Akungba, Erusu, Oyin and Igasi claim historical links with Ekiti towns. According to the tradition of origins of these communities, they had, at one point or the other domiciled in Ekitiland. This notwithstanding, Akoko communities suffered serious attacks

and raids from their Ekiti neighbours. Ikole, for example, invaded Akoko many times and dominated many villages and towns in the area. Akintoye notes that one Okombo, an Ikole warrior made serious incursion to Akokoland²⁵. Ikole domination must have been so prominent that Oba Adeleye 1 (Atewogboye) the Elekole of Ikole in his letter to the District Officer in 1921 claimed that eleven Akoko towns of Erusu, Omuo, Iro, Ese, Irun, Ogbagi, Afin, Afa, Oge and Oyin belonged to Egbeoba kingdom²⁶ and that they were placed under Kabba through the Boundary Delineation Commission of 1890s.

Another Ekiti town that made serious incursion into Akoko country in the pre-colonial era was Ado-Ekiti. It is on record that Ado, in the course of migration, had certain contact with Akoko. Oral tradition indicates that the progenitors of the town once settled in Ido – Ani from where they migrated to Akoko²⁷. Probably as a result of this, Ado – Ewi kingdom had always seen itself as a brother and, to some extent, protector of the community. To this end, Ogunbulu (Ala-loju-osoru), as the Balogun Ado intercepted Ibadan troop enroute Akoko in 1857, also in 1875²⁸. The relationship between Ado and Akoko, however, took another dimension when Aduloju Dodondawa became the Balogun Ado in 1874. Prior to this period, Aduloju has being a free – booting soldier whose passion was more on pillaging weak communities for the purpose of acquiring booties for his personal needs. Having ravaged many Ekiti towns, Aduloju, with his military base at Isinpakude (now Isinbode) mounted serious attacks on Akoko communities²⁹.

On his emergence as the Balogun Ado, Aduloju intensified his raids on Akoko and any town conquered was made to accept the over lordship of the Ewi of Ado³⁰. Such was also required to pay certain levies for the maintenance of the rather flamboyant stool of Ewi. On personal level, Aduloju was a man with insatiable desire for women, hence wives and daughters of Akoko people that caught the fancy of the warlord, automatically became his wife. Able – bodied youths were conscripted into his army and numerous others were turned to slave to serve in his farms or were given as gifts to Ado monarchs and chiefs. The rapacious attacks organized by Aduloju in Akoko and his penchant for enslavement of Akoko people earned him the cognomen *EnitiAkoko n bimo sin lese oke*³¹. Meaning ‘the one who Akoko people bear children to serve’.

Having explored the experiences of Akoko in the hands of her immediate neighbours, it is now necessary to examine the activities of the imperial Lords, including Benin, Nupe, Ibadan and Ilorin whose interests in Akokoland ranged from expansionism, desire for commercial items and ego.

It could be said that the first attempt at imposition of imperial rule over Akoko was made by Benin Empire. This empire, having established flourishing commercial activities with the Europeans since the middle of the 15th century, penetrated the neighbouring communities in desperate search for items of

trade required for this maritime trade. In the process, Akoko communities were invaded and ravaged. Akintoye maintains that Benin soldiers invaded Akoko at various times between the 15th and 19th century³².

The history of Nupe’s incursion into Akoko countries came in two phases. In the first instance, as a result of the incursion of the Fulani Jihadist into Nupeland, which engendered military and political reorganization of the kingdom in around 1830, Nupe embarked on intensive expansionist policy which drove the Ebira people from their aboriginal homes in Ebira – koto (koto-karfi)³³. The revolution also extended Nupe influence to the Afemai (kurukuru), and it affected the northern and central Yorubaland, Igbomina, Ibolo and communities in eastern Yorubaland, many of which came under Nupe authority³⁴. Nupe at this period was checkmated owing to internal strife in Bida. With the emergence of Etsu Masaba (1859-1873), however, whose strategic goal was “to reach the sea, open roads to the east and to the west and bring European commerce under her protection”³⁵, the Nupe invasion of other territories became more incessant and intensive. This was maintained by Etsu Umar Majigi who ruled between 1873 and 1882.

Nupe expansionist policy at this period affected Akoko in no small way. In fact Nupe imperialists did not only make an in-road into Akoko, it also established his military base and administrative headquarters from where other Akoko communities were raided. The objective of Nupe administration at this period was essentially commercial, hence, having subjected Akoko communities to their rule, Nupe imposed all manners of taxation and tributes which were forcefully collected by appointed fief – holders otherwise called Ogba orAjele, who, usually were high ranking Nupe officials³⁶.

Since Nupe warlords lived among the people of Akokoand with some of the local people serving in the army, it was just easy to control the entire area, to ensure compliance to Nupe’s directives and to quell revolts whenever such break out. Consequently, Nupe held Akoko in the jugular and provided little or no opportunity for the emancipation of the people. Little wonder then, that Nupe imperialism lasted till the outbreak of the Ogidi Alliance resistance, which led to the imposition of British rule on the entire area.

Undoubtedly, the most devastating of all the invasions of Akoko by the external forces was the one orchestrated by the Ibadan warlords in the areas, which in most cases, were executed with the support of other warlords that were of Eastern Yorubaland origin. The origin of Ibadan kingdom dated back to around 1829 when Balogun Oluyole led a group of soldier from Igbo – Egba to settle at the present site of Ibadanland³⁷. As a result of the nature of its establishment and management, the new kingdom attracted a lot of opportunity seeking personalities and by 1840, Ibadan had emerged as one of the leading Yoruba towns with sufficiently equipped and well trained soldiers that could embark on military

adventurism into other territories in search of their pecuniary needs.

The first military attack from Ibadan on Akokoland was directed by Basorun Latoosa whose administration of Ibadan embarked on numerous battles intended to increase the wealth and influence of the town over other Yoruba towns and villages, a venture that required abundant revenue and slave who could be attained through military raid of weak communities in Yorubaland. In around 1850's, however, Ayorinde Aje who led Ibadan onslaught on Akoko fell out of favour with Latoosa his boss, the former having been alleged of murder and therefore condemned to death³⁸. To avoid this, Ayorinde fled Ibadan land and sought the assistance of Esubiyi, another fugitive of Ibadan authority, who had established a kingdom in Ekiti and who assisted him to settle in Irun – Akoko in 1856³⁹. The invasion of Nupe was however to deprive Ayorinde of his grip on Irun. In fact Jimeta postulates that Ayorinde once partnered Etsu Massaba of Bida in their Akoko expeditions⁴⁰. This postulation was based primarily on the observation that the military boys of Ayorinde were called “Agannigan”, a name similar to the Kyadya rebels who once revolted against Bida's authority. This assumption couldn't be justified considering the personality and military alliances enjoyed by Ayorinde in eastern and north eastern Yoruba which made it improbable that he would subject himself to the authority of Nupe. In the first instance, Ayorinde was said to be a prosperous man, highly egocentric and therefore, rebellious of regulations and authorities. On the other hand, he enjoyed the cooperation of renowned soldiers such as Esubiyi of Ayede, Aduloju of Ado and Ogedengbe of Ilesa and therefore could not have accepted to serve as mercenary soldier for Nupe's monarch. However, there could be an initial understanding between Ayorinde and Nupe which was violated and which eventually resulted to conflict. The fact, however, is that he was dislodged from Irun. With the loss of Irun to Nupe as his military base, Ayorinde moved to Ise Ekiti where he continually raided Akoko communities⁴¹.

VI. MOTIVATIONS FOR FOREIGN INVASIONS

Many historians have identified reasons for inter-communal invasions in the pre-colonial days. Rodney notes that the notion of development in the past always meant the increasing desire of a dominant group, not only to maintain its independence but also to infringe upon the independence of the vulnerable once⁴². In likewise manner, Ade-Ajayi attributed it to the desire of people to prove their powers by attacking others because manliness and courage were two virtues mostly honoured and respected, hence Ibadan Chiefs, for example, trained their young men the arts of warfare while slaves and prisoners of war were used to cultivate their farms⁴³. Other reasons adduced include the existence of a ready market for sales of slaves and purchase of guns⁴⁴, the desire to build personal aristocracy and the desire to dominate or absorb smaller polities by larger ones⁴⁵. All these factors

manifested in the relationship of Akoko and her numerous invaders.

Foreign invasion of Akoko communities was motivated, at the initial stage, by the desire of neighbouring communities to extend their dominion over their neighbourhood. This explains the encroachment of towns such as Ondo, Ado and Ikole-Ekiti on Akoko towns and villages. The desire of these monarchs at the period was to create vassalages with the intention to increase their influences and also to collect tributes and royalties. This motivation however changed with the introduction of the European maritime trade which created inexhaustible demand for slave and other articles of trade. This unprecedented demand for slave and the abundant wealth accruing to slave dealers motivated attack of Akoko communities and many other communities in Eastern Yorubaland.

The activities of the Europeans merchants, particularly, the introduction of guns facilitated the emergence of groups of professional soldiers such as Aduloju and Ayorinde Aje who made maximum use of their military experiences and the weapons acquired through Europeans contact against the Akoko farmers who were relatively poor in military experiences and equipage. The synergy formed by the European merchants and the local hunters and militia facilitated constant raids for slaves required for sales and for domestic use.

The outbreak of the Yoruba civil wars of the nineteenth century compounded the problem as many of the warring empires and kingdom require more sources of manpower that could be recruited in their armies as well as regular supply of food. For example, many of the captives of Ibadan raids ended up being sold or conscripted into the army.

VII. AKOKO RESISTANCE TO FOREIGN DOMINATION: THE STRATEGIES, THE BATTLES, THE PERSONALITIES

Akoko country, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was sparsely populated and often under siege from unprovoked and hostile neighbours. It has been mentioned earlier that the topography of Akokoland prevented formation of any form of centralized political system in the area. It also hindered effective mobilization against foreign attacks and domination as the craggy and hilly terrains inhibited effective communication and easy movement of men and materials during emergencies. These notwithstanding, Akoko people did not take the incessant foreign invasion and pouching on their human and material resources with kids gloves as the mounted serious resistance against them, in spite of obvious challenges.

At the initial stage, it would seem that Akoko people facilitated cordial relationship with less hostile people such as Ido-Ani and the Ijumu communities in Okunland. As a result of this, they migrated into these friendly communities during foreign hostilities. In fact, the tradition of Ido-Ani indicates

that communities such as Isua, Isan, Isebe and Upe moved to Amusi-Igbo quarters in Ido-Ani where they were accorded adequate respect and dignity. According to Asabia:

The ravages of war and civil strife at this period forced immigration of people from Akoko towns of Isua, Isan, Isebe and Upe to Amusi-Igbo quarters of Ido-Ani, each of these immigrant communities (Akoko) were given traditional titles such as Omiye, the head of Isebe, Alasan, the head of Isan, Odofofin, the head of Isua. So also Afo quarters of the town traced its origin to Oka-Akoko⁴⁶.

It is obvious that as a result of apprehension of danger, covertly or insidiously motivated the movement of people to take permanent residence in less volatile community where they could start life afresh. Also, many people who could not abandon their heritages in Akoko moved upland where they were less vulnerable to sudden and unexpected attacks and possible destruction by their belligerent invaders. This explains why many Akoko communities are located on mountains and uplands of the hilly region.

As the ravages of war and civil strife caused by external invaders became more intensive, A number of Akoko warlords started to emerge with the intention to defend the communities from total extinction. One of such warlord was Arogunyo of Afa (now Oke - Agbe)⁴⁷ whose military prowess made the community impenetrable to invaders for a long period. It was not unlikely that this man partnered with some Muslim personalities for assistant as Afa became noticeably Islamized during the wars. Also from Afa emerged another warlord called Bakare⁴⁸ who distinguished himself as notable warrior and who protected Afa from humiliation and total annihilation.

Perhaps the most celebrated Akoko warrior during the period was Odu Olowuro of Ogbagi who successfully resisted Ibadan invasion of the community for close to a decade. Local history of Ogbagi indicates that this military brass successfully defeated Ibadan soldiers in four consecutive battles namely ogunlaseoro, OgunLatosisa, Ogun Eyo and Ogun Aje⁴⁹. In fact, it is being speculated that Ogbagi got its present name during the period as the name Ogbagi is said to have been derived from a common panegyric of the warrior i.e *Ogbagi-gbani*, which literarily mean "the liberator of men and forest"⁵⁰. This however remains a conjecture as long as the initial name of the community, prior to this period, remains unknown. Also, it is most likely that the son of Odu Olowuro called Odu Olujodo was the person invited by Fabunmi to join the leadership of the Ekitiparapo / Kiriji wars but who turned down the invitation in order not to expose Akokoland to the persistent Nupe belligerence⁵¹.

Undoubtedly, the most successful onslaught of Akoko people against external attacks was the Oka war of 1978 in which the gallant Oka soldiers humbled the seemingly invincible Nupe

warriors. In this historic battle that is comparable with the Battle of Adowa in which Ethiopian soldiers defeated their Italian foes in 1898, Nupe army, led initially by Ndako Damisa, having conquered Akoko communities of Ikaram, Afin, Igashi and Ogbagi, found Oka impenetrable⁵². Although, this has been partly attributed to the fact that the landscape was unsuitable for the use of cavalry, it however, could not be justified as many Akoko towns that were rooted shared similar topography with Oka. To restore the glory and dignity of Nupe which suffered serious humiliation by the Oka battle and which had made Oka and some other communities to declare their independence of foreign imperialism⁴⁹. To protect the interests of these imperialists, i.e. Nupe, Ibadan and Ilorin, a large contingent of soldiers led personally by Etsu Umar Majigi of Bida and assisted by Ilorin and some Ibadan soldiers, besieged Oka but Oka soldiers rebuffed them and for three consecutive years, Oka did not only maintain her ground militarily but also maintained her hard earned independence till the imposition of colonial rule on Akokoland. It should be noted that at this period, many Akoko communities had become militarily equipped and many military personalities had emerged with the sole objective of stopping foreign incursions on their land. This perhaps explains the resistance of Arigidi-Akoko to the exploitation of Nupe surrogates which led to the death of Eleso Akimbo, the second Olu of Bunu appointed by Etsu Massaba and charged with the responsibility to oversee some Akoko communities⁵³.

The resistance of Akoko to foreign rule also featured prominently in the readiness with which Akoko soldiers joined other neighbouring communities to fight foreign invaders. For example, Akoko soldiers joined their Ekiti counterparts against Ibadan soldiers led by Bada as directed by Balogun Ibikunle and the combination of Ekiti and Akoko successfully resisted Bada who returned humiliated and frustrated to Ibadan⁵⁴. Furthermore, although Akoko notable warriors and warlords could not join the Ekitiparapo/kiriji war, a lot of Akoko volunteers served various contingents of Ekiti armies. Also, Akoko warlords joined their Ijumu counterparts in Ogidi Alliance which consisted of Ijumu communities of Ogidi, Ayere, Adigbe, Ekinrin – Adde, Ufe and Ogale as well as Akoko communities of Isua, Ikaram, Ogbagi, Afin, Igashi, Daga, Esuku and Oji to permanently put a stop to Nupe hegemony. Infact, an Akoko warlord from Esuku called Agaun succeeded Ekundina, the Alayere of Ayere to command the alliance army⁵⁵. It was under the command of this Akoko personality that Nupe eventually met her Waterloo.

VIII. EFFECTS OF FOREIGN INVASIONS ON AKOKOLAND

The encroachments of foreign invaders on Akoko communities had far-reaching consequences on the social, political, economic and religious life of the people therein. In fact, the survival and continuing existence of Akoko communities at the period were largely due to the good power and determination with which they resisted these invasions

and the ability of the people to forge ahead in the face of military challenges posed by their tormentors.

Politically, the invasions presented the emergence of any noticeable central authority over the area. Although the hilly nature of the area contributed to this, it is however, more reasonable to note that the concentration of individual community to survive these invasions made the idea of imposition of any form of central authority over the other communities virtually impossible. This is not to say that internal attacks or confrontations were absent among the Akoko communities. Such, however, were limited to the quest for survival rather than for expansion. For example, the invasion of Upe by Ikare was not motivated by expansionist idea. Rather, it was a product of Ikare's effort to meet up the human tributes payable to Nupe imperialists.⁵⁶ Also, the attack of Irun by Ogbagi was merely to punish the later for supporting Ibadan invaders that came to plunder Akoko communities.⁵⁷

Furthermore, the atmosphere of strife and confusion created by the persistent invasion led to reduction in the traditional political authorities of the kings to the extent that these kings look forward to the directives of the warlords before they act. In fact, the traditional political institutions of many Akoko communities became largely subservient to the dictates of their foreign imperialists. As noted by Ade Obayemi, for example:

Nupe administration in Akokoland was not altogether systematic. Indeed, the hold of Nupe on the area was only a tenuous one. It consisted in the ability to master sufficient force to keep the people in subjugation for the purpose of collection of taxes and levies.⁵⁸

In a similar manner, Akintoye observes concerning Ibadan hegemony on Akoko that:

Any Akoko town that escaped total destruction was placed under the guidance of a chief in Ibadan. Such Chief was charged with the responsibilities to ensure absolute loyalty of the people of the town to Ibadan sovereignty, payment of tributes and performance of other sundry assignments as directed by Ibadan⁵⁹

The situation of Akoko communities, as highlighted above, made political development and nations building impossible as many people fled the area for safety reasons while the rulers were reduced to mere puppets of the foreign imperialists. It has also been postulated that any recalcitrant king was made to lose his stool while dynasty changes were effected in many communities⁶⁰.

Foreign invasions prevented urbanization and urban development in the area till the imposition of colonial rule. As a result of the incessant raids orchestrated by these invaders,

people fled their aboriginal homes to seek refuge in relatively secured areas. As a result, there was fragmentation of human habitations and many of these communities were merged in later years to form the few urban centres in the present Akokoland. Furtherance to this, the development of urban communities was inconceivable in Akokoland during this period considering the depopulation caused by the invaders. In the course of the attacks, many people were killed, sold into slavery or made to migrate to other areas where they could pursue their career with little challenges. It is also important to note that many of the Akoko youths were conscripted into the armies of these invaders. For example, it is on record that many soldiers of Akoko origin served in the Ibadan contingent during the Ibadan – Ijaye and Ibadan – Remo wars⁶¹. Many of these forcefully conscripted soldiers died in battles while many eventually settled permanently in the communities in which they served. To further increase human loss, some of these imperial forces demanded for wives and children as tributes and these were sold into slavery⁶².

In spite of the obvious constraints posed by the challenges of external invasions, Akoko people maintained their relevance as a force to reckon with in eastern Yorubaland. As noted by Temple in 1919, "Akoko were good farmers who produced a great deal of palm-oil, the women make excellent cloth"⁶³. Apart from economic relevance, Akoko evolved a cosmopolitan outlook owing to her previous interactions with the various group such that the area became a hodge-podge of diverse culture and people.

IX. CONCLUSION

The experience of Akoko communities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is, to say the least, inclement, owing to the intrusion of various booty-seeking, adventurous soldiers who came to pillage the resources of the land. The situation was further compounded by the mountainous topography of the area that further prevented free flow of goods and services. All these notwithstanding, Akoko confronted these challenges and survived, using both internal and external forces to its advantage. While Akoko military brass like Arogunyo and Bakare of Afa (now Oke-Agbe), Odu Olowuro and Odu Olujodo of Ogbagi, and gallant military forces of Oka, Arigidi and many other warlords from various Akoko towns and villages resisted the hegemony of external imperialists, Akoko youths and volunteers joined other freedom fighters in the Ekitiparapo/Kiriji war to humble the Ibadan imperialists. They equally joined their Ijumu neighbours in the Ogidi Alliance to put an end to Nupe hegemony in Northeastern Yorubaland. More importantly, however, was the unification of Akoko which commenced in the late nineteenth century through which many Akoko communities that had long been affiliated with other kingdoms eventually returned to merge with their kith and kin in Akokoland.

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