

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS TO CHIEFTAINCY AFFAIRS IN YORUBALAND, NIGERIA, WEST AFRICA

Jacob Kehinde Ayantayo
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper examines the socio-religious dimension in chieftaincy in Africa, with regard to history, categories of chiefs, choice of chiefs, and their acts of governance. It observes that, in spite of the wind of social change that has affected African cultural heritage positively and negatively, chieftaincy institutions still remains vibrant. This paper also examines the problems and prospects of the chieftaincy institution in the contemporary age.

Stating the Problem

As a matter of historical fact, the chieftaincy institution is one of the age-old cultural heritages of Yoruba on the one hand, and of Africa in general. This institution, in spite of the wind of social change affecting it positively or negatively, still remains vibrant even in the contemporary age of globalization. Thus, it retains its glory that makes it a pride of Africa in the world polity. But the relevant questions which this paper seeks to answer are: what factors have contributed to its stability and sustainability? And, what are its problems and prospects? What efforts should be put in place to preserve the institution? To the best of our knowledge, the socio-religious belief, sentiment, conviction, attitude, creed, dogma, feeling and ideology of Yoruba people, among others, constitute formidable forces enhancing the continuity of this institution. In order to understand this fully, this work is divided into eight sections to cover the following: chieftaincy institutions in history, categories of chiefs, choice of chiefs, chiefs and their acts of governance. Others include chieftainship in modern time, factors enhancing the

sustainability and stability of chieftaincy institution, problems and prospects of chieftainship. Our scope of study is Yoruba land where we have access to first hand information, records, and historical facts. However, when necessary, reference could be made to Africa in general. We shall discuss the above inter-related variables one after the other.

Chieftainship in the History in Yoruba Land

One cannot say precisely when chieftaincy institutions started in Yoruba land. It must have started since the creation of society. The creation of civil society for any reason presupposes governance. Certain people constitute the governing agents. Governance has to do with formulation and execution of rules and regulations for the benefit of society. Rules and regulations become necessary in civil societies when one considers the state of nature of man which, according to Hobbes, is the state in which men lived prior to the setting up of organized society. In that state, there were no laws, no authority, no morality, no sense of justice and injustice, no notions of right and wrong. Everybody simply pursued the satisfaction of his desire (Hobbes 1946:32). The creation of society put an end to this situation. The emergence of state therefore created room for governance. One can assume that chiefs are governors of their respective societies. On this note, we can then argue that chieftaincy as an institution, whether or not it is well organized as a state, began in antiquity following the formation of any given society.

For the Yoruba society, we can say that the chieftaincy institution began with the emergence of Oduduwa as the ruler of Ile-Ife (the first town in Yoruba land) and the dispersal from there of his descendants who later headed their respective kingdoms. Yet, what is at least certain is that the socio-political history of the Yoruba over the years

before colonization was characterized by the existence of several kingdoms. These kingdoms were under the headship of chiefs whether major (as in the case of kings) or minor (as in the case of lesser chiefs) because chieftainship deals with act of governance. From this point, we can establish two things. One, a discussion of the origin of Yoruba kingdom could be associated with the place of *Ife* in Yoruba history and cosmology. *Ile-Ife* is regarded in history as the cradle of Yoruba race. Oduduwa was the founder of *Ile-Ife*. Therefore, he could be regarded as the first chief in *Ile-Ife*. This should be so because as history has it, under Oduduwa, *Ife* developed a centralized and highly sophisticated political system. (Adediran 1998:2). As Afolayan has put it, the climax of this development was the emergence of kingdoms (under the headship of chiefs) in different parts of what later became Yoruba land. (Afolayan 1998:14). In other words, the origin of chieftaincy is dated to the time immemorial.

Categories of Chiefs in Yoruba Society

For the purpose of emphasis, we need to know who a chief is before we discuss the categories of chiefs we have in Yoruba society. The term chief simply refers to a ruler of a tribe, clan, dynasty, family, group, horde, house, native pedigree, people and race. Within the context of our discussion, a chief is a ruler of a town, village or hamlet. The chief derives his authority from God and people. A chief is invariably a leader, i.e. the one who leads his people. Leadership goes with chieftaincy, which is the power of control over a group of people. In other words, chiefs are traditional leaders. They include paramount chiefs like Obas, Obis, Waziris and Emirs.

There are different categories of chiefs in Yoruba land. The categorization follows Yoruba political tradition, which is embedded in Yoruba theology, cosmology,

cosmogony and philosophy. (Nabofa 1999:31). In Yoruba society there are two categories of chiefs viz. major and minor chiefs. Each of these is also in degree, caliber, grade, status and class.

Regarding the major chiefs, we have kings or *Oba* – who are crowned chiefs and also the councils of chiefs. The council of chiefs headed by the *Oba* consists of six main chiefs. In Oyo kingdom, they are regarded as *Oyo-Mesi*. They are very powerful and the *Oba* cannot do without them. They are also the kingmakers and the highest ruling body; however, the *Oba* appoints them. There are six categories of minor chiefs:

Palace Chiefs – They are appointed by the *Oba* to discharge certain responsibilities such as up-keep of the palace, running errands for the king, cleaning the palace and ensuring good running of the palace. These chiefs because of their closeness to the king could be regarded as the king's confidants.

Warrior Chiefs – They consist of hunters and the powerful people in the society. The *Oba* appoints them chiefs. These chiefs defend the town against internal threats and external invasions. They provide security network for the town as soldiers of the community and ensure peace in their community in time of war and social unrest.

Market Chiefs – They can include both males and females. They oversee the smooth running of market places in town. They ensure free access to the market. They are in charge of welfare of marketers regarding buying and selling. They also ensure that sanity prevails and also work towards cleanliness of the market.

Women Chiefs – They see to women affairs. They are not what we would today call feminists per se, but they protect the interests of women in community affairs. They

provide the council of chiefs with information about women, and how women could be mobilized to contribute to the smooth administration of the town.

The Youth Chiefs – These are few chiefs appointed from different age groups to represent the interests of youth. The youth constitute an important social class in Yoruba society and therefore, their interests are always taken into consideration because of their capacity to offer valuable services that will enhance the welfare of community members. For example, they engage in various communal works such as the construction of roads, dams, market places, and the repair of fallen bridges, the channeling of streams, and at times, the building of king's palace.

Religious Chiefs – These consist of diviners, prophets, prophetesses, magicians, and medicine men. Precisely, they are leaders of devotees of different divinities in town (Ray 1999:72). These chiefs, a few of whom appointed by the *Oba*, are constantly called upon to meet and offer prayer, ritual or sacrifice during both critical and less critical occasions such as planting and harvest seasons, war, drought, pestilence and annual propitiatory sacrifice for ensuring the welfare of the community (Fadipe 1970:206).

Honorary Chiefs – These are appointed by the kings. In the Yoruba society, it is the tradition that honorary chieftaincy titles could be given to indigenes or non-indigenes who have brought outstanding honour and glory to town through personal dedication and patriotic commitment to their community.

All the chiefs regardless of their status and functions work hand in hand towards rendering selfless service to humanity and towards the improvement of community. This goes by way of offering outstanding services in the defense of a cause popularly adjudged

to be positive, relevant and beneficial to the town and humanity and of bravery in the protection and defense of community interest, public service, safety of life and property.

Choice of a Chief (Oba/King)

In order to appreciate the factors that foster the sustainability of chieftaincy institution in Yoruba land, it is important to consider methods of choosing chief, which are both social and religious enterprises. Since the *Oba* is the head of chieftainship, we shall discuss methods of installing an *Oba* in Yoruba land, the phenomenon that makes the institution an enduring one.

Yoruba people are traditionally methodical in everything. For example, there are specific procedures to follow in enthroning *Oba* (the major or head chief). Following the demise of an *Oba*, the kingmaker will swing into swift traditional actions, which involve searching for the next *Oba* through spiritual and secular means. The starting point is the kingmaker's request made upon the next ruling house to nominate candidate(s) as the case may be. Let us note that there are ruling houses where Obaship candidates are selected on a rotational order. There is always healthy competition among candidates within the next ruling house. Candidates engage in persuading, campaigning and petitioning the kingmakers and the elders in the house to favour them in the selection exercise. Public opinion also is important in selecting one out of many candidates. This is why we say that chieftainship is somewhat a social enterprise. For instance, the whole house expects the prospective candidate to meet certain social standard, which is a reflection of Yoruba social morality. That is, prospective chieftaincy title holder should be courageous, brave, intelligent, wise, patriotic, a man of good character and should be

relatively rich or wealthy – richness to Yoruba is a manifestation of hard work, which is expected of prospective office holders. In addition, the person must have a stable and good family life, because the Yoruba believe that charity begins at home.

After wide consultation and lengthy consideration among elders of the ruling house, the head of the house will announce to the kingmaker the name of the candidate unanimously chosen by the whole house. Once the whole house arrives at this decision, all the remaining candidates will rally round and give their supports to the emerging nominee for the glory of the ruling house in question. Today, unlike in the past, an aggrieved candidate may challenge the decision of the house in court of law; but more often than not, the whole exercise is not always a do or die affair.

However, in the case where it is difficult for the ruling house in question to arrive at a decision, the kingmakers will be called upon to intervene. What they do is to bring religious dimension to the whole exercise. This involves invitation of *Ifa* diviner who will use his divination object(s) in order to divine who the *Ifa* wishes should become *Oba*. It is important to note here in passing that the diviners who have esoteric knowledge are capable of interpreting the mysteries of life, the hidden information, convey, and uncover the past and to look into the future and also convey the messages of a god or gods. Since a chief is regarded as representative of God, Yoruba people always call upon diviners to give guidance in daily affairs especially regarding the choice of king. Once the diviner conveys the message of God by naming one person out of the candidates, the king makers will move to the next action, which is the installation of the *Oba*.

Installation of Oba (Chiefs)

Traditions vary from town to town, regarding the methods and procedures for enthroning the *Oba*. We shall discuss only the common features.

The first step is the invitation of religious leaders by the kingmakers to prescribe and perform necessary religious rites, rituals, ceremony, formality, observance, practice and traditions, associated with enthronement. All these are addressed to the ancestral spirits, past heroes, heroines and rulers of the community in order to ask them to transfer authority to the next *Oba* and to support and guide him in all his political administration. These rituals could be performed a week before the formal installation of the *Oba*.

On the day of installation proper, certain rituals also will be performed, some secretly and some openly in the presence of the teeming populace who as a matter of tradition troop out to witness the ceremony. This is not only to demonstrate their approval of the appointment but also to show their happiness and loyalty towards the enthronement of the new *Oba*. Before the teeming populace, the kingmakers instruct the *Oba*-elect to prostrate three times to woo the approval of ancestral spirits and that of every male and female member of the society. As he rises from the third prostration, the whole crowd will echo “*Ka-bi-ye-si*”, which means, “no one dares to query his authority”. This is a sign of approval of his candidacy. The kingmaker will now pronounce that the *Oba* will no longer in his lifetime prostrate before anybody. This is followed by sticking to his cap a certain leaf (ewe – akoko) - a symbol of authority - on the part of the *Oba*.

After this rite, the *Oba* will be taken to the palace for further rituals. Tradition says that he will be offered the tongue and the heart of the last *Oba*, which was preserved for him. This consumption finalizes the transfer of power and authority from the past *Oba* to the new *Oba*.

All these religious rituals among others make the *Oba* a sacred personality and a hallowed person. This is because the rituals performed will allow him to acquire a sense of communion with mystical forces, directing him out of himself into the world of ancestral spirits. The impression here is that the chieftaincy title of the *Oba* symbolizes the divine nature of the *Oba* who is now regarded as the representative of the ancestral spirits. Mbiti calls the *Oba* earthly viceroy or vice-regent. (Mbiti 1980:184). The Yoruba according to Idowu regarded the *Oba* as *Oba alase ekeji orisa* – the king, the commander and wielder of authority next to the *orisa* (supernatural object of worship). He is regarded with a level of respect approaching veneration.

The installation of the *Oba* is immediately followed with merriment, which involves feasting, eating, drinking, drumming, singing and dancing. The ceremonies are performed periodically within specific days such as the first, the third and the three-month periods preceding the installation. Such ceremonies are always accompanied with payment by the *Oba* to the council of chiefs certain number of kola, bitter kola, cowries, honey, bag of salt, palm oil, goats and chicken among others. The ceremonies will involve the whole town and is for the enjoyment of the whole town. The purpose of the ceremony is to incorporate the king into the palace and also to introduce him to method of governance. The feasting of the people in town is a way to solicit their support towards effective administration of the town.

Chiefs and their Acts of Governance in Yoruba land

Administration of Yoruba community rests in the hands of *Oba* and his council of chiefs. They meet every five-day mostly (on the market day), except in cases of emergency, to deliberate, consider, debate and examine both positive and negative issues

or matters affecting the society in general. They start every deliberation with prayer and invocation of ancestral spirits to take preeminence and bestow guidance in all their deliberations. There is no strict agenda, but they discuss the issues as member of the council who have freedom of expression in raising them. What makes their discussion fluent and peaceful has to do with the custom of deferring to seniors. The senior chiefs speak first before the junior ones. In all, there was room for tolerance of opinions. (Lenski 1966:20).

The council of chiefs constitutes the legislative, executive and judicial arms of traditional system of government, which perform several civil and military functions. For example, the legislative functions include making laws on issues related to intra and inter town civil affairs, commercial and overall economic activities, security of life and properties of the members of the community. Laws are made concerning penalties awaiting whoever violates the laws of the land. The executive functions performed by chiefs consist of taking decisions on question of policies, relation between towns, its offshoots, and tributaries and external relations. Under external relations come questions of peace and war, question of finance (whether to raise funds by special taxation), and public works (the clearing of paths and bush, the bridging of swollen streams, the building of town wall and moat, the building and repair of the king's palace and the making of roads. In like manner, the judicial function of the council of chiefs consists of settling disputes between chiefs, between parties belonging to different wards. They also entertain criminal cases or indictable offences such as murder, treason, burglary, arson, unlawful wounding, manslaughter, incest, witchcraft and sorcery.

While the chiefs engage in these civic duties, they always seek the support and loyalty of members of their community who are always cooperating. This political structure derives its stability from the custom of regarding the chiefs as representative of ancestral spirits who should be held in honour. Holding the chiefs in honour embraces loyalty and patriotic acts on the parts of members of the society.

Chieftaincy and Modern Time

Modernity, which entails the use of very recent ideas, fashions or ways of thinking to approach an issue, has both negative and positive effect on chieftaincy institution in Yoruba land. The negative impact could be understood in the way the Europeans maltreated and rendered redundant the chieftaincy institution following the introduction of Western system of government; this has made traditional system of government subsidiary. (Oyeweso and Osin 1998:39). Today, the chiefs are not seriously recognized owing to the emergence of the councilors, chairmen, governors, senators, members of house of assembly and the president as the governing agents at ward, local, state and federal levels of government. People in the society now show more allegiance to these personalities than to the *Oba*. On this account, it can be reasonably argued that the changes, which are occurring in traditional societies, are affecting both the structure of chieftainship and the values attached to this sacred institution. Worse still, the government in power sometimes politicizes the chieftaincy institution. During civilian government, we had instances in which the government is not favorably disposed to particular chiefs (on the ground that the chief belonged to a party different from the party in power) has punished, maltreated and banished certain chieftaincy titleholders. For example, an *Alaafin* of Oyo was deposed by the then Action Group Government in the

late 50s in the then western region. On that account, chieftaincy institution and its survival were subjected to the whim and caprices of the government in power. For this reason, many chieftaincy titleholders unavoidably have to dance to the tune of the government in power for favour even when such action is against the tradition. This is one of the negative developments of modern time.

However, we still notice positive aspects of the change which, to our mind, enhance the preservation of chieftaincy institution. For example, the present political arrangement necessitates the need for politicians to start their political enterprise from the grassroots level. Arising from this, they do solicit the support, approval, assistance, backing, cooperation, loyalty, patronage and succor of the kings whom they believe have control over their subjects. By so doing, chieftaincy institution becomes indispensable as a force to reckon with consciously or unconsciously in the political arrangement in the Nigerian nation.

It is the recognition of this fact that obliges the present government to provide certain facilities for the chiefs such as building palaces for them, giving them cars, furnishing their palaces, supplying them with water (through boreholes) and constant supply of electricity (through standby generators). As a matter of fact, most chiefs in Yoruba land are on the payroll of the government to various degrees. Besides, the chiefs are always referred to by the government during critical times especially during impasse between certain individuals, ethnic groups and various arms or organs of government. In history we remember when the late Sani Abacha, an ex-head of state in Nigeria called on the first class *Oba* to help resolve crisis between his government and certain ethnic

groups in Nigeria. From the above instance, we can see that the chieftaincy institution is an enduring one.

More importantly, the chieftaincy institution has gained credibility and accreditation from the government by virtue of the legalization of the institution. It is a legalized institution because some of the chieftaincy titles are gazetted. Evidence of these abounds in Nigeria National Archives. In fact, starting from colonial time to date we have government laws and edicts passed and enacted at different times concerning chieftaincy matters, on issues related to enthronement, deposition and death of chiefs. (Western Regional Gazette, 1954). This political apparatus establishes instruments of council of chiefs across the country. Based on this system, the government issues white papers on chieftaincy matters. This provides the reason why the government always presents the office staff to the chiefs - especially first class chiefs - in Nigeria as a way of legalizing, confirming and ratifying the entire enthronement procedures.

Factors Sustaining Chieftaincy Institution in Yoruba Land

At least, there are two distinctive factors which enhance the sustainability and stability of chieftainship in Yoruba. These are social and religious factors. We shall consider this in turn as brief as possible.

1. Social Factors

In order to understand this social factor, we need to lay the premise that chieftaincy is a social affair and therefore it is an element of social status. Status in this context refers to one's position in society. By implication, chieftaincy is a symbol of social status, which involves ideas about the political and legal rights of persons within socio-political community (Turner 1988:1). On this note, we believe that chieftaincy is

connected with social prestige, credit, distinction, eminence, fame, glory, honour, importance and influence as far as Yoruba people are concerned. It is a common thing that many people wish to become chiefs because chiefs are universally respected. This is so because chieftaincy connotes the power and authority to control, direct and influence others – especially non-chieftaincy titleholders. It is this consciousness that sustains the institution directly or indirectly. It is no wonder why the status and symbolic nature of chieftaincy has been incorporated into the present religious circles. For example, both the contemporary Islamic and Christian social structure makes provision for conferment of chieftaincy honour to some members of the church or mosque. Today in religious circles, we have chieftaincy titles such as *Mayegun Ijo* (the one who ensures that peace reigns supreme in the religious circle), *Majekobaje* (the chief who ensures that everything goes smoothly in the church/mosque), *Otun* and *Osi Ijo* (the two can be considered as lieutenants of the head of the church/mosque). All these chiefs constitute the governing authorities in the church/mosque; they perform legislative, executive and judicial functions for their respective religious centres. It is ironical, that all the chieftaincy titles are replica of traditional chieftaincy titles.

The same mentality has even been extended to the wider society. For example, as a sign of honour and desire for social class, we have a type of social arrangement, which makes it possible for non-indigenes in a particular town to become chiefs who govern indigenes residing in that particular town. For instance, we have *Eze Ndi Igbo*, chief, who represents the interest of all Igbos in Ibadan. We also have *Seriki Hausawa* (who represents the interest of Hausa people in Ibadan, a Yoruba town). All these chiefs have palaces and their own sets of chiefs. The importance the Yoruba or African people placed

on chieftaincy as status booster could not be divorced from the awards of honour and degree to graduates in Nigerian universities. The same is the reason for the (National) Honour Awards given at local, state and federal levels to distinguished citizens in Nigerian society. The honour and awards, according to Yoruba, is synonymous with chieftaincy titles. Because Yoruba people are title conscious, chieftainship remains an enduring one. On this note, Lipset is right to define status as the positive estimation of honour, or prestige received by the individuals or position (Lipset 1968:301-302). Thus, chieftaincy titles involve the felt perceptive of people in Yoruba society.

2. Religious Factors

In all ramifications, traditional religion is the basis of chieftaincy institution in Yoruba land. This is so because in Yoruba land, there is no distinction between religion and politics. Politics relates to chieftainship. For the Yoruba, political laws are embedded in religious laws. This goes with the impression popularized by Idowu about Yoruba people that in all things including their philosophy, politics, law and business, they are religious. In fact, Idowu proves that religion forms the foundation and the all governing principles of life for them and that it forms the themes of songs, makes topics for minstrelsy, finds vehicles in myths, folktales, proverbs and saying and is the basis of philosophy (Idowu 1996:5).

It is within this premise that the chiefs are regarded as sacred personalities as earlier discussed. Given this fact, every person in the society is obliged to be loyal to the *Oba*. As the *Kabiyesi*, nobody has the right to question his authority. This is why *Ifa* oracle condemns any act of disobedience to the king in strong terms as this:

Ida ni i m'eje
Ida ni i m'eje
Eni ba gbe oju ogangan s'oba.
Ti oba ni ase;
Ti oba ni ida.
Nje eso, mo ni eso
Ki ogbon inu eni
Ma gbe 'ni lu ida oba.
The sword sucks the blood
Of those who are disobedient or rude to the king.
To the king belongs authority;
To the king belongs the sword
Then take it easy. I say, take it easy
That one's cleverness
May not push one against the king's sword.
(Adewale 1986:67).

The above makes it incumbent on the part of members of the society to be loyal to the chiefs and to render their support, allegiance, and respect to the institution. Since there is no vacuum in chieftainship, as it is a religious position, the institution enjoys continuity and respect by all, regardless of their classes in Yoruba society. In fact, the position of Obaship is so respected that every celebrant of events such as naming, funeral, or birthday parties must take some quantity of food whether raw or cooked to the Oba in his palace.

Problems and Prospects of Chieftainship in Yoruba Land

The status – symbolic nature of chieftaincy titles, which makes kingship attractive or appealing to all and sundry, goes with its attendant problems. Some of these are unhealthy rivalry between contestants for titles, especially major chieftaincy titles like Obaship. This has resulted in numerous court cases. Whenever the case is not well resolved by the courts of law, the aggrieved party and his sympathizers resort to conflict, insult and argumentation, which often result in destruction of life and property and finally to social unrest. This is common in Yoruba land e.g. Owo crisis regarding *Olowo's Stool* in Ondo State of Nigeria.

In addition, we observed cases of unnecessary power tussle or struggling among certain categories of chiefs over the question of superiority. A case in Yoruba land was the power tussle between the Alaafin of Oyo and Ooni of Ife. The struggle eventually led to the creation of Osun state from Oyo State. This provided an opportunity for Alaafin and Ooni to become chairmen of their respective state councils of *Oba*. To this day, there is still crisis among first class *Obas* in Yorubaland.

Another problem associated with chieftaincy affairs in Yoruba land is that some of the occupants of chieftaincy posts are educated and as a result are sometimes tainted with western attitudes. This causes them to look down upon some traditions and values associated with the office. This is a negative development. Also associated with this is the abuse of power or office by some chiefs. For instance, those who became chiefs with political or economic interests are fond of exploiting their subjects by denying them certain rights. This is contrary to tradition. By so doing, the institution has lost the aura of

mystique that goes with it. Today, through the courtesy of foreign religions – Islam and Christianity, an average chieftaincy holder has been de-collateralized.

All the above notwithstanding, the chieftaincy institution will have a better future when one considers the caliber of people who have shown and who are still showing interest in becoming chiefs. For example, in the early nineties we read in the dailies about *Oba* (Prof.) Ololade Folayan – the Akesin of Ora, a biochemist who resigned from the Dept. of Biochemistry, Obafemi Awolowo University, to become the *Oba* of a rural area in Osun State. The same goes for many academicians, business tycoons, industrialists and retired civil servants who show positive interest in being made chiefs. In the light of this, we envisage that these new sets of people will try to refine the institution by demystifying and by removing all the archaic religious traditions associated with obaship institution in primitive times. At the same time, they will attempt to legitimize the institution by modernizing it for the global age. But, for the institution to maintain itself as a living tradition, certain steps should be taken by individuals and the government. On the part of the individual chiefs, we advocate a return to tradition. The chiefs should start to think and act honorably as it was in the past. Suggestively, a chief should commit no action that has any element of opprobrium. Yielding to the recommendation of Ayisi, chiefs should not engage in adulterous practices or incestuous congresses, stealing, sorcery, or kindred actions (Ayisi 1972:48). Rather, the virtues expected of chiefs are generosity, kindness, humility, and respect for elders, fecundity, respects for ancestral spirits, living exemplary life, preservation of traditional values and moral consciousness in all their doings. (Ayantayo 2002:1).

The government has a role to play. This includes reviewing chieftaincy laws in order to close any loopholes that have led to court cases that have sometimes diminished the institution. The government in collaboration with king makers should be fair over the appointment, conferment, enthronement and deposition of chiefs. The judges who handle chieftaincy cases should be impartial and make justice their watchword. All stakeholders in chieftaincy matter should be fair to the tradition, which sustains the institution.

Concluding Remarks

From the various arguments regarding the chieftaincy institution in Yorubaland, we believe that the institution has come to stay regardless of the winds of change that might have affected it. Since chieftainship is a cultural affair, and since the chiefs or kings never die because there is no vacuum in ruler-ship in Yorubaland, we are optimistic that chieftaincy institution will never die. Given the socio-religious dimension to it in Yorubaland as explored in this work, we have a ray of hope that chieftainship will continue to survive and thrive in Africa and even in the global context. This is so because it is one of the African cultural heritages, that will never die, but can only transform for the better.

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