

Benin – Ife Relations in Historical Perspective. A Study of two Kingdoms, one Institution

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The study examines, in historical perspective, the nature and character of the relationship between Benin and Ile-Ife. It observes that these are two different kingdoms laying claim to one institution. The work, therefore, discusses the origins of the two kingdoms, indicating their connection with the legendary Oduduwa that has remained the source of controversy between the two kingdoms. It is, therefore, clear that the controversy has nothing to do with the people themselves, but with the leadership, that is, kingship in both Benin and Ile-Ife. The study, therefore, concludes that their relationship is perhaps mystical and providential, given that even in the modern time both are befallen with similar and close-range events that cannot be easily explained.

[Benin; Ile –Ife; Oduduwa; Ekaladerhan; Nigeria]

Introduction

Benin and Ile-Ife are two controversial kingdoms over which polemics have arisen as to the issues of origin and leadership, that is, kingship. Both kingdoms appear to have reasons for justifying their positions in terms of the supremacy of one over the other. The polemic is not unconnected with the whole question of power politics and power relations. The problem, however, arose because the bulk of the history of Africa and indeed Nigeria is a product of unwritten sources and the issue of dating. It is worth noting that until the advent of the Europeans, Africa lacked writing, except in very few places such as Egypt, the earliest centre of civilization in the continent, where they practiced hieroglyphics, a form of pictorial writings that constituted the mode of communication among the people then.

As it is, therefore, the historian is faced with an enormous task, that is, the challenge of unravelling the truth. The task before us is, therefore,

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assiduous but achievable. For, it is the work of the historian to reconstruct the past, even though it is gone, vanished and unrecoverable. Yet, it is our duty to reflect on the past and attempt to resolve burning national issues. This is the historian's task. In doing this, the historian's craft of laying bare as much as possible to arrive at objectivity will be assiduously carried out, even as one thread very softly as the historian hardly passes judgment and only allows the sources to speak for themselves.

Ife Origins

As the people had no knowledge of writing in the early period, we can only infer their origins from traditions of the people. As for Ile-Ife, two traditions have become popular in this regard, but both must not be accepted on their face value, that is, taken literally. The first of these traditions, which can be termed the creation story emanated from Ile-Ife. Although this tradition has many variants, the gist is the same. In essence, the tradition claims that the ancestors of the Yoruba people came from heaven.¹ These were sixteen Ooye people who are called "immortals". They were sent, according to tradition, by the most high-God-(Olorun-Olodumare) – to come and create land and human beings to exist on the land.

The creation of land was necessary because at this time, the entire world was covered by water. The Ooye were, therefore, given sound; cockerel to spread it and iron with which to work. The most prominent among the Ooye were Obatala, Oduduwa, Obaweri, Obawinrin, and so on. It was said originally that Obatala was the leader, but during the journey of the Ooye, Obatala was said to have got drunk and slept. While he was asleep, Oduduwa took over the leadership from him. These Ooye came to the area around Ile-Ife and landed on Oranfe Hill. There, they organized great land and subsequently human population. From the spot, land spread to cove Ile-Ife and that is why the town is called Ile-Ife, that is, land that expands. Since this story may relate to a period of emergence, then it must be associated with an event which took place from 2000 BC onward.²

The second tradition, which is the popular tradition, was the one that first emanated in the writings of Clapperton in the 19th century, who

¹ J. A. ATANDA, *A Comprehensive History of the Yoruba People Up to 1800*, edit. by G. O. OGUNTOMISIN, Ibadan 2007, p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 5–8.

reproduced excerpts from the work of Bello.³ This tradition became popular when Reverend Samuel Johnson included it in his book, *The History of the Yorubas*.⁴ This tradition, which might be called “migration story”, relates that the Yoruba people originated from Mecca in Arabia. They are said to have been the descendants of one Lamurudu (Nimrod). The offsprings of this Lamurudu were Oduduwa and his children who formed the Yoruba group. Other descendants of Lamurudu are said to be the king of Gobir as well as the King of Kukawa. All these descendants left Mecca in consequence of a war, which broke out in that country after the rise of Islam. This was largely because they did not want to embrace that religion. Oduduwa led his own group to settle again at Ile-Ife. Since this migration relates an event following the rise of Islam, then it must have happened sometimes in the 7th century AD.

Obvious difficulties arose in accepting these versions at face value. At least, one aspect of it indicates that the tradition cannot be taken literally as it is taken in respect of the leadership of Oduduwa. Both versions named Oduduwa as the leader of the Yoruba people, but when we put both stories in time perspective, one above 2000 BC or a little later, the other definitely is the 7th century AD; it will be discovered that almost 3,000 years separated both events. It must then be clear that if Oduduwa was a real person, then he could not have lived to be the leader of both events, which the traditions relate.

This would mean that the stories must be examined more carefully to see what historical information could be deduced. In doing this, we must understand oral tradition itself, that it has one characteristic of lumping together episodes which belonged to different periods and presenting them as one. Understood in this light, it would be clear that the origins of the Yoruba people being referred to as the creation story as well as the other version of the story, that is, the migration story certainly refer to different episodes.

Indeed, as Akinjogbin has rightly argued, each of the stories must be talking of origins of different leaders, for which it is time to provide a common leadership.⁵ Indeed, if the traditions were carefully examined, it would be clear that at least one of the traditions has indicated two

³ H. CLAPPERTON, *Narratives of Travels and Discoveries in Central Africa*, London 1828.

⁴ S. JOHNSON, *History of the Yorubas*, Lagos 1921.

⁵ I. A. AKINJOGBIN, *The Concept of Origins in Yoruba History: The Ife Example*, in: *University of Ife: Department of History Seminar Paper*, March 1980, p. 3.

leaderships. Therefore, it follows that, the Oduduwa episode must have been lumped with the Obatala's episode, even though both belonged to different era or periods. Indeed, the Ikedu tradition, which is older than any of the traditions and which came to light recently through research, coupled with archaeological and linguistics evidence really emerged in Yoruba history about the 8th century AD. In other words, the origin of the history of the Yoruba people did not begin with Oduduwa. To sum up this aspect of this study, therefore, researches based on oral traditions, archaeology and linguistics have indicated the following concerning the history of the Yoruba.

That the hitherto popularized origin of the Yoruba people from either Mecca or Egypt cannot be sustained with that of research. Instead, our suggestion is that the Yoruba originated from West Africa as they speak a variant of the KWA group of the Niger-Congo family of languages. The tradition, which indicates that the people came from heaven, should not be taken literally. It is only indicated that the Yoruba people became conscious of themselves in the very remote past and that in the affected homeland, Ile-Ife must be one of the areas occupied. Another area had been identified as Iwo Eleru in Oba-Ile⁶ near Akure in Ondo-State as well as the Mejiro cave.

It is also significant to note that Yoruba history must have begun about 2000 BC or about later, but certainly must have begun in the first millennium BC.⁷ It also follows that, there was a period in Yoruba history long before Oduduwa emerged. This period covering about 3,000 years features developments in Yorubaland before the advent of Oduduwa. Besides, it also follows that, the fame of Oduduwa should rise not because Yoruba people originated from him, but from the fact that like all other great men, he succeeded in planting his footsteps on the sand of Yoruba history so much so that his name has become indelible.

Before delving into the origins of Benin, let us examine the character, Oduduwa, who has become so prominent in Yoruba history and who the Benin claims to be their own.⁸

⁶ U. BEIER, Before Oduduwa, in: *Odu: Journal of Yoruba and Related Studies*, 3, 1970, pp. 25–32.

⁷ R. ARMSTRONG, *The Story of West African Languages*, Ibadan 1964.

⁸ Without mincing words, the bone of contention between the Ile-Ife and Benin leadership or kingship tussle is the personage and role played by the legendary Oduduwa mystical figure. It has indeed been difficult for historians and researchers to unravel the mystery surrounding the person of Oduduwa.

The Advent of Oduduwa in Yoruba History

The name Oduduwa is very prominent in oral tradition as the leader of the Yoruba people. But despite this popularity of his name, the man was and probably still is one of the greatest enigmas in Yoruba history. The popular belief among the Yoruba is that Oduduwa was their progenitor. To them, their very existence began with him. Little wonder, the people say, the Yoruba, the *Omo Oduduwa*, and vice-versa. But there are sceptics who have doubted the existence of the man. To these sceptics, Oduduwa was more or less a leader figure who hardly existed in reality. His person and his name were said to have been invented for propaganda purpose. The big question then is, was Oduduwa, a myth or reality?

In answering this question, our attitude is that, neither the Yoruba view of Oduduwa nor that of the sceptics about the man is entirely correct. The Yoruba people probably have exaggerated Oduduwa's place in their history. In this regard, enough have been said to show that Yoruba history did not begin with Oduduwa. That, in fact, there was a period of almost 3,000 years of historical development among the Yoruba before Oduduwa came.⁹ On the other hand, the sceptics who have doubted the existence of the man seem to be oblivious of the historical hints in oral tradition. From such hints, there appear to be considerable evidence that the man really existed and made considerable achievements.

From oral tradition, it seems clear that this man did not migrate from outside Yoruba territory, the Ikedu traditions have made it clear that he took advantage of the political weakness in the kingdom of Ife to wrest power from the Ugbo (Igbo) people who at that point in time were being governed by Obatala. The episode of the conflict between Obatala and Oduduwa is well featured in an enactment or re-enactment event,¹⁰ which forms part of the *Olojo* festival in Ile-Ife till today.

In the re-enactment event, it has been made clear that at the time of Oduduwa's advent, there was a context between two groups, one led by Obatala and the other by Oduduwa. In the context, Oduduwa and his group became victorious and seized power. In the context, Oduduwa was supported by some who were dissatisfied with the political situation in Ile-Ife at that time. Prominent among such supporters was Obameri.¹¹

⁹ BEIER, pp. 25–32; JOHNSON, p. 13. See also J. A. ATANDA, *An Introduction to Yoruba History*, Ibadan 1980, pp. 4–5.

¹⁰ See "Obatala Festival", *Nigerian Magazine*, No. 52, 1956.

¹¹ I. A. AKINJOGBIN, Yorubaland before Oduduwa, in: *University of Ife: Department of History Seminar Paper*, March 1981, pp. 17–18.

The climax of the context came when the Oduduwa group seized the *Aare* crown from the Obatala group. The Ugbo (Igbo) group under Obatala made a futile attempt to counterattack and recover power, but they failed. This episode is also preserved in oral tradition in an event connected with Moremi¹² – an exceptionally beautiful lady with political sagacity who succeeded in saving the Oduduwa group from the Oduduwa attackers, that is, the Obatala group.

The Oduduwa group succeeded in the context with the Obatala group for two major reasons. First, there was a political weakness in Ile-Ife kingdom, which made it difficult if not impossible for the Obatala group to mobilize forces to defeat Oduduwa. Secondly, the Oduduwa group appeared to have a better mastery of the iron weapons. Indeed, it is known in tradition that it was during the time of Oduduwa that the weapon called *Ida* or sword became an effective instrument of warfare in Yorubaland. Because Oduduwa seized power, some people have regarded him as an invader from outside, but evidence from oral tradition and other unwritten sources have indicated that Oduduwa did not come from Mecca or Egypt; that in fact, he was living in one of the neighbouring states, which formed part of Ife kingdom. And that he really moved from a hill settlement of Oranfe Hill to conquer the capital, Ile-Ife.¹³

Having seized power, Oduduwa began to make impact on Ife politics. Thus, his coming marked the beginning of a new dynasty in Ile-Ife, that is, the Oduduwa dynasty. This dynasty was not only of importance to Ile-Ife, it became of importance to the whole of Yorubaland. Oduduwa also established a dynamic leadership, which revitalized the process of state formation in Ile-Ife.¹⁴

It is not certain how many years Oduduwa reigned before he died, but the fortunate thing was that his successors continued the process of dynamic leadership. As a result of the foundation laid by him and the follow up activities of his successors, Ile-Ife became a strongly centralized state, a centre of economic development as well as a centre of religious and artistic development.¹⁵ The process of a new age began very early in the 10th century AD, that is, about 900 AD and its influences lasted till about 1460 AD.

¹² Moremi has since become a highly revered woman in the history of Ile-Ife in particular and Yorubaland in general. It is to her that the victory of the Oduduwa group over the Obatala group attributed.

¹³ ATANDA, p. 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 27–38.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Benin Origins

Like Ile-Ife, there are many versions of the origin of Benin. The first is Chief (Dr) Jacob Uwadiae Egharevba's¹⁶ account stating that, "*many years ago, the Benin came all the way from Egypt to found a more secure shelter in this part of the world after a short stay in the Sudan and at Ile-Ife*". This account takes no real confidence of the culture which migrant people bring along with themselves to their newfound land. As a further proof that the Benin people do not come from Egypt, Prince Ena Basimi Eweka¹⁷ argued that, one may say that the Egyptian writing culture is significantly absent in the Benin or Edo culture. The origin of the Edo people remains on Edoland and cannot have its origin from Egypt, which lends none of their culture to the Edo. The nearest in form and style to Edo culture is that of Ancient Romans whose laws, cultural, social, and architectural forms compare in similar terms to the ancient Benin or Edo. This is not to say that the Benin migrated from Rome, but it indicates that life springs up at different points on the earth surface and the Edo people cannot be excluded from such a natural phenomenon. In short, no one can say where the Edo people came from. The Edo mythology says that Benin is the cradle of the world. According to Benin tradition, *Edo orisiagbon*, meaning, "Edo is the cradle of the world". It is believed that all other people started life in Edoland for the *Oba* of Benin (King of Benin) owns the land as given to him by God Almighty.¹⁸

This can be deduced from the Benin origin of their kings. The Edo mythology goes further to say that when God was creating, he created many kings who were ordained from heaven to govern or administer the earth, but before the kings came down to this world, the Almighty God asked them to make their choices in whatever gift they wanted God to endow them with. Some chose money, others chose worldly possession, but as the King of Benin was about to make his choice, a bird called *Owonwon* suggested to the king to choose that which was in the snail shell (*Ze mwin no r'ughughon*). The bird repeated these words several times and in the end the King (*Oba*) chose the Snail Shell (*Ughughon*), which contained sand. The story goes further that, the king of Benin created land wherever he went thus becoming the owner of the land even up to Europe, as the Edo say, "*Oba yan oto se Evbuebo*".

¹⁶ J. U. EGHAREVBA, *A Short History of Benin*, Ibadan 1968, pp. 1–5.

¹⁷ E. B. EWEKA, *Evolution of Benin Chieftaincy Titles*, Benin 1972, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

In the opinion of the Late *Oba* of Benin, the *Omo N'Oba Uku Akpolofo, Erediauwa I*, in a lecture delivered at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan on 11 September, 1984, titled, *The Evolution of Traditional Rulership in Nigeria*, he described the origin of Benin as follows: "According to our traditional history that evolved out of our ritualistic beliefs, this land of Edo is the origin of the world. It was founded by the first *Oba* of Benin who was the youngest son of the Supreme God. When the Supreme God decided to send his children to the world, He gave an option to each of them to choose what to take away. At that time (as the Holy Book came to confirm at a much later age) the universe was all water and no land. One of the children chose the sign for wealth; the other one took wisdom (or knowledge), another one chose medicine (mystical knowledge).

When it came to the turn of the youngest child, there was apparently nothing left for him to choose; but after looking around the whole place, he saw a snail shell which his senior brothers had overlooked because it was very dirty. He took that, broke it open only to find that it contained ordinary sand.

The Father commended him for his intuition and told him that on getting to the world he should empty the shell in any place of his choice and the place would be his. He emptied it in the area that is now Edo (Benin) and the whole place became land. His other brothers who had been hovering around for somewhere to rest then came round to request for a portion of land to settle on. These other brothers represent the three shades of 'ebo' or 'white men' – as we call them – who occupy the rest of the world. That is why one of the attributes of the *Oba* of Benin is that he owns land up to 'evbo-ebo', meaning European country. And this is also why the earth features so prominently as part of our coronation rituals.

Although some contemporary historians claim that the Benin (Edo) people migrated from the Sudan, the truth is that no scientific historical explanation has been found to account for how the ethnic group known as the Edo (Benin people) came to be where they are today. This is an area I personally would like to see some more work done.

Generally speaking, Traditional Rulership is as old as the community to which it relates. Although as earlier observed, the origin may differ from community to community, there seems to be one feature common to all and one can use the feature in the Benin Kingdom to illustrate. What came to be known as the Benin Kingdom did not begin its existence as a Kingdom in the sense of its being headed by a King or a Traditional Ruler as is known today. It began as a conglomeration of villages, each of which was headed by the oldest man in the community which we refer to as *Odionwere* or village head. But with a cluster of family compounds, each of which was headed by the householder or head of the family. I believe this is the pattern of origin of Traditional Rulership in many parts of the country. As time went on,

*several of the villages joined together for purposes of security against external aggression and for commerce, and the most powerful of the old people automatically became the head of the group. This was what happened in Benin and the first to emerge as such as leader, almost immediately assumed the position of a King for by the wisdom he was described as being like a King in heaven or a King from heaven (Oyevbogie Noriso). This is the origin of the title 'Ogiso' which came to be the title of the earliest Benin Kings, before the advent of Oranmiyan.'*¹⁹

There were thirty-one of these kings who were styled *Ogiso* and their rule lasted for nearly 1,000 years until there was interregnum, which created room for two republican administrators in Evian and Ogiamien before the coming of Oranmiyan.²⁰

The expanded form of the word *Ogiso* is *Ogie-Iso*, which when translated in Edo means, King from Heaven or king of the sky. The word *Ogie* means king, *Iso* means sky or Heaven. Thus, the Edo people believe that their kings come from the sky or more appropriately, from Heaven or from God. It is this belief which explains why the *Oba* is the embodiment of the culture of the Edo people. The story of the people cannot be written without reference to their king or *Oba*.

Thus far, we have been able to demonstrate that Benin and Ile-Ife were indeed two different and distinct kingdoms – one to the East and the other to the West of the modern republic of Nigeria. However, in spite of their unique history and arguments pointing to the fact that both kingdoms never migrated to their present locations, but, in fact, were created in and have always lived on their present sites as ancient kingdoms; we are not oblivious of the fact that in the course of their history and as people who live within the same geographical environment, they must have interacted such that led to institutional affiliation with respect to kingship in Benin and Ile-Ife.²¹

In the light of the above, we will now attempt to examine whether the two kingdoms are indeed of the same kingship institution or not. From the onset, it should be stated that from oral traditions, there is

¹⁹ *Omo N'Oba Erediauwu I*, The Evolution of Traditional Rulership in Nigeria, Lecture delivered at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan on 11 September 1984.

²⁰ See EGHAREVBA, pp. 5–7; also, Eweka, pp. 8–9, V. O. Edo, *The Benin Monarchy, 1897–1978: A study in Institutional Adaptation to Change*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan 2001, p. 182.

²¹ In fact, the main reason for controversy between the two kingdoms is not unconnected with the factor of contiguity in the geographical region in which both are located.

a link between Benin and Ile-Ife that dated back to the 12th century AD or much earlier.

Benin and Ile-Ife – One Institutional Monarchy

The link between Benin and Ile-Ife is not unconnected with the person of Oduduwa who the Benin considered to be Prince Ekaladerhan, the son of the last *Ogiso* of Benin, namely, *Ogiso Owodo*. It is also obvious that both Oduduwa and Ekaladerhan were scavengers and were skilled in hunting and magical powers. While the person of Oduduwa is not in doubt with respect to his leadership position in Ile-Ife and his general acceptability as the progenitor of the Yoruba ethnic group; what, however, is in doubt is the fact that to the Benin, their own Ekaladerhan who wandered to Uhe (Ife) is the acclaimed Oduduwa, whose son, Oranmiyan, came to rule over Benin in the 12th century AD. And before leaving Benin, he gave birth to *Eweka I*. There is, therefore, a link between Benin and Ile-Ife that should not be debated. In fact, in this light, it is significant to note that about the Benin historical link with Ile-Ife, the late *Omo N'Ob.a Uku Akpolopo Erediauwa I* in his lecture referred to above posited that: *“Another important traditional ruler whose origin deserves examination is the Oduduwa of Ife whose origin is also shrouded in myths or legend. He is believed to be the father of the principal rulers of the Yorubaland, the father of Oranmiyan who the father of Eweka I of Benin was and who was also the founder and the first Alaafin of Oyo Kingdom. Ife traditional history says Oduduwa descended from heaven- (in a like manner to the Edo account). Some modern historians say that the great Oduduwa was a fugitive from the moslems of the Middle East and that he came to settle in what is present-day Ile-Ife. We in Benin believe, and there are historical landmarks for such belief, that the person whom the Yoruba call Oduduwa was the fugitive Prince Ekaladerhan, son of the last Ogiso of Benin by name Ogiso Owodo; he found his way to what is now Ile-Ife after gaining freedom from his executioners and wandering for years through the forests. It was after the demise of his father and when, in the interregnum, Evian, and later his son, Ogiamien, tried to assume the kingship that those who knew that Ekaladerhan was alive organised a search party to fetch him. It was this search party that emerged at Ile-Ife and discovered Ekaladerhan, known then to the people of Ile-Ife as Oduduwa and already enjoying the status of a king. After failing to persuade him to return with them to Benin, they succeeded in getting him to send his son Oranmiyan to rule in Benin.”*²²

²² *Omo N'Oba Erediauwa I*, The Evolution of Traditional Rulership in Nigeria, Lecture delivered at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan on 11 September 1984.

Oba Erediauwu I's opinion is hinged on the fact that, at the time of the emergence of Ekaladerhan in Ile-Ife, the kingdom had no ruler and with the *Ifa* prediction that a stranger would come from the East to rule them; the people of Uhe (Ife) accepted his leadership. Unfortunately, or fortunately, Benin is to the East of Ife. Thus, in his joyful relief at the reception he received from his new abode, he exclaimed *Izoduwa*²³ which translated means “*I have not missed my path to prosperity*” or “*I have taken the path to prosperity*” or “*I have not missed the road to good fortune*” in allusion to the welcome hospitality he had received since he arrived Ife. To Benin, the word *Izoduwa* was eventually mispronounced as “*Oduduwa*”, which word became the name of the new ruler who is acclaimed to be the father of Oranmiyan who begat *Eweka I* of Benin.

Conclusion

From the above stated, there is no doubt that there is some confusion regarding where both the Benin and Ife came from, whether from Egypt, the sky, or the ground. Controversy continued to surround the traditions, but from all available evidence, it seems clear that there were a people who lived in Benin and Ile-Ife before Oduduwa and Ekaladerhan. Another inference that can be drawn is that there have been interactions between and among peoples from time immemorial. Benin and Ile-Ife are no exception. And in the absence of writing, these interactions could not be documented, hence, the missing link and lack of chronological evidences to unravel historical facts. Yet, another inference is that there is a concrete evidence of relationship between Benin and Ile-Ife that has nothing to do with the origins of the two groups, but of leadership connection. And it is common in diplomatic relations to ask for one form of assistance or the other from each other as no kingdom or country is an island to itself. The Benin and Ife, no doubt, interacted to the extent that at certain points in their history, Oranmiyan, a product of the Oduduwa/Ekaladerhan tangle or saga connected both Benin and Ile-Ife together such that both Benin and Ile-Ife are today of one institution, even though they remain uniquely different entities or kingdoms. I make bold to say that nation building, and national integration processes are usually built on this kind of premise.

²³ See W. OBOMEGHIE, *The Benin-Ife Controversy: Clash of Myths of Origins*, Nigeria 2013. The book is a compilation of opinions of several people on the controversy.

What can, therefore, be deduced from our analysis is that there is a great link between Benin and Ile-Ife. Few years back, that link was cemented with the coming of a bridge builder in the person of the current *Ooni* of Ife, His Royal Majesty, *Oba* Enitan Adeyeye Ogunwusi, *Ojaja II* who on Saturday, 12th March, 2016 took a Benin woman, namely, Zaynab Itohan Wuraola Otiti Obanor for wife as the *Olori*.²⁴ The mystery behind that development is that it was acclaimed to be divinely ordained. What this amount to is that both Benin and Ife are of the same source and root. Whatever polemics arose, it is because there must be conflict between and among close relations. Fortunately, the current *Ooni* threw an olive branch. It, therefore, behoves the current Benin monarch to also reciprocate the kind and peaceful gesture for us to live as one entity. However, and indeed unfortunately, the so much talked about and publicized relationship did not last the test of time. Barely a year after the marriage was consummated, as confirmed by the *Oni* in August 2017, the relationship collapsed, and the two parties have since gone their separate ways. Nevertheless, the relationship between the Benin and Ife monarchies are intact, giving no signs of rancour, but peaceful relations and harmony to the delight of all.

There is, therefore, no doubt, that, even though both Benin and Ile-Ife are two different kingdoms, they are, however, connected with one divine institution that both groups cannot really explain how it happens. Only providence can. This is the whole essence of the providential view of history as opposed to the cyclical (Christian), and linear (Islamic) views of history. Yet, Benin and Ile-Ife can be likened to two sides of a coin and perhaps, two brothers from the same parent. Besides, the fact that, the passing on and accessions to the throne of the *Obas* of the two kingdoms are usually of close range is something that only providence can explain. There is a mystery that is yet to be unravelled in the light of this development. One is, therefore, convinced that Benin and Ile-Ife are two kingdoms connected by one institution, no more, no less. The Benin and Ile-Ife story painted above is not only unique, but common in intergroup relations among primordial societies all over the world. One big lesson that can be learnt from the Benin – Ile-Ife tangle is that nationalistic

²⁴ Various Nigerian Newspapers carried the news of the *Ooni's* marriage to the Benin beauty damsel before and after the occasion. This divine significant event should cement the relationship between Benin and Ile-Ife and ensure henceforth, an enduring peaceful relationship between the two ancient kingdoms.

or patriotic history will forever remain controversial because either party will always maintain his or her position and can rarely be objective. Therefore, historians will continue to attempt to unravel the truth of historical studies in the absence of written or documentary sources.

