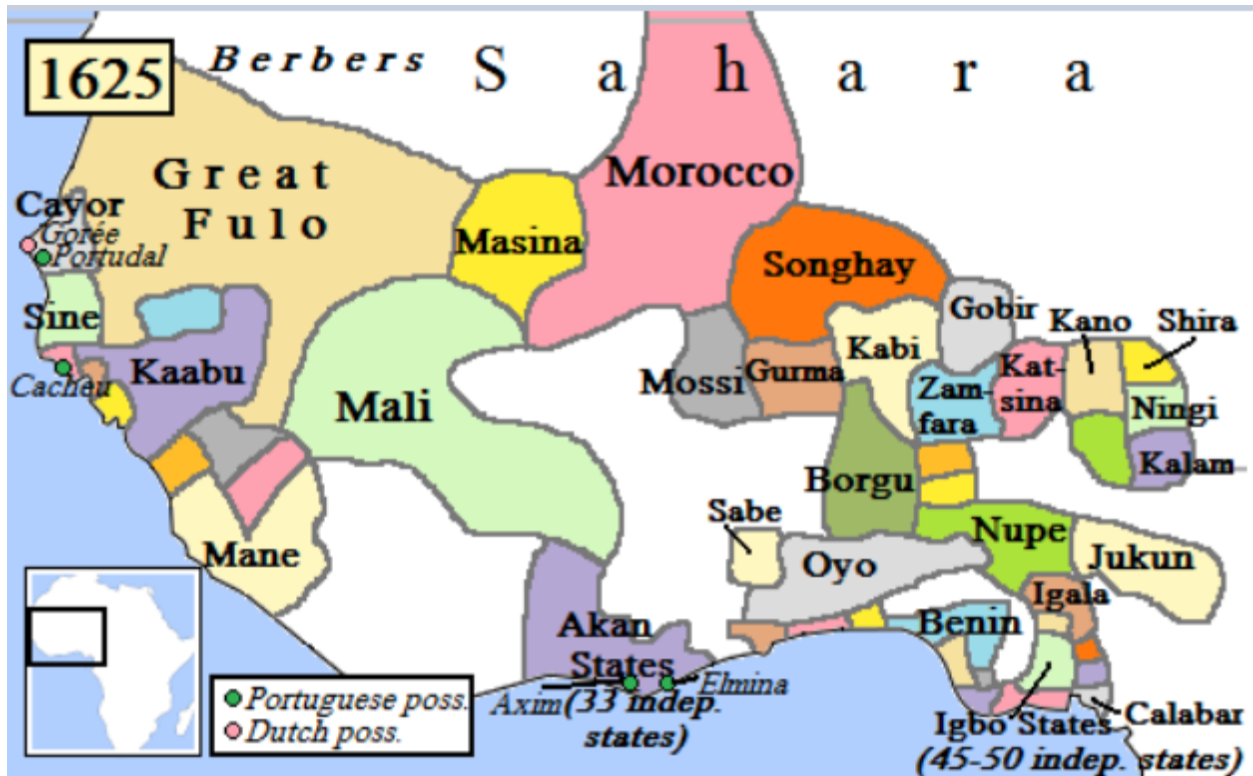


Nigeria: A brief History of Traditional Rulers

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PRE-COLONIAL period:



Modern Nigeria: the eastern part of the above area: Including

- Oyo (Yoruba empire, with a strong cavalry),
Note: Yorubas are also in Benin, Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone
- the Benin Empire (also called the **Edo Kingdom** or the **Benin Empire**, called **Arriṣa ẹdo** in Bini (Bini: dialect of Edos)), was a kingdom within what is now southern Nigeria. unrelated to current Republic of Benin),
- the Igbo states to the east (also known as **Southeastern Nigeria** (but extends into **South-Southern Nigeria**), is the indigenous homeland of the Igbo people. Geographically, it is divided into two sections by the lower Niger River: an eastern (the larger of the two) and a western one),
Note: Igbo or Ebo are primarily found in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. A sizable Igbo population is also found in Delta and Rivers States. Ethnic Igbo populations are also found in Cameroon, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea as migrants.

Among the major ethnic groups in Africa, four (Hausa, Fulano, Yoruba and Igbo) are found in Nigeria: Nigeria also has many smaller ethnic groups. The total population of each of the four ethnic groups in Africa is: **Hausa: 78 Million, Fulano: 20 M, Yoruba: 40 M and Igbo: 34 M** (Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ethnic_groups_of_Africa) and

- the **Hausa / Fulani** in states such as Katsina and Kano to the north. **Note:** Hausas are also in Niger, Benin, Ghana, Cameroon, Chad and Sudan. Fulanis are also in Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Chad, Sudan, Central African Republic, Ghana, Togo and Sierra Leone)

In broad terms, the southeast was occupied mainly by Igbo, the Niger Delta by Edo and Igbo related people, the southwest by Yoruba and related people and the north by Hausa and Fulani people, with a complex intermingling of different ethnic groups in the Middle Belt between north and south. In total there were (and are) more than 200 distinct ethnic groups.

Before the arrival of the British in the late 19th century, the history of the area was turbulent, with wars among different empires. Although political structures differed widely between different ethnic groups, it was common for each town or collection of towns to have a recognized ruler, who might in turn be subordinate to the ruler of a larger polity. Thus, the Sokoto caliphate was divided into emirates, with the emirs loosely subordinate to the Sultan of Sokoto, although at times acting as independent rulers.

COLONIAL era

Europeans had long traded with the coastal states, primarily exchanging cotton and other manufactured goods for slaves and palm oil products at centers such as **Calabar** (*capital of **Cross River State***), **Bonny** (*a coastal town and a Local Government Area in **Rivers State***) and **Lagos**.

FIRST BRITISH COLONY: In 1861, the British annexed Lagos.

In 1884, the **Oil River Protectorate** was formed (in the **Oil Rivers** area of present-day Nigeria) in a small area along the coast.

In 1891, the **Niger Coast Protectorate** was established, by renaming the Oil River Protectorate.

ROYAL NIGER COMPANY: During the period 1879–1900 the Royal Niger Company made a concerted effort to take control of the interior, using **disciplined**

troops armed with the Maxim gun, and making treaties of "protection" with the local rulers.

Note: The **Maxim gun** is a recoil-operated machine gun invented in 1884 by Hiram Stevens Maxim. It was the **first fully automatic machine gun in the world**. Used by colonial powers in Africa and by insurgents. The Maxim gun was greatly influential in the development of machine guns

Formation of NIGERIA: In 1900, Royal Niger Company's territory was sold to the British government, with the southern region of the territory merged with the Niger Coast Protectorate to become the SOUTHERN NIGERIA PROTECTORATE. The remaining part of the Royal Niger Company's territory was named as the NORTHERN NIGERIA PROTECTORATE.

In 1914 the two were merged into the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, with roughly the same boundaries as the modern state of Nigeria.

The **first British Governor General for Nigeria, Lord Frederick Lugard** (1st January 1914 to 8th August 1919), ruled through the traditional rulers, and this approach was later extended to the south.

Lugard's Political Doctrine: The Europeans and Africans were culturally different. Hence, Africans had to be ruled through the Africans' own institution.

Lugard's successor Sir **Hugh Clifford** (1919-1925) left this system in place in the north, where the emirate system had long traditions, but introduced a legislative council with some elected members in the south, relegating the traditional rulers to mainly symbolic roles.

Clifford's RATIONALE for his POLICIES: It was the primary responsibility of colonial government to introduce as quickly as practical the benefits of Western experience.

Clifford opposed further extension of the judicial authority held by the northern emirs, stating bluntly that he did "not consider that their past traditions and their present backward cultural conditions afford to any such experiment a reasonable chance of success."

Clifford's recommendations, as modified by the Colonial Office, were embodied in the 1922 constitution (known as the Clifford Constitution). While administration in the north was left untouched and the Governor General retained the legislative power for the North, a new legislative council and executive council were established in common for the two southern regions, replacing the Lagos Legislative Council and the moribund Nigerian Council. For the first time, direct

elections took place outside Lagos, although only four of the council's forty-six members were elected. Moreover, the introduction of the legislative principle encouraged the emergence of political parties. It also created room for the bringing up of newspapers such as Lagos Daily News and the Daily Times Nigeria Plc in 1925.

DEMERITS OF THE CLIFFORD CONSTITUTION 1. Africans were excluded from the executive council. 2. Whites dominated the legislative council. 3. Legislative council was only advisory. 4. Governor enjoyed unlimited powers. 5. North was excluded from legislature.

The constitution gave voting right to only male adults with a residential qualification of 1 year and gross income of \$100 per annum. (Not many had this level of income in 1922.)

Under the British Rule, the position and tenure of offices of Chiefs were safeguarded and enhanced. In place of the perquisites and tributes which the Chiefs used to exact with violence, if need be, and in place of their incomes from all manner of inhuman traffic, the Chiefs were paid regular and reasonable monthly stipends

Over time, the relationship between the colonial administration and the traditional rulers evolved. For example, the Tiv people had always been extremely decentralized and therefore had no paramount ruler. The British created the office of *Tor Tiv* in 1947, appointing Makere Dzakpe as the first holder of this title, in order to have a "traditional ruler" to speak for the Tiv people.

Note: The Tiv people are only 2.4% of Nigeria's population. Most of the speakers of the Tiv language are found in Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, Cross rivers, Adamawa, Kaduna and Abuja States. In pre-colonial times, the Fulani ethnic group referred to the Tiv as "**Munchi**" (also sometimes written Munshi), a term not accepted by Tiv people. The Tiv people depend on agricultural produce for commerce and sustenance.

INDEPENDENT NIGERIA (1960):

The traditional rulers lost all official powers even in the North.

In the north, the emirs finally lost power to the government administration, though said administration was often staffed by traditional notables. Where rulers had previously acquired office strictly through inheritance or through appointment by a council of elders, the government now increasingly became involved in the succession.

In some cases, the government has merged or split traditional domains. For example, there had been two rulers of the **Efik people** in the area around **Calabar**, but in December 1970 it was agreed to combine the office into a single one that was to be held by a ruler known as the *Obong*.

When **Yobe State** was created there were just four emirates, but in January 2000 the state governor **Bukar Abba Ibrahim** restructured the state into 13.

The government has maintained colonial classifications. Thus, when **Kwara State** governor **Bukola Saraki** appointed three new monarchs in August 2010, the new **Emir of Kaiama** was designated a **first class traditional ruler** while the **Onigosun of Igosun and Alaran of Aran-Orin** were designated **third class monarchs**.

Traditional rulers today are still highly respected in many communities, and have considerable political and economic influence.

Although they have **no formal role in the democratic structure**, there is intense competition for royal seats amongst the finite pool of eligible dynasts. The rulers can also **award traditional or honorary titles** within the Nigerian chieftaincy system. These titles come with ex officio positions in their "administrations", and wealthy businessmen and politicians often place great value in acquiring such titles.

The rulers play useful roles in mediating between the people and the state, enhancing national identity, resolving minor conflicts and providing an institutional safety-valve for often inadequate state bureaucracies. One reason for their influence may be that the people of many ethnic groups have limited ability to communicate in the official English language, so the traditional ruler serves as an interpreter and spokesperson. By June 2010, Akwa Ibom State had 116 traditional rulers with official certificates from the state. **They had received new cars on their appointment, among other perks. The chairman of the Akwa Ibom council of Chiefs said that in return, the traditional fathers were responsible for preventing robberies and kidnappings in their domains.**

Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_traditional_rulers