

Research Article

Egba Indigenes in the Politics and Political Development of Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Egba indigenes have been very prominent in political history of Nigeria. The objective of the paper is to examine the political development of Nigeria and the roles played by Egba indigenes. Abeokuta founded in 1830 has been a notable settlement in Nigeria. The Egbas have been significant members of ruling political parties. They have contributed significantly to the political development of Nigeria. The likes of Adetokunbo Ademola, the Ransome Kuti family, Madam Tinubu, George Sodeinde Sowemimo, Wole Soyinka, Moshood Kashimawo Abiola, Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo, Olusegun Osoba, Dimeji Bankole and others cannot be forgotten in the political history and political development of Nigerian. The researchers listened to a number of radio and television documentary programmes. News paper cuttings, magazines and journals were read. The paper used oral interview conducted with some retired and active political party chieftains, the monarchs, and notable members of Nigerian public. Providence has bestowed it upon them to play active parts in the political affairs of Nigeria. Not even a single ethnic group has ever had it so good and in the political history and development of the country. However, whoever is in power needs to be supported and encouraged to move the nation ahead.

Key Words: Egba indigenes, politics, political development, Nigeria.

BACKGROUND

Sodeke, a hunter and a leader of the Egba refugees who fled from the disintegrated Oyo Empire founded Abeokuta in about 1830. The town was also settled by missionaries (in the 1840s) by Sierra Leone Creole who later became prominent as missionaries and as businessmen. Abeokuta's success as the capital of the Egbas and as a link in the Lagos - Abeokuta oil-palm trade led to war with Dahomey (now Benin Republic). In the battle at Abeokuta in 1851, the Egbas were aided by the missionaries and also armed by the British. Thus, they were able to defeat King Gezo's Dahomey Army that was unique and famous in the history of West Africa for its common practice of using women warriors. Another Dahomey attack was repulsed in 1864. Troubles in the 1860s with the British in Lagos led the Egbas to close the trade routes to the coast and they expelled its missionaries and European traders at about 1867, (Sklar, 1963 and Wikipedia Foundation, 2008).

After the Yoruba civil wars (1877 – 93), in which Abeokuta opposed Ibadan, the Egba Alake (King) signed an alliance with the British Governor, Sir Gilbert Carter that recognized the independence of the Egba United Government (1893 – 1914). In 1914, the Kingdom was incorporated into the newly amalgamated British Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. The Abeokuta rioters of 1918 protested the levying of taxes and the "indirect rule" policy of Lord Fredrick Lugard, which made the Alake, formerly *Primus inter pares* (first among equals), the supreme traditional leader to the detriment of other quarter chiefs in Egbaland. Egbaland and Egbas have been surviving and growing as such since then through different political and socio-economic challenges and status, and the indigenes in various fields of human endeavour.

TABLE I: MAJOR LANDMARKS AND PLACES OF INTEREST

Landmarks / Places of Interest	Remark
Churches	Of all denominations you can find in Nigeria
Mosques	With about five Central Mosques
Federal University of Agriculture	Formerly a campus of the University of Lagos
Federal College of Education	The only government owned College of Education
Markets and stalls	Selling agricultural produce and few manufactured items
Ogun River	Traverses the town
Petrol Filling Stations	Owned by government and Marketers.
Stadia	Two, one abandoned but Moshood Abiola's is active
Parks	Including Garages for commercial vehicles

Recreation Centres	Strategically located all over the city
Government Secretariats	Local, State and Federal Government Secretariats
Major roads & Feeder roads	Criss crossing the city
Schools and Colleges	Including privately owned schools and colleges.
Supermarkets and Malls	Selling some imported goods and locally sourced items
Government House	Housing the State Governor, the seat of government.
Government Reservation Areas (GRA)	Own by Ogun State Government.
Olumo Rock	A tourist attraction; historic to Abeokuta
Hotels and Restaurants	The largest being Gate Way Hotel, but abandoned.
Railway Stations and rail lines	Built before independence
Obasanjo Library and Archives	A modern edifies
Akin Olugbade Social Centre	Busy every weekend & public holidays
Olumo Resort	Owned by the Ogun State Government.
Centre for Arts & culture	With large Yoruba Artefacts
Ogun State Water Work	Major source of pipe born water
Housing Estates	Government and privately owned
Post Offices	Including General Post Office at Sapon
Radio and Television Stations	Federal and State Governments' owned
Palaces of monarchs	Particularly of Alake of Egba Land
Shrines of gods and goddesses	Ogun, Obatala, Oya, Oro, Shango and others.
Quarries	Found around and within the town e.g. Aro Quarry
Police Stations & Army Barracks	Keeping peace and maintaining order.
Factories & Manufacturing Industries	Examples are ceramic and plastic manufacturing plants
Local craft industries	Adire tie and dye is common-the home of tie and dye
Hospitals and Maternity Homes	Privately and Government owned
Centenary Hall	Built in 1930; it is historic

Source: Aderogba, K.A., Ogunyemi, B.A., and Odukoya, Dapo (2011) Field Work

Modern Abeokuta is full of life with different land marks; see Table I. She is an agricultural trade centre trading mainly in rice, yam, cassava, maize, palm oil and palm kernels, fruits and vegetables. It is an exporting point for cocoa, palm produce, fruits and kola nut. The missionaries introduced rice and cotton, but cotton weaving and dyeing (with locally grown indigo - *adire*) are now traditional crafts of the town. She is the headquarters for the Ogun – Oshun River Basin Development Authority with programmes to harness land and water resources of Lagos, Ogun and Oyo states for rural development. Irrigation, food-processing and electrification projects are also included. Local industry is limited but now includes fruits canning plants, plastic manufacturing factories, brewery, sawmills and a ceramic and an aluminum-product factory, granite quarries, (for example, Aro Granite Quarry, provides building materials for much of south western Nigeria). There is a huge, modern cement plant at Ewekoro about 28km south.

Abeokuta was a walled town and the relics of the old walls still exist. Notable land marks include Ake (the palace of the Alake), Centenary Hall (1930) and several churches and mosques, educational institutions, markets, stalls and others. See Table I – that lists major landmarks and places of interest. Hitherto the creation of Ogun State out of the then Western States in 1976 when Abeokuta was made the state capital, she had existed as the Provincial Headquarters of Egba Egbado Province.

Abeokuta is situated on the coast of the Ogun River, around a group of rocky outcroppings that rise above the surrounding wooded savanna. But it has now extended to the other side of Ogun River, western side, and southward towards Lagos road, that is, beyond Aro Psychiatric Hospital. It lies on the main railway (1899) from Lagos 78km South; and on the other older trunk A road from Lagos to Ibadan that transverses the town. It also has road connections to Ilaro, Aiyetoro and Republic of Benin in the West and North West; and to Igbo-Ora, Oyo State, in the North. It is absolutely defined by 7°11' North and 3°18' East of the latitude and longitude lines respectively.

By and large, the objective of this paper is to highlight the significance of Abeokuta and the Egba indigenes in the political development of Nigeria, and point out the inherent political potentials in them. Though the paper goes into the history with all righteousness of uniformitarianism, emphasis is on the present day politics and politicking of Abeokuta (the Egbas) and Nigeria. The paper has neither political inclinations nor any political undertone. The words "Abeokuta indigenes" and "Egbas" are used interchangeably to mean the bonafide children of Egbaland the headquarters of who is Abeokuta. The paper did not touch on gross misconduct of individuals and groups.

NIGERIAN POLITICAL HISTORY:

Tables II, III, IV and V are showing, in chronological order, the officers of the highest political offices in Nigeria: The Presidents and their Vices, the Senate Presidents, Speakers of the Federal House of Representatives and the Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of Nigeria from independence till date respectively.

The Presidential Office and that of the Vice have been occupied five times by Ogun State indigenes, for a total periods of 18 years that is 36 % out of a total period of 50 years of political independence; and there was a close attempt for a sixth period of time – (the Third Term Agenda). But Ogun State indigenes have never been in the office of the Senate President nor Speaker of the Federal House of Representative except the last, 2007 till 2011, that is, when Dimeji Bankole was massively elected to be the Speaker of his colleagues; see Table IV . The Office of the Chief Justice

Table II: Nigerian Heads of State and Their Vices (1960-Date)

Presidents	States of Origin	Periods of Service	Appro. No of Yrs
Abubakar T. Balewa -Prime Minister	Bauchi	1960 – 1966	7
Nnamdi Azikiwe (President)	Anambra	1960 – 1966	7
Aguiyi Ironsi	Enugu	Jan.1966– July 1966	1
Babafemi Ogundipe (VP)	Ogun	Jan.1966– July 1966	1
Yakubu Gowon	Plateau	July1960–July 1975	11
J.E.A. Wey (VP)	Lagos	July1960–July 1975	11
Muritala Mohammed	Kano	1975 – 1976	1
Olusegun Obasanjo (VP)	Ogun	1975 – 1976	1
Olusegun Obasanjo	Ogun	1976 – 1979	4
Shehu Musa Yar' Adua (VP)	Katsina	1976 – 1979	4
Shehu Shagari	Sokoto	1979 – 1983	5
Alex Ekweme (VP)	Anambra	1979 – 1983	5
Mohammed Buhari	Katsina	1983 - 1985	3
Tunde Idiagbon (VP)	Kwara	1983 – 1985	3
Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida	Niger	1985 – 1993	8
Ebitu Ukiwe (VP)	Anambra	1985 – 1990	5
Augustus Aikhomu (VP)	Edo	1990 – 1983	4
Ernest Shonekan	Ogun	Aug. 1993– Nov 1993	1
No Vice	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sani Abacha	Kano	Nov.1993 – June 1998	5
Oladipupo Diya (VP)	Ogun	Nov. 1993	3
Abdusalam Abubakar	Niger	June 1998- May 1999	1
Michael Akhigbe (VP)	Edo	1998 – 1999	2
Olusegun Obasanjo	Ogun	1999 – 2007	8
Atiku Abubakar (VP)	Niger	1999 – 2007	8
Umaru Musa Yar' Adua	Katsina	2007 – 2010	3
Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (VP)	Bayelsa	2007 – 2010	3
Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (President)	Bayelsa	2010 – Date	3
Namadi Sambo	Kaduna	2010 – Date	1

Source: Adoni, O. & Adoni, J. (2008) Up-to-Date Current Affairs, Lagos: Platinum Ventures; & The Authors (2011).

Table III: Nigerian Senate Presidents (1960 - date)

Senate President	Political Parties	States of Origin	Period of Service	Appro. No of Yrs
Nnamdi Azikiwe	NCNC	Anambra	1960 – 1960	1
Nwafor Orizu	NCNC	Imo	1960 – 1966	6
Joseph Wayas	NPN	Cross River	1979 – 1983	5
Iyorchia Ayu	SDP	Benue	1982 – 1993	1
Ameh Abute	SDP	Benue	1993 – 1993	1
Evans Ewerem	PDP	Imo	1999 – 1999	1
Chuba Okadigbo	PDP	Anambra	1999 – 2000	2
Pius Ayim	PDP	Abia	2000 – 2003	3
Adolphus Wabara	PDP	Imo	2003 – 2005	3
Ken Nnamani	PDP	Enugu	2005 – 2007	3
David Mark	PDP	Ebonyin	2007 – 2007	1
	PDP	Benue	2007 - Date	5

Source: Adoni, O. & Adoni, J. (2008) Up-to-Date Current Affairs, Lagos: Platinum Ventures; & The Authors (2011).

Table IV: Nigerian Speakers of the Federal House of Representative (1959 – date)

Speakers	Political Parties	States of Origin	Periods of Service	Appro. No of Yrs
Jaja Nwachukwu	NCCN	Abia	1959 – 1960	2
Edwin Ezeoke	NPN	Imo	1979 – 1983	5
Salisu Buhari	PDP	Kano	1999 – 2000	2
Ghali Na'abba	PDP	Kano	2000 – 2003	4
Aminu B. Masari	PDP	Katsina	2003 – 2007	4
Patricia Etteh	PDP	Osun	2007 – Dec 2007	1
Dimeji Bankole	PDP	Ogun	2008 – 2011	3
Tambuwal, Waziri	PDP	Sokoto	2011 - Date	Still in Office

Source: Adoni, O. & Adoni, J. (2008) Up-to-Date Current Affairs Lagos: Platinum Ventures; & The Authors (2001).

Table V: Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of Nigeria 1958 – date

Chief Justices	States of Origin	Periods of Service	No of Yrs
Ademola Adetokunbo	Ogun	1958 – 1972	5
Teslim Olawale Elias	Lagos	1972 – 1975	4
Darnley A. Alexandra	Lagos	1975 – 1979	5
Atanda Fatai Williams	Lagos	1979 – 1983	3
George Sodeinde Sowemimio	Ogun	1983 – 1986	2
Ayo Gabriel Irikefe	Delta	1986 – 1987	2
Mohammed Bello	Katsina	1987 – 1995	9
Mohammedu L. Uwais	Kaduna	1995 – 2006	11
Sali M. Alfa Belgore	Kwara	2006 – 2007	2
Idris Legbu Kutigi	Kogi	2007 – 2009	2
Katsina Alu	Katsina	2009 - 2011	2
Musdapha Dairu		2011 – Till Date	

Source: Adoni, O. & Adoni, J. (2008) Up-to-Date Current Affairs Lagos. Platinum Ventures & The Authors (2011).

All the Ogun State indigenes as indicated on Tables II, III, IV and V are from Abeokuta (Egba) except Babafemi Ogundipe and Oladipo Diya. The followings have highlighted what made them great in their various professions and or political contributions.

SELECTED EGBA INDIGENES IN POLITICS:

Above has listed in chronological order of the occupation of the highest political offices in Nigeria – The Prime Minister, The Presidents, The Vice Presidents, The Senate Presidents and The Speakers of Federal House of Representatives, and the Chief Justices of the Federation. In addition to the list, there had been many others who have played significant roles in the running of the governments. But particularly who are these? The followings discuss a few of them:

OLUFUNMILAYO RANSOME KUTI: She was a great Nigerian woman political activism. She was the first lady known to drive a motor car in Nigeria. She was also the first woman politician in Nigeria and probably in Africa. She was a Human Right activist in the early 1900s. In 1944, she founded the Abeokuta Women Union (later became a National Women Union), consisting of about 20,000 financial members. Its major achievement includes: objections against the sole native authority of the King (Alake) who was their Drummer Boy. The King had to abdicate the throne, and the Union's education campaign and objection to flat tax rate were all successful.

She was the administrator of Rev. Kuti Memorial Grammar School at Abeokuta. The school has produced eminent Nigerians in all works of life. Her children included Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Olikoye Ransome Kuti and Beko Ransome Kuti. Olufunmilayo fought the military against the unjust arrest of her son (Fela Anikulapo). During the raid of Fela's house and his "Kalakuta Republic" by the military, she sustained a serious injury in one of her legs and it led to her death.

FELA ANIKULAPO KUTI: He was born of Rev. and Mrs. Kuti at Abeokuta in Nigerian in 1938. He was a singer-composer and trumpeter, sax, keyboard player, band leader, and politician. Fela Kuti was one of the most controversial African musicians. Throughout his life, he continued to fight for the rights of the common man despite

vilification, harassment, and imprisonment by the governments of Nigeria. He was strongly influenced by both his parents particularly the mother who was a leading figure in the national struggles.

Virtually all of his records (musical albums) are dominated by political events and discussions from the approach of Pan-Africanism. He was the leader of the unique highlife jazz, Afro Beat, African'70 and later Egypt'80 which he formed at different times. He was influenced by American Jazz. But his bands traditionally included the typical huge line up consisting of many singers and dancers, numerous saxophonists, trumpeters, drummers, percussionist and many guitarists blending African rhythms and jazz horn lines with politicized song lyrics. His music was complex. Rather than calling it afro-beat, it could best be arguably described and considered as afro-jazz.

Fela Anikulapo Kuti continued his outspoken attacks on the Nigerian governments when the military wanted to return power in 1979. He formed his own political party – Movement of the People (MOP). The Military returned the power in 1983 and within the year, Kuti (Fela) was sentenced to five years imprisonment on a spurious currency smuggling charge. He was released in 1986 after yet another change of government. He suffered from prostate cancer; and died from complications due to AIDS.

OLIKOYE RANSOME KUTI: A Professor of Paediatric and former Nigeria Health Minister in the government of Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. He was once the Deputy Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO). His ministerial assignment and achievement in the Health Sector in Nigeria (and worldwide generally) are worthy of note.

BEKO RANSOME KUTI: He was born of Rev. and Mrs. Kuti (Funmilayo); he was a brother to Professor Olikoye Ransome Kuti and Fela Anikulapo Kuti. He was a Medical Director for Government; and he was the Chairman of Campaign for Democracy in Nigeria. Beko Kuti was imprisoned on July 25th 1995 on a charge of treason and treasonable felony to the Abacha Government. After Abacha's death, on June 8th 1998, President Abubakar Abudlsalam released him along with eight (8) other political prisoners on June 15th, 1998. During the raid of his brother's house and night club, he sustained some serious injuries that could not be healed till he died.

MADAM TINUBU: She was the first Iyalode of Egba Land. She became filthily rich as a slave trader having her headquarters at Abeokuta. When she visited Badagry and realized the inhumane condition slaves were subjected to by the white men, she became slave abolitionist. She spent a great deal of her wealth on the abolition of slave trade. Tinubu Square on Lagos Island was named after her gallantry achievement in Nigerian political struggle.

CHIEF (MRS) BISOYE TEJUOSHO: She was another Iyalode of Egba and the mother of Dapo Tejuosho, the Osiele of Okeona Quarters of Egba Land. She was very hard working; apart from her other companies, she established "Teju Foam", one of the leading foam manufacturing companies in Nigeria. The company employed large number of Nigerian skilled men and women. She was a great politician of her time. She sponsored many political parties and their struggles.

SIR ADETOKUNBO ADEMOLA: He was a former Chief Justice of the Federation. He was an illustrious son of an illustrious father. His father was the late Alake (paramount ruler) of Egba Land (1920 - 62), Sir Ladapo Ademola. Sir Adetokunbo Ademola was among the most distinguished and most respected Nigerians. He had a brilliant career and built for himself an international reputation, being a member of several world bodies. He was born on September 1st, 1906 at Abeokuta, the capital of Egba Land. He studied Law between 1928 and 1931 at Cambridge University where he obtained a B. A. Degree. He later received M.A. Degree. He was called to the bar (Middle Temple) in London in 1934 and later became the only African ever appointed bencher of the Inner Temple.

In Nigeria, Sir Adetokunbo Ademola worked from 1934 – 35 as crown counsel at the then Attorney-General's Office; then for a year as Assistant Secretary at the Southern Secretariat in Enugu, Eastern Nigeria. From 1936, Sir Adetokunbo practised until 1939 when he was appointed Magistrate of the Protectorate Court. In 1949, he became the third Nigerian to be appointed a Pusine judge. In 1948, he served as a member of the commission for the revision of court legislation. In 1955, a year before Western Nigeria became internally self-governing; he was appointed Chief Justice for Western Nigeria. Thus, he became the First Nigerian Head of the Judiciary.

Sir, Adetokunbo Ademola string of "firsts" continued when he became the first Nigerian Chief Justice of the Federation of Nigeria. He was knighted in January 1957; and in 1963, he was appointed the Queen Elizabeth's Privy Councillor. The same year, the Queen awarded him a KBE. He married Miss Kofo Moore, the first West African woman graduate (daughter of late Eric Moore). He was member of several international bodies: United Nations International Public Service Advisory Board, International Commission of Jurists, World Peace through Law (Executive Member), Vice President of World Association of Jurists, President of the Nigerian Red Cross Association, Chairman of Nigerian Cheshire Homes, Member of International Olympic Committee, Member Nigerian Institute of International Affairs and President of the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity. He was also one of the founders and Chairman of the Metropolitan Club, a founder and member of the Island Club and Vice Patron of the Yoruba Club. He was in the forefront of several peace moves in Nigeria.

GEORGE SODEINDE SOWEMIMO: Sowemimo was the Chief Justice of the Federation from 1983 to 1985. He was admitted into the British Bristol University in 1944. The late Nigerian Chief Justice graduated in 1948 and was called to the Middle Temple in 1949. He later returned to Nigeria to set up a private legal practice.

Justice Sowemimo was well known for the landmark case in his 32 years on the bench on the controversial late Nigerian prominent opposition politician, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and 26 others. In his 90 page judgment with the famous quotation "My hands are tied," Sowemimo, the judge of the Lagos High Court, sentenced Chief Obafemi Awolowo and 17 others to 10 years imprisonment for attempting to overthrow the Federal Government of Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa. However, Awolowo and the other political prisoners were released three years later, following Nigeria's military coup that brought former military ruler, Gen. Yakubu Gowon, to power in July 1967.

He retired as Chief Justice in 1983 at the mandatory age of 65 years. He defended that controversial verdict which has remained a reference point in Nigeria's judicial history. He was honoured a Commander of the Order of the Niger, one of the Nigeria's highest awards.

MOSHOD KASHIMAWO ABIOLA: He was born on August 24th 1939 at Abeokuta. He was a very successful business mogul of his time. Kashimawo means "Let's wait and see". His early career was with ITT Corporation, where he later rose to the position of Vice President, Africa and Middle East. Abiola and Olusegun Obasanjo were classmates in Baptist Boys High School, Abeokuta. Both of them were given names by Fela Anikulapo Kuti in his 25 minutes political screed titled "International Thief, Thief."

In the Presidential Election of June 12, 1993, Abiola was the candidate of the Social Democratic Party (and his running mate was Baba Gana Kingibe). He overwhelmingly defeated his northern rival, Bashir Tofa of the National Republic Convention. However, the election was annulled by Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. Subsequent events led to Gen. Sani Abacha seizing power later in the year. From then on, Nigerian political stability and unity suffered several setbacks that became very hard to contain. In its immediate effect, the annulment intensified public outcry and pressure for Babangida to relinquish power which he reluctantly did on August 26, 1993 by "stepping aside" and handing over to the Interim National Government chosen by him and headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan of Abeokuta (Egba Land). As he declared himself president of Nigeria, he was accused of treason; and eventually imprisoned. He was widely believed to have won what was considered to be Nigeria's freest and fairest presidential election. He was being referred to as the Nigerian's greatest statesman. But in a country with a history of political corruption, and "considering Abiola's past, many Nigerians believe his presidency would have been as corrupt and ineffective as its predecessors, had Abiola lived to attain it," (Wikipedia Foundation, 2008).

Abiola's wife, Kudirat Abiola, was murdered in a drive - by - shooting in her car for the dogged pursuit for the actualization of the perceived electoral mandate of her husband. Her daughter, Hafsat Abiola, later became a democracy activist and founded the "Kudirat Initiative for Democracy" in honour of her mother.

Shortly after the death of Abacha, Abiola himself succumbed to a heart attack while in prison on July 7th, 1998. Ironically, that was the day he was to be released from prison. Though there were no enough evidences to support that, some conspiracy theorists alleged that his death (and possibly Abacha's) was masterminded by American Central Intelligence Agency, (Adebayo, 2008).

MKO Abiola had a chain of businesses within and outside of the country. He was a great philanthropist. He received several traditional, Islamic religious and other titles from various parts of Nigerian and outside the country. He was Bashorun Ona Kankanfo of Yoruba Land. Governments, institutions and communities have variously immortalised his name. He was also famous outside the shores of Nigeria.

ERNEST SHONEKAN: Chief (Dr) Ernest Shonekan (GCFR, CBE) hails from Abeokuta; and he was educated at the CMS Grammar School, Lagos, and the University of London. He graduated in Law in 1967, the year he was also called to the bar. He joined the Legal Department of the United African Company (a Unilever Group of Companies) in 1964. He rose to become Chairman and Managing Director in 1980.

Chief Shonekan was appointed Chairman of the Transition Council in 1992 and subsequently in 1993; he briefly served as Head of State and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria in the Interim Government-without a vice. He held the traditional title of Abese of Egba Land. He was the Chairman of the Vision 2010 Committee, which in 1996-1997 drew up the blue print for Nigerian's Economic Development. He was Economic Adviser to the Head of State, Chairman and Director of numerous companies in commercial, industrial and financial sectors. Member, Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Nigeria – Netherlands Chamber of Commerce, author of *The Nigerian Economy* (1986); and he is the recipient of the Commander of the British Empire and French Legion D'Honore.

CHIEF OLUSEGUN AREMU OBASANJO: Obasanjo was born March 5th 1937 at Owu Quarters of Abeokuta. He is a Nigerian Army General, politician and diplomat. He was the first Military Leader (1976 – 79) in Africa to hand over power to civilian ruler. In 1999, he was elected civilian President of Nigeria.

He was a student in Baptist Boys' High School and later worked as a teacher for a year. His parents were unable to afford college; he thus joined the Nigerian Army in 1958. He received further education in England and at Cadet School. He rose through the army ranks, and during the Nigerian Civil War (that is, the Biafra secession, 1967-70) he headed a commando unit that was instrumental in ending the war.

In 1975, Brigadier General Murtala Mohammed sized control of government and announced that he would relinquish power to civilian rule by 1979. In February 13th of the following year, Mohammed was assassinated. Thus, leadership passed to Obasanjo, his Deputy, and he emerged as an influential statesman. He established ties with the United States of America, and in 1978, the US President Jimmy Carter visited Nigeria. That was the first time the President of America will visit Nigeria. Obasanjo continued to push forward Mohammed's Time Table for a return to

civilian rule, and elections were held in 1979. He chose not to run. Shehu Shagari from the predominantly Muslim Northern region was declared winner. The move however, angered his fellow Yorubas but he gained outstanding respects of Hausa/ Fulani leaders in the Northern Nigeria. For several years after, he worked as a diplomat, holding various positions in the United Nations and in other National and International bodies. He was a vocal critic of General Sani Abacha who sized control of Nigeria in 1993 and established a military dictatorship. Obasanjo was imprisoned in 1995 for allegedly organizing a coup against Abacha. But after the death of Abacha, he was released and he joined the dominant People's Democratic Party. When the Interim Leader, General Abdusalam Abubakar promised to hold democratic elections, Obasanjo announced his candidacy for President. He was declared the winner with 63% of the votes in 1999. Thus, he became the first civilian leader after 15years of military rules in Nigeria. He led the government for two terms of four years each – May, 1999 – May, 2007.

Obasanjo ought to alleviate poverty, reduce state corruption, and establish a democratic system. He also pledged to reform the military and the police. But religious and ethnic strife became central concerns during his presidency as incidents of violence in his eight years rule- May, 1999 – May, 2007 were not uncommon. Though his government was also unable to establish stable electricity for the nation, Global System of Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) was brought to the country; and he was able to handover to another democratically elected government of his political Party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

ALANI BANKOLE AND DIMEJI BANKOLE: Father and son. Akande (2007) remarked that Speaker Dimeji Bankole must have been well prepared for leadership position by his father, that is, apart from his personal talent. His father, Chief Alani Bankole, has never held any elective public office but he is better known and recognized as an effective political leader and organizer of the masses than many who had. He had been in the "thick" and "thin" of Nigerian politics for as long as when the Second Republic was being cast in the 1979 constitutional mode. Chief Alani Bankole is known to be simple, straight, sincere and effective as a party man and as a political leader – a straight shooter who has no time for frivolities, nor engaged in procrastination about irrelevant political issues – from National Part of Nigeria (NPN) days to Action Peoples Party (APP) to All Nigerians Peoples Party (ANPP), (where he held national leadership positions), and later to PDP. He was a progressive fighter in Nigeria's political struggle to advance the course of the common Nigerians. He is a populist by orientation. His acceptability among his political peers from the South to the North of Nigeria was a major factor in Dimeji's election to the Speakership of the House of Representatives in Nigeria.

Chief Bankole was one of the strongest decision makers that influenced the candidature of Chief Olu Falae as the common Presidential candidate of the APP and Alliance for Democracy (AD) against Obasanjo, his kinsman from Egba and the PDP candidate in 1999. Olusegun Obadanjo (former president) recognized Bankole's political ability and influence in Egba Land, especially in Abeokuta and environs (up to Egbado, Remo and Ijebu in particular) and thus sought his friendship to improve his own political acceptability in his locality and immediate environment.

With these rich background and formidable antecedent, Honourable Dimeji Bankole, the son of Chief Alani Bankole won the landslide election among his peers in the Federal House of Representatives to become their Speaker. There is no current leadership of any contemporary party that is represented in Nigerian House of Representatives that does not know Chief Alani Bankole as a reliable, dependable and respected political leader. His fairness and friendly disposition to all and sundry have contributed immensely to the support given to his son (Dimeji Bankole) across party lines in the House of Representative. The young Dimeji Bankole scored 304 votes against 20 for his opponent who "represented the power that can make and unmake Nigeria dry or wet in raw political power dispensation," (Akande, 2007).

Contrary to the low educational qualification of the former Speaker, Ms Olunmi Etteh, Dimeji had the best of education at Reading, Oxford, Sand- Hurst and Harvard. He is adequately schooled and educated to handle his office as Speaker in the committee of Speakers of developed and developing democracies any where in the world. Nigerians and particularly those that elected him into the position believed that, as the son of Chief Alani Bankole, he will rise above political pettiness and maintain his fairly ethical standards in discharging his official duties. Afterwards, his father is available to him, and so also some Senators: Ken Nnamani (an Ex- President of the Senate) Ex-Speaker N'abba and Ex- Speaker Masari. All of them knew Chief Alani Bankola as a politician of substance and a reliable citizen.

Dimeji became the successor to Ms. Olunmi Etteh whose election to the high legislative position had many misgivings. He was not a popular political figure before his sudden election as speaker. However, he had quietly established some reputations for competence, balanced judgment, humility, dedication to work and an underlying ability to be smart and straight in how he carried himself among his colleagues between 2003 and 2007. Akande (2007) went further to say these about Dimeji Bankole:

Some sectional leaders of Nigeria in Diasporas raised some concerns about their expectations of him. But there are strong hope that Honourable Speaker of the House of Representative will rise above politically inspired intrigues which are often regarded as political gamesmanship in Nigeria even though they constituted Stone Age exhibition of animalistic aspects of human tendencies to abuse public trust and promote illegalities in the name of power politics

He went further to reiterate his expectations that Dimeji will be honest and prudent with public fund in his care because he had no political godfather to whom regular delivery will be demanded and made. "He will demonstrate

ability and trust in Nigerian democratic values and raise the confidence of Nigerians in general in the dignity of public service. He will maintain high ethical standards as expected from his family background". In all honesty, other things being equal, all these factors were subjected to the "Rule of Law".

According to Dimeji Bankole himself, while responding to questions from the press, he said he does "not belong to any religious sect that claims to produce seers of the future". He is well educated, disciplined, exposed and humble. The world and particularly Nigerians were greatly on the look out for what his future will unfold. His last days in office were not without public concerns for issues of corruptions in the office, however.

OTHER EGBA INDIGENS:

There are several others such as the Alake of Egba Land, Oba Ladapo Ademola, Chief M. A. Majekodunmi, Prof. Adeoye Lambo, Prof. Julius Oguntoyibo, Alhaja Kudirat Abiola, Olusegun Osoba and others that have contributed directly and or indirectly and sometimes inadvertently and significantly too to the political development of Nigerian, all put together, far more than any tribal and or ethnic group in the country. A correspondence of The Sun, one of the Nigerian News Papers describes Abeokuta thus...

*A city of many Nigerians with firsts
In their chosen professions.
A city of sweet and sour
A city of great men and women*

Their contributions to the political development in Nigeria are legendary. Any honour bestowed on them for purpose of politics and political development in Nigerians is more than well deserved. It is not unlikely that if given the opportunity, they will record more successes; and probably more brilliantly.

SELECTED ASPECTS OF POLITIC KINGS:

Adebayo (2008) asserts that "Abeokuta can be described as a famous town under the rock and as a town with a tale of sweet and sour". It is the town that providence has bestowed on it to always play a prominent role in the socio-economic and political destiny of Nigeria at various times.

In deed, the history of Nigeria (before and after independence, 1960) cannot be completed without repeated mentioning of Abeokuta people otherwise known and addressed as Egbas. They are so "fiery and they are fearless. They straddle every face of Nigeria national life like colossus. They are so prominent that they hardly need any introduction," (Adebayo, 2008). Quoting another author, "what would Nigeria have been without the Egbas." (Shonekan 1986, Mabogunje 1980 and Wikipedia Foundation 2008). Abeokuta, to some people is the rock upon which Nigeria is built. Even, the history of Nigerian press could be traced to Abeokuta where and when Henry Townsend founded *Iwe Iroyin* which was a powerful organ for the politicians then to reach out to the grassroots.

Events had it that the Western part of the country blazed the rumbling in the country where notable Egba indigenes played leading roles. It was the event that culminated in the historic treasonable felony trial of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo the leader of the opposition in the Federal Parliament. To Chief Obafemi Awolowo who was also born and bred at Abeokuta (though native of Ikene Remo), the founder of Action Group (AG) and Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), his fellow Yoruba brothers from Abeokuta, Adetokunbo Ademola and Justice Sodeinde Sowemimo, were at the forefront of his orchestrated arrest, trial and subsequent imprisonment. That historic judgement of justice Sowemimo reads:

"With regards to the 27th accused person, I have discussed the evidence against him exhaustively and I find him guilty on the three counts ... I would love to set you Free but my hands are tied..."
Federal Ministry of Justice, Ikoyi, Lagos, (1968)

This ambiguous statement by justice Sowemimo, for many years remained in the political and legal lexicons of the country. The statement, according to many political pundits, was to justify the trial of Chief Awolowo by his Yoruba brother from Abeokuta, (Adebayo, 2008). Though in spite of the feelings, peace eventually came to reign while he was in prison.

Furthermore, Chief Majekodunmi, another Egba man also played a leading role in old Western Region crisis which saw his emergence as the administrator of the Western Region. He actually ordered the restriction of movement and eventually the house arrest of Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

The assumption of office of Majekodunmi put paid to the administration of another Egba man, Alhaji Dauda Soroye Adegbenro who was the choice of Action Group (AG) to replace Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola (of Ogbomoso) a Premier. While in office, Majekodunmi restricted the movement of his townsman to Osogbo instead of their home town, Abeokuta. The events of the early 60s that involved Chief Obafemi Awolowo and some notable Egba indigenes precipitated the crises in the old Western Region, the first military coup in Nigerian and by extension or progression, the Civil War that engulfed the country for months.

Fela Anikulapo Kuti did not spare Olusegun Obasanjo and M.K.O Abiola in their misdoings. Anikulapo Kuti saw these two illustrious sons of Egba as oppressors. He did not spare them through his poisoned barbs.

Obasanjo administration as a Military Head of state after Murtala Mohammed was assassinated directed the destruction of Fela's Kalakuta Republic and his residence at Yaba area of Lagos metropolis. It was in what later became known as "Unknown Soldiers" Saga, that Fela Anikulapo's household including his younger brother Beko and his mother were molested, rough-handed and wounded by the "Unknown Soldiers". That was in 1977 rampage. His mother Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti, the matriarch of the Ransome Kuti family and the Woman activist did not get recovered fully from the trauma until she died later. Similarly, his brother Beko suffered the same faith: He sustained some fractures during the raid and he limped for the rest of his life.

Since independence, there was hardly any political unrest in the country that would not have an Egba son(s) at the centre of the emerging scenario, (Aderogba, 1998). On June 12th 1993 Bashorun M.K.O Abiola contested Presidential Election. He was acclaimed the winner but it became a watershed in the political history of Nigeria. Instead of the winner to be declared and inaugurated as the President, the then Military President, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida annulled the election. General Obasanjo, an Egba man, quietly supported this illegal action of the Military President, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida.

In the midst of the uncertainties that trailed the annulment, General Badamosi Babangida "stepped aside," and another Egba man, Chief Ernest Shonekan became the head of "Political Concoction" – the Interim National Government that was sacked barely few weeks in bloodless coup staged by General Sani Abacha- the most dipodic Military Ruler Nigeria ever had, (Adebayo, 2008).

The country survived and M.K.O. Abiola was imprisoned and eventually died of a mysterious circumstance while in Prison at Abuja. It was his classmate while in Baptist Boys High School Abeokuta (an Egba man) that had the mantle of leadership fell on him again, Obasanjo. That was through the election conducted by General Abdulsalam. He ruled for eight years again. Nigerian citizen felt he brought more hardship than succour to the masses.

No sooner that the Nigerians were relishing their experiences from the administration of Obasanjo than another Egba man became the number four citizen of the country: Honourable Dimeji Bankole mounted the saddle of leadership as he was made the Speaker of the Nigerian Federal House of Representatives. Throughout the time in office, the nation, and of course the world, were on the look out for what his tenure was to unfold for Nigeria. He remained the centre point of Nigerian politics, (Okuwa, 2007). His last days were in very bad financial mess, however.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

Politics is about power. Nobody can really take it on a platter of gold. It is all about being able to negotiate with other politicians based on principles of equality. And, there are dynamics in politics. From the fore-goings therefore, it is obvious that the Egbas have been deeply involved in the politics of the country, Nigeria. They have been significant members of great political parties. They have also pride themselves as founding members of ruling political parties "at the centres", and they remained staunch members. They have considerable experience in the local party activities and national politics. That is apart from being privileged to have strong political and educational pedigree and staunch membership of ruling parties give them robust political antecedent essential for national and international political offices. They are eminently qualified - sentiments apart. Aside the national and international politics and political development, the Egbas have been very significant in the politics of the then Western Nigeria and Ogun State in particular, and the nation generally. They have served, and worked for the successes, and otherwise of the state; and the nation. No other ethnic group or state of the Federation has ever had it bountifully.

Providence has expressly bestowed it upon Abeokuta that her indigenes (the Egbas) must take active part in the political affairs of the country. No town or ethnic group of the country has ever been opportune, privileged or chanced as the Egbas. As time unfolds, it is hoped that Abeokuta (and the Egbas) the ancient town in Yoruba land (in Western Nigeria), will continue to blaze its trail in the political events of the country and subsequently her political history. Suffice it to say that a tree does not make a forest, Egba man or not, whoever is in power need to be supported, encouraged and assisted to be able to move the nation ahead and to serve humanity.

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