

power and authority was the sacredness attached to his office and person once installed, in Idaisa the *jagun* dynastic group emerged as a strong pillar of political unity and the only adequate symbol of existence in the face of continual external invasions. The *alaafin*'s authority and power, for instance, depended on his subjects' faith in his sacredness. On the other hand, it was obvious to every Idaisa citizen that subservience to the *jagun* was the only adequate form of insurance against total annihilation. Cf. the case of Dahomey (Argyle 1966; Akinjogbin 1967).

Also, while the Oyo dynastic group saw itself and was seen as a privileged group, in Idaisa, the opposite was the case. The relationship between the dynastic group on the one hand and the other Idaisa lineage on the other hand was that of compatriots in the same struggle for existence. This was because from the inception of its rule, the *jagun* dynasty adopted a policy of social integration which strengthened interlineage bonds. For example, in spite of the fact that it was a mixed lineage group (Assongba 1975), the customs of the *jagun* forbade intermarriage within the group. This encouraged interactions and created an interlocking network of relationships among the various groups. Since every *otola* (prince) had the blood of a commoner flowing in his veins, many non-royal lineages were socially bound to the dynastic group and had keen interests in its success.

Furthermore, since in spite of the attendant insecurity, the *jagun* group proved itself capable of running the affairs by the kingdom and succeeded in establishing a stable administration, it became the only reasonable alternative to the oppressive and exploitative rule of either the Oyo or Dahomey who sought to dominate the Idaisa region. In the circumstance, what the Idaisa emphasized was military prowess and not kinship factor as expressed in the *Oduduwa*<sup>4</sup> myth popular in virtually all other Yoruba kingdoms (Law 1973).

**Abstract** – This paper examines the problem faced by the Idaisa sub-section of the Yoruba-speaking peoples. The Idaisa built a state in an ethnic frontier zone mainly by

<sup>4</sup> *Oduduwa* is the mythical progenitor of all Yoruba *oba* and one of the major deities in the Yoruba pantheon. This figure is little known among the Idaisa.

conquests. The paper examines the process by which the rulers of the state succeeded in translating conquests into effective administration in spite of obstacles from external pressure and the military nature of the state. Founded amid the disruption of continual wars, Idaisa grew by re-establishing security. The State developed administratively following the receptivity of their leaders to foreign ideas. Thus the kingdom emerged as a highly-centralized state whose nature contradicted the generally known cases such as that of the Oyo empire. But although power in Idaisa was highly concentrated in the hands of the *jagun* (king) and his kinsmen, the history of the state in the 18th century indicates that centralization cannot be equated with political stability. In fact royal absolutism encountered serious challenge from the ruler's kinsmen and from his non-royal subjects. [Nigeria, Yoruba, Socio-political Organization, History]

This paper is based on a fieldwork financed by the Research committee of the University of Ife, Nigeria. Fieldwork was carried out first in 1978 and later between July and October, 1981. Altogether about fifty informants have been interviewed in Idaisa. On the present topic, the principal informants are: M. Abissi Albert (70+), the regent of Dassa-zoumé; Albert Alale (90+), Chief priest of *Nana Burukuu*; members of the Zomahun family; Jacob Idoyun (80+), Isalu, Dassa-zoumé; Bara Georgwin (100+), Esepa, Dassa-zoumé; and Apo Gbegnuou (50+) and Zomahun Albert (70+), provincial governors of the Idaisa kingdom.

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