

Monthly Lagos AMRC Lecture

**Protocol of Dethronements and
Re-enthronements in Old
Lagos**

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Background

- Obaship Institution - A very vital aspect of the sociology of the Yoruba people
- African societies conceive the universe as vast hierarchical order
- From a supreme being to the least creature
- The traditional Yoruba Oba takes a pivotal position within the scale

Conceptual Review

- Dethronements among Yoruba
- The status of Oba among the Yoruba – Alase Ikeji-Orisa
- Features of dethronement in the precolonial
- ...his sacred character does not allow him to go on living after his deposition, precisely because that ‘character’ is permanent - (Munoz, 1977)



Background

Next to God, who has power by himself, one finds the first parents of man, ... these people who have received directly from God their vital force, constitute the highest link between men and God, whose intermediaries they are.

(Munoz, 2003)



Conceptual Review



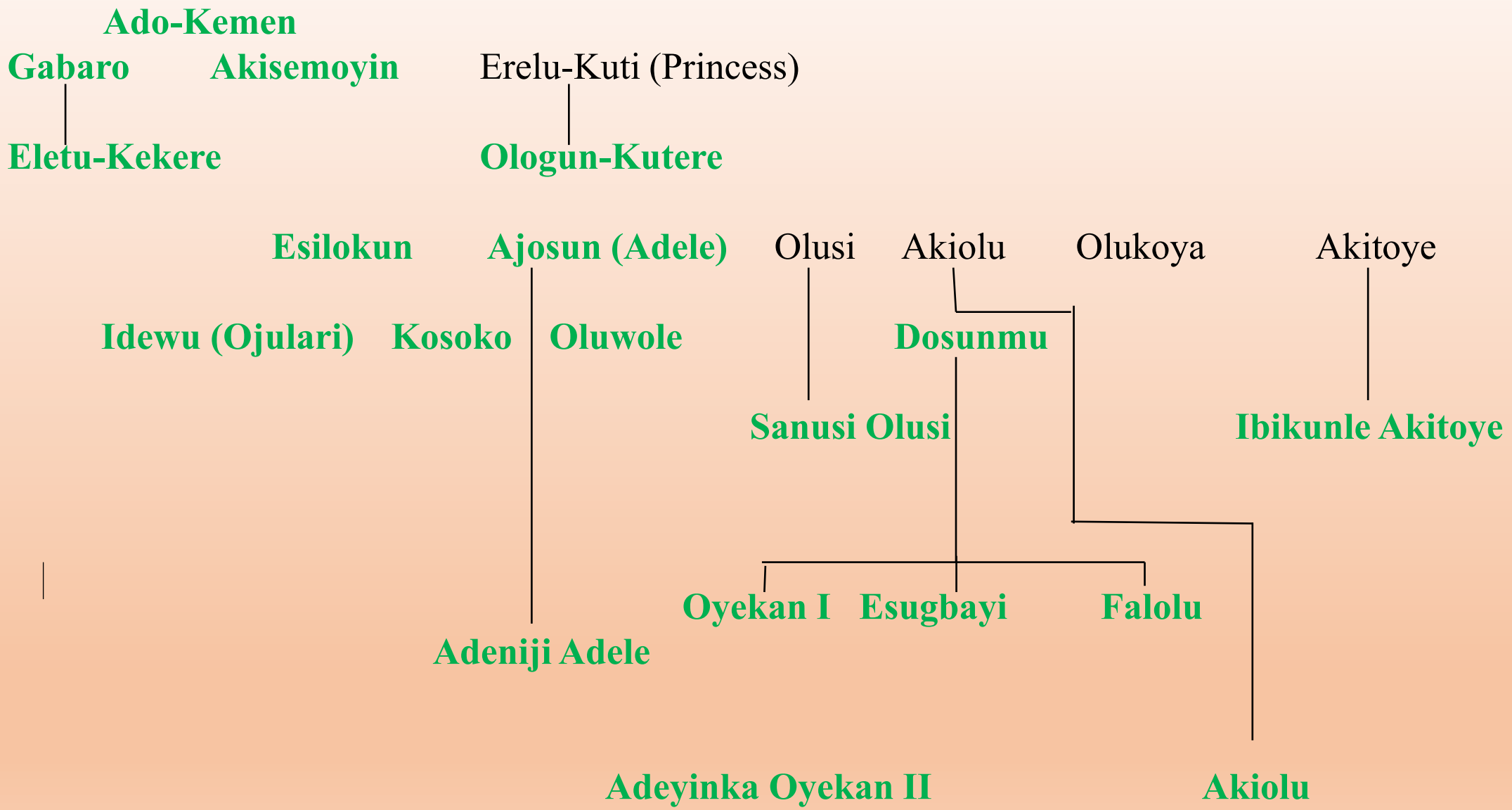
- What happened to a dethroned Oba?
- Isigba (Opening of the calabash)
- A deposed Oba alive could constitute the focus of agitation and disaffection, thus endangering the security and survival of the state if he was the paramount king. (Oduwobi, 2003)
- Colonial intervention – introduction of native chiefs' laws – state level laws
- Usurpation of the chiefs and people's say

Lagos Royalty

- Obaship in Lagos - Historical Background
- The Benin Link – contents and contexts
- Primogeniture Concept of succession
- The eventual Yorubalisation of Lagos royalty



Genealogy



Dethroned Obas of Lagos

- Ajosun, a.k.a. Adele – 2nd child of Ologun-Kutere, was made Oba instead of Esilokun (1811 to 1821)
- Adele permitted the worship of Egungun by some of his slaves
- Ajosun agreed to leave the throne and moved to Badagry axis.
- Dethroned by the dominant traditional institution of the day
- Adele reenthroned after the passing of Esilokun (1835 to 1837)

Dethroned Obas of Lagos

- Akitoye, the last son of Ologun Kutere - made Oba after the death of Oluwole (1841 to 1845)
- Nephew's intrigue due to a hint from one of the chiefs, Eletu-Ika, one of the important kingmakers.
- Kosoko waged war against sitting Oba, the latter fled to Abeokuta – Badagry.
- Akitoye, deposed by an act of war by Kosoko



Oba Akitoye of Lagos

Dethroned Obas of Lagos

- Kosoko, made himself oba of Lagos (1846 to 1851) after Akitoye fled to Abeokuta
- After 6 years of reign, the British fought to re-enthroned Akitoye.
- That signaled the major take-over of Lagos by the British.
- Kosoko fled to Epe with his supporters (Eko Epe)
- Dethronement of Kosoko was achieved by a foreign power



Dethroned Obas of Lagos

- Esugbayi, became Oba after the reign of Oyekan I (1901 to 1920)
- Had series of issues with the colonial govt.
- Dethroned but not exiled in 1920. Eventually exiled to Oyo in 1925.
- Herbert Macaulay continued to fight against this decision – the ruling of the Privy council brought him back to Lagos as mere occupant of Iga Idunganran
- No Oba in Lagos between 1931 and 1932



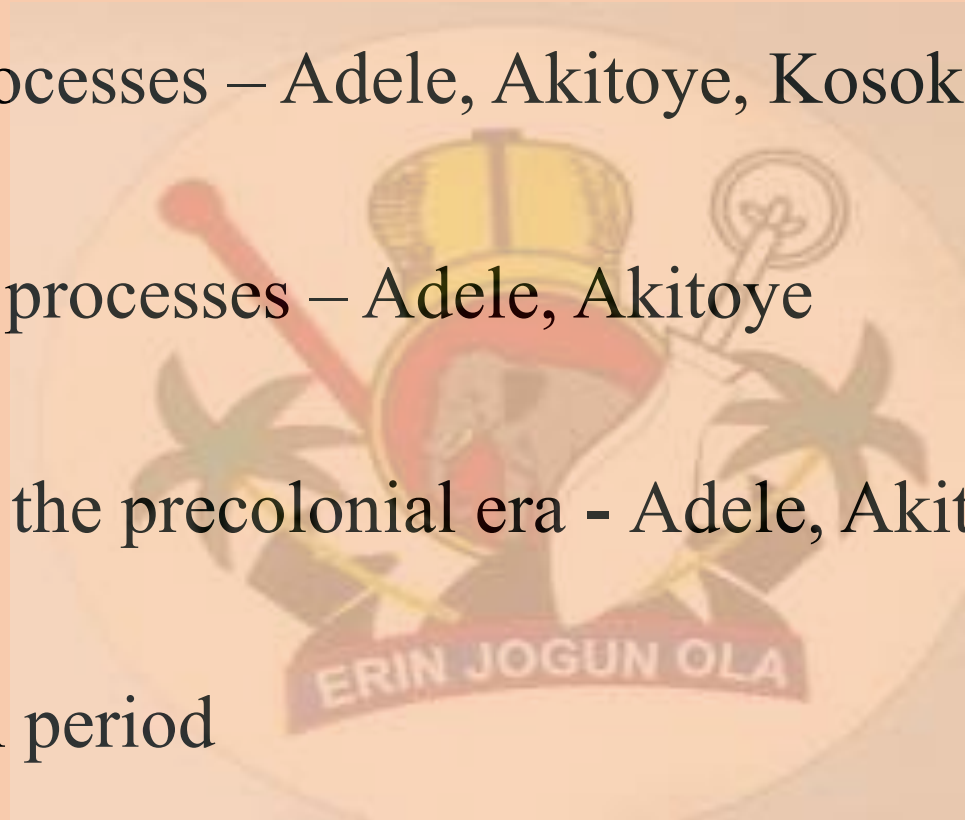
Dethroned Obas of Lagos

- Sanusi Olusi, the first Muslim Oba of Lagos (1928 to 1931)
- Became Oba after Ibikunle Akitoye (first Christian Oba)
- His reign was disrupted in 1931, due to a court injunction by the privy council (Habeas Corpus) as result of the deposition of Esugbayi, court ordered that he must be returned to where he was exiled from (Iga Idunganran)
- Negotiation between Olusi & British, former agreed to vacate the royal residence
- No banishment, continued salary payment and construction of Iga
- An act of self-sacrifice – Daily Times



Discussion

- Categorising dethronement process in old Lagos
- Five dethronement processes – Adele, Akitoye, Kosoko, Esugbayi, Olusi
- Two re-enthronement processes – Adele, Akitoye
- Two happened during the precolonial era - Adele, Akitoye
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- Three during Colonial period
- All five except Olusi went on exile

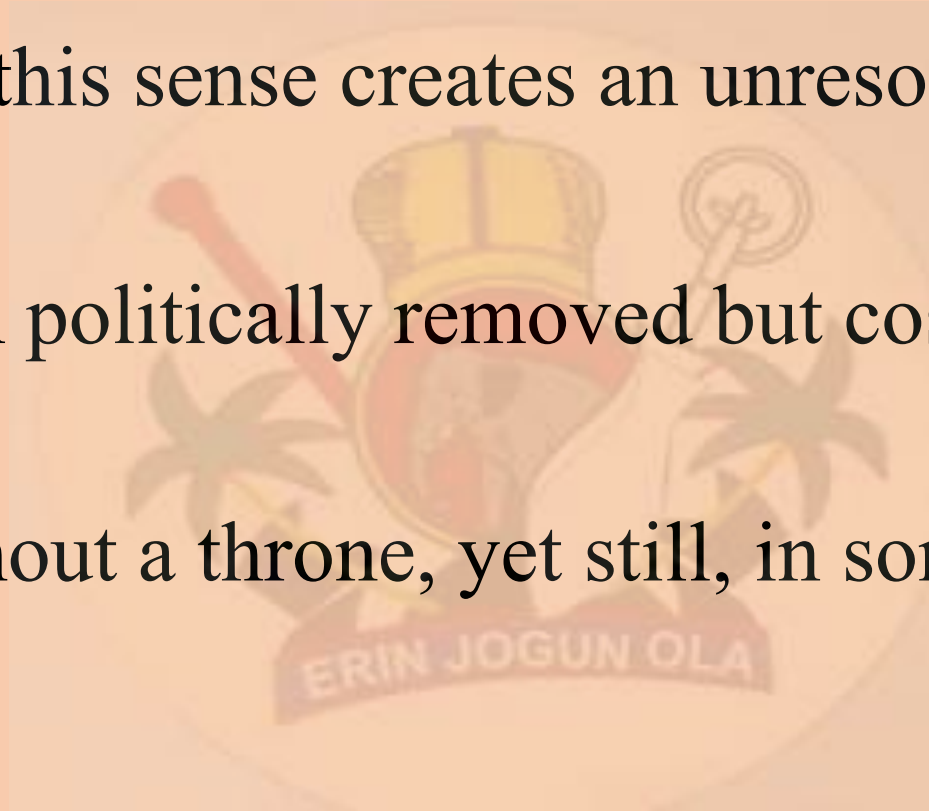


Analysis

- Applied to the Lagos Obaship, the dethroned Oba occupies a peculiar liminal condition, one made even more
- The philosophy of the Yoruba principle: "*Bi Oba kan ko ku, Oba miiran ko je*" — if an Oba does not die, another cannot be enthroned, states that the Obaship is not merely a political office that can be vacated and refilled.
- It is a sacred status, ontologically tied to the person who holds it - death is the only legitimate mechanism of full separation.
- The action of Ajosun (Adele) is seen as detrimental to the society, it's a spiritual breach on the community, the consequence at the time, in a typical Yoruba setting was considered death sentence.

Analysis

- Dethronement in this sense creates an unresolved liminality
- The Oba has been politically removed but cosmologically remains.
- He is an Oba without a throne, yet still, in some fundamental sense, an Oba.
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- Also, the cases re-enthronement was therefore not the creation of something new but a reincorporation

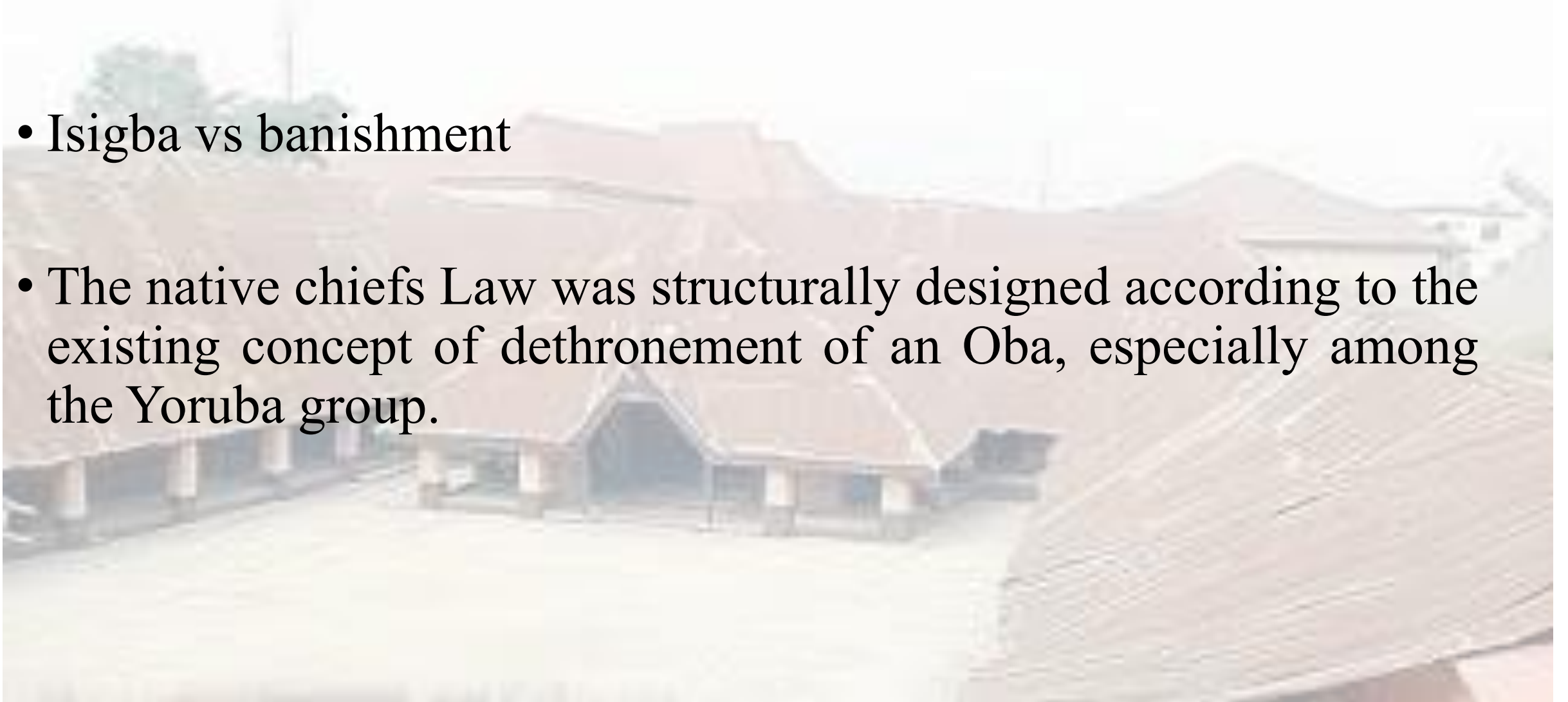


Analysis

- Adele and Akitoye were able to achieve continuity in the real sense of royalty after their return
- Esugbayi was returned to Iga Idunganran, even if he was not officially identified as an Oba between 1931 and 1932 that he passed
- Kosoko and Olusi were built separate Igas by the colonial government at Ereko and Oke-Arin respectively, with salary and other throne advantages.
- Yet, they remained Oba, without a throne

Reflection

- Isigba vs banishment
- The native chiefs Law was structurally designed according to the existing concept of dethronement of an Oba, especially among the Yoruba group.



Dethronement of other Yoruba Obas

- The study also speaks to the relationship between the Oba and the chiefs as being not a simple hierarchy but a dynamic of mutual constitution.
- If the chiefs have some powers to remove an Oba in old Lagos, it posits that the Oba's authority was real and sacred, but it was the chiefs who made it so.



Dethronement of other Yoruba Obas

- The central argument - dethronement and re-enthronement in Old Lagos were not signs of political weakness or institutional failure.
- On the contrary, evidence of institutional strength — the expression of a governance structure designed to hold royal authority accountable to communal norms while preserving the sacred continuity of the Obaship as an institution.
- Obaship in Old Lagos was never simply a personal office held by an individual ruler.. It was a living institution, animated by an ongoing negotiation between the sacred claims of royalty and the customary claims of the community.
- The study also challenges the principle of — "*Bi Oba kan ko ku, Oba miiran ko je*" — this is understood by the alteration of the process of isigba, by the introduction of banishment and exile. This is one of the colonial disruption in the indigenous Yoruba cosmology.

Dethronement of other Yoruba Obas

- Alaafin of Oyo – Oba Adeyemi II (1954)
- Awujale of Ijebu - Adenuga Folagbade (1925)
- Timi of Ede - Adetoyese Laoye (1948)
- Olowo of Owo – Olateru Olagbegi II (1966)
- Deji of Akure – Oluwadare Adepoju (2010)
- Alake of Egba land - Ladapo Ademola (1948)
- Olota of Ota – Oba Tomothy Fadina



Thank you