

strongly resisted by the chiefs and the people.²⁰

Prince Aiguobasinwin was later crowned the *Oba* of Benin on 22nd July 1914 with the title of Eweka II. From this time on, the relationship between Eweka II and Chief Agho Obaseki became strained. Also, at this crucial time, according to Chief Omo Osagie, the late *Iyase* of Benin, Chief Okizi,²¹ the *Iyase* of Benin then, died and the post of *Iyase* became vacant. As the *Iyase* (Prime Minister) is the next to the *Oba*, the British administrator influenced the *Oba*, Eweka II, to bestow the chieftaincy of *Iyase* on Chief Agho Obaseki,²² which was immediately carried out. Although the Bini (Edo), like the Baganda of Buganda,²³ cherish their monarchical institution and were happy at the restoration of the monarchy, they did not like the post of the *Iyase* given to Agho Obaseki,²⁴ but there was nothing they could do under the circumstances. The position of the *Iyase* is the second highest office in the Benin political hierarchy. Chief Agho Obaseki, elevated to the post of the *Iyase*, thus became the second highest office holder in the Benin political structure or administrative setting.

Thus, with the restoration of the monarchy, the British introduced the indirect rule system into Benin, making use of the *Oba* and his chiefs as their agents in exploiting the kingdom. However, the implication of this new development is tremendous. First, the *Oba* ceased to be the sovereign ruler of Benin. Second, the Benin Native Council as constituted became executors of the orders of the colonial agents posted to the area as well as the areas covered by their authorities. This did not conform strictly with the traditional political arrangement of the pre-colonial period. For instance, Igbafe indicates that contrary to tradition, Agho Obaseki, a junior chief in Benin was appointed paramount chief for Benin.²⁵ Third, the roles of the paramount chiefs that became elevated as a result of the political development of 1897 changed considerably as examined above. They had to execute orders from the District Officers or Residents who were their political superiors. This political situation prevailed in Benin until 1914 when monarchy was restored.

It should be noted that the British did not want to restore the *Oba* to his former status. The authority of the *Oba* was severely curtailed. In Igbafe's assessment, the most important aspect of the restoration is to be found in what was not restored.²⁶ What was restored was a caricature of the traditional monarchy. There were strict limitations on the powers of the *Oba* and his chiefs. The *Oba* was stripped of his ancient power and in the letter of his appointment, it was stipulated that, 'except as conceded by the Resident, the (restored) *Oba* lost all rights and authority over the land of his ancestors, these rights being vested in the English monarch and his representatives'. Similarly, the *Oba* lost the power to collect and impose taxes, the power of appointment and selection of his chiefs, the power to make and change the laws of his people²⁷ without the consent of the Governor or his representative, namely the Commissioner appointed to his territory by the Governor-General.²⁸ As it were, the British expedition of 1897 thus opened a new vista of modern administration in Benin in which the *Oba* and his chiefs became instruments of governance. Hence, all through the colonial period and even up till now, the monarchy was never to recover from the shock of February 1897, and has never been independent ever since.

Conclusion

From the afore-stated, it can be seen that the *Oba* was divested of his traditional powers. This means that the powers of the chiefs were also limited considering the erosion in the powers of the *Oba*, but a few of them, especially the *Iyase*, gained more powers and influence during this period. Yet, the entirety of the people in Benin were happy at the restored monarchy, the symbol of their society, customs and tradition. It was at the coronation of *Oba* Eweka II that the *Uzama Nihiron* performed their duty of crowning the *Oba*.²⁹ The head of the *Uzama* chiefs, the *Oliha*, did the crowning. All the chiefs, except Chief Agho, paid homage to the *Oba* in the traditional way. Chief Agho Obaseki did not pay homage to the *Oba* because he considered himself equally fit for the