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Ethnic Multiplicity, Diverse Facial Tribal Marking and Sustainability of Ilorin Fulani Emirate in the 19th Century

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Abstract
The 19th century Yoruba historical quagmire transformed Ilorin from scattered micro settlements to a Fulani Emirate, a centralized polity and a cultural melting point. Establishment and consolidation of the Fulani Emirate hegemonic rule in a Yoruba geographical domain, culminated to the solid foundation of Ilorin's political and economic prominence. Ilorin became a conqueror and a safer haven for the oppressed. It turned out to be a scent of attraction for migrant settlers from Yorubaland, Nupe land, Hausa-Fulani, Borno, Sudan, Mali, several other parts of Western Africa and Sudan. Facial markings and other diverse cultural features of these people excessively complicated her heterogeneity and turned the tribal ownership of Ilorin Emirate into an unending controversial academic debate. The paper explores readings from extant literature and oral testimonies to juxtapose the extent through which facial tribal markings demonstrated tribal and cultural diversity of a united sovereign entity of the Ilorin Emirate. The study claims that despite the prevalence of diverse facial tribal markings, political and administrative structuring and restructuring which allocated rightful places to major and significant minor ethnic groupings, vested in them a sense of belonging and identity. Ilorin Emirate became one of the most formidable political and economic heavy weights of the 19th century West African history.

Keywords: Tribal Marks, Heterogeneous, Ethnicity, Ilorin, Emirate, Wards, Yorubaland

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Introduction

Prior to the 19th century, several autonomous communities constituting Ilorin were mere hunting, farming and market compact autochthonous and micro settlements of peoples from diverse ethnic backgrounds. It evolved out of her strategic geographical features as transition region between the forest and savannah, and a gateway to Yorubaland. Considering the strategic geographical and economic significance of the area, a version of history claimed that it got to a point where Oyo political hegemony thought it right to secure the area from the rampaging Nupes, Baribas and other conquerors and power mongers of the time. Consequently, representatives of the *Alaafin* of Oyo *Baale* or *Ajele* were henceforth appointed to oversee security and collect taxes on his behalf. Despite the presence of *Baale*, there was no evidence of interference and centralized political bonding in Ilorin communities of the time. Early 19th century monumental historical events in Yorubaland automatically prepared the solid ground for Ilorin's future independence, prominence and imperium hegemony. Afonja, the Oyo Empire's War Generalissimo *Aare Onakankanfo* and the last of Oyo representatives *Ajeles*, took advantage of Oyo's constitutional crises and political dilemma to implant Ilorin's autonomy.

Early and contemporary Yoruba historians have undertaken extensive research on how waves of migration, wars, skirmishes, raiding, power mongering and supremacy propelled the rising to prominence of notable Yoruba 19th century hegemonic powers. Peel (1979: 2) and Akinjogbin (1998: 6) expressed how several Yoruba folks founded Ijesa-Obokun in Ilesa. Kolawola Ajisafe (Deese 2021) and Folari Adebesin (1939: 2) explored mythical historical evidence in showcasing the essence of heterogeneity in the foundation and growth of Abeokuta, Ajase and Egba kingdoms. Isaac Babalola Akinyele (Harold 1965: 4) appraises the role of migrating heterogeneous Yoruba tribes in the 19th century foundation and eminence of Ibadan and her neighbors like Osogbo, Iwo and Ikirun. Gollmar (1956: 16), Law (1976: 76), Olajubu (1978: 34), Adeniran (1980: 21), Agiri (2014: 4), Akinyenri (1971: 23) and Akintoye (1971: 37) historicized the role of Yoruba tribes' migrant settlers in the growth of Lagos, Ibadan, Ogbomosho, Oyo, Igboho, and Ijebu. Moreover, Biobaku (1973: 42), J.F. Ade Ajayi and Smith (1994: 12), Toyin Falola (1988: 11) and scores of other contemporary Yoruba Afrocentric scholars interrogated the impact of the collapse of Oyo Empire and its consequences on the rise to prominence of some Yoruba kingdoms. Their studies examined how the fall of Oyo, abetted by incessant raiding, wars, disturbances and waves of migration, contributed enormously to the foundation of heterogeneously inclined kingdoms in the

Yorubaland geographical region. These scholars proved and admitted that domination of these hegemonies by migrating Yoruba tribes and sub-tribes played a significant role in their conspicuousness.

However, Ilorin as one of the notable sovereign powers at the northernmost Yoruba geographical region stands out as an exception. Before and after the collapse of Oyo as reiterated above, Mockler ([1911] 1987: 3; 2018: 45), Danmole (1997: 6), O'Hear (1997: 74), Jawondo (2012: 303-313), Olumoh (2015: 94), Jimoh (2012: 16), Banwo (1998: 167), Olaoye (1989: 44) and others established that the consequent waves of migration witnessed in Ilorin were not only from the capital and provinces of Oyo empire but also across the Niger and transregional areas like Mali, Niger, Sudan and Chad among others. Some Yoruba folk migrated to seek solace, economic prosperity and security from the newly independent Ilorin community. Many others drifted to join their kinsmen who had already inhabited the area. Scores of slaves from diverse ethnic backgrounds throughout Yorubaland and outlying villages deserted their masters to seek succor, freedom and protection in the newly reorganized Ilorin army. Afonja and the subsequent Fulani forces, comprising of warriors of diverse ethnic background such as Hausa, Nupe, Yoruba, Gobir[1], Kanuri and Kemberi among others, won battles, conquered territories, acquired bounties, and added ado to Ilorin's imperial acumen of the 19th century.

The rarity of the unique peopling and settlement pattern of Ilorin Emirate complicates its singular ethnicity claimant status. It threw Ilorin's tribal ownership and claimant status to an unending academic debate. It is in view of this that this study employs diverse facial tribal markings to analyse the extent of the tribal and cultural diversity, and its consequent impact on the formidability of its sovereignty and peaceful coexistence of her populace in the 19th century and beyond. The study examined diverse facial tribal markings to historicize the extent of heterogeneity, cooperation and peaceful coexistence, which transformed Ilorin to a cultural melting point.

Expectations that varied cultural identities like facial tribal markings and others might have created divisions, resentment, suspicion, skepticism, enmity and dubiety among various tribes in Ilorin, rather warranted harmonious coexistence. The study found out that despite the presence of diverse facial tribal

[1] It is important to note that there are ethnic Gobirawas (Gobir) and other Hausa folk that migrated to Ilorin from several parts of the present-day Northern Nigeria and parts of West Africa. Although Gobir is one of the seven kingdoms of Hausaland and had constituted the ruling class (the Sarakunas or Sarkis) in Hausaland before the 19th century, Usman dan Fodiyo's jihad, and also speak Hausa language; they constituted a unique Hausa group identified by their special features such as facial tribal markings among others.

markings and ethnicities, superb political structuring and subsequent restructuring meaningfully accommodated rightful places to majority and significant minority ethnic groupings. This granted and accorded them a sense belonging, identity and loyalty. Therefore, these peoples, with diverse facial tribal markings, and from multiethnic backgrounds and nationalities prioritized the defense and protection of Ilorin Emirate's sanctity as a worthy stake. Ilorin Emirate thereby transfigured to a distinct and unique cultural breed.

Foundation History of Ilorin as Micro Settlements, an Independent Entity under Aare Afonja and a Fulani Emirate

Ilorin's Foundational Histories

Ilorin emerged in a unique ecological and geographical area where the open savannah belt in the north shares a common border with the forest zone to the south of present-day Nigeria (Balogun 1992: 1). There is no doubt that the origin of Ilorin as a collective settlement or a single town is shrowded in a deep and as yet an insolvable uncertainty when viewed from a historical perspective (Jimba 1994: 10). This factor has warranted the thoughtfulness and objectivity of historians in the reconstruction of history of Ilorin from a mini to a centralized political entity.

The first era in the history of Ilorin was one tagged with individual founding of Ilorin narrated by different mythical hypotheses. The foremost in this regard is the Ojo Isekuse factor in the foundation of Ilorin. Some oral and written hypotheses suggest that he migrated from Oyo, while others assumed he originated from several other parts of Yorubaland such as Gambe-Ilotta near Eji and Eminla among others (Jimba 1994: 1). Ojo Isekuse was said to be a Yoruba hunter who found Ilorin to be most suitable for his hunting activities. The tradition further claims that it was the settlement of Ojo in the present site of Ilorin that attracted other settlers that later swelled its population. A version expresses that it was at the time Ilorin had grown in population that Ojo committed an abominable crime that forced him to migrate out of the new settlement (Omoiya 2009: 59). Suleiman (2022: 62) however agrees that Ojo Isekuse, with other groups in his era were persecuted and exterminated from Ilorin based on politically motivated reasons.

Another individual also associated with the founding of Ilorin was one man called *Asaju*. He was also said to be a hunter, who combined his hunting activities with farming. He was also said to have found the present site of Ilorin suitable for these activities, hence, he migrated to the site (Omoiya 2009: 60). The

tradition also claims that it was *Asaju*'s settlement in Ilorin that attracted other settlers who conferred on him the appellation, *Asaju*, which means 'the leader', that eventually became his adopted name (Omoiya 2009: 60). A critical evaluation of these traditions shows that it is extremely difficult to accept any of the tales as authentic root of the foundation of Ilorin. An Ilorin historian is thereby compelled to correlate these traditions with the contemporary events to elicit an acceptable and suitable theory on the origin of the town.

One of the most popular and reliable historical hypotheses was the supposition that traced the origin of Ilorin to the old Oyo ascendancy and the forefathers of Afonja, from Laderin, Pasin and Alugbin. Laderin was said to be the founder and the first *Baale* of Ilorin, succeeded by his son Pasin; Pasin too was succeeded by his son Alugbin, and Afonja who happened to be the last in that lineage. The Laderin royal family of Ilorin enjoyed considerable fame in the Oyo country for its valor and leadership quality (Akintoye 2014: 284). The details surrounding this tradition explain Ilorin as part of the larger and centralized political entity of old Oyo Empire. Subsequently, Ilorin attracted more relevance and popularity due to her strategic geographical location as a transition belt between the forest and savannah region. Ilorin had served as the northern boundary and belonged to the *Ekun Osi*, meaning left flank of the metropolitan province of old Oyo Empire (Olumoh 2015: 49; Johnson 1921: 351). The Central Sudanese local manufacture (e.g., leatherworks and clothing), as well as mined, agricultural, and semi-processed products (e.g., natron and cotton), entered the Yoruba world through Oyo; and a large volume of Yoruba products (e.g., cloth, kolanuts and pepper) passed through the Oyo metropolis and its northern satellite towns (including Ilorin) to the Sudan (Ogundiran 2020: 243). The vast movement of goods and people along the route brought about the need to secure the area by putting in place a political connectivity between Oyo empire's capital and Ilorin.

sThe establishment of Oyo Empire's interest in Ilorin through its *Ajele* further fortified and secured the area. Its values and potentials were quickly appreciated and this brought about the dramatic changes of its social, economic and political status (Omoiya 2009: 64). The long-distance traders, travelers, religion crusaders and wanderers that had been traversing Ilorin to their destinations such as Oyo, Sabe, Saki, Ijebu, Ibadan and other Yoruba societies, the Hausaland, Nupeland, Borno empire and several parts of Africa such as Sudan and Mali were soon to find Ilorin as a more central and suitable place for their activities. During Aare Afonja's era as *Ajele* or *Baale* in early 19th century, Ilorin's prominence as the first big settlement after crossing the River Niger to the Yoruba country prompted the migration of new settlers into the community. These migrations and interactions

further boosted economic and social activities in Ilorin. Trade relations and other interactions between these people grew, so also the overall growth of Ilorin. Ilorin thereby became a heterogeneous society and a cultural melting point where people of different origins lived peacefully and harmoniously.

An elaborate and semi-autonomous Hausa community, a new and big market began to emerge around the Gambari area. This gave rise to the *Mai Gida* system, a situation whereby the Hausa resident of Ilorin hosted their kinsmen who came to the town for commercial purpose. If the Hausa trader came with goods to sell, he would not sell a single one without the knowledge of his host, and if he comes to buy goods, he would go in company of the host. Another middlemanship system known as *Jawo* also emerged among the settlers of Gambari community. It was not mandatory for the *Jawo* middlemen to accommodate their clients, what matters were for them to ensure smooth business transactions between them and the Ilorin local merchants. Their affairs were overseen by the office of the *Sarkin* Gambari, an office that had been in place in Ilorin before the collapse of Oyo and the subsequent establishment of the Emirate.[2] More so, there was evidence of the existence of an autonomous Fulani herdsmen community known as Olufadi Fulani group before the Afonja and Alimi Ilorin history episode.

The presence of Dose, a Nupe descent, could be seen as a *prima ferci* of the existence of Nupe ethnic group across Ilorin in the reign of Bako, the *Sarkin* Gambari and Muhammed Tahir Sholagberu, a Kanuri man and leader of the indisputable Okesuna quarters of Ilorin. The first Emir of Ilorin, AbdulSalam's destruction of Okesuna resulted into internal displacement and resettlement of diverging ethnic groups of the quarters across several Ilorin areas, which propelled the assemblage and swelling up of Oke-Male's population (Suleiman 2022: 186).

The Oke-Male settlers are another known prominent set of people since the reign of the Oyo ascendancy in Ilorin. Many believed that their migration from Mali earned them the appellation *Oke-Mali*, which was later corrupted to *Oke-Male*. Others also held on to the belief that they might have migrated from Niger, Borno, and could also be Mande traders from Sierra Leone. From wherever they may have come, they were known for trading activities, Islamic scholarship and evangelization mission[3] (Omoiya 2009: 59). These people were said to have found this solid mini-Islamic community, with which other Muslim migrants

[2] Alhaja Ramatu Eleha, pers. comm., 16 April 2019.

[3] "Evangelization mission" has been used by several contemporary Ilorin historians and scholars to showcase the craft, expertise and efforts of these earliest scholars migrants in spreading Islamic scholarship and gospel to Ilorin and several parts of Yorubaland.

and subsequent settlers from the Hausa, Nupe, Kanuri, Arbahaji (later corrupted to *Agbaji*) in Sudan and several parts of Oyo Empire pitched their tent. These people on their part, brought into Ilorin market items such as woven cloths and other household materials in exchange for European goods from the coast. In the process of trading, they established Quranic schools and converted many of the indigenous population of Ilorin to Islam (Omoiya 2009: 61).

Another unit of notable settlement that emerged during the period of Oyo ascendancy was the Okesuna, Okekere, Okelele, Okekura, Oke Aluko, Oke Apomu and Oke Anifowose among others, which were made up of specific groups of migrants from different places (Omoiya 2009: 61). For instance, the settlers of Okesuna were prominent Islamic scholars, teachers and preachers that migrated from various places such as parts of Borno and Hausaland, and Kuwo, Kobayi, Gbanda, Kobe and other parts of Yorubaland, where Islamic culture and traditions had been fully established (Danmole 1997: 1-13). As a vassal province of the old Oyo Empire, the units of settlements in Ilorin were coordinated under the authority of the empire's *Ajele* of the community (Omoiya 2009: 89). Ilorin thereby became a nucleus of diverse linguistic groupings, cultures and tribes. Subsequently, intermarriage, trade and predominance of Islamic religion further strengthened the relationship among these peoples.

Ilorin as an Independent Entity under Aare Afonja

During the short reign of Oba Adebo, Opele, the *Baale* of Igbogun, was the first to announce his independence. Afonja's declaration of Ilorin's Independence during the long interregnum between the Oyo's monarch Maku and Majotu, earned him the most important person in the final disintegration of the Oyo Empire (Akintoye 2014: 284). Afonja, an influential Oyo prince (on his maternal side) and Commander of the Army (*are-ona-kakanfo*) became the emblematic figure of anti-*alaafin* sentiment in the metropolitan area (Ogundiran 2020: 367). Afonja had aspirations for the throne of Oyo, but the kingmakers bypassed him on three occasions between 1789 and 1802. His hostility toward the metropolis seemed to grow on occasion that he was bypassed for the throne (Ogundiran 2020: 367). Rather than fighting to save the empire from external intrigues as his office required of him, Afonja only fanned the embers of internal discord between 1790 and 1824 (Ogundiran 2020: 367). He embarked on a quest to carve his own autonomous polity out of the metropolitan area of Oyo. He itched for a realignment of powers that would replace the already destabilized *Alaafin* dynasty. With the united energy of all Oyo people, the authority of the empire

would be reestablished on all its former provinces and more territories would be conquered, and the capital of the new empire would be Ilorin (Akintoye 2014: 285). The condition of things in the Oyo homeland seemed to favor all these plans. Constitutional crisis, decline in Oyo's export market, inter-elite power struggle in the metropolis, political instability in the empire and the rebellion of the underclass in the empire's metropolis and provinces as a result of institutionalization of social inequality, all work in favor of Afonja's empire building plan (Ogundiran 2020: 357).

From his base in Ilorin, only sixty kilometers south of the capital, Afonja allegedly issued a call to the metropolitan area, promising freedom to the teeming slaves in the capital and its suburbs who were willing to join his resistance force in the provincial town (Ogundiran 2020: 367). It is important to note that the influence of a new Islamic movement under Usman dan Fodio - which emerged in Hausaland in 1804 - turned Islam in Yorubaland to a radical and aggressive faith, thereby provoking violent reactions in many towns in Oyo country (Akintoye 2014: 286). It led to slave revolts in Yorubaland. Many Muslims were killed or forced to flee their homes, some of them coming to live around Sholagberu and Alimi in Ilorin. As these Muslim refugees came, the men among them, sizzling with anger against *Alaafin* and the Oyo rulers who had persecuted them. They were very zealous to join Afonja's army and fight for him against the *Alaafin*'s establishment and against the communities from which they had fled, even though Afonja's political plans and wars had nothing to do with their Islamic faith, and even though Afonja himself showed no desire to convert to Islam (Akintoye 2014: 287). From this circumstance, Afonja came to the idea that he could easily and quickly build up a large army by tapping into the fears and anger of Muslims in the Oyo homeland. Moreover, there were very many slaves of foreign origin (mostly Hausa, but also Nupe, Bariba, Aja and Fulani) in Oyo homes all over the kingdom, kept as cowherders, farm hands, stable tenders, rope makers, barbers, etc. (Akintoye 2014: 287). Afonja decided that offering these slaves their freedom and protection in Ilorin could yield him a big addition to the army that he could amass from the Yoruba Islamic community. Afonja obviously had no understanding of the religious implications and possibilities of his idea (Akintoye 2014: 287). In 1817, he lured the Fulani and Hausa and other slaves of northern origin in Oyo-Ile to his side and constituted them into a formidable force known as *Jama* (congregation of the faithful) (Aribidesi 2012: 137). These slaves were desperately seeking freedom from bondage. The slaves were not the only ones who left the capital; they were joined

by many Oyo citizens and other Yoruba underclass who were seeking better economic and social opportunities (Ogundiran 2020: 368).

After the proclamation of independence and self-determination for Ilorin, Afonja initiated several measures to consolidate his power. He rallied the support of leaders of several interest groups inhabiting the Ilorin metropolis, out of which Sholagberu, the leader of Okesuna axis, his age-long friend, a Muslim scholar and trader was key. Being fully aware of the fact that all the powers he had were sourced through Yoruba traditional means, and that they could be destroyed through the influence of *Alaafin*'s supporters, Afonja sought for an independent source of power to survive his confrontation with Oyo authorities (Omoiya 2009: 72). It could also be that Aare Afonja sought for another source of power, such as Muslim medicines (charms), so as to make him the most powerful king and empire builder and make Ilorin the center of gravity of the Yoruba nation. From the military point of view, Muslim trade was a source of horses, and Muslim slaves from the north had traditionally provided a large number of highly skilled cavalrymen and grooms to Oyo's army (Law 1976: 69-89). Afonja extended hands of fellowship to Muslims and other interest groups to earn him access to their support in subverting the power of the *Alaafin* and other enemies.

Through Sholagberu, Afonja came to know Salih Alimi, a renowned Islamic scholar and cleric, who had traversed many parts of Yorubaland before settling down at Kuwo, a village not too far from Ilorin. In order to strengthen his hands in the enterprise he was about to undertake, he encouraged and invited Alimi to come down to settle and serve as his priest in Ilorin (Johnson 1921: 193). Alimi came and invited his sons, relatives and followers down from Sokoto. The arrival of Mallam Al-Salih in Ilorin in 1817 transformed the position of Islam in the city. It increased Ilorin's appeal to Muslims from Yorubaland, the Central Sudanese region and parts of West Africa.

Afonja had already built up a solid military team by appointing his allies and loyal chieftains Toyeje, the *Baale* of Ogbomosho as the Commander of the right wing and Fagboun, *Baale* of Jabata as the left-wing Commander. Although Afonja as the war commander and generalissimo had a large retinue of warriors under his fold in Ilorin and in the provinces of other loyal friends, he relied heavily on the strength of the slave soldiers, also known as *Jama*, most of whom were loyal to Salih Alimi. These restless *Jama* served as Afonja's veritable instrument in establishing independence for Ilorin Yorubas and some ascendancy over their Yoruba neighbors, the Ibolos, Igbominas and Ekitis (Aribidesi 2012: 137). They were also instrumental to the suppression of Ojo Agunbambaru's uprisings (the tyrant Bashorun Gaha's son). Outstanding

successes recorded by these *Jama* intoxicated Afonja to over-rate them over his long-time standing army and allies. He had unlimited confidence in the *Jama* and was unaware of the growing disaffection and disloyalty towards himself (Johnson 1921: 198). They operated with impunity and turned Ilorin to a lawless community whenever they were not engaged in any war. During these periods of idleness, they stole, raped, confiscated peoples' properties, grabbed lands, and committed all sorts of crime with impunity. Whenever Alimi, their principal, was requested to caution them, the usual response was to encourage Afonja to engage the *Jama* in War or raiding expedition on a continuous basis.

At the long run, Afonja resorted to disband and put an end to the excesses of the *Jama* but misconstrued his own might and strength. He thought he could put them down whenever he liked and was sometimes very severe with any act of insubordination, openly threatening them with suppression and annihilation (Johnson 1921: 198). Long time of impunity of the *Jama* increased their confidence, which soon sparked an open confrontation and outrage between them and Afonja, their landlord. Long time over-reliance on the *Jama* and the subsequent fragmentations resulted in complete feebleness and powerlessness of Afonja. His total confidence in the *Jama* made Afonja to accord less respect to members of his long-standing Yoruba army.

By the time an uprising or what C.K. Whitaker (1970) referred to as a palace coup was taken up against Afonja, he had not only become powerless and hopeless, he was also completely helpless. The private messages sent to other powerful provincial chiefs, all went into futility. On realizing this, the *Jama* swept into action and assassinated Aare Afonja and summarily terminated the Yoruba oligarchic rule in Ilorin. Although Yoruba historians for example had claimed otherwise, contemporary historical sources (oral and written) proved that Alimi's children, Abdulsalami and Shitta, had taken over the headship of the *Jama* brotherhood immediately after his demise, and that the duo masterminded the palace coup against Afonja. It is obvious that Abdulsalami (1823-1836) took full control of the force and machinery that commenced the establishment of the Fulani Emirate system in Ilorin. Externally, the new Ilorin Emirate's oligarchy responded swiftly to the threat of the Yoruba nation, spearheaded by Toyeje, the *Baale* of Ogomosho, and the new Areonakakanfo (Generalissimo) after Afonja. Ilorin's army, comprising of diverse ethnicities, routed and defeated Yoruba's combined forces in Ogele and Mugbamugba campaigns, otherwise known to historians as survival wars (Omoiya 2014: 80). Internally, with the support of the *Jama* and an overwhelming majority of Oyo Muslim refugees, Abdulsalami

suppressed Sholagberu and Bako (the leader of Gambari autonomous community), both of whom had nurtured entitlement to Ilorin's headship.

Foundation of Ilorin as an Emirate

Ilorin became an Islamic emirate, ruled by Alimi's descendants as a royal family, which sought the links with the Islamic Jihad movement going on beyond the Niger (Akintoye 2014: 291). Although Ilorin was connected to the Sokoto Caliphate, it was passive and represented the "soft underbelly" of the Fulani Empire (Whitaker 1970: 126). Hogben and scores of local traditions maintained that Abdulsalami received the flag from Sokoto shortly after his installation (Hoghen 1930: 156). The Alimi's family link with Sokoto beyond the Niger appeared to have been seen by the Yoruba of Ilorin as, essentially, no more than a private family matter; and it never seems to have affected the life of their town in any significant measure. Compared with the emirates created by the Fulani jihadists in Hausaland beyond the Niger, Ilorin was far from being a typical Fulani Emirate, and it is nearer the truth to call it a Yoruba Islamic Emirate (Akintoye 2014: 291). Under the emirate, Islam became the state religion, and the Emir and his cabinet were duty - bound to adhere to Sharia law (Danmole 1997: 1-13). Trade and Islamic scholarship and religion prompted the migration of Muslim traders from Kanem Borno, Songhai, Mali, especially the Madinka traders, to Ilorin and Oyo area (Kalli 2005: 174).

Only on few instances did Ilorin seek military succor from the seat of the Caliphate (Gwandu), her successes in campaigns could be credited to the adoption of internal and external diplomacy in creating relations, in stabilizing and sustaining the new emirate system. Externally, the Ilorin Fulani oligarchy forged open and secret alliances with many Oyo chieftains (Akintoye 2014: 292). The Ilorin Emirate won many wars, leveraging on Oyo army commanders' discord, prompted by suspicion, intrigues and cowardice acts of the Yorubas. Internally, the emirate exhibited a high degree of diplomacy and religious sentiment in carrying every major and minor ethnic and interest groupings along. Political offices were created to accommodate and honor leaders of the diverse ethnic and interest groups that contributed towards the cause of the sustainability of the emirate. It is important to note that certain significant considerations influenced and stimulated the creation of offices and political hierarchy for smooth administration of Ilorin Emirate. Among these were ethnic diversity and heterogeneity of the emirate, and also the need to adequately compensate the leaders of the different groups who played worthwhile roles in

the revolution and struggle for the Fulani hegemonic rule in Ilorin. Inclusive representative arrangement was adopted to put in place an effective reward system and ensure consistent and reliable military preparation and participation against oppositions and enemies.

Consequently, wards were created to accommodate the interest groups that constituted Ilorin. The four wards were placed under the control of warlords, known as *Baloguns*, representing various major ethnic and interest groupings within the Ilorin population, and the later Emir's ward administered by Magagingeri, a Fulani man by tribe and close associate of the Emir (Bello 1991: 8). *Baloguns* Fulani represented and headed the Fulani ward, while *Balogun* Gambari represented the ward which comprises migrant settlers such as Hausa, Kemberi, Nupes, Kannike, Kanuri, Gobir, and others from several parts of the Western and Central Sudanese region. The Yorubas as the predominant ethnic group had two *Baloguns*, Ajikobi and Alanamu. The creation of two Yoruba *Baloguns* out of four largely confirmed the preponderance of the Yoruba ethnic group in Ilorin, and the desire to bring them into the mainstream of the Emirate's socio-political affairs, especially after the Afonja episode (Bello 1991: 8). Strategic political division of the Emirate logically beckoned the exhibition of facial tribal marks and other preserved cultural heritages of the diverse ethnic groups of Ilorin.

Interrogating Diverse Facial Tribal Markings, Migration, Ethnicities and Peaceful Coexistence in Traditional Political Wards of Ilorin Emirate

Ajikobi Traditional Political Ward

Ajikobi ward was the first major Ilorin Emirate's traditional political grouping identifying the bulk of diverse Yoruba migrants of the defunct Oyo Empire, those from Owu, Egba, Ile Ife and other Yoruba linguistic groups. The first *Balogun* Ajikobi did not only hail from Iseyin but also constituted one of the most loyal followers and warriors who served meritoriously in Ilorin Emirate wars of independence and survival.[4] Under Ajikobi ward were Zarumi, Ojuekun, Oloje and Ibagun traditional sub-wards, each representing the interest of the *Balogun* and Emir. Under these sub-wards were migrant settlers from Ogbomosho, Oyo-Ile, Igboho, Igbetti, Saki, Ikoyi, Orile-Igbon, Iwo, Osogbo and other parts of the defunct Oyo Empire, and Sabe, Ile-Ife, Bini and several other parts of Yoruba linguistic and cultural areas.

[4] Alhaji Toyin Ajikobi, retired Local Government Revenue Officer, Ajikobi Street, Ilorin, 12 April 2023.

Ibrahim, the progenitor of Oloje, one of the sub-wards of Ajikobi, migrated from one of the provinces of Old Oyo Empire known as Aha which was later named Oje-Owode. Power tussle obtruded him and his followers consisting of 140 compound heads out of Oje-Owode to Ilorin before the establishment of the Fulani Emirate system.[5] In the pre-emirate era, he and his followers inhabited several locations ranging from Olohunoje, Ara-Oje and Alfa Oja compound of the sub-ward. AbdulSalam, the first emir of Ilorin in 1823 rewarded Ibrahim and his Oloje family with the *Majagi* chieftaincy title of the sub-ward in recognition of his loyalty and meritorious service rendered to the cause of the Fulani hegemony during Ilorin's independence wars.[6] In the pre-emirate era, he and his followers inhabited several locations ranging from Olohunoje, Ara-Oje and Alfa Oja compound of the sub-ward.[7] Evidences of harmonious habitation of Oloje sub-ward by migrants from several parts of Yorubaland was replicated in the prevalence of different Yoruba facial tribal markings like *Keke, Gombo, Abaja Alaafin Oyo* and *Pele* among others in the quarters.

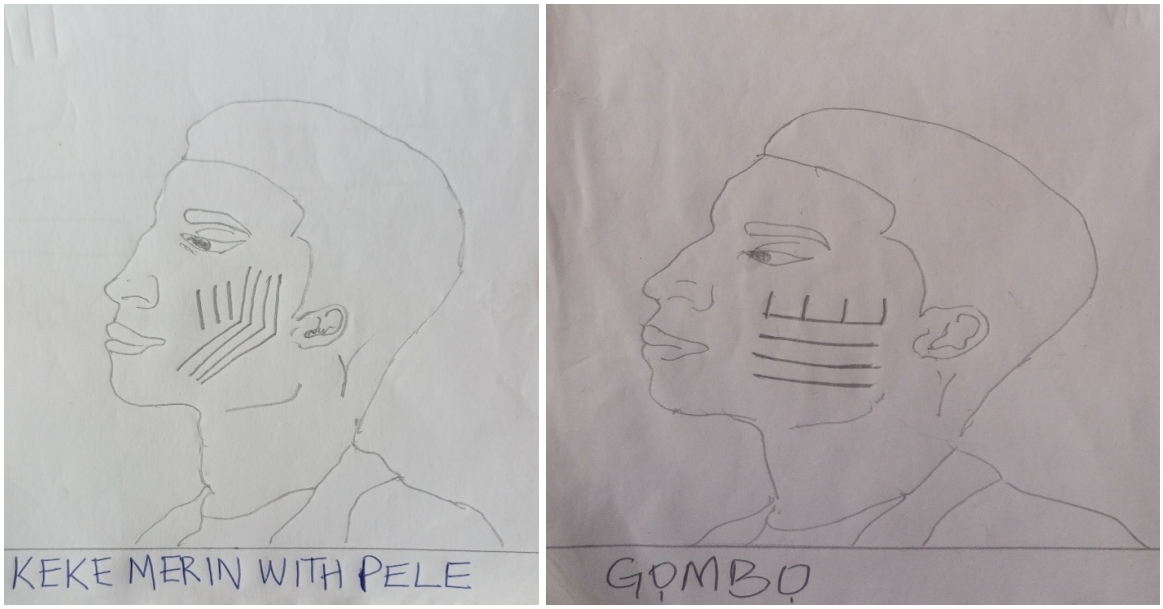

Figure 1 (**a & b**): Keke and Gombo Tribal Marks Sustained by Oloje Sub-Ward People of Ilorin

[5] Alhaji Ibrahim Yahaya, retired Archivist, National Archives, Kaduna, Nigeria, 16 April 2023.

[6] Alhaji Baba Eleko, elder statesman and Grassroot politician, Ita-Amon Street, Ilorin, 16 April 2023.

[7] The area later known as Oloje was formerly an expanse of land used for farming by a man from Abudu Compound, Ode Abudu area of Ilorin. Ibrahim and his Oloje family met this man's tattered building *Pepe* or *Ahere* and acknowledged it as the first residential building in the area. It was this man that gave space and access for these initial settlements of Oloje family and their followers on the land. The choice of the area for settlement was borne out of the direction of the *Ifa* divination, directing them to settle in between the location of two rivers, and in this location were Abata and Foma rivers.

Loyalty and meritorious service to the cause of actualization of the Fulani Emirate earned valiant Yoruba warriors like Zarumi and Ojuekun their sub-ward chieftaincy title known as *Daudu*. *Dada*, a prominent elite slave of *Balogun* Ajikobi, was also rewarded with a track of land and headship of his sub-ward axis[8] (Hear 1997: 72). After exhausting and forfeiting their available arable lands to Ilorin Emirate metropolitan configuration, the Yoruba migrant settlers in Ajikobi ward drifted further to found additional settlements. For instance, Yoruba free farmers and settlers of Okelele quarters migrated further to found and engage farming, hunting and other prosperous economic activities in Oloru and Romi village in Onire district, both of which later became Ilorin fiefs (O'Hear 1997: 37). Similarly, after the initial settlement of the Ojuekun family in Ilorin metropolis, farming and hunting prompted them and others to drift and found Alapa village, which subsequently became a fief under the Ilorin Emirate.[9] Moreover, the quest for hunting and farming prompted an Iresadu migrant and one of the progenitors of Amolegbe family of Dada quarters to further migrate and establish a farm settlement at Laduba.[10]

Despite the inheritance and sustenance of diverse Yoruba facial tribal markings such as *Pele, Abaja Alaafin, Abaja Merin, Keke* and others in Zarumi, Ojuekun and Dada sub-wards, the people coexisted peacefully as a united entity.

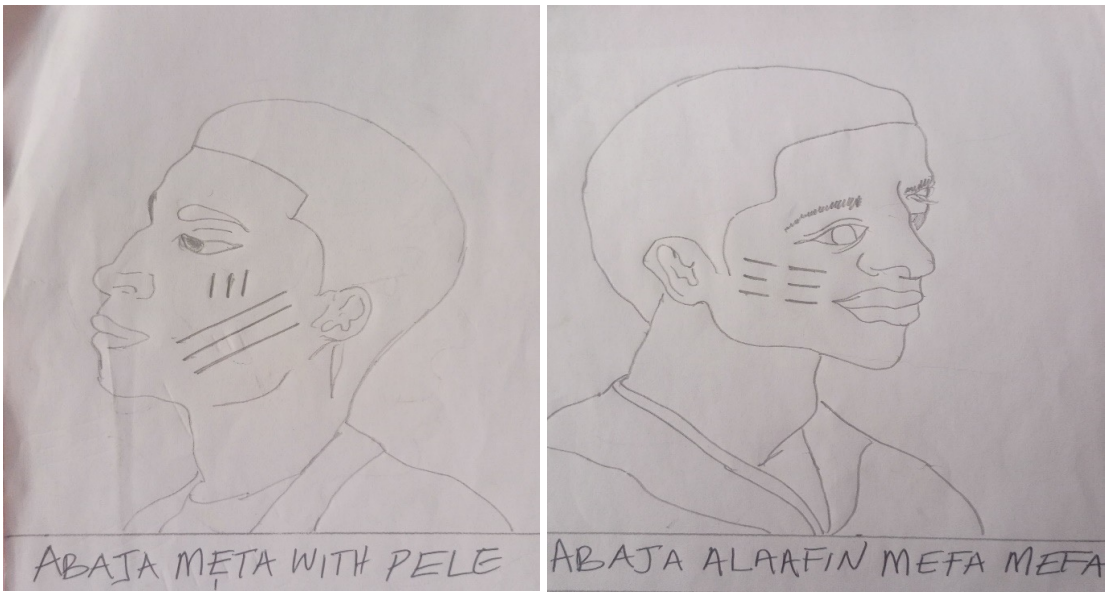

Figure 2 (a & b): Abaja Meta with Upper Pele and Abaja Alaafin also known as Mefa Mefa in Dada area

[8] Late Dr. Saad Omoiya, Senior Lecturer, Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, 7 January 2016.
[9] Alhaja Salman Ojuekun, market women leader, Ojuekun Area, Ilorin, 23 April 2023.
[10] Alhaji Issa Amolegbe, retired librarian, Sooto Street, Pakata Road, Ilorin, 16 April 2023.

Alanamu Traditional Political Ward

The earliest settler of the ward was the founder of Seeni family, Magaji Seeni, an elite slave Alfa of Emir Shitta (O'Hear 1997: 57). As a loyal and powerful elite slave, he was the first settler assigned to oversee the would-be Alanamu central area. He apportioned lands to subsequent settlers, most of whom were migrants from different provinces of Yoruba country.[11] The family was identified with their *Keke Meta with Pele* facial tribal mark, sustained from their place of origin.

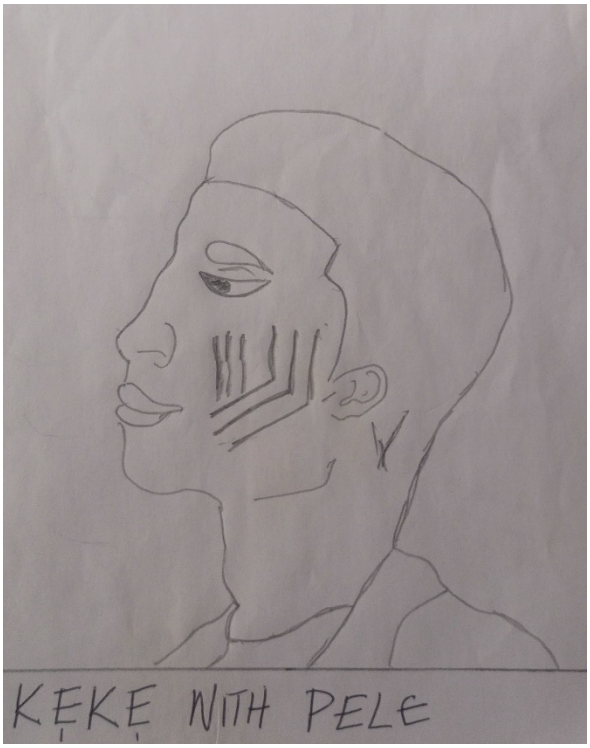

Figure 3: Keke Facial Tribal Mark of Seeni Family, the First Settler of Alanamu Ward

The would-be Alanamu family was descendant of Aremo Owoade Agunloye royal lineage of the capital of Old Oyo Kingdom.[12] Chieftaincy tussle and the quest for new hunting territory prompted the migration of Odewusi from Oyo kingdom to Reke, which subsequently became a vassal of Ilorin Emirate. He became the traditional ruler, *Baale* of Reke. As Reke prospered in prominence, Odewusi invited his younger brother Adeshina who was also a hunter and warlord. With the nod of Odewusi, Adeshina collaborated initially with Afonja

[11] Alhaji Baba Mualim Alanamu, retired Arabic school teacher and elder stateman,11 April 2023.

[12] They were descendants of the only known female Oyo Empire king, Alaafin Orompotoniyun, who reigned in 1554. She was said to be the last of Oyo kings that reigned in Igboland (Johnson 1921: 112).

in his struggle for Ilorin's independence, and subsequently the Fulanis during Ilorin's defensive wars.[13] His outstanding role as a fearless warrior and an astounding herbal medicine man earned him accolade and publicity deserving of a hero. For instance, he engaged his powerful herbal formula in healing an injury sustained by prince Shitta during the Worukura war. The nickname *Alanamu* implies his exoteric prowess as one who beats before conquering his enemies.[14]

The Ilorin Fulani Emirate's rapid growth in economic strength and population explosion necessitated the need for an additional administrative frontier to accommodate the ever-expanding heterogeneous capital. Emir Shitta's intensity with restructuring and consolidating the Emirate prompted the readjustment and creation of the office of an additional war generalissimo in the Yoruba dominated areas, with the aim of rewarding Adeshina, his healer, with the office of the first *Balogun* Alanamu of Ilorin. Emir Shitta thereby ordered Magaji Seeni to apportion some parcels of land to Adeshina Alanamu's family in his domain.[15] Alanamu came along with some followers who also founded their compound and became indigenous members of the ward. Families like Ogbondoroko Sarumi, Oyolola, Afunkulola, Dalegan, Kundike, Ogundele, Mejindadi, Eebodaniyan, Onimago and scores of others with diverse facial tribal marks and other cultural features, settled and lived harmoniously in several parts of the ward.

Since the time of the appointment of Adeshina's first son, Yusuf Baale, as the first *Balogun* Alanamu, and throughout the whole of 19th century, different migrant families from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and features settled in Alanamu ward. Before the end of the 19th century, Alanamu ward comprised of 170 family compounds, which spanned Ogbondoroko Sarumi compound down to Okelele area of Ilorin. Ethnic multiplicity, endowed with diverse tribal marks and other cultural features in the compounds comprising the ward was evident. Although the majority of them were migrants from provinces of the defunct Yoruba country such as Ogbomosho, Egba, Ijebu, Oyo Ile, Ikoyi, Igbeti, Igboho and numerous others, few were also migrants from Nupe, Borno, Hausa and other societies from the upper Niger areas and parts of West Africa. For instance, Hausa, Fulani and Borno family compounds such as Alikinla in Ita Ogunbo, Shiru in Ode Alfa Nda, Shaabani at Ode Alausa and Idi Orombo, Jawondo at Isale Aluko, Onagun of Ita Egba and Alfa Ajongolo compounds and numerous

[13] Alhaji Adebimpe Daudu, 8 April 2023.
[14] Alhaji Saka Owolabi, Retired Journalist, Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, Mando Road, Kaduna, Nigeria, 8 April 2023.
[15] Alhaji Adebimpe Daudu Alanamu, retired civil servant, Alanamu Central Area, Ilorin, 8 April 2023.

others with their peculiar indigenous tribal marks coexisted peacefully in Alanamu ward with the Yoruba majority ethnic group (Yusuf 2009: 37).

Despite the presence of diverse facial tribal markings, all tribes inhabited harmoniously and remained loyal to *Balogun* Alanamu's office. *Balogun* Alanamu's family indigenous tribal mark was *Keke* and *Abaja Alaafin*. The family adopted a new and unique *Igba Ila* (200 strips marks) tribal mark during the reign of Inakoju Ali, who was the fourth *Balogun* Alanamu in the 1860s. The *Igba Ila* was adopted from a Baruba wife of the warrior Worukura, captured by *Balogun* Inakoju Ali during the Worukura war.[16] The *Igba Ila* was not only a unique symbol of identity but also one of the prerequisites for ascension to the throne of *Balogun* Alanamu.[17] Alanamu's Yoruba followers inhabiting Alanamu ward central quarters also sustained several kinds of *Keke*, *Abaja* and other common Yoruba tribal marks, showcasing identities and affiliation with their ancestral homes and places of origin.

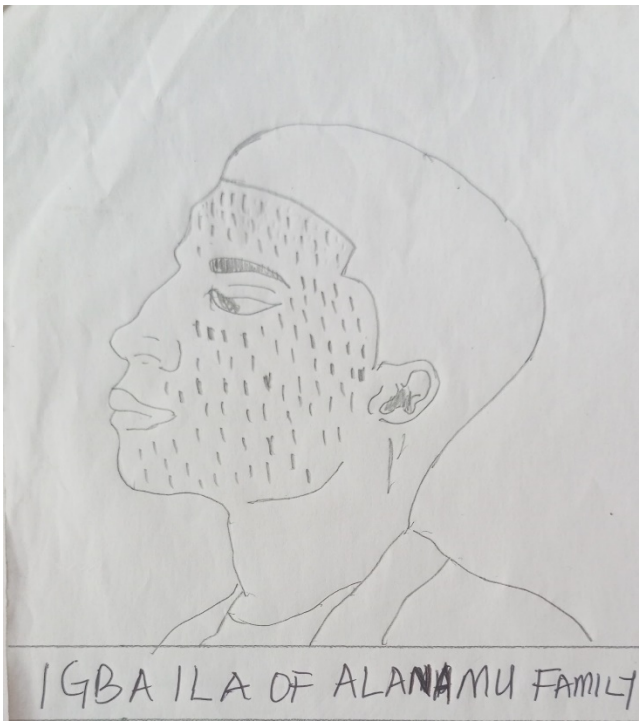

Figure 4: Balogun Alanamu of Ilorin's Igba Ila Tribal Mark

[16] The Baruba woman was said to have contributed immensely towards the success of the war by revealing hidden secrets of Worukura's powerful charms. The barren Baruba woman with the *Igba Ila* tribal mark became *Balogun* Inakoju Ali's favorite wife after the war. His obsession of the Baruba wife became deeply entrenched to the extent that her tribal mark *Igba Ila* was adopted to immortalize her.
[17] Dr. Jos Alanamu, *Balogun* Alanamu of Ilorin, Central Alanamu Area, Ilorin, 10 April 2023.

Persistent population growth witnessed in every major Ilorin wards prompted subsequent sub-ward administrative readjustments. Continuous mass exodus of migrants perpetrated by disturbances recorded from the defunct Oyo Empire and the quest to tap from Ilorin Emirate's rapidly advancing economic prosperity necessitated the accommodation of more prominent elite groups and heroes into the mainstream administrative stratagem. In 1840, the accommodation of Ologbin chieftain as the first *Alangua* of Adewole sub-ward under Alanamu ward thereby became imminent.[18] Ologbin was one of the warriors that joined the train of Sheikh Alimi from Ogbin, an Oyo province, which shared a common boundary with Ikoyi-Ile. His formidability and prominence prompted his relocation from *Balogun* Gambari's residence, where he initially settled, and his subsequent appointment as the first *Alangua* or head of Adewole sub-ward (Akanbi 2020: 68).[19] Under Ologbin's authority were 32 Magajis such as Aromaradu, Kuntu, Oko Erin, Warah, Olugbon, Gerewu, Gbagba, Akala, Idi-Igba and Aibinu among others. These Magajis oversaw the affairs of compound heads and people from diverse cultural backgrounds in their respective areas of jurisdiction. Diverse facial tribal markings, multiethnic background, peaceful coexistence and absolute loyalty to Ologbin's authority were evident among the settlers overseen by these Magajis. The *Alangua* of Adewole and his family sustained the *Abaja Meta* facial tribal mark inherited from Ogbin, their ancestral home. The facial mark was not only a symbol of honour and identity; it was also a prerequisite for clinching the chieftaincy title of *Alangua* of Adewole sub-ward.

[18] Alh. Hanafi Oseni, *Alangua* Ologbin *Adewole* of Ilorin, Adeta Area, Ilorin, 15 April 2023.

[19] Ologbin's role and involvement in Ilorin's struggle for survival such as Ogele and Kanla wars earns him the sub-ward titular head during the subsequent administrative readjustment. Ologbin is a masquerade that roars at all times meaning *Egungun to n gbin*. He explored his supernatural power and spiritual prowess in aiding and sustaining the 19th century Ilorin Emirate hegemony, which earned him the sub-ward head. That his display of spiritual prowess could no longer be condoned in Gambari quarters prompted the Emir to relocate and make him the *Alangua*, a sub-ward head under Adewole ward.

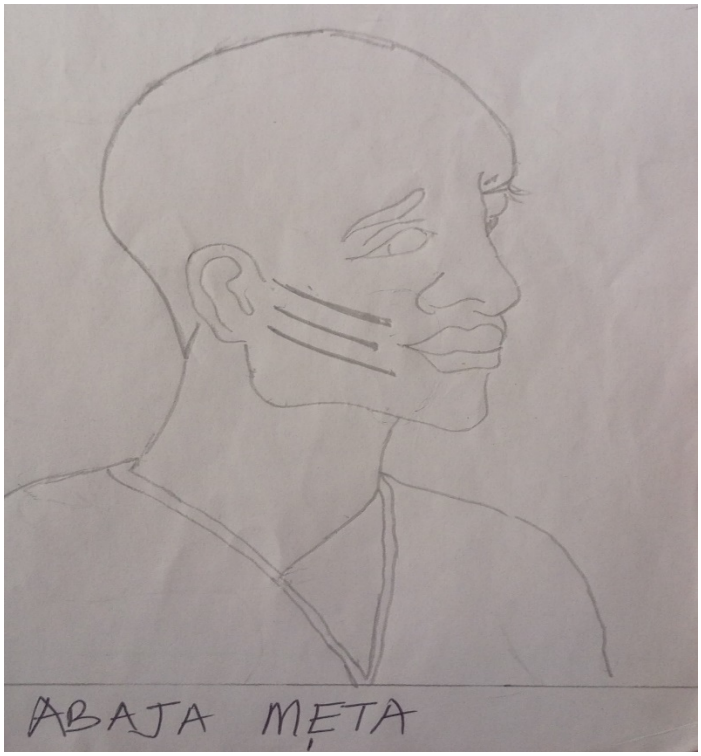

Figure 5: Alangua Adewole's Abaja Meta Facial Tribal Mark

Although, most settlers and compound heads apportioned land by the *Ologbin* were migrants from the provinces of the defunct Oyo Empire, few were settlers' tribes from across the Niger. Scores of them were hunters, farmers, business merchants who sought solace in the ever prosperous and extremely indestructible 19th century Ilorin Emirate. Regardless of the diverse facial tribal marks and other multicultural features inherent of these peoples' lifestyles, loyalty to the compound heads, *Ologbin*, and the cause of the emirate kept them united. For instance, a unique feature of Ilorin Emirate's heterogeneity was exhibited in Aho compound's preservation of *Ture* and *Ibamu* facial markings, showcasing peaceful coexistence of Nupe and Yoruba ethnic groups cohabitating the same family compound.[20]

[20] Alhaji Saka Ramoni, a trader and *Magaji* of Aho Family Compound, Adeta Area, Ilorin, 15 April 2023. Some family sources claimed the Iseyin Yoruba and Nupe progenitors of Aho compound migrated separately, while others ascribed the *Bamu* mark as a symbol meant to immortalize the family Nupe's maternal ancestry.

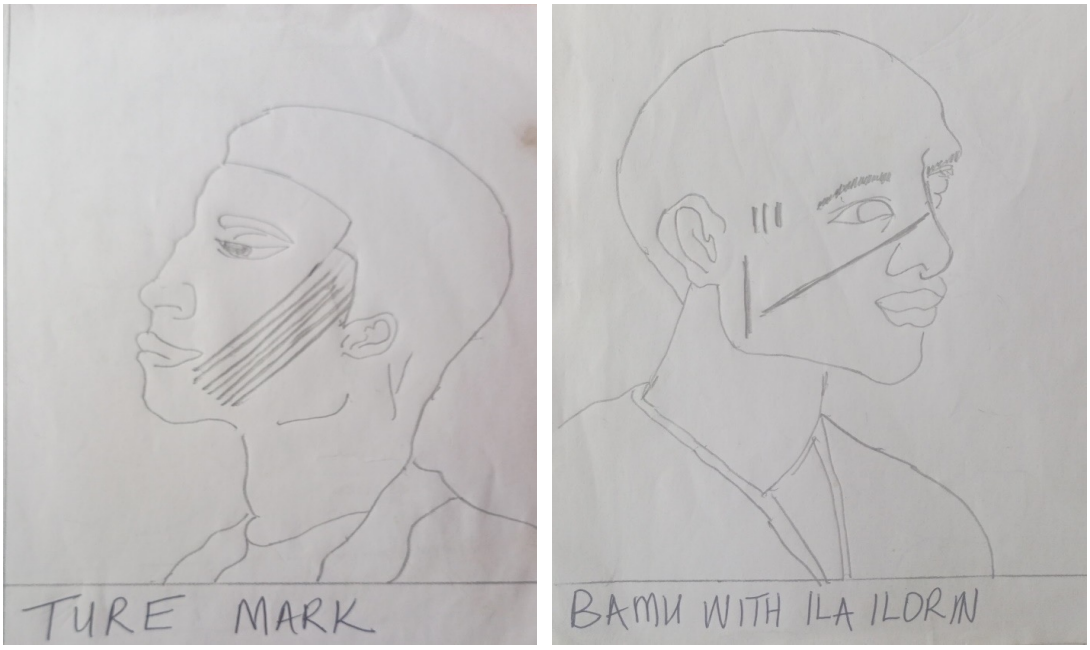

Figure 6 (a & b): Ture and Ibamu Tribal Marking of Aho Compound, Adeta area of Adewole Sub-ward

Similarly, naturalization and longtime mingling and adaptation impelled the adoption and mixture of the common *Ila Ilorin* with *Abaja* tribal mark, a typical instance common among Oyo migrant Tinuola family of Ilorin.

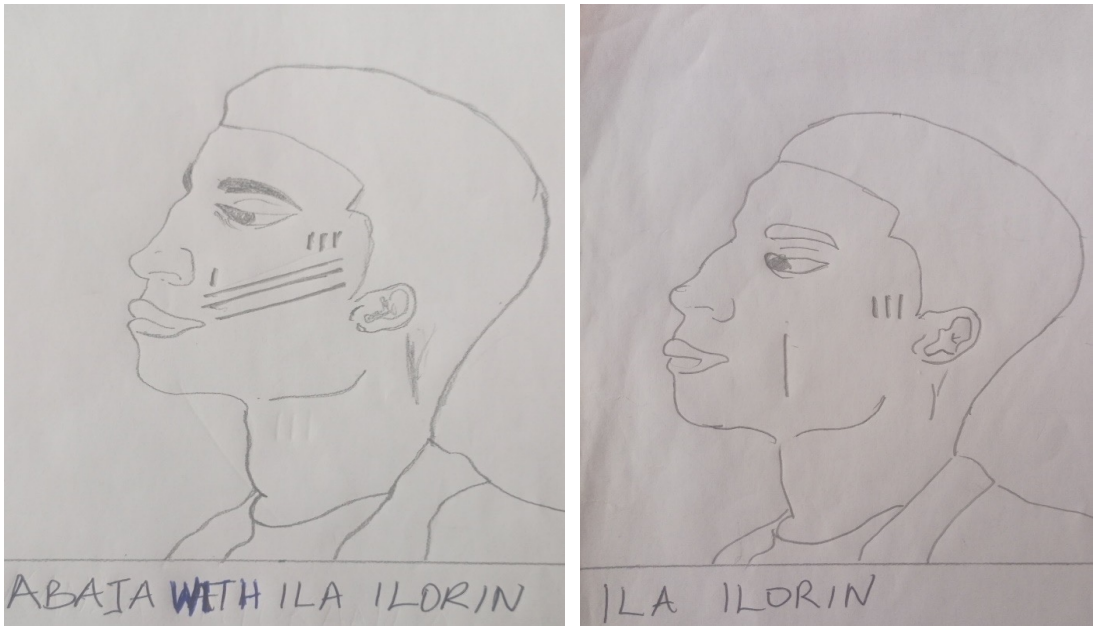

Figure 7 (a & b): Combination of Abaja and Ila Ilorin and Ila Ilorin Facial Tribal Marks

Migrant Yoruba sub-tribes from Oyo, Igboho, Ogbomosho, Egba, Ila, Ijesha and other provinces of the Old Oyo Empire, and several others from Sokoto, Kebbi, Borno and other areas of the Western and Central Sudanese region were occupants of the Ubandawaki sub-ward under the traditional authority of *Balogun* Alanamu. The Ubadawakis themselves were Hausas and closely allied to the Kannike tribe of Gambari ward of Ilorin Emirate. Compounds such as Alagbede, Eleja, Baale, Keeto, Ogbomosho, Jaigbade, Aladugbo, Apatapiti, Ongo, Onilu, Agunko, Egun Onipako and several others adorned themselves with several Yoruba facial tribal marks symbolizing heterogeneity, multiculture and peaceful coexistence in the Ubandawaki traditional sub-ward. Scores of settlers in these sub-wards sustained their ancestral facial tribal marks such as *Ture, Abaja mejo, Abaja Meta, Abaja Alaafin, Keke ati Bamu, Pele* and others.

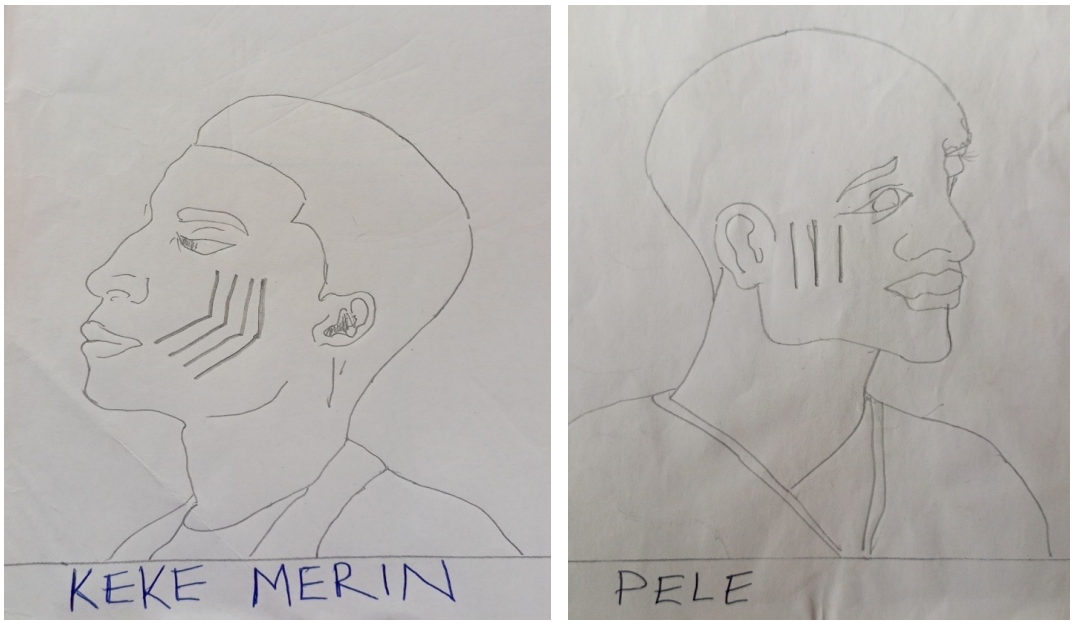

Figure 8 (a & b): Keke Merin and Pele Facial Tribal Markings seen at Ubandawaki Sub-Ward

After founding their settlements in Ilorin metropolis, scores of them drifted further to engage their hunting, farming, endowed crafts and economic activities on vacant land tracts spanning Ilorin Emirate. Consequently, they became holders of dual indigenous identity of Ilorin metropolis and the newly founded vassals. For instance, after exhausting the game in his vicinity, the progenitors of Aho compound and others migrated further to virgin lands and founded villages in Oke Moro, which were subsequently incorporated as vassals of Ilorin Emirate. Similarly, progenitors of Alagbede compound of the Sakele area proceeded to

found Labintan and Ajuba farm settlements.[21] Moreover, the fishermen folk, Oyo migrants that initially settled at Idiape, and later at Ubandawaki sub-ward, shifted further to found the Eleja riverine settlement, where their craft was practiced with utmost convenience and prosperity.[22] The level of opulence in these vassals triggered the migration and habitation of a huge population of the scattered Yoruba people of diverse cultural backgrounds, fleeing the disturbances of the defunct Oyo kingdom in the early, middle and late 19th century.

Gambari Traditional Political Ward

Naming the quarters after the Hausa word *Gambari* symbolizes its domination by Hausa and other northern Nigerian migrant ethnic groups. The settlement, headed by *Sarkin* Gambari, whose family migrated from Izza, is dated back to the pre-Fulani emirate era. The pre-eminence of Gambari Hausas and other migrant settlers from across the Niger as one of the earliest Ilorin inhabitants accorded her the status of a ward under the Fulani political composition in 1823. Doshe, the Nupe warlord and a stakeholder in the foundation of the Ilorin Fulani dynasty, was appointed the first *Balogun* Gambari, specifically to usurp and suppress the power of Bako, the *Sarkin* Gambari, who engaged in leadership tussle with AbdulSalam after the death of the Emirate founder, Salih Alimi.[23] Subsequently, during the reign of Ilorin Emirate's second Emir Shitta, a Katsina warlord and Ilorin Fulani loyalist, Ali Maiyaki, was appointed the second Balogun Gambari after the death of his predecessor.[24] Ali Maiyaki's role in masterminding the total suppression of the Nupe's aggression against Ilorin earned him the prestige and traditional chieftaincy title of *Balogun*, the position

[21] Alh Anibi Alagbede, a retired blacksmith and head of Alagbede Compound, Sakele Area, Ilorin, 12 April 2023.

[22] Imam Mohammed Jamiu, Chief Imam of Sakele Mosque, Sakele Street, Ilorin, 12 April 2023.
The Sakele area rose to prominence during the pre-emirate era. Then, the Laderin/Afonja *Ajele* lineage was acclaimed to have allocated the land to the *Baale* of Sakele, the paramount ruler of the autonomous area. The *Baale* in turn allocated settlement spaces and tracts of land to Alagbede, Eleja, Apatapiti, Aladugbo and scores of other Oyo and her provinces migrants inhabiting the area in the pre-emirate period. The emirate political restructuring assigned the land and sub-ward to Ubandaki which further relegated *Baale* of Sakele as a title of extinction.

[23] Salih Alimi and Bako, the *Sarkin* Gambari, were said to be best of friends during his lifetime. Their friendship was bonded by Islamic piety and scholarship. Switching of prayers at Alimi's and Makana (Bako's Mosque) mosques solidified their friendship. Bako appreciated himself as the most learned and the next inline of Imam after Alimi. Immediately after the later's death, Bako took up an ugly leadership tussle and competition with Alimi's son AbdulSalam, which transfigured him to an enemy of the state and denied him the leadership of Gambari ward during the era of political restructuring of the Fulani Emirate system in the early 19th century.

[24] Abubakar Olayinka Laaro, retired civil servant, Alagbado Area, Ilorin, 17 June 2023.

his lineage held till present. Ali Maiyaki and his lineage adorned themselves with *Bamu* the facial tribal mark typical of the fearless warrior migrant settlers from across the Niger.

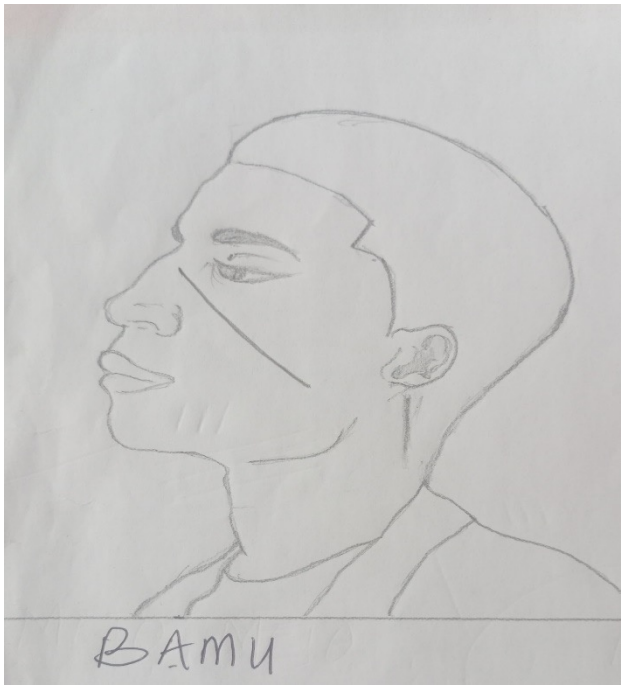

Figure 9: The Balogun Gambari of Ilorin's Bamu Facial Tribal Mark

The Gambari ward consists of majorly the Hausa migrant settlers from Katsina, Sokoto, Zamfara and other Hausa speaking areas of Northern Nigeria. The ward also inhabited other ethnic groupings such as Yoruba (from several Oyo provinces), Kemberi, Nupe, Gobir, Kannike, Gwari, Kemberi, Baruba, Kanuri, Ubandawaki and Fulani among others.[25] The Gobir tribe and progenitors of *Sarkin* Gobir compound migrated from Izza in the present Niger Republic. Other Gobir tribes inhabiting Gambari ward migrated from places such as Zamfara, Argungu, Bafara, Gada, Bube, Koni, Bida, Maiduguri, Niger, Chad and other parts of the West African region (Yusuf 2009: 46). The *Sarkin* Gobir and his tribe's men were among the warrior migrant subjects and loyalists, who contributed tremendously to Ilorin's victory in Jalumi, Kanla, Erimope and other

[25] Mallam AbdulMumini Aladie, head of Aladie Compound, Gamabari Street, Ilorin, 6 April 2023.
Oyo empire tribes like Magaji Ateru, Aladire, Omolabi, Habibu, Guruma family and scores of tribes that settled at Guruma area of Gambari which sustained their *Pele* tribal mark, and non-Oyo province Yoruba tribes such as Adedo, Oba Eungi from Isanlu Makutu, Wokili also known as Antolu family from Lanwa, founded their settlements in the pre-emirate era. Despite diverse cultural features such as tribal marks, language and economic activities, the Gambari ward Yorubas mingled and cohabitated peacefully with upper Niger tribes. Thus, these tribes adopted elements of the culture of one other. For instance, Gambari tribes adopted cattle rearing, *Akero* cattle middlemanship craft and tribal markings among others.

expansionist and consolidation wars.[26] These roles earned their leader the chieftaincy title, *Sarkin* Gobir, of Ode Gobir sub-ward in Gambari quarters, which spanned a section of Gambari and that of Sobi road.[27] The Gobirawas adorned themselves with long and short Gobir facial tribal marks sustained from their cradles.

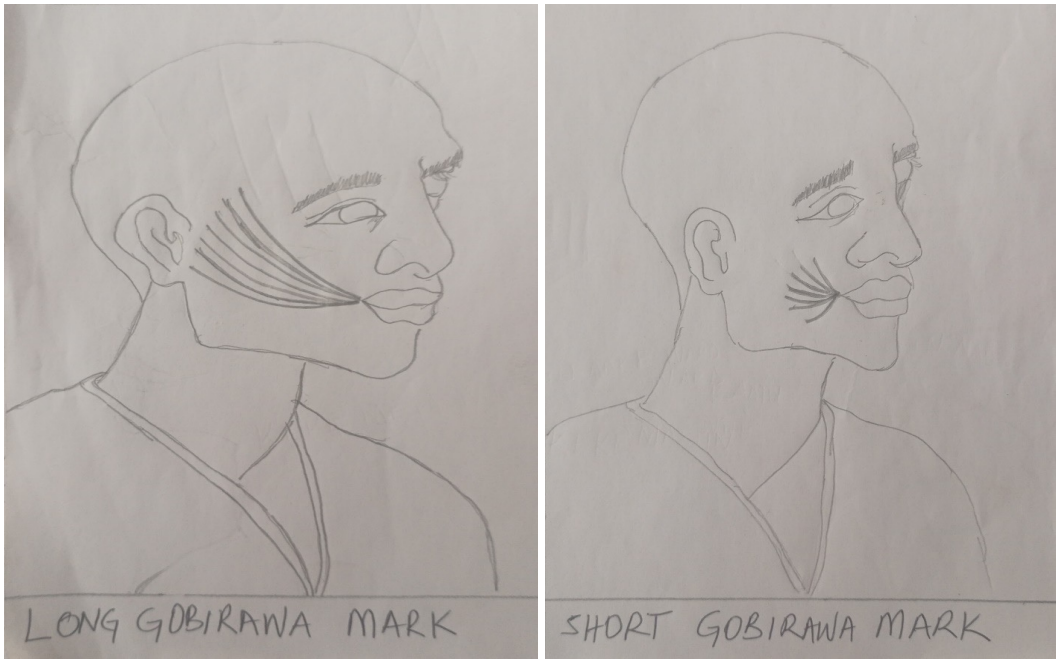

Figure 10 (a & b): Long and Short Gobirawa Tribal Facial Marks of Gambari Ward, Ilorin

The progenitor of the Kannike people was one Yahaya Dungu, a blacksmith, who migrated from Maiduguri to settle in Ilorin during the reign of Shitta, the second Emir of Ilorin (Yusuf 2009: 48). His prominence earned him a sub-ward leader, *Sarkin* Zango, under Gambari ward. His family and co-Kannike settlers inhabited Ojagboro, Isale Tapa and Isale Kannike quarters, all under Gambari ward.[28] Despite the prevalence of diverse tribal marks at Isale Tapa and Isale Kannike quarters of Gambari ward, the Kannike people, Kanuri, Kemberi and other migrant tribes from Bornu, Niger and Chad coexisted peacefully and harmoniously.[29]

[26] Alhaji Abdullahi Gobir, rice merchant, Ojagboro Street, Ilorin, 6 April 2023.
[27] Khalipha Ismail Gobir, Islamic scholar and secondary school teacher, Ojaboro Street, Ilorin, 7 April 2023.
[28] Mallam Abdullahi Kannike, a farmer and long-distance trader, Gambari Street, Ilorin, 6 March 2023.
[29] Sheikh Dan Borno, pers. comm., 6 March 2023.

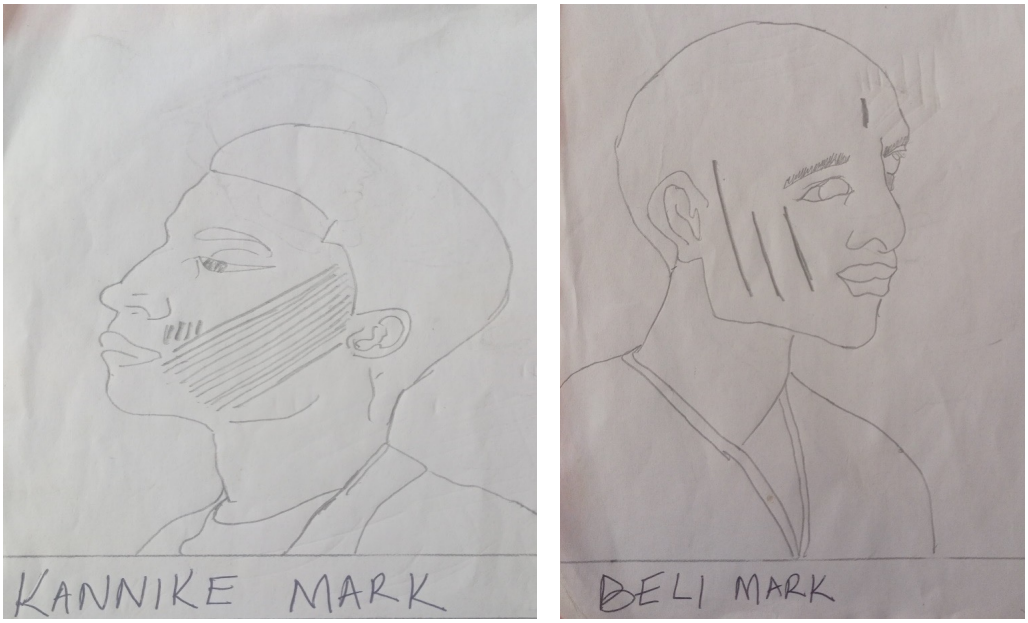

Figure 11 (a & b): Kannike Facial Tribal Markings and Borno Kanuri's Beli Facial Tribal Marking in Gambari Ward, Ilorin

Good fortune from warfare, herding, hunting, farming and other economic activities impelled the Gambari ward peoples' founding of settlements on the suburb of Ilorin metropolis. Settlements and Ilorin Emirate vassals such as Ajia Bako, Okinni and Baba Dudu among others were founded by the Gobir people of Gambari ward.[30] Villages and Ilorin vassals like Asomu, Tepatan, Elemere and Ara among others were also founded by Ali Maiyaki's family and other co-settlers.[31]

Magajingeri Traditional Political Ward

Magajingeri traditional political ward, otherwise known as the 'Emirs ward', inhabited the Emir's palace chiefs and close allies from diverse tribal backgrounds ranging from Yoruba, Fulani, Kemberi, Nupe, Hausa, Gwari and others. It is worthy of note that this ward was dominated by the Emir's war lieutenants, army generals and professional security and body guards from diverse tribal backgrounds, most of whom were prominent elite slaves and trusted allies of the Emir. Trusted elite slaves and war and palace generals and

[30] Abdullahi Gobir, elder stateman and retired registrar at College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies, Ilorin, 8 June 2023.
[31] Mallam Mohammed Buhari, community developer and youth leader, Gambari Street, Ilorin, 5 June 2023.

guards such as Jimba, Nasamu, *Sarkin* Baraje, *Sarkin* Galadima, *Sarkin* Dongari and many others that maintained close contact with the Emir inhabited the ward. Magajingeri chieftaincy title signifies the Emir's Chief of Staff. Apart from the fact that Magajingeri and other war leaders *Balogun* were the kingmakers, he was also the closest personal adviser to the Emir.[32] Wau, her ancestor, was an acclaimed Gwandu prince who migrated to Ilorin in Sheikh Salih Alimi's convoy. Wau and Salih Alimi were said to be co-mentees of Usman dan Fodio's school of thought.

Factually speaking, the Magajingeri family's *Bamu* facial tribal mark and her acclaimed Fulani ancestry is a context of historical controversy. Findings have shown that culturally, apart from beautification and medicinal marks, the Fulani ethnic group does not prioritize permanent bodily identification relating to facial tribal marks. The researchers thereby consider the Magajingeri, Jimba, Alapata, Ali Maiyaki (*Balogun* Gambari family) and scores of other Ilorin Emirate families identified by *Bamu* facial tribal marks, laying claim to Fulani origin as those that attained such by the process of naturalization through slavery, age-long loyalty and alliances.[33]

Long time cohabitation and loyalty to the newly founded Ilorin Emirate never ceased to disconnect the peoples from maintaining ties with their diverse ancestral cultural features such as tribal marks inherited from their places of origin. Despite the persistence of several tribal nationalities inhabiting Magajingeri ward with their *Bamu* with *Upper Pele, Ila Ilorin, Pele, Pele Ijesha* and other Yoruba facial tribal marks sustained as means of identification with their root, they cohabitated harmoniously.[34] No wonder why the *Bamu* with *Upper Pele* (Gwandu migrants) and *Pele Ijesha* (Ijesha migrants) tribal mark bearers cohabitated the same Magajingeri family compound, and bore a single family name (Mogajingeri) for more than two hundred years without records of major discord or disdain.

[32] Late Hon. Olawoyin Magaji, former Majority Leader of Kwara State House of Assembly, Asa Dam Road, Ilorin, 2 November 2022.

[33] These upper Niger migrant tribes that sustained the *Bamu* facial tribal marks, and laid claim to Fulani origin did so simply due to the difficulty in tracing their original ancestry. Difficulty in accessing their rightful historical background and long time cohabitation with powerful tribes such as the Fulanis, Nupes, Hausa and others prompted the *Bamu* mark and its holders' claimant to such host tribes. All of these *Bamu* facial mark migrant settlers were warriors and war mongering groups that collaborated with the Ilorin political elites in founding and consolidating the emirate system, as well as usurping and colonizing many territories in 19th centuries.

[34] Mallam Olarongbe Mogaji, a business tycoon, Surulere Street, Ilorin, 12 June 2023.

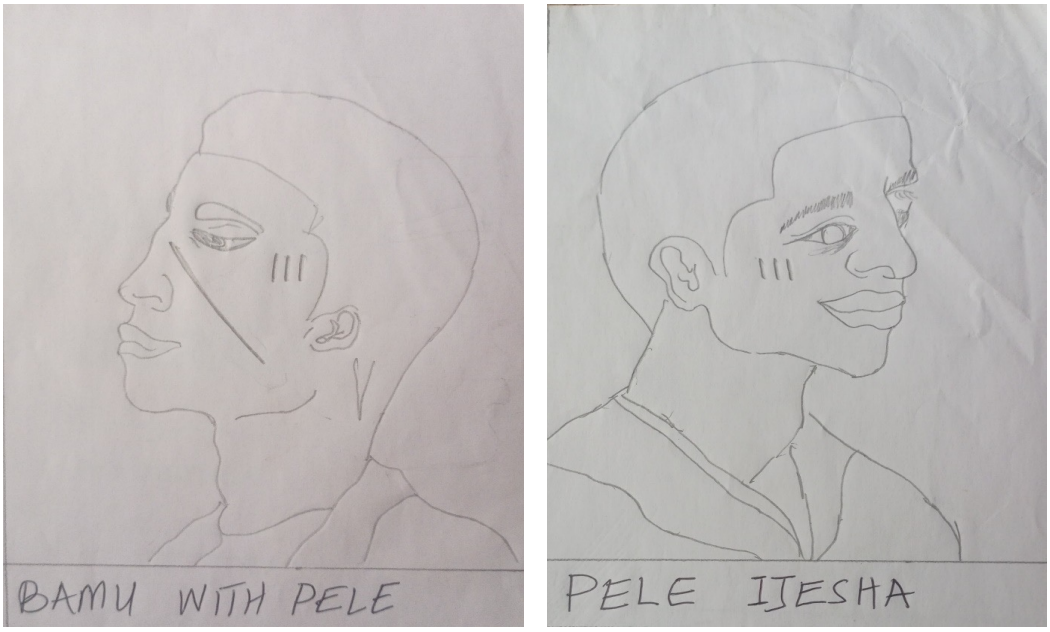

Figure 13 (a & b): Bamu with Upper Pele and Pele Ijesha Facial Tribal Marks Sustained by Diverse Migrant Settlers in Magajingeri Compound

Aare Traditional Political Ward

Ojo Isekuse, an Oyo migrant and the controversial mythical founder of Ilorin, was the earliest known individual in Ilorin history. The foundation of the first and earliest Ilorin micro settlement was believed to have been masterminded by Ojo Isekuse at his Idiape quarter's base in Aare ward. He was claimed to have being the custodian of the famous stone *Okuta Ilorin* used in sharpening iron objects from which the name *Ilorin* emerged, meaning a place where iron implements used by farmers and hunters were sharpened *ibi ti won tin lo irin*. The historical version proclaiming Ojo Isekuse as Ilorin's founder was also justified by the location and citing of his abode, Ilorin compound also known as Bamidele compound, at the center of Ilorin metropolis. In like manner, prior to the 19th century, the Baruba people of Borgu and Nikki kingdom, and migrant settlers from Oyo provinces dominated Aare ward.

Moreover, Yoruba historians and apologists of the Ilorin foundational history version upheld Aare ward as the center of political connectivity between Oyo and her northern-most provinces. To them, political and administrative history of Ilorin was pioneered and championed by Oyo migrant settlers' heroes beginning with Laderin, Pasin, Alugbin, Laderin, which ended with Afonja's headship as *Baale* or *Ajele*. They believed Afonja's abrupt end, perpetrated by a coup, and the subsequent Fulani hegemonic rule launched the beginning of another epoch in the political history of Ilorin. Contemporary Ilorin Fulani

historians argued otherwise and attributed Afonja political activities as that binding only on his co-Oyo and Yoruba settlers inhabiting the Aare quarters, while other hamlets and micro settlements like Gambari, Okesuna, Oloje and others were administered independently without external interference. Despite these ceaseless Ilorin foundational historical controversies, Aare ward emerged as one of the epicenters of the 19th century Ilorin politics. Allies and friends of Afonja lineage and co-Oyo migrants such as Magaji Alapinni, Adogunduro, Akinbiore, Agbadamu, Onilu and Alase among others constituted the headship of their various sections of the ward.[35]

Prevalence of Oyo facial tribal markings and other cultural features justified the domination of Aare ward by migrants from the capital of Oyo Empire, her provinces and several parts of Yorubaland. In Aare ward, facial tribal markings were not only devised as means of identification but also as a symbol of classification among the chieftaincy ruling houses of Laderin lineage. In the Laderin lineage is Aare Afonja family, Baba Isale family (Afonja uncle) and Isokun family (Pasin lineage).[36] *Keke Meta* with *Bamu* facial tribal mark was meant to identify women and men who were not entitled to the compound headship chieftaincy title *Magaji Ile* or the ward's headship title *Magaji Aare*. Men entitled to these headships known as *Daudu* were marked, classified and identified with *Keke Marun* with *Bamu*.

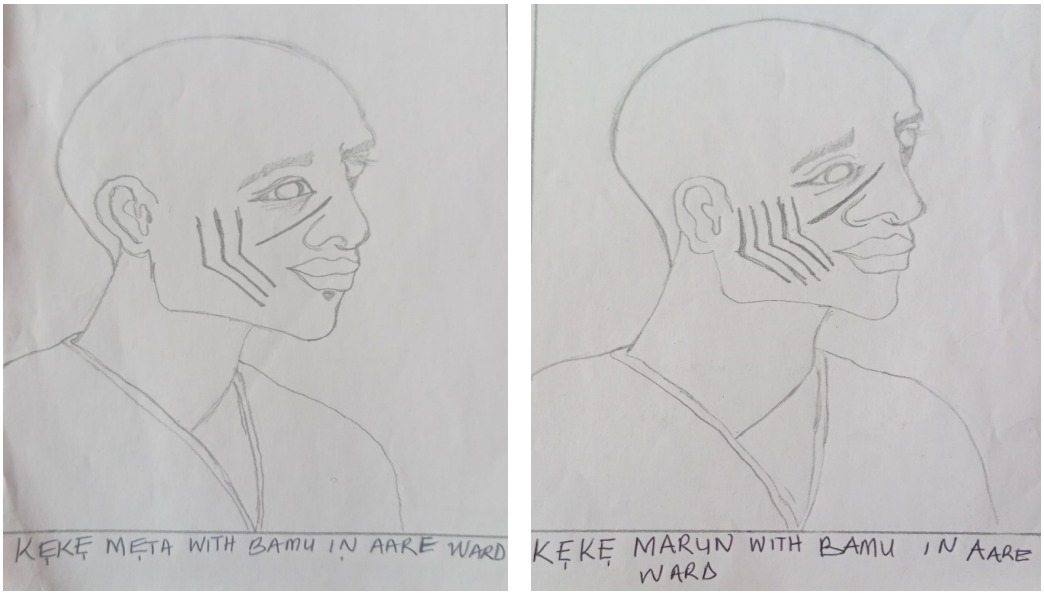

Figure 14 (a & b): Keke Meta Mark Meant for Non-claimant to Mogaji Chieftaincy Title at Idiape, Aare Ward and Keke Marun Identifying Title Holder, Mogaji Isokun, Idiape, Aare Ward

[35] Alhaji Hassan Alabi Amao, elder statesman and retired civil servant, Idiape Area, Ilorin, 6 June 2023.
[36] These *Daudus* are usually the first male child and most of the male children of these families.

Moreover, Yoruba tribal markings such as *Keke Meta* with *Bamu*, *Keke Marun* with *Bamu*, different types of *Abaja* such as *Abaja Lasan, Abaja Meta, Abaja Alaafin; Gombo, Mejo Mejo, Mokanla Mokanla, Pele, Ila Ilorin* and others laid credence to the fact that the majority of Aare ward settlers were migrants that joined their kinsmen before, during and after the collapse of Oyo empire.

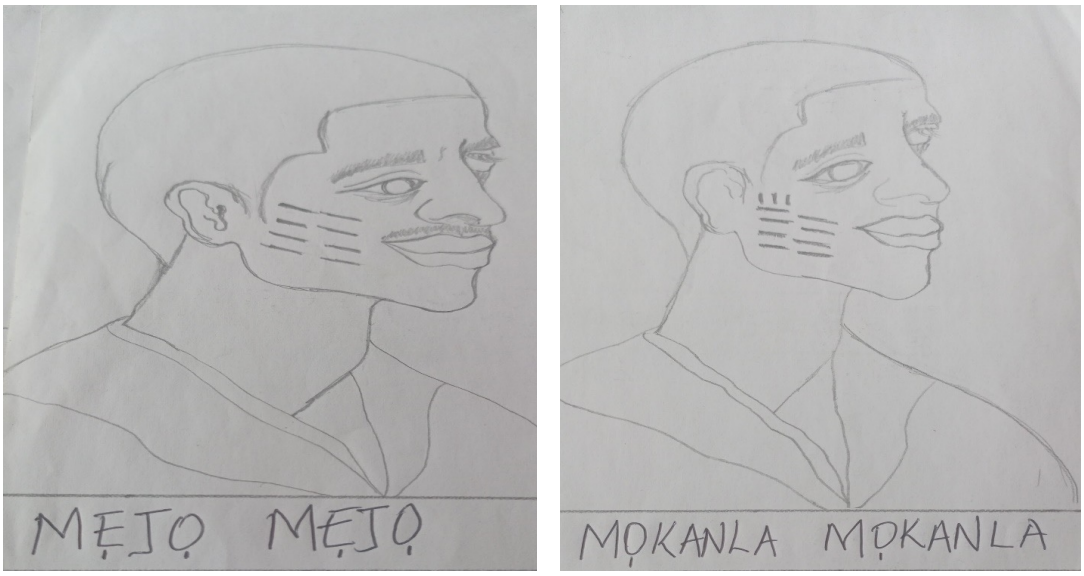

Figure 15 (a & b): Oyo Tribal Marks Mejo Mejo, Makanla Mokanla and Gombo Sustained by Aare Ward Oyo Migrants Settlers

Just like the other Ilorin Emirate wards, the quest for further economic fortune prompted prominent chieftains and settlers of Magaji Aare ward to found and extend their cultural tentacles to a number of villages on the outskirt of Ilorin metropolis. Farm village settlements such as Olayinka along Igbaja village, Isokun Olopon along Oke-Oyi, Ago-Oja and Budo Agun along Laduba, Afin-Oloko along Offa Garage, Abayawo, Sapati, Idiape oko, Iyemoja and many others were founded to perpetrate and propagate Ojo Isekuse and Laderin/ Afonja's ancestral economic and cultural heritage and dominance.[37]

Conclusion

After the triumph and recovery from the Nupe militarism, Oyo Empire emerged to fill the political vacuum created by the decline of Ife kingdom and contributed excessively in redrawing the political map of the region between 1570 and 1650

[37] Alhaji Aliyu Abubakar Babatunde, Magaji Isokun of Ilorin, Idiape Area, Ilorin, 13 June 2023.

(Akinwunmi 2020: 188). *Alafin* Abipa and Obalokun and successive Oyo warrior kings took advantage of the military might and the extensive commercial opportunities from the Atlantic coastal market and inland trade routes to effect hegemonic politics and made Oyo a dominant state in Yorubaland.

Oyo Empire's breakdown, which took place between 1790 and 1837 was prompted by internal division and constitutional crises, wars, tensions, unrest and political rivalries. The quagmire put an end to Oyo political supremacy and automatically granted independence to the provinces. The political crisis plunged the entire Yoruba country in a state of confusion. The confusion breed waves of migration, whereby people scampered for safety, succor and prosperity in saver haven. The major directions of most peoples' migration were provinces with a prosperous economy and a strong military power, of which Ilorin was inclusive. *Aare* Afonja's proclamation of freedom for Oyo slaves and refugees of diverse cultural backgrounds and ethnicities strengthened Ilorin's heterogeneity. The subsequent Ilorin Fulani Emirate, which guaranteed prosperity for migrants' tribes from not only the Yoruba country but also tribes from the Central and Western Sudanese region and afar, complicated her heterogeneousness.

Cultural diversities of the migrant tribes were evident through the prevalence of varied facial tribal markings of Yorubaland and ethnic nationalities from across the Niger and inter-regional zones, such as Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Kannike, Nupe, Gobir, Kemberi, Malians, Mandinke and the Sudanese region among others. The Ilorin Emirate became a melting point for Yoruba, Kanuri, Gobir, Hausa and Kannike among others, adorned with facial tribal marks such as *Keke, Keke Meta, Keke Merin, Keke Marun, Pele, Pele Ijesha, Gombo, Abaja Meta, Abaja Meta* with *Upper Pele, Abaja Alaafin* also known as *Mefa Mefa*, combination of *Abaja* and *Ila Ilorin, Igba Ila, Mejo Mejo,* and *Makanla Mokanla; Ture, Ibamu,* Long and Short *Gobirawa* marks*, Kannike and Beli* marks among others. Despite being migrants from different geographical and trans-regional directions, endeavored with various facial tribal markings, these peoples teamed up to form a united front in the survival, expansion and sustainability of Ilorin Fulani Emirate of the 19th century.

Despite the presence of diverse facial tribal markings and ethnicities, superb political structuring and subsequent restructuring meaningfully accommodated rightful places to majority and significant minority ethnic groupings. This granted and accorded them a sense of belonging, identity and loyalty. Contrary to expectations that diverse facial tribal markings and other cultural identities might have created division, resentment, suspicion, skepticism, enmity and dubiety among various tribes in Ilorin, the rather warranted harmonious

coexistence. Therefore, these people, with diverse facial tribal markings, and from multiethnic backgrounds and nationalities prioritized the defense and protection of the Ilorin Emirate's sanctity as a worthy stake. Ilorin Emirate thereby transfigured to a distinct and unique cultural breed.

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