

# From Selection to Coronation of Monarchs in the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Nikki: A Critical Exploration

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**Abstract:-** Several centuries ago, the world has known many powerful empires and kingdoms with significant powers and great leaders at the top of the monarchies. By the end of the nineteenth century many of those powerful kingdoms have lost most of their powers and assignment due to democratization and the instauration of democracy. Thanks to decolonization and the strong desire of people for more freedom and liberty, kingdoms such as the powerful kingdom of Sundjata Keita in Mali, the Zulu kingdom of Chaka in South-Africa, the powerful Abomey kingdom of Behanzin, the wassangari kingdom of Nikki in the Northern part of Benin, the powerful empire of the Britain to mention but the above lost their prestige and main powers and has become symbolic monarchies. The main aim of this paper is to explore how monarchs are selected in the United Kingdom and the kingdom of Nikki in Benin Republic. The research also focuses on the system of coronation in the two kingdoms for a better understanding and for the purpose of finding the common points and disparities between the two systems of traditional government.

**Keywords:-** Selection; Coronation; Monarchs; United Kingdom; Nikki kingdom.

## ➤ Résumé

Il y a plusieurs siècles, le monde a connu de nombreux empires et royaumes puissants dotés d'importants pouvoirs avec à leur tête de grands rois. À la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, bon nombre de ces royaumes ont perdu la plupart de leurs pouvoirs et attributions en raison de l'instauration de la démocratie et de l'état de droit dans la plus part des pays du monde. Grâce à la décolonisation et au fort désir des peuples de plus de liberté, des royaumes tels que le puissant royaume de Sundjata Keita au Mali, le royaume zoulou de Chaka en Afrique du Sud, le puissant royaume Abomey de Béhanzin, le royaume wassangari de Nikki en la partie nord du Bénin, le puissant empire de la Grande-Bretagne pour ne citer que ces royaumes. Ces derniers ont perdu leur prestige et leurs principales attributions et sont devenus des monarchies à caractère symboliques.

L'objectif principal de cet article est d'explorer la manière dont les monarches sont choisis au Royaume-Uni et dans le royaume de Nikki en République du Bénin. La recherche porte également sur le système de couronnement des souverains dans les deux royaumes pour une meilleure

compréhension et met en exergue les points communs et les disparités entre les deux systèmes de gouvernement traditionnel.

**Mots-clés:-** Sélection; Couronnement; Monarques; Royaume-Uni; Royaume Nikki.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom commonly referred to as the British monarchy, is the constitutional monarchy of the United Kingdom, its dependencies and its overseas territories. The origin of the kingdom can be associated from the petty kingdoms of early medieval Scotland and Anglo-Saxon England, which is consolidated into kingdom of England and Scotland. By 10th century, the last crowned Anglo- Saxon monarch was defeated and killed by William the Conqueror. Till today the United Kingdom monarchy is ruling by his line descendants. The ceremonial of coronation of the successive monarchs is made up many initiation rites based on the customs and traditions of the Kingdom.

The Nikki Kingdom traces its origins after the arrival of Wassangari in Ouénou<sup>1</sup>. It is founded some years later by Sounon Sero, who extend his domination on the whole region. The emperor of Nikki died in 1831 while fighting against the invasion of his territory by the Fulani people. After his death his children succeeded him by dividing the succession line.

The main objective of this work is to compare the United Kingdom system of monarch's selection and the way they are coronated with the Kingdom of Nikki in order to draw some similarities and disparities between them. This research work does not cover all the Kingdoms of Benin. I just selected the Kingdom of Nikki as native it could be easy for me to get trustworthy information to be use in my research. The study is mainly about the coronation in these Kingdoms and my choice is based on their criteria of selection of the Monarch. The research do not have the pretension of covering all the aspect concerning the topic, its main aim is sharing knowledge, facilitating cultural integration and encouraging mutual understanding.

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<sup>1</sup> a small village located in the Northern part of Benin Republic

## II. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This research paper is the fruit of a documentary and field investigations. I have gone through books, reports and documents dealing with my topic. The above method helped me to get the basic information about the two kingdoms. It is worth to mention that for the case of the Kingdom of Nikki, I find it difficult to find many books dealing with the topic the original tradition of the monarchy being based on oral literature. Still books such as *le royaume de Nikki ses rois, ses origines en nos jours* (1992) translated into English as *The Nikki Kingdom, its Monarchs up to nowadays* by Leon Bio Bigou<sup>2</sup> has been of great importance. I have also gone through internet from which I have collected some useful data to enrich my work.

## III. RESEARCH RESULTS

### A. Concepts Clarification

Coronation is the ceremony when a new King is officially installed. A **coronation** is the act of placement or bestowal of a crown upon a monarch's head. The term generally also refers not only to the physical crowning but to the whole ceremony wherein the act of crowning occurs, along with the presentation of other items of regalia, marking the formal investiture of a monarch with regal power. Aside from the crowning, a coronation ceremony may comprise many other rituals such as the taking of special vows by the monarch, the investing and presentation of regalia to the monarch, and acts of homage by the new ruler's subjects and the performance of other ritual deeds of special significance to the particular nation.

Many scholars, researchers and writers have dealt with the concept of coronation. The most illustrative one is the work of Edward Shills and Michael Young. In their research paper entitled *the Meaning of Coronation (1953)*, they define Coronation as the Coronation was the ceremonial occasion for the affirmation of the moral values by which the society lives. It was an act of national communion. According to a survey they have conducted in some streets of the Eastern part of London, they concluded based on the information they got that nothing was more remarkable than the complete inability of people to say why they thought important the occasion they were honoring with such elaborate ritual. They compare the coronation ceremonies as assemblies of Christians celebrating the principal dates of the life of Christ, or of Jews remembering the exodus' from Egypt or the promulgation of the Decalogue, and a reunion of citizens commemorating the promulgation of a new moral or legal system. The Coronation is exactly this kind of ceremonial in which the society reaffirms the moral values which constitute it as a society and renews its devotion to those values by an act of communion.

### B. From selection to the coronation of the British Monarchs

#### ➤ Selection of the British Monarchs

Historically, the crown sat upon your head mostly because you had the biggest army. When you died usually your eldest son kept control over that army and so the crown relocated to his head, though, of course, someone with a bigger army could change the political landscape quite abruptly. As time marched on and the world grew less violent eventually in 1701 Parliament established a set of rules to transfer the crown from one head to another -- hopefully with less turmoil than before.

So here's how the 1701 rules work:

- ✓ *Frist: don't be Catholic.*
- ✓ *Second: don't be a bastard.*
- ✓ *Third spouses don't count.*
- ✓ *Fourth and Finally: Male Primogeniture (whatever)<sup>3</sup>.*

As you can see these are clear rules that indicate that what kind of person can become king or queen in the United Kindom.

#### • Coronation of the British Monarchs

The coronation of the British monarch is a ceremony (specifically, initiation rite) in which the monarch of the United Kingdom is formally invested with regalia and crowned at Westminster Abbey. It corresponds to the coronations that formerly took place in other European monarchies, all of which have abandoned coronations in favour of inauguration or enthronement ceremonies.

The coronation usually takes place several months after the death of the previous monarch, as it is considered a joyous occasion that would be inappropriate while mourning continues. This interval also gives the planners enough time to complete the elaborate arrangements required. For example, Queen Elizabeth II was crowned on 2 June 1953, having ascended the throne on 6 February 1952; the date of her coronation was announced almost a year in advance, and preparations inside the abbey took five months. The ceremony is performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the most senior cleric in the Church of England, of which the monarch is supreme governor. Other clergy and members of the nobility also have roles; most participants in the ceremony are required to wear ceremonial uniforms or robes and coronets. Many other government officials and guests attend, including representatives of other countries. The essential elements of the coronation have remained largely unchanged for the past thousand years. The sovereign is first presented to, and acclaimed by, the people. He or she then swears an oath to uphold the law and the Church. Following that, the monarch is anointed with holy oil, invested with regalia, and crowned, before receiving the homage of his or her subjects. Wives of kings are then anointed and crowned as

<sup>2</sup> University Lecture and Native of Nikki Kingdom

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cgpgrey.com/blog/how-to-become-the-british-monarch>

queen consort. The service ends with a closing procession, and since the 20th century it has been traditional for the royal family to appear later on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, before attending a banquet there.

The timing of the coronation has varied throughout British history. King Edgar's coronation was some 15 years after his accession in 957 and may have been intended to mark the high point of his reign, or that he reached the age of 30, the age at which Jesus Christ was baptized. In 1937, the 11 year old Princess Elizabeth had watched her father, King George VI, crowned in the elaborate ceremony and 16 years later on 2 June 1953, her own official coronation was to take place. Coronations have been held at Westminster Abbey<sup>4</sup> for 900 years and The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was to follow suit. But the Coronation of 1953 was ground-breaking in its own right. She was crowned on 2 June, 1953 in Westminster Abbey. Her Majesty was the thirty-ninth Sovereign to be crowned at Westminster Abbey. During the investiture, The Queen first put on the newly-made Colobium Sindonis - a loose linen-lawn garment, and then a robe of cloth of gold called the Dalmatic or Supertunica. The Lord Great Chamberlain presented the golden spurs, the symbol of chivalry, after which the Archbishop of Canterbury presented a jewelled sword, and then the armills, the golden bracelets of sincerity and wisdom. Finally, The Queen put on stole and cloth of gold Robe Royal and received the orb, the coronation ring, the glove, and then the scepter.

- *Coronation Participants*

Many officials and citizens take part to Monarchs coronation, the Clergy, the great officers of the State for instance. We have the participation of landowners and other persons with honorific "duties" or privileges. The Archbishop of Canterbury, who has precedence over all other clergy and all laypersons except members of the royal family,(Velde 2010) traditionally officiates at coronations;<sup>5</sup> in his or her absence, another bishop appointed by the monarch may take the archbishop's place.( *Maer et al August 2008*) Along with persons of nobility, the coronation ceremonies are also attended by a wide range of political figures, including the Prime Minister and all members of the Cabinet of the United Kingdom, all governors-general and prime ministers of the Commonwealth realms, all governors of British Crown Colonies, as well as the heads of state of dependent nations. Dignitaries and representatives from other nations are also customarily invited.<sup>6</sup> Hereditary peers and their spouses are also invited. For Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953, 8,000 guests were squeezed into Westminster Abbey and each

<sup>4</sup> Strong p47

<sup>5</sup> The Royal Household (25 May 2003). "50 facts about the Queen's coronation". British Monarchy website. Archived from the original on 9 February 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Royal Household. "Coronation". Royal family website. Retrieved 20 April 2016.

person had to make do with a maximum of 18 inches (46 cm) of seating.

- *The Monarch Recognition and Oath*

Before the entrance of the sovereign, the litany of the saints is sung during the procession of the clergy and other dignitaries. For the entrance of the monarch, Psalm 122, *I was glad*, is sung. The sovereign enters Westminster Abbey wearing the *crimson surcoat* and the *Robe of State of crimson velvet* and takes his or her seat on a Chair of Estate. Garter Principal King of Arms, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Great Chamberlain, the Lord High Constable and the Earl Marshal go to the east, south, west and north of the coronation theatre. At each side, the archbishop calls for the recognition of the sovereign, with the words,

Sirs, I here present unto you [name], your undoubted King (Queen). Wherefore all you who are come this day to do your homage and service, are you willing to do the same?

After the people acclaim the sovereign at each side, the archbishop administers an oath to the sovereign (*Kershaw (2002)*). Since the Glorious Revolution, the Coronation Oath Act of 1688 has required, among other things, that the sovereign "Promise and Swear to Govern the People of this Kingdome of England and the Dominions thereto belonging according to the Statutes in Parliaments Agreed on and the Laws and Customs of the same".<sup>7</sup> The oath has been modified without statutory authority; for example, at the coronation of Elizabeth II, the exchange between the Queen and the archbishop was as follows:

*The Archbishop of Canterbury:* Will you solemnly promise and swear to govern the Peoples of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Pakistan and Ceylon, and of your Possessions and other Territories to any of them belonging or pertaining, according to their respective laws and customs?

- ✓ *The Queen:* I solemnly promise so to do.
- ✓ *The Archbishop of Canterbury:* Will you to your power cause Law and Justice, in Mercy, to be executed in all your judgments?
- ✓ *The Queen:* "I will."
- ✓ *The Archbishop of Canterbury:* Will you to the utmost of your power maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel? Will you to the utmost of your power maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law? Will you maintain and preserve inviolable the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, as by law established in England? And will you preserve unto the

<sup>7</sup> "Coronation Oath Act 1688: Section III. Form of Oath and Administration thereof". Legislation.gov.uk. the National Archives. Retrieved 4 June 2016.

Bishops and Clergy of England, and to the Churches there committed to their charge, all such rights and privileges, as by law do or shall appertain to them or any of them?

✓ *The Queen*: All this I promise to do. The things which I have here before promised, I will perform, and keep. So help me God (*Kershaw (2002)*).

In addition to the oath, the monarch may take what is known as the Accession Declaration if he or she has not yet made it. This declaration was first required by the Bill of Rights of 1689 and is required to be taken at either the first meeting of the parliament after a new monarch's accession (i.e. during the State Opening of Parliament) or at his or her coronation. The monarch additionally swears a separate oath to preserve Presbyterian Church government in the Church of Scotland and this oath is taken before the coronation (Maer August 2008).

Once the taking of the oath concludes, an ecclesiastic presents a Bible to the sovereign, saying "Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God."<sup>8</sup> The Bible used is a full King James Bible, including the Apocrypha (Carefoote June 2006). At Elizabeth II's coronation, the Bible was presented by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Once the Bible is presented, the Holy Communion is celebrated, but the service is interrupted after the Nicene Creed.<sup>9</sup>

#### IV. FROM SELECTION TO THE CORONATION OF NIKKI KINGDOM MONARCHS

##### A. Geographical location of the kingdom of Nikki

Nikki is one of the most important historical city located in the North-East of Benin Republic in the commune of Nikki. The commune covers an area of 317 100 hectares. According to 2013 population survey, it counts about 151,232 inhabitants. It is one of the so many cities having land border with the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Nikki Kingdom has been created with the arrival of the Wassangari<sup>10</sup> ethnic group. Before leaving Busa, Boko's country in Nigeria for Ouénou, the Wassangari came from antique hole. Their idolatrous ancestor Kissira was obliged to leave the empire because the Muslims invasion. During the evasion three of his daughters were captred by Muslims. The first of them became the bride of Mohamed Ibn Abubakar. She gave him a child named Kassim. The second got married with Abu Ali and the third became the bride of Abdullah Ibn Umar. Kissira migrated from Persia to Busa. Then with the persecution of Hausa, he moved to Ouénou, the north East of Republic of Benin (Dahomey at that period). Thus, before they came at Ouénou the reign of Bariba, this land was occupied by Natimba, Yoabu, Pila-Pila, Tienga, Gourmantché ethnic

groups, and also the Yoruba's hunters and then Mokollé ethnic group. Like other ethnic groups, the Baatombous of this period had a well-structured social organisation without a king at the head of state but were organised as chiefs of clans, cults, hunters, fishermen living from agriculture and other activities. They did not have a chief superior who reign over the Baatombous before the penetration of the Wassangari group in Baarou Tem. They migrate at Ouénou since 1480. The Wassangari had a chief, Mansa alias Mansa Doro. He was one of the adepts of Kissira, as a good companion, Kissira gave him his son Séro as his groom. He educated Séro like his own child with Gawé Yerima, the cousin of Séro and Bio Nikki Sira the brother of Mansa for their surviving. It was during the hunt that they arrived to Ouénou. They decided to stay at this region because of its underground riches and its several animals. After spending a few times at Ouénou, Mansa decided to return for his friend Kissira. But before leaving, he nominated Séro as a new chief because of his wisdom and respect. After being invested Séro got married with three Baatombou women at Ouénou who gave him five children. Simé his cadet founded the principality of Wassangari that will become the future capital city of the Nikki. It was in hunt party that Simé discovered Nikki, this area was humid and he decided to call it "Ya Niké-nikérou San" which means "it is humid" in Bariba language, the derivation of the adjective "Niké-nikérou". He returned to Ouénou, to convince his father Séro to come and live with him but he declined his proposition and stayed at Ouénou with his sisters Gnon Doué and Bona Doué.

It was his moving toward his father that led to the pilgrimage of every Sina Boko at Ouénou before his coronation on Wassangari throne. Thus, the throne of Wassangari is between the five brothers and their descendants. Then, the kingdom of Nikki is composed by four ethnic groups: The Wassangari are the first component of the population. They compose the Kingdom of Nikki because it is one of them (Simé) who founded this Kingdom. After the Wassangari, come the Bariba who are the pure people. They didn't have King but chiefs of clans like Sina Gorogui and Sina Danwirou who were members of ministers sit; the Gando who are the Bariba children bring up by Peulh because they are said to be born abnormally; and the strangers who are generally the Muslims (Bio Bigou 1992).

I found it useful to mention this few part of the Nikki Kingdom for three main reasons. The first, this kingdom is the only remaining empire in Benin Republic and may be in Africa the Nikki having powers and recognised by people living in a vast area called "Baru Tem" meaning people sharing Bariba language from Benin Republic up to the Kwara State in Nigeria. The second reason is my aim of making this special kingdom known by the readers of this paper from historical, traditions and customs perspective compare to the well-known United Kingdom .

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

<sup>10</sup> One of the powerful ethnic group in Benin Republic



### B. Selection of the Nikki Kingdom Monarch

Unlike the African Kingdoms, the Kingdom of Nikki is directed by a sovereign who has a limited power. In fact, he is helped in his job by other personalities and institutions. The kingdom is divided into four big Dynasties and every dynasty has its particular qualification. These dynasties are:

- *The Daffiarou dynasty*: it is one of the four dynasties that composed the kingdom of Nikki. It is the dynasty of the current monarch “Sabi Nagninan III. The descents of this dynasty are said to be Courageous.
- *The Makararou dynasty*: it is the dynasty of Séro Taasu, the predecessor of the last king. Their descents are said to be crafty.
- *The Korarou dynasty* is the dynasty of Séro Kora III, the last King of the Kingdom of Nikki. The descents of this dynasty are said to be fearful.
- *The Gbassi dynasty*: the next King has to be from this dynasty. They are said to be crafty.
- Monarch selection criteria:
  - The criteria to be elected as King are:
    - Firstly, to be member of the dynasty which is going to reign,
    - To have beard which is considered as wisdom character,
    - Not have done obscure sacrifices,
    - Be son or grandson of King
    - Have been shaved at Gaani festival and received Prince Name,
    - Be copper stirrups possessor and then have a great familial status,
    - Be orphan of mother. The absence of your mother’s is an essential rule for the future king to be considered mature and pretend to rule.

According to customs and tradition, the future Monarch to be selected should not be a woman and is supposed to be more than seventy (70) years old. Only the children of the Monarch born before he becomes a King are eligible to become Monarch so those who are born after are considered as illegitimate, because it is assumed that he would not have enough time to have sexual relation with his several wives. His wives could have sexual relations with the King’s warriors, guards and palace domestics and the children of these relations are only King’s children because their mothers are King’s Wives. In Nikki, only princes can be King the princesses cannot.

Because of historical consideration the King selected goes to Ouénou for special ceremonies before coming back to the royal palace in Nikki. This coronation ceremony is traditional and usually done secretly. Being secret I could not find information to share.

### C. Coronation Participants

Although the Coronation ceremony is secret, it is a great day for the citizens and the local and national political leaders. It is like a festival for the people of Baru Tem. People with honorific duties and privileges such as the representatives of all religious confessions take part to the ceremony even if they do not have access to the room of the ceremony. At the end the new Monarch comes to his palace to receive thanks and salutations. The King is helped in his job by the Ministers. They include:

- *The Prime Minister*: “Sina Dounwirou” which means “the Head of the horse”. He is every time in front of the King during the Gaani festival. When he dies he is buried in their graveyard at Ouénou.
- *The Agricultural Minister*: “Sina Gbééré”. He cared the royal court supplying/procurement. He makes sure that the King every time has his part when someone kills an ox because he doesn’t have to buy meat. The butcher’s chief is called “Yarari Sounon”.
- *The Minister of Defense*: is “Sounon Tooto”.
- *The chief of griots* called “Bara Sounon” is also the Minister of communication.
- *The “Guèssèrè”* are the one who praise the King. They are located at Wèrèkè at two kilometers from Nikki behind the barrage of Nikki.

These respective Ministers live in their respective houses out of the royal court. Any time the Monarch needs their service he makes them call to his Royal Palace.

## V. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TWO KINGDOMS REALITIES

A closer look on this research work allows us to come up with many similarities and disparities. From tradition and custom perspectives, I can say that the two Kingdoms are authentic kingdoms that are still resisting to the progressive disappearance of Monarchies. Although they reduced to playing symbolic roles, they are still useful for the people, protect their interest and care for their welfare. They both promote peace and unity and conserve their cultures and customs and traditions as an important part of their daily duties. Citizens of both nations are still proud of culture and tradition and they want to conserve it. “*No need to change what is part of our parent’s history and the reason of their existence; it is the real essence of our life*” said an old man to me when carrying out this research work. Both Kingdoms are ruled by Monarch selected according to a specific rule and they are elected for life. They also share the common saying “the king is dead, long life the king!” just to say that human resources are still available to continue the way even after the death of the current.

Despite the existing common point, there are undoubtedly important disparities between the two Monarchies. While it is possible to become Monarch whatever the sex in the United Kingdom this is not possible in the kingdom of Nikki. This can be interpreted as a contempt toward women. Equal opportunity should be

given to both sexes. The United Kingdom of course went through the same situation but had already gave back such a practice. Also it said that is not possible to selected Monarch if your mother is still alive. This may lead future Monarch to assassinate their mother. This could be seen as risk and inhumane. In the United Kingdom a Queen or a King can abdicate to leave the Throne to his son or daughter according to the line of succession. Succession in the Kingdom is well organised, Royal Line of succession to the throne is already known from now to many generations to come and nothing can change. This is not the case in Nikki where succession may lead to many intimidation and battles before the new Monarch is designated. In the United Kingdom, from eighteen (18) years old you can be King or Queen; contrary to the Kingdom of Nikki where the candidate should have seventy (70) years old to be eligible. The King of Nikki can have as many as four wives and many children as he wants, but in the United Kingdom this may be seen as immorality. Once again this is based on customs and traditions of each kingdom.

Politically the UK Monarch is Head of state and Head of the Armed forces, Head of the Church of England and of the Commonwealth, to be brief, she has National duties which is the case for the Monarch in Nikki. He has limited powers and cannot represent the Country at international Level. In the kingdom of Nikki the members of the Royal family have the right to vote even if they don't clearly show their political position. In the United Kingdom the Monarch as well as members of his family do not vote nor do they have to be elected this is strictly forbidden. There are many to say about the two Kingdom I hope that future researches would deepen the topic.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Nikki are kingdoms founded some centuries ago. Several laws and rules had been established about the Monarch selection and coronation in the two Monarchies. Though, it is important to keep in mind that each kingdom is built and is functioning according inner customs and traditions. This research work has dealt with coronation and future Monarch selection. It retraces the way the Monarchs are selected and coronate. While the United Kingdom has granted the possibility to female to be eligible, the kingdom of Nikki has kept it past and old manner of selection and coronation kept secret to common citizens. Not pretending to indicate what is good for each civilization and people I thing that I would prefer things to be well-organised in the existing kingdoms. I still believe that they are important tools for the preservation of our culture and customs and civilization. So it becomes urgent that the selection of a future Monarch and his coronation not to become sources of conflicts and discord as it is often in the Kingdom of Nikki.

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