

AFRICA and other **CONTINENTS** since the 19th century

A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Rashid Oladoja Lasisi



Ibrahim A. Jawondo

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Editors

Ibrahim A. Jawondo (Ph.D)

&

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CHAPTER 1

R.O. LASISI: A SCHOLAR, TEACHER AND AN ADMINISTRATOR

By I. A. Jawondo

Rashid Oladoja Lasisi was born on 16th August 1944, to the family of Late Rufai Akanbi Lasisi of Ile- Imam Ajokidero, in Oyo town and Princess Asimau Sie Ejide Oyedunmade Atuyaya, daughter of Alaafn Bello Gbadegesin, Ladigbolu II. His father was Baba Lasisi, whose own father was Rufai. They were all descendants of Ajokidero family and of Olundu's lineage, who migrated from the Old Oyo Kingdom to the present Oyo. The name Olundu (perseverant) was given to the lineage because of the endurance shown by members of that family in spite of having suffered successive misfortune of infant mortality. The Ajokidero family belongs to the Imamate lineage since the time immemorial of the Old Oyo Kingdom and it produced the first Imam of the new Oyo. The Imamship of Oyo land is rotated between the Ajokidero and Akewugberu family that produced the second Imam of the new Oyo. The current Imam, al-Shaikh Mashood Abdulganiy Adebayo, who was turbaned in 2007, is from the Ajokidero family. He is the direct son of Baba AbdulGaniyu who was from the line of Baba Atanda, a younger brother to Baba Rufai, the grandfather of Rashid Lasisi. Baba Lasisi's other brothers included AbdulRaheem, Salahudeen and Yunus.

R.O. Lasisi, who was the first child of the family had the following younger brothers and sisters; Imam AbdulRafiu Lasisi, Mr. Mashood Adebayo AbdulGaniy, Lawyer Tajudeen, Alhaji Shakirudeen, Alhaji Falilulahi and Alhaja Shakira.

Princess Asimau Sie Ejide, who was the only daughter of her mother, Mama Saudat Ode to Aalafin Bello Gbadegesin Oladigbolu II, had the following as half sisters and brothers; Alhaja Sikirat, Alhaja Mojisola, Alhaji AbdulGaniy, Alhaji Husseni and Alhaji Hassan. Due to having lived a long life, she rose to the position of head of Gbadegesin family. Princess Asimau Sie Ejide was, however, survived by eight children, namely R.O. Lasisi, Imam AbdulRafiu Lasisi, Mr Mashood Adebayo AbdulGaniy, Alhaja Shakira, Alhaji Muhammad Kabir, Alhaji Abdul Wasiu, Alhaja Fatima and Alhaji AbdulFatai.

Education

As it was the practice among Muslims to give their children and wards sound education from their childhood, particularly families with Imamate tradition, the young Lasisi, along with other children of Ajokidero family, were exposed to Islamic education. He attended the tablet Quranic School (Ile-kewu) of Alfa Aderibigbe of Kaa Alfa Akewugberu, who was the father of Alfa AbdulAzeez who succeeded his father in overseeing the Qur'anic school. Young Lasisi completed the Quranic learning in 1954, but the graduation ceremony came up 1958. Members of the 1958 graduating class included Mudasir, Muritala, Rafiu, Ladi, Sidikat, all of Okunola's family. Others were Razaq Busari, Ayetiti, Abdullahi ibn Kaka and others. The current teacher at the Quranic School is Alfa Ahmadu.

Young Lasisi began Western education at the Native Authority Primary School, Idi-Ope, Oyo, where he graduated in 1957 with a Primary School Leaving Certificate. He advanced his education by attending Local Authority Teachers' Training College, Oyo, between 1961 and 1962 for Grade III Certificate. He later proceeded to the Local Authority Teachers' Training College, Ibadan, between 1965 and 1966 for his Teachers' Grade II, where he bagged academic awards, being the best student in both Geography and Principles of Education.

In preparation for university education, he registered for and passed

Ordinary and Advance G.C.E. London. With these results, he gained admission into the University of Ibadan in 1968 and graduated with a B.A. (Hons.) History in 1971. Lasisi registered for and completed his Master's and Ph.D degrees in the same University in 1981 and 1985 respectively. During his studentship at the University of Ibadan, he was a University Scholar in the Department of History between 1981 and 1984. These awards clearly testify to his consistent outstanding brilliance, industry and handwork.

Career

Determined to build a career in teaching, Rashid Lasisi traversed various strata of the profession, starting from Primary School to Secondary School, College of Education, Polytechnic and finally the University. Lasisi's experience in the Civil Service was very unique. Sometimes, some individuals move fast through the cadres, while others go slowly. That of Lasisi was a steady type of career progression because he served in different but related educational sectors and in each sector, he started almost from the scratch and made it to the top.

At the Primary School, he began as a class teacher and rose to the position of Headmaster. From being a graduate History teacher, he rose to become Principal. As a Lecturer II in 1976 at the then Kwara State College of Technology now Kwara Polytechnic, he rose to the position of a Principal Lecturer in 1983, before crossing to University of Ilorin in 1986 as Lecturer II. He rose to the position of Lecturer I in 1988, Senior Lecturer in 1990, Reader in 1993, and Professor in 1995. The secret of his uniqueness was in his academic advancement which gave him the chance of moving on at every given opportunity.

Appointments

As a reward for his consistent dedication to work and exhibition of truthfulness and trustworthiness, Rashid Lasisi was appointed and won elections into several offices. As a Primary School teacher,

he rose through the ranks to become Assistant Headmaster and substantive Headmaster in 1965 at Eleyele Primary School in Okeho, Oyo North. As a graduate History teacher at Oro Grammar School, Oro, in the present Irepodun Local Government of Kwara State, he became the Head, Department of Arts, and subsequently, the Acting Vice-Principal between January 1974 and June 1976, after which he was appointed substantive Vice-Principal of Okeya High School, Okeya in July 1976.

At the university, the leadership qualities of Lasisi were brought to bear not only in departmental and faculty administration, but in the University at large and beyond. Though a father figure and adviser to all students, he was appointed adviser to 100 and 200 Level students between 1986 and 1991, the position he combined with manning the departmental Examination office within the same period. Appointed as Postgraduate Co-ordinator of the Department of History between 1998 and 1999, he rose to become the Head of the Department between 1999 and 2001. Lasisi was an 'ambassador' of the Faculty of Arts at the Faculty of Health Sciences Board from 1990 to 1994. He was a member of Senate Committee on Longe Commission in 1991 and on the committees on Examination, Scholarship and Prizes between 1993 and 1995. He was elected Sub-Dean of the Faculty of Arts in 1991, which lasted till 1994 and subsequently became the elected Dean nine years after. It is remarkable to mention that Professor Lasisi was not on ground when the decision to make him the Dean was taken by some Faculty members neither was he on ground to do the necessary campaign, but for his outstanding personality, he won the election with a land-slide. Late Professor Musa Ali Ajetunmobi was nominated by the supporting Professors and made the Chairman Campaign Committee, supported by Dr. Sa'ad Yusuf Omoiya, Dr. Ibrahim AbdulGaniyu Jawondo and other members. Professor M. A. Ajetunmobi succeeded him in office as the Dean of the Faculty.

Professor Lasisi's letter to the administration on returning from

Sabbatical cum accumulated leave speaks volumes about his election as Dean:

I was granted sabbatical from December 2001 to November 2002 and permitted after to utilize my accumulated leaves of eight months. I am therefore resuming work today, 1st August 2003 in the Department of History and also as Dean, Faculty of Arts...

The Kwara State Government also tapped from the fountain of knowledge, erudition and frankness of Lasisi when he was appointed the Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Great Debate under the auspices of the Directorate of Mass Mobilization (MAMSER), Kwara State, for Gubernatorial Candidates in December 1991 and a member of the Kwara State Boundary Committee from 1992 to 1994.

At the university level, Lasisi served in various capacities. He was appointed Director of General Studies Unit twice, 1998-1999 and 2005-2007. He was the Chairman, Committee for the Implementation of the Unilorin Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies and elected into the Joint Council/Senate Committee for the selection of Vice Chancellor for the University in 2007. Lasisi's footprints as the Chairman of the University of Ilorin Muslim Community are still boldly written in the sand of time. The erudition of Lasisi knew no bounds; he read very widely as a scholar of International Studies, and he travelled the length and breadth of the country. He transcended the borders of the country to the international arena through attendance of conferences and publication of articles in reputable international journals. His academic focus was on British and French Administration in Africa, as reflected in his Master of Arts thesis and Doctor of Philosophy dissertation which he completed in 1981 and 1985, respectively.

For ease of reference, a list of some of his academic outputs is included in this chapter. Efforts are also on-going to collect, collate

and publish his public lectures.

Given his academic experience, he served as External Examiner to quite a number of Nigerian universities, including Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto; Bayero University, Kano; University of Ibadan; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Delta State University, Abraka among others, apart from observing his sabbatical leaves at Ondo, and Delta States universities and Ajayi Crowther/Al-Hikmah in 1993, 2001 and 2010 respectively. He was a member of National Universities Commission Accreditation Team to several Nigerian universities in Bayelsa, Rivers, Imo states and Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin in Kwara state.

Upon his retirement from the services of the University of Ilorin on 16th of August 2011, he joined Al-Hikmah University as a Contract Officer in the Department of History and International Studies. It should be noted that he was not new in Al-Hikmah University. Apart from the fact that he had been on her staff list as an Associate Lecturer, he spent his last Sabbatical leave (2010-2011), in this University. Here, he also served in various capacities, ranging from the Deanship of the College of the Humanities now College of the Humanities and Social Sciences for two (2) years (2010-2012), the Chairman, Staff Disciplinary Committee and others till his transition to eternity.

Association membership

Professor R.O. Lasisi belonged to some professional, cultural and faith-based associations. Until his death, he was an active and, indeed, life member of the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN), Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP), Current Affairs Association of Nigeria (CAAN), University of Ilorin and Al-Hikmah Muslim Communities, and Oyo Muslim Committee of Friends. He chaired Unilorin Muslim Community for a period of four years, 2005-2009.

Family

The young Lasisi got married in 1967 at the age of 23 years and as a primary school teacher. Since then and until his death, he was a committed family man. The eldest in both the paternal and the maternal families, he was indeed a rallying point. He was seen as a compassionate and no nonsense man. Based on principles, he was strict but benevolently generous. His marriages produced the following offsprings, arranged in order of age; Shakirat, Dauda, Sarafa, Sadia, Aminat, Mohammed, Hafisat, Taofiqat, Mariam, and Rasheedat.

His pilgrimage to Makkah

Hajj is an important but the last of the pillars of Islam enjoined on all mentally, physically and financially able Muslims. Hajj, to some is not only meant for the able Muslims but that for an individual to perform Hajj, he must be spiritually mature in addition to age. Another school of thought believes that as soon as a Muslim is able, he or she can go on Hajj, believing that the spiritual maturity can come anytime. People in this group encourage minors to perform Hajj, since they can still go at will as time and resources permit. Professor Lasisi, as a senior civil servant, was eminently qualified to go on Hajj but he did not until 2010 believing that as the last pillar of Islam, it should also be the last of all worship to unite with one's Lord. At this point, permit my personal reminiscence with him, to succinctly capture his view on Hajj.

Sometimes in 2010, I was in my office, Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, when it suddenly occurred to me that 'Oga' had not gone on Hajj. By any standard, I felt he had been qualified for long. I made up my mind to see him, but I also felt I needed someone to accompany me, in case I might need to argue with him. I therefore called on Dr. Abdullahi Abubakar Sadiq of the Department of English who also understood 'Oga' very well because he served as his secretary when he was the Chairman

University of Ilorin Muslim Community. I had briefed him of our mission to *Oga's* house. Now in his house, after chatting and putting him in a proper frame of mind, I opened a discussion on Hajj and eventually asked him if he had gone on Hajj. He replied no! Then both of us exclaimed WHY! He said: 'Going to Makkah is not a joke. Once you go, you must be ready to give up this world. So, I feared committing sins after Hajj.' We laughed it off and made him to see the blessing in going on Hajj. There and then he resolved to go that year (2010). He asked if I would be going with him and I replied 'No problem, but that depends on getting the money I had contributed to my cooperative'. The second day, he gave me a check to pay for his Hajj. I went straight to Kwara State Pilgrims Welfare Board where my teacher, an elder state man, Imam AbdulHameed Abdullahi (The Imam Imale of Ilorin) was the Chairman. I met with the Secretary, Mr. Imam, who is also a friend. I was given a teller of the Unity Bank. I paid for *Oga's* form and mine but I could not pay again for Hajj that year because Board claimed that they had exhausted the spaces available, in spite of the fact that I had obtained a form. However, I pleaded with the officials that my *Oga* be allowed a space in the first flight and they agreed. To the glory of Allah *Oga* went and returned from Hajj transformed. His faith increased tremendously as observed from his words and deeds. He said to me when I went to welcome him from Hajj: 'Jawondo', 'Sir,' I answered. 'You see my grown grey beard?' 'Yes Sir,' I answered, 'So shall it be till I die'. From his return from Hajj till his death, white became the choice colour of *Oga* and so he went to meet his creator with it.

His death

Death is an inevitable phenomenon in human life. However, long life has always been man's daily prayer to God. In Islam, Muslims are expected to live a life of preparedness for death at every time of the day, of the week and of the year. As a Muslim, Professor Lasisi seemed to have been influenced by this philosophy. While he prayed for longevity, he took caution in his sayings and deeds. At this point,

permit me again to narrate my experience with him on this subject matter. In my discussions with *Oga*, I discovered that he never had a protracted illness. He told me he never slept in a hospital since he was mature. Based on this, he never wanted in his life a prolonged illness but a tranquil transition. The very month of his preparation for transition to the great beyond, I met him in his office to say hello as I was on Sabbatical Leave at Al-Hikmah University at that time. While with him, he coughed and I asked. 'Sir, what is the problem? You are doing what you hate most!' He replied, 'In fact, I am to see my doctor today by 12 noon.' And I said: 'Sir, this is 11:30a.m.' Yes, he replied, 'but I have a class of 400 Level at that same time.' I persuaded him to let me take the class for him. He paused and said, 'Well, if you would not mind.' At this point I had a mixed feeling. First, I was happy that *Oga* was trusting me with his lecture for the first time in 2014 since 2001 that I had been in the same Department with him. Secondly, I was panicky as to the level of his illness for him to have allowed me to handle his class. As I was about to go, he called me again to give me a guide and even a note. I simply told him, '*Oga*, a child is always a child before his father.' He got my message and he allowed me to go. After ten minutes in the class, I observed he was still in his office, so I left the class again to meet him, asking if he needed attention. When he saw me, he was alarmed. 'The students should be in class!' he exclaimed. 'Yes Sir, I came back because I still saw your car and that means you were still in the office,' I explained. Yes, I was about going when my junior brother called me and Yinka (his son) has also called now. They are both coming to my office,' he said. I wanted to take him to the hospital but he told me not to worry as his brother and son were coming to pick him. This turned out to be his last day and moment in Al-Hikmah University. He was driven to the hospital where Professor Ibrahim Katibi took care of him for 31 days. A few days after his discharge from the hospital, he breathed his last and answered the call of Allah after performing the Suhr prayer on Saturday, 1st March, 2014. May Allah forgive him and grant him aljannat Firdaos. (Amin).

testimonies

Prof. R.O. Lasisi was a friend, colleague and my predecessor in Office (the Dean of the Humanities, Al-Hikmah University). He was a humble and uncommonly rigidly principled person and a practising Muslim. May his soul rest in perfect peace. (Prof. I. B. Bello-Imam, 03/03/2014).

Daddy was a mentor when he was alive. I pray for Allah's forgiveness on him and may his gentle soul rest in perfect peace. (Mrs. Mustapha, Law, Unilorin, 03/03/2014)

He was a quiet, honest believer in God. May his soul rest in peace (Prof. G. A. Badmus, Al-Hikmah University).

My mentor has gone R. I. P. (Prof. Tijani AbdulWahab (LAUTECH, Ogbomoso)

Prof. R. O. Lasisi, you were a wonderful father whose passion for Islamic scholarship, justice and equity does not know any bound. I will greatly miss you and I pray fervently that Allah grant you His abode for the righteous in Jannatul-Firdaos, A-a-m-e-e-n (Alhaji Abdul-Hafeez Adedimeji, Fountain University Osogbo,)

His death was a great loss to the family, disciples, historians, Unilorin Muslim Community and humanity in general. May Allah bless and forgive Prof. R. O. Lasisi (Muhammed Bashir Gidado Jnr, M.A. History, ex-student)

I don't know how to describe how much I will miss him. He's one in a million in all ramifications. May Allah grant him Al-Jannah Firdaus. (Lawal, S. Abayomi, COE, Ilorin)

You were an icon. You affected so many positively and they remain proofs of your dedication as a teacher and administrator. Continue to rest in Al-Jannah. (Mrs R. F. Ajiboye)

A great mentor, who shall never be forgotten May your soul rest in peace (Chief M. K. Ajayi, NPA Lagos)

The (Society for Peace Studies and Practice) sympathizes with the family for this great loss. May his gentle soul rest in peace.' (Dr. Willie Eselebor, President SPSP).

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✓ Conclusion

This chapter has given a brief biography of Professor R. O. Lasisi as an indigene of Oyo in the present Oyo State in South-western Nigeria. For his educational adventure, he traversed the length and breadth of Oyo before he went out in search of further knowledge. The quest for knowledge made him transcend the borders of Nigeria to Togo and France. As a teacher, he affected the lives of many who will never forget him. To the nation, he was an unforgettable personality because of his contributions to knowledge and administration everywhere he had served. As a family man, he will be missed by his kin and children. As a Muslim, his contributions to the development

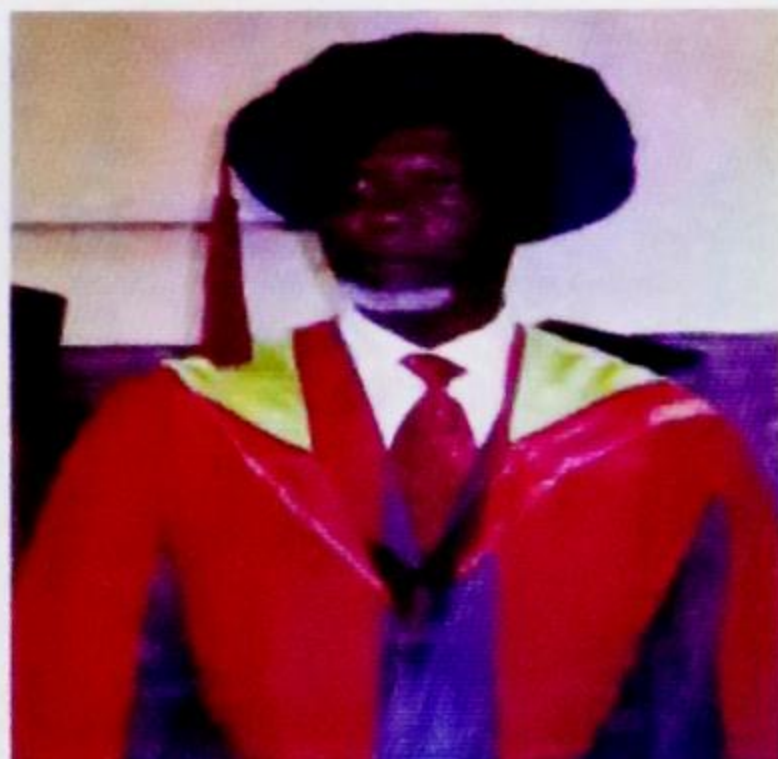
and peaceful co-existence of the Ummah are unquantifiable. Indeed Lasisi's death is a colossal loss to humanity. However, to the Muslims, death is a debt that every living being must pay. Prof., rest in peace.

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3. Interviews with the Chief Imam of Oyoland, Sheikh Alhaji Imam Mashood Abdulganiy Adebayo
4. Interview with Dr. Ayo Alaka
5. interview with Imam AbdulRafiu Lasisi (SAW MILL, Ilorin)
6. Fridau prayer booklet used on the 8th day prayer for Professor Lasisi
7. Fridau prayer booklet used on the 8th day prayer for Asmau Sie Ejide, Professor Lasisi's mother.
8. Condolence Register signed by sympathizers at Professor Lasisi's house, Adewole, Ilorin.



Professor Lasisi as Dean of the College of the Humanities (now College of the Humanities and Social Sciences) on a matriculation day



Professor Lasisi standing while he was being introduced on his inaugural lecture



Professor Lasisi at the 2nd Convocation of Al-Hikmah University, 2012



The children who were in attendance at Prof. R.O. Lasisi's Inaugural lecture.



Professor Lasisi celebrating [✓] first birthday of Sadiat Abiola Lasisi in 1978

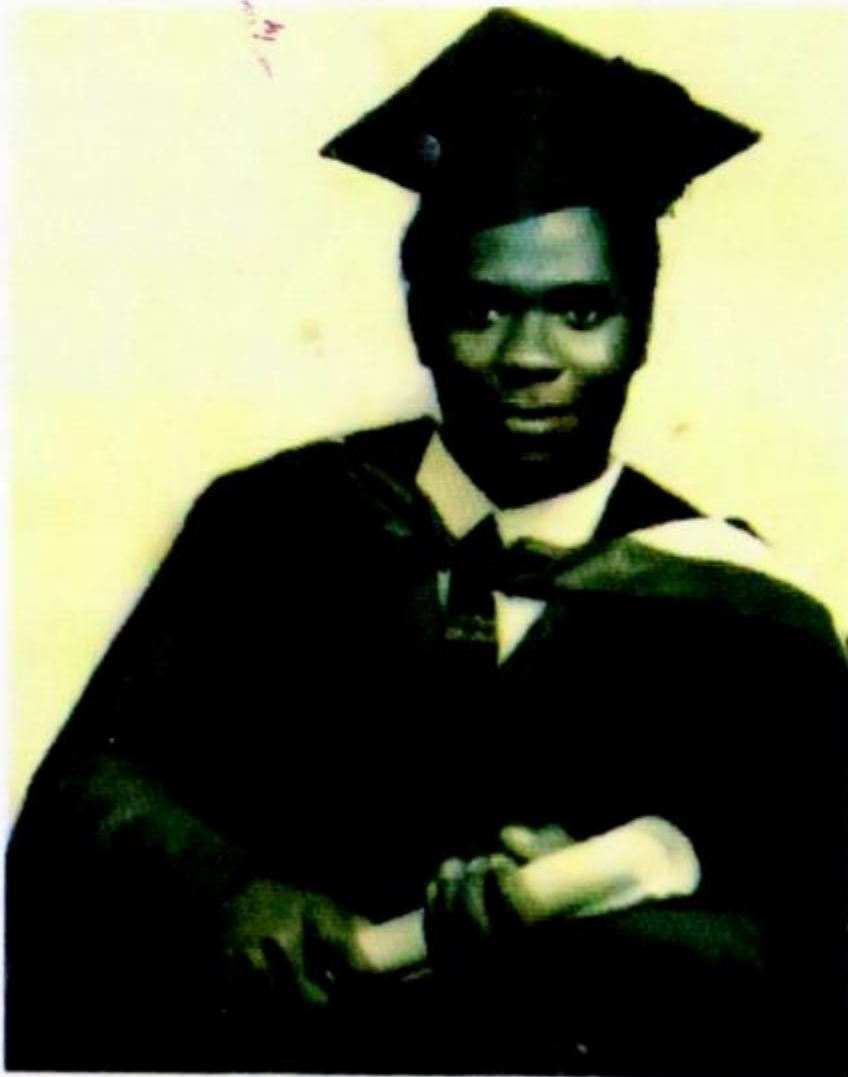
R.O. Lasisi & Chief Raimi Oladimeji, Proprietor, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin



Late Rufai Akanbi Lasisi of Ile- Imam Ajokidero, Oyo(Father of Professor Lasisi)



Princess Asimau Sie Ejide Oyedunmade Atuyaya (Mother of Professor Lasisi)



Professor Lasisi as a fresh graduate from the University of Ibadan in 1971



Rasheed Lasisi with a friend standing by his first Car in 1974

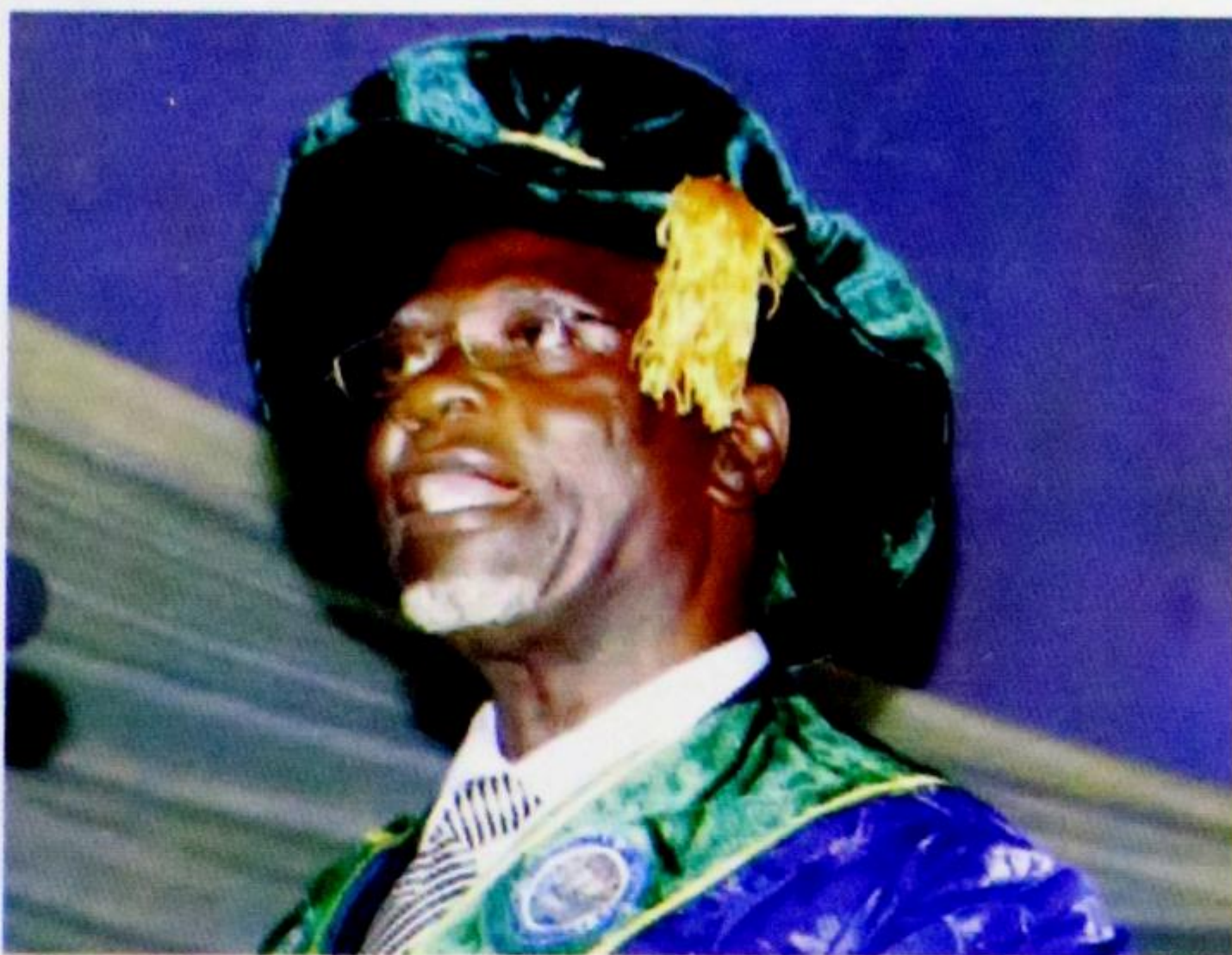


Prof. Lasisi and wife celebrating Woli-mat Al-Quran with their children





Prof. Lasisi and the Proprietor of Al-Hikmah University, Alhaji Chief (Dr.) Abdur-Raheem Oladimeji, the Jagunmolu of Igbominaland



Prof. Lasisi as the Dean presenting the students of the College of the Humanities to the Chancellor for the award of their degrees