



FAJ

FACULTY OF ARTS JOURNAL

Vols. 8, 2016

Editor-in-chief
Prof. D. S. Shishima

Printed @
EAGLE PRINTS, LTD.
Eagle Dove Mega Business Ltd
Km2 Gboko Road, Makurdi.
0805339884, 07037976537

ISSN: 1582-6258

THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL RULERS IN PEACE
AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN YORUBALAND:
A CASE STUDY OF ALAAFIN LAMIDI OLAYIWOLA
ADEYEMI 111 OF OYO, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

Rotimi Williams Omotoye, PhD

and

Mrs Adeyemi R. Olabimpe

Abstract

The Alafin of Oyo occupies a significant position in the political and social history of paramount traditional rulers in Yorubaland, South-western, Nigeria. A major assignment of any traditional ruler is to maintain law and order in his domain. Even though, the 1979 Constitution in Nigeria did not give much recognition to the activities of traditional rulers in Nigeria. The Government in each state and Local Government is always looking unto the traditional rulers to ensure peace and settle conflicts where it is observed in a community. Alaaфин Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111 became the Alaaфин in 1971. Since then, he has succeeded in maintaining peace in his domain and many challenges have been fought. This paper, therefore, is to examine the period between 1971 to 2013 in the life of Alaaфин Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111. He served under the military and civilian governments in different capacities. Internal wrangling has been witnessed between him and some traditional rulers in Yorubaland with-in the period under study. It is observed that Oyo community which was a traditional Yoruba community has witnessed a tremendous transformation in the political, socio-economic and religious life. Some of these factors have contributed to crises and properly managed by Alaaфин Lamidi Adeyemi 111.

Key words: Alaaфин, Adeyemi, Oyo, Military, Civilian.

Introduction

The focus of this paper is to examine the importance of traditional rulers in time of peace and conflict in a community. The presence of peace is not to say that conflict is totally absent in such a society. However, as a dynamic society, there is a need to manage peace and conflict for the growth and development of any community. In other words, peace and conflict are two concepts that are applicable in course of this paper. The theoretical framework of this paper is based on peace and conflict theory as explained by Albert and Oloyede. According to them:

Peace theory distinguishes between negative and positive peace. Negative peace is the absence of physical violence while positive peace is the absence of both structural and psychological violence. Negative peace is often imposed; it hardly results from an open resolution of the conflict. On the other hand, positive peace implies reconciliation and restoration through creative transformation of conflict. It is preferred to negative peace.¹

The political, social and religious situation in Oyo community during the period under focus fits considerably to the spirit of positive peace. The Alaaфин Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111 has successfully adopted the concept in the administration of Oyo.

The methodology that we adopted was historical and phenomenological. The historical method became germane because we are assessing the period of reign of an individual and phenomenological in the sense that some issues were interpreted, so as to give the necessary meanings in Yoruba culture and traditions.

Obaro Ikime once said "chiefs help to advise on how best the affairs of the states were to be handled to produce the desired goals of peace and national unity"². Many research studies have been

done by eminent scholars on traditional institutions in Yorubaland in particular and Nigeria in general. Some of these scholars are: Samuel Johnson, E.A. Ayandele, Obaro Ikime, J.D.Y. Peel, E.B. Idowu, N.A. Fadipe, Awolalu and Dopamu and J.F.A. Ajayi.

In the Yoruba tradition, a traditional ruler is

s“a person who by virtue of his ancestry occupies the throne or stool of an area and/or who has been appointed to it in accordance with the custom and tradition of an area and has traditional authority over the people of that area or any other person appointed by instrument and order of the government to exercise traditional authority over an area or ethnic group in the state recognized as such by the government of the state”³

It is believed that *Olodumare* gives the scepter to *Orisanla*, who in turn gives this to each ruler. By virtue of their position, the Oba is styled *Igba keji Orisa* (next in rank to the divinities)⁴.

In the Pre-Colonial era, the Alaafin of Oyo was regarded as having absolute power; he had the power of life and death over his subjects.

Iku Baba yeye

Alase ekeji orisa

He that kills without being questioned

The owner of authority and surrogate of the Divinity.⁵

However, in practice it was not so, because there was a legislative arm of government known as Oyo Mesi that acts as checks and balances to any despotic and tyrannical rule of any Alaafin. Adesoji opines “that the Oyomesi Council served as a check on the power and influence of the Alaafin ... had the power to force the king to abdicate and even to oblige him to commit suicide”⁶. In the Colonial era the power of the Alaafin and other traditional rulers were drastically curtailed and minimized. However, the Parliamentary system of Government adopted at Independence in

1960 granted the traditional institutions to be appointed into governance and administration of the land. The 1979 Constitution out rightly removed the functions of traditional rulers from the affairs of the state. They are to maintain law and order in their vicinity, in other words they are expected to complement the role of the government in such environment. Of recent there was a request by the traditional rulers that the government should involve them in the governance of the country. In fact, it was re-echoed at the last National Conference which ended some days ago in Abuja.

The Yoruba people of South-western Nigeria have been well researched into with no less than three thousand five hundred works on them. They are found in Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo and Lagos states. A reasonable percentage also resides in Kwara and Kogi states. The sub-ethnic groups in Yoruba are Egba, Ijebu, Ijesa, Awori, Egbado, Ondo, Akoko, Ibolo, Ilaje, Ekiti, Igbo and Okun⁷. It is interesting to note that for many years the Yoruba people in some states that are not dominated by them have been clamouring and agitating that they be permitted to join their kits and kins in the South-western Nigeria. Of course, the request for the creation of new states at the just concluded National Conference in Abuja is a reference point in this regard. The Yoruba people in Kwara and Kogi states are requesting to be part of Yoruba states in the South-western Nigeria.

It is observed that some Yoruba people are “aborigines of some towns in the Benin Republic and Togo”. Some descendants of ex-slaves from Yorubaland form a good proportion of the population of the Caribbean and South America (especially in Cuba and Brazil). In Brazil, they are known as *Anago*. In Sierra-Leone they are known as *Aku*. In Cuba, Yoruba people are known as *Lucumi*. According to Nike Lawal “The Yoruba have been at their location for thousands of years”⁸.

The Yoruba believe that they are all related through a common eponymous ancestor called Oduduwa⁹. In fact, the Old Oyo Empire was founded by Oranyan, son of Oduduwa who was

regarded as the progenitor of the race. The former migrated to Old Oyo to settle. According to Agiri "the Oranyan migration was the last (so, the tradition has described its eponymous leader as the youngest son of Oduduwa)"¹⁰. He moved from Ile-Ife which the Yoruba people regarded as the ancestral home.

However, the migration theory and the influence of Oranyan has become an issue of supremacy between the Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111 and Oba Olubuse, the Oni of Ile-Ife. The conflict and controversy is still raging in Yorubaland. The controversy pre-dated the reign of both traditional rulers.

Observers of the relationship between the Alaafin Lamidi Adeyemi of Oyo and Oni Olubuse of Ile-Ife often believe that there is animosity between them; however, the former said "that he had never harboured any animosity against Ooni Okunade Sijuwade Olubuse, or any paramount ruler. But he was quick to add that if he disagrees with anybody at all, it is based on his commitment to the sacredness of the institution of obaship and his conviction to preserve the dignity of the Yoruba race".¹¹ Our study has shown that the mis-understanding is historical and is a matter of supremacy and struggle for recognition and power.

Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi was born on 15th October, 1938 and succeeded Alaafin Gbadegesin Ladigbolu 11 who died on January 26th 1968.¹² He assumed office as the Alaafin on 18th November, 1970 during the military era of Colonel Robert Adeyinka Adebayo. The Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi's father, Oba Adeniran Adeyemi 11 was deposed and exiled to Ilesa on Monday, 27th September, 1954¹³ for sympathizing with the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). He had political conflict with a prominent member of the Action Group, Chief Bode Thomas who was an indigene of Oyo and the deputy leader of the party.

The Oyo Kingmakers preferred Alaafin Lamidi Adeyemi to be the Alaafin amongst other contestants because he was literate. It was observed that Oyo community was disadvantaged from enjoying

government patronage because the Alaafin before him was an illiterate. In fact the other prominent and paramount rulers, such as the Ooni of Ile-Ife and Alake of Egba were literate, "they understood and spoke English, which the Alaafin did not. While the Ooni and the Alake could communicate directly with the colonial officials, the Alaafin had to depend on interpreters. Consequently, the Alaafin could not play any prominent role in the proceedings of the conferences"¹⁴.

According to investigation, up till 1930, the Alaafin was *primus inter pares* among the paramount rulers in Yorubaland, but succeeding occupants of the stool were unable to maintain that position.

Historically, the conference of Yoruba Chiefs was instituted by the Colonial Authorities in 1937 in Oyo. Jide Oshuntokun and Tunde Oduwobi opine that

"It was an annual forum for Yoruba paramount authorities (i.e. native administration heads) in the Southern Provinces to exchange ideas on issues concerning native administration (local government), as well as deliberate on government policies, to the extent to which the rulers were affected. Included in the gathering was the Oba of Benin whose primal ancestor is believed to be of Yoruba provenance"¹⁵.

Even though, the then Alaafin Siyanbola Ladigbolu, though an illiterate, was permitted to Chair the meeting, because of his imposing personality, and probably the most senior in age and length of service as a reigning paramount Chief. So, when there was an opportunity to appoint a new Alaafin, they decided to settle for a literate person.

Oyo local historians believe that the aftermath of the conference made the Colonial authorities to recognize and prefer to deal directly with the Ooni of Ile-Ife who was literate and occupying the ancient city of Ile-Ife which the Yoruba people regarded as the

cradle of the Yoruba people. Following the promulgation of the Lyttelton Constitution in October 1954, Ooni of Ife, Oba Adesoji Aderemi was elected as the President of the House of Chiefs of the Western Region¹⁶. In January 1955, he conceived the idea of resuscitating the annual conference from where it left off in 1945, i.e., on a regional basis. The inaugural meeting of the conference was held in April 1956. The conference had its last meeting in May 1959. This was because later, in September, the government instituted an advisory body called the Council of *Obas* and Chiefs which was designed to serve the purpose for which the conference and its council had come into existence.

As of 8th February, 1960 the Alaafin, Oba Ladigbolu 11 was the third Oba in the Council of *Obas* and Chiefs in Western Region. With the intervention of the military in governance in 1966, the Alaafin became the deputy Chairman to the Ooni of Ife.¹⁵ The council was further enlarged in 1976 with an introduction of rotational of membership. The council had a total of forty-three persons involved – twelve permanent and thirty- one rotational. The Alaafin represented the Oyo South and Oyo North at the Council. It is interesting to note that Western Region was split into three in 1976 as a result of creation of states. Each state created its own Council of *Obas* and Chiefs. The Oyo state Council of *Obas* and Chiefs was thus established in June 1976. A nine member council comprising five permanent chieftaincies and four rotational members. The council was reconstituted in March 1977 to comprise the Presidents of the local government traditional councils. The council increased from nine to fifteen. Early in 1990, a new council was constituted called the Oyo State Traditional Council, which had twenty-three members. It was made up of Presidents of local government traditional councils, with the exception of five members. The operational of the new council was cut short with the creation of Osun state from the existing Oyo state.

New Oyo State council of *Obas* and Chiefs was constituted. However, there were accusations and counter accusations on the composition of the state traditional council of *obas* and chiefs in

the state. The Government had to set up the Justice

-Oloko Chieftaincy Commission of Enquiry to advise the Government. The Commission recommended a twenty-five member council, whereby all twenty- five local government areas in the state would be represented. Paramount rulers in the state disagreed with the recommendation of the commission because it eroded their supreme power over the local governments in their domain.

The issue of permanent and rotational Chairmanship of the Council of *Obas* and Chiefs in Oyo state has been re-examined, settled and accepted by the Government through another commission of chieftaincy enquiry headed by Justice Moshood Abass; thus making the Alaafin the permanent Chairman of the Council based on historical facts and respect for the institution of Alaafin in council.¹⁶

Therefore, the appointment of Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi who was an educated and an enlightened person was seen as an opportunity to rectify and redeem the lost image of the Alaafin.

Alaafin Lamidi Adeyemi attended Tinubu Methodist School, where he passed the Standard Six Leaving Certificate in 1954. He proceeded immediately to Saint Gregory College; also in Lagos for a five year High School training and graduated with the West African School Certificate in 1959¹⁵. There is an existing court poetry being chanted in Oyo in honour of Alaafin Olayiwola Adeyemi 111 to eulogize his personality and literacy.

Atin joba nile Oyo

Ever since we have been having kings in Oyo

Ao tii joba to mowe L'Alaafin

We have never had an educated Alaafin

Bii ti Layiwola

As in the case of Layiwola

Atanda, babaa Kudi

Atanda, father of Kudi

Oba lomoo Adeyemi

Child of Adeyemi is the king¹⁷

In spite of court litigation and protest that attended his announcement and proclamation as the Alaafin, he successfully embraced peace and appealed to other contestants and protesters to join hands with him to achieve peace and progress in Oyo community.

The peace being enjoyed in the community has facilitated a gradual improvement in the socio-economic facilities in the town. Oyo town has over one hundred pre-primary and elementary schools, twenty-five high schools, two colleges of Education, a federal school of surveying, a nursing school, and a Christian privately owned university, known as Ajayi Crowther University. It was established by the Anglican Church.

In addition there are basic religious and social institutions. According to Bolaji Idowu, "The keynote of their life is their religion"¹⁸ which is known as traditional religion. Awolalu and Dopamu have defined the religion as "religion of their forefathers transmitted from generation to generation"¹⁹. The three major religions in Nigeria, namely: traditional, Islamic and Christianity are actively being practiced in Oyo. The issue of insecurity based on religious intolerance is at its barest minimum because there is the policy of "live and let live". The religious understanding in Oyo is recommended as a model for peace and stability in Nigeria. Alaafin Adeyemi is a Muslim and he has contributed immensely to *dawal* (Islamic propagation) in Yorubaland. In 1990, President Ibrahim Babangida appointed him *Amir-ul-Hajj* in recognition of his commitment to the consolidation of Islam in Nigeria.²⁰

Investigation has shown that the three religions being practiced in Yorubaland are permitted within the palace of Alaafin in particular and the town in general. There is a Chapel for the Christians in the palace and of course some of the children of Alaafin are Christians. According to Shade, the first daughter of Alaafin, "the Aremo who is the first son is a Lawyer and highly gifted in local musical instruments which he plays in the church."²¹ The retired Bishop Oladigbolu of the Methodist church is a confidant of the Alaafin, in spite of being a Christian Cleric. The Kabiyesi also has a brother

who is a Catholic Reverend, named Peter Adeyemi. There are many mosques (private and public) and churches of different denominations in the town. The traditional worshippers are given the freedom to make sacrifices and worship their gods without any molestation or harassment in the community. In other words, inter-religious relations is highly appreciated and valued in Oyo.

Conclusion

It is observed that peace is necessary for any meaningful development to take place in any community. In the words of Alaafin Adeyemi 111,

"It is also part of evolution of the polity, a process of social change, so to say, that at different stages of human history and development, there could be social discontent, disaffection, suspicion and even resistance, as the case may be. It is strictly a human phenomenon. In such situations there would be an outcry of oppression, domination, persecution, or whatever some sections, large or small, of the populace perceive as injustice"²²

The religious situation in Oyo has shown that Nigerians of different faiths can co-exist peacefully with respect to other peoples religion. The issue of political supremacy is being handled maturely and there is a gradual provision of the necessary facilities into the community by both the government and private individuals. The reign of Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi has been seen as a period of civilization, progress and development in Oyo. The Kabiyesi is at the centre of the developmental achievements and could be regarded as a catalyst of socio-political and religious change in Yorubaland.

Notes and References

Isaac Olawale Albert and Is-haq Olarenwaju Oloyede "Beyond Adversarial Conflict Management" in Isaac Olawale Albert and Is-haq Olarenwaju Oloyede (eds), *Dynamics of PEACE PROCESSES*, Ilorin, University of Ilorin Centre for Peace

- and Strategic Studies, 2010, p2.
- Michael Crowder, *Colonial West Africa*, London: Frank Cass, 1979, p210.
- A.O. Adesoji, "Traditional Rulership and Modern Governance in 20th Century Nigeria", in Tunde Babawale, Akin Alao and Bimbo Adesoji (eds), *The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria*, Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), 2010, p417.
- Rotimi Omotoye, "An Examination of the Activities of Traditional Rulers to the Introduction of Christianity in the Pre-colonial Era in Yorubaland" published in *CENTREPOINT*, Humanity Edition, Volume 11, Number 1, A Journal of Intellectual, Scientific and Cultural Interest, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. p.2
- Ibid, p2.
- A.O. Adesoji, "Traditional Rulership and Modern Governance in 20th Century Nigeria" p419.
- R.D. Abubakre, "Islam and Yoruba Ethnic Consciousness", *Religion and Politics in Nigeria*, Nigeria Association for the Study of Religions, 1993, p177. See also, R.D. Abubakre, *The Interplay of Arabic and Yoruba Cultures in South-Western Nigeria*, Iwo, Daru I-Ilm Publishers, 2004, p1, see also, N.A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1970, pp 29-30.
- S.A. Akintoye, "From Early Times to the 20th Century" in Nike S. Lawal, Matthew N.O. Sadiku and Ade Dopamu (eds), *Understanding Life and Culture*, Asmara Eritrea, 2004 pp2-4, see also, J.F.A. Ajayi, "19th Century Wars and Yoruba Ethnicity" in Adeagbo Akinjogbin (ed), *War and Peace in Yorubaland 1793-1893*, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria), pp 9-19
- Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, Lagos: C.M.S. (Nigeria), 1957 (reprinted) pp3-4
- Babatunde Agiri, "Yoruba Oral Tradition with Special Reference to the Early History of Oyo" in Wande Abimbola (ed), *Yoruba Oral Tradition Poetry in Music, Dance and Drama*, Ile-Ife, Department of African Languages and

- Literatures, 1975, p 170
- Akintunde Akinyemi, *Yoruba Royal Poetry A Socio-historical Exposition and Annotated Translation*, Bayreuth, African Studies Series, 2004, p244
- Ibid pp231-232
- p203
- p30
- Jide Oshuntokun and Tunde Oduwobi, *The Merchant Prince and the Monarch Oba Oladunni Oyewumi The Soun of Ogbomosoland*, Ibadan, Bookbuilders, (nd) pp 151-152
- Oral interview with Alaafin Oba Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111 on 2nd of June 2014 at Alaafin's palace in Oyo. Aged 76
- Ibid p.154
- E.B. Idowu, *Olodumare God in Yoruba Belief*, Lagos, Longman, 1962, p5
- J. Omosade Awolalu and P.A. Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion*, Ibadan, Onibonoje Publishers, 1979, p26
- <http://wikipedia.the> free encyclopedia Lamidi Adeyemi 111 accessed 17-7-2014
- Ibid