

CONTEXTUALISING LOCAL LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA'S HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT¹

***Omotoye Olorode**

INTRODUCTION

On the face of it, this discussion is about leadership (its nature, structure, efficacy, and may be, its history and dynamics) in the territory conceived variously as Ogbomoso or Ogbomosoland. The conception, meaning and scope of what is called Ogbomosoland, is also a thoroughly loaded matter with contending political and historical notions of power, hegemonic and other interests.

Beyond what the topic suggests, *prima facie*, the date and the venue of today's discussion are equally loaded with meaning for Nigeria (even Africa and beyond) and for Ogbomoso and its people. Specifically today, January 15, 2010, is the forty-fourth anniversary of the first military take-over of the governments of the half-a-decade-old Federal Republic of Nigeria (January 15, 1966). In that military putsch, late Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, the Premier of Western Region at that time was assassinated along with a number of prominent military and civilian figures. The various explanations, rationalisations and consequences of the fore-going events are now history and they are available in a plethora of literature that has become generally accessible.

***Omotoye Olorode**

A renounce Comrade and Marxist theoretician is a retired Professor of Botany, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State,

¹ The paper was first presented on January 15, 2010, at the Ogbomoso Leadership Forum Lecture in Remembrance of the Assassination of Chief Ladoke Akintola on January 15, 1966.

The foregoing two elements of the contexts of today's discussion encompass issues concerning events, social movements, economic and political circumstances surrounding the settlement of what is now known (rather loosely) as Ogbomoso or Ogbomoso land. The character of Nigerian communities (including Ogbomoso) following the establishment of formal colonial rule in various parts of Nigeria in the 1800s, the rise of the western educated elite in Nigeria and their ambivalence under colonial rule, popular mass struggles under colonial exploitation (tax riots, movements against forced labour and conscription into the colonial army) and movements against subversion of indigenous religious and governance paradigms.

In regards to the two elements identified above, it is important to insist that the question of the developments in Ogbomoso, as in many other communities in Nigeria, are historically linked to the social and related developments in the Nigeria nation. The unfolding developments cannot be understood or judiciously and scientifically appraised outside the general political economy of Nigeria in its transformation from a colonised tertiary (since about 1851 to 1960) to a neo-colonial state and to its continued peripherality in the "globalised" neo-liberal state of the world.

We must also interrogate the intention of the formulation of the topic of today's discussion—**Leadership in Ogbomosoland: Past, present, and future**. I am almost certain that what is intended is *political leadership* in terms of attainment, exercise and consequences of political power. But this circumscription, as we hope to show later, is deficient! Concentrating on the question of *leadership* also raises the age-old question of the relative significance of the role of individuals (*leaders*) in social movements and the social base of social and political movements i.e. class action, class movements and the role of individuals in these movements.

Clearly many questions arise from the very simple issue of *Leadership in Ogbomosoland* that we are called upon to deliberate upon. Some of the questions can be addressed only in outline because of the limited amount of time that is available to us. But we must assert emphatically that the narration and interpretation of historical and contemporary events are bound to be as variegated as social, political, and class commitments. In this regard I must assert, *ab initio*, that as much as I will present *evidence*

that is as scientific as my limited intellect will permit, my social, political and, especially class commitments will be obvious, I will be neither equivocal nor apologetic about these commitments.

REFLECTIONS ON PRE-COLONIAL HISTORY

The settlement of Ogbomoso reflects fairly well, the pattern of movements of peoples in various parts of what became Nigeria especially the portion of it to the West of River Niger. In this regard, the records of the early movements of the Yoruba and their neighbours, the peoples of Borgu and Nupe from the early parts of the last millennium to about the middle of the seventeenth century showed that while Ogbomoso was being settled by various migrant groups, ancient settlements like Igbon, Iresa, Ikoyi, Obandi were already in place. These movements developed into various other degrees of contacts with new Oyo and Ibadan to the South, Ilorin and the Fulanis in their South-ward movement from the North and the Yoruba groups to the North-east (Ekiti and Ijesa). These movements promoted warrior cultures, intrigues, betrayals acts of valour, acts of commitment etc.

The establishment of colonial rule, of course, disorganised Yoruba social (moral and ideological), political and economic (commercial, scientific, technological) formations considerably.

As we shall see subsequently, the circumstances of the establishment of Ogbomoso and the trajectory of developments (especially political and hegemonic), testify to the zig-zag character of the movement of history in terms of class, group (etc) controls of leaderships and hegemonies. It is important to understand these if we are to profitably employ history for the articulation and defence of the interests of the masses of our people rather than those of hegemonic individuals or classes. We shall address this question later in regard to Nigeria's history and the current debates within the Yoruba political elite about the evolution of political forces and groupings since January 1966 (Ajasin, 2003) or even since the establishment of colonial rule in Nigeria in the late 19th century (Ayandele, 1974; Oyerinde, 1934; Falola, 2009).

Today in Ogbomoso, traditional leadership is ascriptive and monarchical whether we are considering the Sohun hegemony or the other hegemonies in greater Ogbomoso—Orile Igbon, Ikoyi, Ijeru, Iresa etc. But from generally available historical evidence many leaderships (monarchies) that became ascriptive originated as meritocracies. In the particular case of Ogbomoso, Sohun Ogunola headed what appeared like a Republic or Federation of “civil” interests comprising hunters, farmers etc; that was about 700 years ago. Since then, internal and external events around that territory has turned it into one in which traditional and “modern” forces (and especially colonial and neocolonial) have progressively promoted the Sohun hegemony and relegated the influence of principalities which ante-dated Egbe Alongo.

What all these mean concretely is that particular epochs in history do not drop from heaven. Rather they are always products of the resolution of the influences of contending forces especially the political economies that produce, reproduce and sustain such epochs.

My own political and ideological predilection predisposes me to periodise the time in our part of Nigeria between 1500 and today into roughly four segments: the period around the formation of *Egbe Alongo* (i.e. 1600-1800); the period of the Yoruba wars (1800-ca 1895); the epoch of colonial control (ca 1895-1960); the neo-colonial period (1960-date). These are broad periods that may be further segmented. The more important thing is that *particular political economies underpin each of these periods*. In the *Egbe Alongo* milieu, settlements were small and far between; communities and production units were autonomous and they were sustained by family (or extended family) solidarity, moralities and ethos. The period of the Yoruba wars and Fulani wars were periods of *primitive accumulation*, wars of subjugation, pillage, extensive exploitation and development of hegemonies accompanied, quite often by valour, intrigues, tactical or strategic alliances and betrayals etc. (Johnson, 1921; Oyerinde, 1934; Ogunremi & Adediran, 1998; Falola, 2009). The Yoruba wars created various and precarious balances of forces and authorities in the core of Ogbomoso headed by the Sohun lineage and his Chiefs on one hand and the pristine kingdoms (surrounding and coexisting with this core) on the

other. Leaders (warriors, diplomats etc.) rose within this core and outside it. All of these were also pulled and controlled with different intensities and complex combinations by central Yoruba authorities at Oyo and Ibadan.

In relation to the foregoing, the origin of some of the current tension and crisis among traditional rulers in Ogbomoso regarding the various movements of the Yoruba peoples before and during the Yoruba wars of the 19th century are important issues to be treated scientifically. In this regard Kehinde Faluyi (1998) observed in relation to the [southward] movements of Yoruba peoples after Old Oyo was sacked:

Such [southward] movement was not without its strain, stresses and problems... in a place where the whole town moved with their Oba to take refuge under another chief... acrimony dominated the early days of their relationships... by tradition a *Baale* was expected to be under a crowned *Oba*, but the circumstance which forced a crowned Oba to seek shelter under his junior inevitably made him to succumb to the unexpected. Such indignity was often resisted not only by the crowned *Oba* but by his subject.

We shall return to the effect of this historical fact later when we address the contemporary leadership problems in Ogbomosoland. Suffice it to say that the relationships were not always about conflict; quite a lot was about cooperative and mutual protection [see Oyerinde's account of the history of Oloogbo and Onpetu Atoyebi (Oyerinde, 1934; pp.46-53; pp. 63-64)]. Oyerinde (Ibid pp 73) insists:

“Awon ilu ati ileto l’o so Ogbomoso di ilu bantabanta.
Ilu wonni si tun so Ogbomoso di ilu alagbara”.¹

It was in the foregoing mix in Yorubaland that the British conquered Yoruba land through the use of superior weapons, religious penetration of missionaries, deceits and treachery. Lagos and Ijebu were conquered in 1851 and 1892 respectively. The colonising British authorities became involved directly in the Yoruba wars in Oyo, Ibadan, Egbo and Ijesa homelands and also turned it into a powerful city.

concluded various “treaties” that ceded control of Yoruba land to British authorities.

What cannot be disputed in the said imperialist interventions is that there was considerable and popular resistance to British colonial intervention. In the process and post-treaties, the elite was fragmented. The traditional elite (Obas and Chiefs) generally struggled to maintain the remnants of their authorities in their territories and “subject”. The western educated elite (whose number was growing in the middle of the 19th century) and the growing business class were caught between supporting the conquerors and asserting native nationalism thus pitching them against the British authorities on one hand and the traditional institutions on the other (Oyerinde, 1934; Falola, 2009). The story of Ogbomoso’s *Egbe Olorunda* face-off (1922-1924) with the British tax authorities and the final confrontation with the Senior [British] Resident (Ajele-Agba) on 24th June, 1924, was typical of the relationship between the neo-colonial bourgeoisies, the traditional elite and the colonial authorities (Oyerinde, 1934: pp. 176-184). At a more general level Ayandele (1974) characterised the new educated elite as “deluded hybrids” and “collaborators”. What we shall see presently, then, was that since the educated elite, their business partners and the military wing of the elite took control of state power in 1960, the foregoing general pattern of intra-elite behaviour on one hand and behaviour of the elite (the “leaders”) towards the masses of the Nigerian people on the other, had been maintained in all material particulars. These are the contexts in which leaderships in Ogbomoso in the past and the present have evolved. These are the contexts, which, barring new revolutionary and more creative social movements, the future leaderships will evolve.

THE EVOLUTION OF LEADERSHIPS IN OGBOMOSO

I have had the privilege of access to three important historical sources on Ogbomoso. These are *Iwe Itan Ogbomoso* Oyerinde (1934), *Ogbomoso: The Journey so Far* (Adelowo, 2000) and a number of issues of *Irawo Owuro* Magazine (edited by the indefatigable Mogaji Adisa Adeleye—Omo Labosin—since 1986!). While *Irawo Owuro* has been addressing historical and contemporary issues borrowing from Oyerinde (Ibid) and

Johnson (op cit), Oyerinde borrowed from Johnson (Ibid) and other sources while Adelowo relied heavily on Oyerinde and many other sources.

Generally, the foregoing sources focused on unique individuals (Obas, Chiefs, professionals, businessmen and women, warriors etc.) and unique events. But unique individuals and events are often construed as the products of certain repetitive processes in human history. As Batra (1987: pp. 2) observed:

The two approaches as are not antithetical and unique events and individuals can be the triggering mechanisms that explode broad social forces or set them off in new directions.

Analysts and historians need herculean courage to write history or analyse contemporary events objectively especially when a society is in deep crisis as Nigeria is in today. Oyerinde (op cit) observed (pp. 5):

Iberu ko je ki onitan fe so itan “A ko mo ohun ti yio gbehin re”! li ohun ti won nwi. Onpuro si po ju onpitan lo.²

Beyond all of these, class predilections predispose historical analysis and interpretations to be selective about the significance of events and roll calls of heroines and heroes. In contrast, for example, to the attention given to *Egbe Olorunda* (established in 1922) in Ogbomoso, very limited attention was given to the heroism of *ordinary people* in their contemporaneous resistance against colonial administration on forced labour on the Ilorin-Ogbomoso Road (*Ise Oju Ona*) and the introduction of new currency (owo sile) which enabled the British authorities to impose and collect taxes and integrate Yorubaland into the British colonial economy. The question here is not about the desirability of “modernisation” but illegitimacy of British occupation and which interests this occupation served! This was the time of Resident S.M. Grier Esq. and Senior Resident Cap-

² *Fear discourages “historian” from rendering “history”, What they’re saying is, “We don’t know what will be the consequence”, And there are more liars than tellers of history.*

tain W.A. Ross. The heroes of the resistance against excessive tax in 1955 and 1956 remain unsung; neither were the farmers who were martyrs of the Agbekoya Uprisings of 1969 acknowledged. Many of them were Ogbomoso hanged unceremoniously by the military authorities at Ibadan. In this regard it was also significant that Falola's account (2009) of Adelabu who became President of Ibadan Tax Payers' Association (ITPA) about 1953 did not mention Tafa Adeoye and the martyrs of Agbekoya Uprisings—the mass movement against excessive taxation in Western Region in 1969!

IS THE PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP IN OGBOMOSO UNIQUE? WHO ARE THE LEADERS IN A TOWN OR COMMUNITY? WHAT DO THEY DO?

My answer to this question is that the problem of leadership in Ogbomoso is not unique. The same types of forces (political, social, economic, cultural, psychological and intellectual) are at play in Ogbomoso, Kano, Osogbo, Nnewi, Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode, Pategi, Ikenne, Oko, Ikirun and Gombe etc.

My evidence is theoretical and empirical. Given all the forces that are at play in an underdeveloped economy and the social bases of the mainstream of alleged leaders in such societies, individuals towns, cities and communities, they cannot rise above the general situation of the nations in which they are situated. This is because "leaderships" have class character rather than town, tribal or community character. Communities in which this theory and its empirical appurtenances do not hold will be very rare indeed! And this is why there is overwhelming and generalised identity of poverty and deprivation among the masses of the Nigerian people (arising from urban decay, unemployment, crumbling educational institutions, lack of recreational facilities, poor or non-existing water supply, etc.) and generalised and legendary affluence among those who call themselves leaders across Nigeria.

Do not misunderstand me. There are people who really love their country, their town, their communities. There are people who love Ogbomoso fanatically; full-time not part-time. I have met *some* of them such as Mogaji

Adisa Adeleye, Prince J.S. Oyeniyi Ayo Adelowo, Iyiola Olabisi, Ayanitayo Ayandele, L.A. Gbadamosi, S.T.Ojo, Dapo Atanda, John Akin Akintola, Afolabi Okewole and the late Gbadebo A. Alasoko, Christopher Laogun Adeoye and Chief Ladoke Akintola himself. One of those that had influenced me most is Christopher Agboola Ajao; I have never met him! Of course there are those that I have only read about including intellectual giants such as N.D. Oyerinde and Reverends J.O. Adediran and Emmanuel Oladele Agboola.

These were all largely Ogbomoso of the *nationalist* epoch in Nigeria with the exception of two or three young ones of today's generation. They were also people who love humanity and Nigeria; they are mostly intellectuals in their own rights. I am not implying that fanaticism about Ogbomoso is necessary a virtue. One can be fanatical about Ogbomoso without being a worthy human being as such individuals may want to *defend Ogbomoso right or wrong*. This is what those "leaders" who exploit Ogbomoso rely upon to feather their own nests and promote their private interests. They exploit Ogbomoso-ism to label groups and individuals as "enemies" in order to advance their private, class, group and individual interests. It is these same "they" and "us" that ethnic irredentists use across Nigeria and manipulate to divide ordinary people in order to sustain their group and class hegemonies. In any case, there were many non-indigenes of Ogbomoso such as Professor Ita and Engr. Ben Faluyi who have contributed more to the progress of Ogbomoso than many of the vociferous indigenes will ever contribute (Adelowo, 2000)!

A good and worthy Ogbomoso person does not necessarily have to be an Ogbomoso "activist". He simply needs to be a good example of a Nigerian patriot, humanist, honest and hard-working "omoluabi"³ wherever he is—a good human specimen who happens, *by accident* of birth to be Ogbomoso.

My suspicion is that authentic leadership (actual and potential) in various parts of our country has not coalesced into a critical quantum because it has not been able to break free from the traditional groupings, loyalties

³ "Omoluwabi": *person of character; person of integrity; humanist; truthful; modest and reflective.*

and mindsets that have kept our people divided and allowed opportunists and self-seekers to divide and exploit them. Effective, principled and faithful organisations need to be built on that quantum. Building such organisations has both local and national components because those who want to maintain the status quo also have local and national components. We talk so much about unity that “unity” *per se* had become a fetter to progress and purposive action. Unity is good for the pursuit of truth and good cause. But people also often unite to pursue shadows; to pursue anachronistic and base causes!

THE LADOKE AKINTOLA PHENOMENON AND THE NIGERIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT.

We are not likely to have a firm grasp of the all-round deterioration of leadership at our local and national levels until we understand the milieu in which the political consciousness of Ladoke Akintola’s generation developed; the post-independence crisis in the political movements of that generation and military interventions which created the current buccaneer class whose virulence has escalated with current rampaging neo-liberal ideology of primitive private accumulation and individualism.

I will rely heavily on the hand-written *Toast of Mr. S.L. Akintola at the Reception accorded him by Ogbomoso Community Lagos at the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos on Saturday April 22, 1950* by Gabriel Adebayo Otunla (of blessed memory) for my understanding of Ladoke Akintola’s early life as a worker, nationalist, journalist, anti-colonial and anti-exploitation activist in London in the late 1940s. This document was kindly (jointly) made available to me by Baba Christopher Agboola Ajao and Mogaji Adisa Adeleye whose intellectual commitment to Nigerian people and Ogbomoso I must gratefully and fully acknowledge here.

Ladoke Akintola graduated from the Baptist College and Seminary as a trained teacher in 1930 and was posted to teach at Baptist Academy (Lagos) where he taught with dedication for all of a full decade. He joined the service of the Nigerian Railways in 1941 from where he was appointed Assistant Editor and, a year later, Editor of the nationalist newspaper—*Daily Service*. Ladoke Akintola knew very early as a student

and teacher that the unfolding scenario in colonised territories would require intellectual galvanisation for those who would spearhead the nationalist struggle for liberation from colonialism. As a teacher, and later as a journalist, he invested substantial portions of his income in books on philosophy, logic, journalism, ethics, political science and history.

There were critical stories that the SLA toast at Glover Hall on April 22, 1950 may not have captured. For example, while at the Baptist Academy in the early 1930s, Ladoke Akintola was already at the centre of nationalist struggle and international anti-imperialist movement and agitation. He was a prominent member of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) which started as Lagos Youth Movement (LYM) in 1934 and renamed itself Nigerian Youth Movement in 1936. According to Arifalo (2001: p.38).

Kofoworola Abayomi... was made President of the Movement while Earnest Sissei Ikoli an Ijaw... was made Vice-President... Hezekiah Oladapo Davies, a Yoruba... was made Secretary of the Movement.

The principal aim of the movement was the development of a United Nigeria and its political goal was complete autonomy within the British Empire.

Other prominent members of the Movement included Hamzat A. Subair, Obafemi Awolowo, Samuel Ladoke Akintola, F. Ogugua-Arah and Duro Emmanuel.

We must add that both Ikoli and Davies were also journalists and Ladoke Akintola succeeded Ernest Ikoli as Editor of *Daily Service* which SLA edited when he left the service of the Railways. We must also note that the *Daily Service* newspaper started as *Service*—a newsletter of the NYM.

In 1930, the NYM published its *The Nigerian Youth Charter* and it had branches all over the country—Ibadan, Warri, Benin City, Ijebu-Ode, Aba, Enugu, Port-Harcourt, Calabar, Jos, Kaduna, Zaria, Kano, Sapele, Ilesa, Uyo, Ejinrin, Makurdi and Yelwa (Arifalo, 2001: p. 43).

The subsequent bickering in the nationalist movement and the schism between NNDP led by Macaulay and Azikiwe on one hand and the NYM on the other fractured the nationalist movement and paved the way for the emergence and/or strengthening of ethnic=nationalist (tribal) organisations like *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, Igbo State Union, etc. around 1945. Various excuses had been canvassed for the alleged inevitability of these break-ups (Arifalo, 2001; Ajasin, 2003). What is undisputable, in my view, are the problems, among the main actors, of personal political ambitions, megalomania, careless and disruptive public statements, indecent commitments to political short-cuts and lack of fundamental faith in the possible emergence of a pan-Nigerian vision. These problems afflicted not only practising politicians but the intellectuals that were associated with them. This problem is, of course, compounded by the ambivalence of the main actors of the passion to lead this same Nigeria which they constantly claim to be unviable. These problems have remained with us because the pivotal interests of ordinary working people who bear the brunt of exploitation and degradation from 1851 have been peripheral in most political calculations of the ruling circles.

Ladoke Akintola secured a British Council Scholarship in 1946 to study in England. Between 1945 and 1950, he studied administration, journalism and law. He was called to bar in 1950. Ladoke Akintola was in the mainstream of the crisis among the nationalists and he came to play foundational roles in both *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* and the *Action Group*, the later being a largely Yoruba political party. While in London, Ladoke Akintola was not only deeply immersed in the agitation for better cocoa price (constantly harassing the Colonial Office in London), he was pivotal to the revival of *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* when Obafemi Awolowo left London and the *Egbe* was going to “die”. Arifalo observed (2001: p.87):

When Awolowo returned to Nigeria in 1946, the society (Egbe) was going to die a natural death, but was revived by S.L. Akintola, Ayo Ogunseye, A.M.A. Akinloye, S.O. Agunbiade-Bamise, Ayodele Okusaga and Dr. Akerele, its first President. When the *Egbe* re-emerged in Nigeria in 1947, the one in London became a branch and remained very active for a number of years.

Almost exactly one year after Ladoke Akintola returned from England as a lawyer i.e. on April 25, 1951 Action Group (*Egbe Aferinfere*) started its inauguration conference at the Olowo's Royal Palace, Owo. The inauguration conference last from 25th to 29th April, 1951 (Ajasin, 2003: p.100). On 28th April 1951, the very first Executive Committee of the party was elected as follows: Chief Obafemi Awolowo (President), Hon. Gaius Obaseki (Vice President), Chief W. Mowarin (Vice President) Chief Arthur Prest (Vice-President), Mr. M.A. Ajasin (Vice President) and Chief Bode Thomas (General Secretary); there were two Assistant Secretaries (Chief Anthony Enahoro and Chief S.O. Sonibare), a Treasurer (Chief S.O. Ighodaro) and a Publicity and Propaganda Secretary (M.A. Ogun); there were three legal advisers (S.L. Akintola, M.E.R. Okorodudu and S.T. Oredein).

Chief Adekunle Ajasin's account of the Western Region crisis of 1962 is one of the most sedate that I have read (Ajasin, 2003: 126-138). In that account, Ajasin identified the vacation of the Western Region premiership (with retention of the Presidency of Action Group) in 1960 while SLA became Premier of Western Region, and the invitation from Tafawa Balewa to AG and NCNC to participate in a coalition government with NPC. Awo rejected Balewa's invitation while Awolowo's Deputy President of AG (SLA) "felt differently". Ajasin observed (p. 127):

The difference between the two political leaders precipitated the crisis that erupted in 1962 and the chain of events that followed it.

The attitudes of the two leaders were influenced by ideology and strategy. Ideologically, AG was socialist while NPC was feudalistic.

What followed from the foregoing was the gradual development of mutual suspicion between the two leaders... the conflict spread to the rank and file of the party and the Government of Western Region.

The crisis led to the walk-out of SLA (Deputy Leader) and Ayo Rosiji (Gen Secretary) of AG at the 1962 Jos Annual Convention. SLA and Ayo

Rosiji were expelled from AG. Although the rest of the story is familiar, the debate as to whether the split-up of AG was more about personality clash between Awo and SLA or purely disagreements concerning ideology and strategy will remain alive for a long time. The argument about ideological differences on socialism and feudalism between Awolowo and SLA are neither here nor there. The feudalistic and atavistic tendencies between Yoruba Obas and northern emirs today remain tendencies of degree rather than kind while, interestingly, the Igbo elite are re-inventing feudalism across the Niger.

We must take particular note of the continuing debates and disagreements in the various ethno-nationalist enclaves of Nigeria's ruling circles concerning the strategies of inter-regional and inter-ethnic alliances. Because the Nigerian ruling circles have been unable to conceive power and governance outside ruling class preoccupation with primitive private accumulation, the crisis is as rife now as it was in 1960. Ajasin (2003: p.127) posed this question sharply in the context of the Awolowo-Akintola conflict:

In terms of strategy Chief Awolowo believed that the best strategy for the party (AG) to win election at the federal level was for the party to cross the regional political barrier, penetrate the two other regions and by so doing garner more followership to see the party to the centre. Chief S.L Akintola did not believe in this strategy. Instead, he would want the three major political parties to be left to hold on to their regions of control while the AG should form alliance with them as the need arose in order to reach the centre. In this regard Akintola's preferred alliance was the one between the AG and NPC.

In these contexts, what created the Aare Onakakanfo MKO phenomenon in 1993? Why did Falae end up in ANPP in 1999? Why did Bola Ige end up as Obasajo's Minister? What was the nature of AD's agreements with Obasanjo towards the 2003 General Elections? In terms of the two strategies as articulated by Ajasin above, what is the currently

touted mega-party all about? The more you look at Nigeria's unfolding ruling class horse-trade politics the less you see!

COMPARING THE NATIONALIST GENERATION WITH THE PRESENT RULING CIRCLES

My thesis is that we must examine the milieu in which the current ruling circles of Nigeria was forged in order to understand the source of generalised decay which our country suffered in the last thirty years or so and which had so definitively terminated all the promises of independence. As the Yoruba put it: "**Pelebeidi awodi l' aa wo k' a to mo ero agogo**"—If you do not know what a gong should look like, observe the tail of the black kite!

I will like to observe that in spite of the disarray among the nationalists in the mid forties, the promise of nationalist ethos propelled our country towards independence in 1960. This ethos and the pressures from the youth and the labour movement forced some of the promises of independence to be delivered in the late 1950s and 1960s. Because of the increases in oil revenue and in spite of military dictatorship and beginnings of the rule of buccaneers since the assassination of Murtala Mohammed, Nigerians were still able to savour the fruits of independence.

What has happened in the last three decades dominated by military dictatorship and especially its civilianised variety in the last one decade had been the almost complete obliteration of the promises of independence. This situation is supervised by imperialism, its organisations (IMF, World Bank, WTO) and its masquerade programs (NEPAD, NEEDS, Vision 2010, Vision 20:2020 etc.) expressed in policies such as SAP, deregulation, privatisation, down-sizing of public service, withdrawal of basic social services, etc.

In the process led fundamentally (and by force) by the armed wing of the Nigerian ruling class, the psychology and carriage of conquerors and *onisunmami*⁴ has become cloned at different tiers of government (local, state and national), in our universities, in the civil service, among our alleged royal fathers and even in places of worship. These postures are

required for *massive accumulation of private wealth* which comes largely from public coffers. We can see this display in the special areas where the ruling circles corners for themselves in our towns and cities. And we can easily compare these restricted opulence with the decay of our urban centres, bad roads, withdrawal of basic facilities like transport, drinking water and even clean air to breathe!

In the preoccupation of the ruling circles for primitive private accumulation, Nigeria cannot be defended by the ruling elite hence the overarching influence of the World Bank and IMF everywhere. More importantly, two wars have emerged—intra-class within the circle and inter-class war between the circle and the masses. This is why peaceful electoral processes and changes are not possible. Many of the so-called traditional rulers have also become accomplices in these crimes. Since accumulation by the rulers leave so little for ministering to the basic needs of masses, the latter cannot be the *social base* of their *alleged elected representatives*. This is why elections have become a farce and there is so much ballyhoo about Electoral Reforms! But there used to be elections properly speaking. Opposition parties used to defeat governing parties. In the 1954 Federal Election NCNC (the opposition party led by Adegoke Adelabu) won more seats (into the House of Representatives) in Western Region than the governing AG. When I was a young man in this *our Ogbomoso*, there was an opposition bench of councillors led by my brother (Banji Sobalaju Olorode) in the Ogbomoso Local Government Council chaired by Victor Ladipo Lajide—a great Ogbomoso patriot of blessed memory. There were legitimate “majorities”, not majorities by robbery”. Can any local government in Oyo state today be said to have resulted from a democratic process?

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

We cannot preach to people about how to be a leader. In any case one cannot be a leader unless one has the humility to follow; to follow examples. A leader has then to be exemplary. He must make available all his

³ “*sunmami*”: banditry; “*onisunmami*”: bandit.

mental resources to the movement. He/she must reproduce himself so that the organisation can carry on and thrive without him or her!

Leaders are best cloned inside organisations and movements as we have observed in the evolution of the Nigeria's nationalist movement. This is because building an organisation builds and tests our capacity for courage, solidarity, commitment to the collective, empathy and faith in policies collectively articulated. Good leaders grow or emerge from the ranks of organisations, not people who suddenly corner large sums of money and then impose themselves or their communities or impose their limited liability campaign organisations on their parties which are themselves trading associations.

In our particular situation of deep social and moral crisis, leaders need courage to confront established but rotten paradigms, courage to show solidarity with beleaguered associates and colleagues. I read in *Irawo Owuro* (1991: p. 17—**How SLA was buried**), the act of courage shown by Prince Oladunni Olaoye in going to Ibadan to, with Agboola Ajao, convey Ladoke Akintola's body to Ogbomoso for burial when other associates of SLA were hiding! I also read of the legendary courage of Rev. J.O. Adediran in speaking the truth to power

A leader is a seeker of knowledge and truth. He must develop his intellectual power. She/he must question everything. A leader must be patient with alternative, even hostile, views. She/he must read everything that comes his way about his community, his country and the entire world as it unfolds.

A leader must be passionately committed to the cause of ordinary people. He/she must be immersed in their struggles, their culture, their aspirations, the language they speak, their vision of a better world! In doing this a leader must be a servant; he must be modest in his personal aspirations, how and where he lives, even how he/she dresses!

A leader must have faith in the people and their capacity to articulate their own interests, defend those interests and change their own situation for the better. Good leadership is incompatible with personality cult and vain glory, with huge bill boards all over the place proclaiming all sorts of dubi-

ous achievements or totally personalising government and collective state achievements as that of the leader. The *omo-aije'beri*⁵ ways most State Governors and LG Chairmen propagandise their worth and seek to imprint their personality cults on public consciousness is a case in point. A particularly obscene element of this personality-cult culture is the case of Governor's and LG Chairmen's wives, who, without any official or elective business with the public, people who are really "nobodies", simply impose themselves on the public and on public treasury!

As we said above the contraries of what we considered as desirable above are the products of today's particular political economy—the neo-liberal economy in the periphery of the moribund centres of neo-liberalism. **Only the alternative vision of society can produce the kind of desirable leaders we have characterised.** That vision will be pivoted on three central commitments (Olorode, 2008: p. 40) of the new political movement that have to be built by our people:

The first is commitment to a united Nigeria with a united people who are genuinely sovereign. The second is commitment to an economic order in which the welfare of the people is the primary goal, in which the resources of our land and their exploitation and allocation are under the full control of the toiling people thus immediately enabling the minimum of a welfare state and incremental socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. The third commitment of the movement will be the pursuit of a social and cultural policy that promotes cultural freedom and solidarity among our people, and frees their minds from superstitions and from ethnic and confessional prejudices.

We can begin to give effect to that vision here and now in Ogbomoso and all over Nigeria.

⁵ literally, a syndrome of greed, acquisitiveness and unrestrained consumption arising from a background of deprivation that is compounded by lack of any socialisation in restraint especially regarding correct attitude to consumption

REFERENCE

- Adelowo, Ayo. (2000). *Ogbomoso: The Journey so Far*. Ayo Adelowo. Ogbomoso.
- Ajasin, M.A. (2003). *Ajasin: Memoirs and Memories*. Ajasin Foundation, Lagos.
- Arifalo, S.O. (2001). *Egbe Omo Oduduwa: A study in Ethnic and Cultural Nationalism*. Stebak Books and Publishers, Akure.
- Ayandele, E.A. (1974). *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society*. University of Ibadan Press. Ibadan.
- Batra, R. (1987). *The Great Depression of 1990*. Venus Books. New York.
- Falola, Toyin. (2009). *From Basorun Oluloye to Hon. Adegoke Adelabu: Ibadan Warrior Traditions and the Anatomy of Success*. Ibadan Foundation, Ibadan
- Fauliyi, K. (1998). Yorubaland in the Era of Revolutionary change. In: Ogunremi, Deji & Biodun Adeidiran (Eds.). *Culture and Society in Yorubaland*. Rex Charles & Connel. Ibadan pp.27-38.
- Johnson, S. (1921) *History of the Yorubas*. CSS Bookshops, Lagos.
- Ogunremi, Deji & Biodun Adediran (Eds.) (1998). op cit.
- Olorode, O. (2008). *Nigeria and the Global Crisis: Intellectual Commitment and the Socialist Collective*. The Book Project. Ile-Ife.
- Oyerinde, N.D. (1934). *Iwe Itan Ogbmoso*. 1992 Edition printed by Peak Precise General Enterprises.