



Uluslararası Sosyal Arařtırmalar Dergisi

The Journal of International Social Research

Cilt: 5 Sayı: 22 Volume: 5 Issue: 22

Yaz 2012 Summer 2012

www.sosyalarastirmalar.com Issn: 1307-9581

## SOCIO-HISTORICAL CRIME REVIEW ON EFUNSETAN ANIWURA, BASHORUN GAA AND AARE-AGO OGUNRINDE AJE

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### Abstract

This study examined the historical criminal behaviours of three important pre-colonial Yoruba political figures: Efunsetan Aniwura, Bashorun Gaa and Aare Ogunrinde Aje (Aare Ago Arikuyeri). The study utilized historical research design, and qualitative method was equally used to complement the study in form of soft data (photos).

The historical background of each of the three personalities was thoroughly examined and the crimes of each of them were explained painstakingly. The paper concluded by recommending further studies on other personalities in Yoruba history and other African societies in general, who had similar life events. Furthermore, it is recommended that such findings should be cited within political cycle as warnings to those who are at the moment holding political power and those who will hold them in the future. Finally, such findings will equally bring history closer to the younger generation.

**Keywords:** Crime, History, Efunsetan Aniwura, Bashorun Gaa, Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje.

### Introduction

History is an important tool of passing on events from generation to generation. If the coming generation is not aware of story, they must be familiar with history kept intact for them by the preceding generation. Hence, Yoruba race does not take history with levity. Within the Yoruba history lie the epochal events which featured the lives and personalities of many important figures. Some of these figures are credibly remembered for their good deeds, while others can never be forgotten for their heart breaking wickednesses. The wicked ones among them cast the shadow of fear and horror in the hearts of present generation.

Among those in the beginning was Efunsetan Aniwura (Balogun, 2001), Bashorun Gaa- a notable nobleman and leader of the military in the old Oyo empire (Wikipedia, 2011) and the like of Aare Ago Ogunrinde Aje (Adeleke, 2007). All these three personalities were notable and great political and social figures in the history of Yoruba race. They had the same thing in common- crime against humanity. Even though, they featured differently in the phases of

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Yoruba history: Bashorun Gaa in 17th Century, Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje in earliest 18th century and Efunsetan Aniwura in mid 18th century.

The three personalities mentioned above in the history of Yoruba race will be examined in this article. Their historical backgrounds and the crimes they committed will be thoroughly looked into. Such examination will reveal to us why they remain unforgettable in the history of Yoruba race as a whole.

### **Methods**

The historical method was employed in this article. This method is used increasingly by social scientists in Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, and Economics, as well as by many historians (Schutt, 2004). The study of history involves looking at the past in an attempt to learn what happened. Sociology also looks at historical events within their social contexts to discover why things happened and more importantly, to assess what their social significance was and is (Tischler, 2002).

Historical consciousness is interested in knowing not how men or people develop in general, but, quite on the contrary, how this man, (this people) became what he is: how each of these particulars could come to pass and end up specifically there (Neumann, 2003). Historical method calls for a study of events, process, and institutions of past civilizations, for the purpose of finding the origins or antecedents of contemporary social life, and thus of understanding its nature and workings. The underlying idea is that our present forms of social life, our customs or ways of living, have their roots in the past and that one can best explain them by tracing them back to their sources (Inkeles, 1987).

Furthermore, qualitative method was equally used. Soft data in the form of photos were used as sources of information for the study (Adler and Clark 1999). Content analysis was the method used in the process of analyzing the data. Both historical data and photos were subjected to content analyses.

### **Madam Efunsetan Aniwura (Owner of Gold): Historical Background**

Efunsetan Aniwura- the Iyalode of Ibadan (Queen of women or women leader or minister of woman affairs) was a woman of Egba ancestry or origin (Ilesanmi, 2010; Osewa, 2005). She became a very powerful and prosperous rich trader at Oja-Oba, Ibadan, in the region now known as Oyo State, Nigeria. Oral evidence reveals that she had three large farms in each of which no less than 100 slaves worked at a time. She had hundreds of slaves on her farms with many others at home. History had it that she owned over 2,000 slaves during her live time.

She was involved in trading with Europeans, taking goods from the hinterland to the coast and bringing imported goods; especially arms and ammunition, back to the hinterland (Osewa, 2005). She extended credit facilities in the form of ammunition to the various Ibadan warriors when they were going on their military expeditions in 1872. She fielded hundred slaves' soldiers under her head slave (Ogidan), to join the Ibadan forces on their expedition to the Ekiti country. Even before then, she had been made the Iyalode of Ibadan in recognition of her contributions in this and other fields. As the leader of the women in Ibadan and a successful trader in arms, she was in a position to contribute to the debate on the issues of war and peace (Ilesanmi, 2010).

Because of her spirit of entrepreneurship and the help rendered in oiling the military machine of Ibadan, Efunsetan Aniwura was a legendary of many exploits and demonstrated the place of women in politics during the pre-colonial period (Lebu; N.D; Olukoju, 2010; Soetan, 2011).

Efunsetan Aniwura was an eponymous heroine (Ogunleye, 2004); she was a powerful, rich and influential high chief of old Ibadan province. Her name was a force to reckon with, powerful, fearsome, terrific, rich, audacious and daring. As one of the chiefs, nobody in her

time could rubbish her. Her magical prowess and affluence made her a terror to everybody that had one contact or the other with her (Fadare, 2007). She was an example of an African woman who stood against male chauvinism and gender inequality because of her wealth and spiritual depth in power and authority (Ilesanmi, 2010; Washington, 2005).

### **Efunsetan Aniwura's Life Challenges**

Efunsetan Aniwura life woes arose from her participation in the war efforts. Latoosa (the Yoruba generalissimo) and his chiefs were becoming tardy in the payment of debit owed Efunsetan. She was a financier of the war efforts and a supplier of ammunition, she therefore stopped extending credit facilities to them. When Latoosa set out for another war in 1874, she refused to give her usual support and kicked against the military expansion policy of Aare Latoosa which brought many towns under Ibadan jurisdiction (Osewa, 2005; Ilesanmi, 2010).

After returning from battle field, Latoosa brought three charges against Efunsetan:

- That she did not allow her forces to accompany him to war.
- That she never sent him supplies during the war campaign.
- That she did not come in person to meet him outside the town wall to congratulate him on his safe return. Latoosa, therefore, deposed Efunsetan Aniwura on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1874, replacing her with her lieutenant. Despite the fact that Efunsetan paid all the fines imposed on her, and sought the good will of prominent chiefs, through costly gifts; seeking to use them as emissaries of peace to request for forgiveness from Latoosa, these were all in vain (Osewa, 2005).

Efunsetan Aniwura's second woe came from her personal life predicament. She had a terrible sense of loss. Her only daughter died in 1860 during childbirth. Therefore, with the stigma of not having a progeny to inherit her legacies, she blamed God for her tragedy and as a result of her psychological problems, she vent her anger on the society, becoming wicked, cruel, callous, bitter, heartless and a monster dreaded by the society. Her slaves suffered mostly from her aggressive behaviours (Ilesanmi, 2010; Osewa, 2005).

### **The Many Crimes of Efunsetan Aniwura**

The political confrontation from Latoosa and the life calamity of losing only one child who was to inherit the legacies of Efunsetan Aniwura warranted a serious psychological crisis in her life. She was psychologically depressed and transferred untold aggression to her slaves. The hopeless therapy posits that individuals with cognitive vulnerability, when experiencing negative life events, are likely to become hopeless (Hankins et al, 2004; Hankins, et al 2001; Husky et al 2007). Cognitive vulnerability models offer popular ways of understanding the origins and causal factors that contribute to psychological problems (Riskind and Alloy, 2006)

Efunsetan's wickedness sprouted from her psychological problems from negative life events. These wickednesses were reflected in the ways she treated her slaves. The first crime Efunsetan committed was aggravated physical assault against humanity. Although, slaves were the property of the master or mistress in Yoruba land, the law of sanctity of life still prevailed. Beating was a constant habit of Efunsetan on her slaves. This crime of aggravated physical assault led to the body mutilation of many slaves in her life time. (Isola, 2010). Efunsetan Aniwura's slaves could be easily identified among other slaves in Ibadan land, with the "stripe labels" on their bodies. In this modern day, she would have been tried and sentenced for aggravated physical assault against other human beings. Many of the slaves were tortured and subjected to inhuman conditions through her domestic violence. It was recorded that she did starve any erring slaves for days and only gave the obedient ones meagre food to keep their bodies and souls together and not to nourish them into good health and vitality (Isola, 2010).

Efunsetan was also guilty of extra judicial killings of her slaves. Because of not having a child to inherit her large pool of wealth, most of her aggressions and wickednesses were

directed against the womenfolk. After losing her only child, it became a crime in Efunsetan's home for any slave girl to become pregnant. Death sentence was the verdict -an irrevocable one. And any slave man who proposed love to any girl would share the same fate. About 20 slave girls and 30 slave men were killed by Efunsetan Aniwura for various trivial offences she alleged they had committed. She had her personal executioner which carried out the death verdicts passed on them (Isola, 2010).

Efunsetan was guilty of the contempt of the council of chiefs. She refused to go on self exile as demanded by the decision of the Ibadan chiefs. When she refused, because of the standing rules and regulations, Efunsetan could not be publicly executed, so Latoosa, and his collaborators bribed Kumiyilo (Efunsetan adopted son) and some other relatives to get rid of her.

### **The End of Efunsetan Aniwura**

Efunsetan was aware of the fact that her family members or domestic slaves could be used against her, she spent nights and days running from her own shadow. She cooked her own food herself and changed her sleeping place nightly. However, on the night of June 30 1874, knowing where she slept, two slaves instructed by Kumiyilo entered the room from the ceiling and killed her by dashing out her brain. Latoosa then installed Kumiyilo as head of Efunsetan's family (Osewa, 2005).

However, her natal family members from Egba sent an emissary to Ibadan, requesting for the circumstances which surrounded her mysterious death. Faced by insurrection and possible reprisal attacks from the Egba, Latoosa had Kumuyilo summoned for interrogation. Kumuyilo named three chiefs, who were Latoosa's close aides in the conspiracy of her murder. The rest of the chiefs, did not want to disgrace Latoosa publicly, so they deposed Kumuyilo from headship of Efunsetan's family and had the actual murderers executed on July 10, 1874 to placate the anger of her Kinsmen (Osewa, 2005).

### **Efunsetan Aniwura's Praises**

The woman, who instils fear in others, the fearsome one, who slaughters slaves to celebrate Id-el-Kabir. Efunsetan is one force, Ibadan is another.

The valiant that challenges the Almighty God, if the most high does not answer her on time, Efunsetan leaves the earth to go and meet him in Heaven (Isola, 2010)

Efunsetan, Iyalode.

One who has horses and rides them not. The child ,who walks in a graceful fashion, Adekemi Ogunrin.

The great hefty woman who adorns her legs with beads;

Whose possession surpasses those of the Aare.

Owner of several puny slaves on the farm.

Owner of many giant slaves in the market.

One who has bullets and gunpowder, who has gunpowder as well as guns; and spends money like a conjurer.

The Iyalode who instils fear into her equals.

The rich never give their money to the poor.

The Iyalode never gave her wrappers to the lazy (Osewa, 2005).

Efunsetan's end was catalyzed by the political rivalry between her and Latoosa. We can say that Efunsetan misbehaviours gave Latoosa, the ample chance to revenge on her for flexing muscle with him politically.

Efunsetan Aniwura was credited with the revival of the Alakija festival in Ibadan. She also performed the annual ceremony for the placation and worship of Ori, the divinity that determines a man's destiny and fate (Osewa, 2005).

The story of Efunsetan Aniwura was made popular by Professor Akinwumi Isola. Professor Akinwumi Isola is a Nigerian playwright, actor, dramatist, culture activist and scholar (Ajayi, 2005; Wikipedia, 2012 ; Fasan, 2010).



Figure 1

The statue of Madam Efunsetan Aniwura, at Challenge Round About, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The statue was erected in the memory of her contributions to the pre- colonial Ibadan entrepreneurship and economic development. Source: Field Research (27/02/2012.11.07am Nigeria Time)

### **Bashoorun Gaa (The Wicked Prime Minister of the Old Oyo Kingdom)**

Bashorun Gaa was a notable nobleman and leader of the military in the old Oyo Empire during 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century. He was instrumental to the military conquests during his time as a prime minister (Wikipedia, 2011).

In 17<sup>th</sup> century Oyo Kingdom, the monarchical failings came with a succession of uncharitable kings to the exalted throne. Alaafins Odarawu, Kanran, Jayin, Ayibi and Osinyago in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century were despotic. According to historical record, Odarawu was bad-tempered, Kanran, an unmitigated tyrant, Jayin, effeminate and dissolute, Ayibi cruel and arbitrary and Osinyago, worthless (www.omuara.com).

Internally, Bashorun Gaa as head of the Oyo Mesi, the Oyo council of kingmakers acquired too much power in the process; and became Frankenstein monster in the kingdom. In office as prime minister between 1750 and 1774, Bashorun Gaa supervised the dethronement and execution of four successive Alaafins as follows:

Alaafin Labisi 1750-spent 17 days

Alaafin Awonbioju 1750-spent 130 days

Alaafin Agboluaye 1750-1772 (submitted to Bashorun Gaa's dictation but was later forced to commit suicide at last).

Alaafin Majeogbe 1772-1773 (www.google.com; www.omuaran.com.). He was a king maker and at the same time king destroyer, a great usurper (Ayinla, 2011), renowned for his juju prowess, to eliminate him therefore ,became the consuming passion and chief concern of

the fifth Alaafin, while Gaa was yet prime minister ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com); [www.omuaran.com](http://www.omuaran.com)) He became so powerful and notorious that all the previous Alaafins were afraid of him. Where he got power he wielded over the throne was still under mystery ([www.yorupedia.com](http://www.yorupedia.com); Koleosho, 2009) he became so power drunk to the extent that he was forcing kings to commit suicide for not following his dictates (Oduwole,2011).

The unwritten constitution which gave Bashorun (prime minister) a final say on the nomination of the new Alaafin and the control of the kingmakers was so great that the Bashorun's power rivalled that of Alaafin himself, this of course was an open opportunity for Bashorun Gaa to have absolute control of the political machinery of old Oyo kingdom of his time, under his palm (Wikipedia, 2012).

However, his notoriety reached a breaking point when he murdered Agbonyin, the only daughter of reigning Alaafin Abiodun. Alaafin Abiodun at this time, decided to take the bull by the horns ([www.yorupedia.com](http://www.yorupedia.com)).

Notwithstanding, the elimination of this tyrant prime minister cost so much of state resources and time([www.omuaran-ng.com](http://www.omuaran-ng.com)) not without the Aare-one-kakan-fo (Yoruba generalissimo) Oyalabi from Ajase ([www.yorupedia.com](http://www.yorupedia.com).after) He was overpowered and was killed, his children fled Oyo for places like Egbadò (Yewa), Badagry, coutonou and Dahomey, main locations where their father had contacts (Wikipedia,2011).

### **The Crimes of Bashorun Gaa**

Bashorun Gaa was a classical tyrant of Yoruba pre-colonial era. Bashorun Gaa was instrumental to the killing of four kings. He was therefore, guilty of regicide. He wickedly supervised the dethronement of four kings by forcing them to commit suicide. The last king to be dethroned, Alaafin Majeogbe, was executed under the supervisory instructions of Bashorun Gaa (Faleti,1972). In addition to his extra judicial killing, he instructed the murder of the daughter of Alaafin Abiodun and later used the victim for money ritual.

Bashorun Gaa, unconstitutionally hijacked all the political power and machinery of Oyo kingdom. All the homage, respects and the material benefits meant for the kings were diverted to his personality. This was a great crime against the royal political system and great assault to the gods of the land and the past ancestors. (Faleti, 1972).

Bashorun Gaa was a crime instigator. He was fond of aiding, abetting and covering the crimes committed by the people of his household. The history recorded the serial killings committed by his sons and head slave. The criminals were protected by him and even punished those who reported the crime. He ordered the massacre of the family members of one of his wives who was alleged to have attempted to poison him.

Terrorism was another crime of Bashorun Gaa. During his reign as prime minister, he and his household were great terrorists. Innocent citizens were terrorized by them. People's belongings and property were vandalized and maliciously damaged by the notorious members of his family. The houses and property of the innocent citizens were set ablaze; wives of innocent citizens were forcefully taken away from them. Force labour was unnecessarily imposed on people and freedoms of people were taken away from them. The period was recorded as the most turbulent period in the history of Oyo kingdom.

### **The End of Bashorkun Gaa**

The elimination of Bashorun Gaa was a difficult one. It cost the old Oyo kingdom many material resources, time and lives of innocent people. Alaafin Abiodun and Oyo warriors in collaboration with Aare-Ona-Kaka-N-fo Oyalabi were eventually able to close in on him and arrest him. He was tied to a stake at Akesan market and Alaafin Abiodun ordered that every citizen cut a pound of flesh from his body and drop it in a huge fire in front of him. He was made to smell the odour of his own flesh, his nose was not allowed to be cut and flesh from his

left part of the chest was excluded too (to prevent him from dying quickly). The remains of his body were later burnt in fire to prevent the re-incarnation of this wicked man.

The public execution of this man eventually brought up a popular saying in Yoruba land to warn those in power and the rulers who are tyrants. The saying goes thus: if you are audacious in doing evils you can continue, but if you remember the death of Bashorun Gaa be righteous in all your doings”

### **Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje (Aare-Ago Arikuyeri) Brief History**

Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje, nicknamed Aare-Ago Arikuyeri by Bashorun Ogunmola, was a gallant warrior during the reign of Bashorun Ogunmola as Baale (community leader) of Ibadan land. He was the Balogun of Ibadan land during the reign of Bashorun Ogunmola. However, the history of his life reflected that he had affiliation with Awe, a small community near Oyo (Ogunniran, 2007).

Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje fought many wars during Ibadan war expeditions. He fought for Ibadan during wars against Alara, Ajero, Akoko, Otun-Ekiti, Ido-Ani and Efon-Alaaye. A gallant soldier who brought many victories to Ibadan land, even at the personal loss of his own grown up children (Ogunniran, 2007) He had a domestic slave-fool, who, when occasion warranted it, chant or render praise poetry of his master -Aare-Ago (Ogunniran, 2007). This man was a personal assistant to Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje in peace and travail (Adeleke, 2007)

### **The Crimes of Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje**

The first crime of Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje was extra-Judicial killing of his second wife. The first wife had falsely accused the second wife as the perpetrator behind the mysterious death of three children of the third wife. The incidence was a resultant effect of envy and jealousy which characterized Ogunrinde’s household (Ogunniran, 2007).

This false accusation escalated into domestic violence which eventually led to Ogunrinde Aje, killing his second wife who paradoxically, happened to be the wife he loved most. He shot the woman dead in anger, with arrow and bow.

On hearing the strange incidence, Bashorun Ogunmola sent messengers to him that he should appear before the council of chiefs. Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje refused to go. Hence, he was guilty of the contempt of the highest ruling body of the Ibadan land. Another crime, which infuriated other high chiefs.

Physical assault was another crime he committed. In his attempt to resist arrest, he assaulted the messengers that the council of chiefs sent to effect his arrest. The messengers were physically attacked, harassed and molested by him and his household; a crime, which was an abomination to the judicial system of the Yoruba natives before the advancement of the colonial master, because, in Yoruba land, if anyone insults a king’s messengers he has insulted the king himself, especially if such messengers came with “Ogbo” a traditional wand of authority.

Finally he was guilty of bribery and corruption. He knew the gravity of his crimes and knew the consequences they would bring. Therefore, he decided to pervert justice by buying over the chiefs with money and gifts to persuade Bashorun Ogunmola to pardon him. The secret of his bribery and corruption was discovered and added to the list of his charges (Ogunniran, 2010) A good leader like Bashorun Ogunmola could not be bought with money to pervert justice. Ogunmola followed the examples of the good leaders before him and gave accurate verdict as demanded by the law of the land.

### **The Punishment of Aare Ago Ogunrinde Aje**

There was a standing rule in Ibadan land that any high chief found guilty of offence and sentenced to death must not be executed publicly. In following this rule, Bashorun Ogunmola

commanded Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje to go and commit suicide, for he cannot be executed in the public, being a high chief and member of the ruling council.

Balogun Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje went home, pretending as if he was going to do according to the verdict. However, the history recorded that this man ran away and voluntarily went on self-exile without committing suicide as demanded by the tradition. He forfeited all his belongings to the whole Ibadan community and his fame ended abruptly through his irrational behaviour. On hearing of the news of his self exile, Bashorun Ogunmola changed his name from Aare-Ago Aje Ogunrinde to Aare-Ago "Arikuyeri" (The one who dodged death sentence).



Figure 2

The statue of Bashorun Ogunmola, at Mokola Round About, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. He was a warrior and community leader who laid down a good example of a righteous and just man for the succeeding generation to emulate. He judged the case of Aare Ago Ogunrinde Aje. The statue was erected in his memory for his social justice.

Source: Field Research (27/02/2012. 1.00pm, Nigeria Time)

### **Conclusion**

The review of these three pre-colonial Yoruba personalities revealed that tyrannical behaviours of the present day political power holders are not new in the history of mankind. Such tyrannical behaviours were common in the personalities of some notable political figures before colonization. Extra judicial killings, oppression of the innocent citizens, deprivation of the freedom of citizens, terrorism, violation of the unwritten traditional constitution and other social vices were recorded in the personalities of the persons reviewed under this paper. Such review brings to the memory of the present generation the atrocities committed by some people of the old and sounds a warning to the present generation who may like to walk in their ways.

### **Recommendation**

This study recommends further reviews of other personalities in the history of Yoruba and other African societies who had similar historical records and events like those reviewed in this study. Such reviews will complement the ones on ground and comparative analyses can be made. Such reviews should be documented and cited in any political debates organized on despotism of political figures. These will serve as lessons to those holding political power now



and those that will hold them in the future. Finally, such documentation will bring history closer to the younger generation.

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