

Ifa Priest as a Friend of Monarchs



A friend in need is a friend indeed, another Yoruba adage says: ***“Ore eni nii ba ni pile ola, ara ile eni ni ko”***

It is friend that helps one to achieve wealth but it is the family that will enjoy it. The role of Ifa priest is not only to prescribe or reveals messages of God to the mankind. Babalawo, Ifa priest, father, of mystery and keeper of secrets.

Every monarch in Yoruba land, a part of city Babalawo. Sometimes it is essential to have residence Ifa priest a spiritual adviser. The role of Ifa priest in terms of administrating the city is unlimited. The Babalawo are contrary to the herbalist not only healers but specialist Yoruba and non-Yoruba about great wisdom of Ifa, nearly every of course, the Christians and Moslems of God for the solution of all problems of their lives particularly in the search for security and protection.

As William Bascom observed, Ifa is the most respected and the most interesting system of divination of five to ten million Yoruba in Nigeria and millions of more of their African neighbour descendant in the new world.

Ifa priest is advise king makers to select the right king to be installed when the town or city is in need of a king. When the town is in chaos, Ifa priest is to consult and prescribed propitiation to enable the town's progress and put end to the calamity.

During the tenure of a new monarch, the King and Chiefs must seek advice of Ifa priest from time to time.

Before the advent of Christianity and Islam to the Yoruba land, Ifa priest and monarch are friends, their relationship is very cordially and oath that is between them is deeper than the one that the Ogboni members took at the Ogboni temple (Iledi). Several Ese Ifa points it out that Ifa priest and the monarch are the administrator of the town or city. The role Ifa priest is to restore life; they are the menders who always mend the broken life:

*“Babalawo ti o jaye o foloju,
Ise Olodumare ni won se”*

*“A priest that prevents the life from breaking,
They are on the errand for the God Almighty”*

Some Ifa priests are Babalawo in residence whereby the king invites them from another town. In Odu Ifa ***Irentegbe***, Olongbojigolo was the Ifa priest at the city of Apa, He is their priest and he's also the one that prevents the town in which monarch Alaafin always emptied almost every year to be captured. When the military force of Oyo are unable to destroy city of Apa any more, it become worrisome to the Alaafin, Therefore Alaafin summoned his Ifa priest and he consulted Ifa and they realized that Olongbojigolo is behind their problem, so, one





of the princess Isokunronke was used to entice Olongbojigolo and she disguised herself as a kola nut seller in the city of Apa, and Olongbojigolo married Isokunroke. As king Alapa use to divine every week day (Ojo Ose) but refused to listen to the advise of his Ifa priest, the town of Apa was ruined when Olongbojigolo followed his wife to the palace of Alaafin in Oyo, In his absent they kill his friend King Alapa and his head was put inside a calabash, Alaafin then invite Olongbojigolo to come and interprets an Odu Ifa, thus Olongbojigolo explained;

“Who will not know?

*Who will not know that it is the head of king Alapa
that is inside the calabash”*

Ogbe Obara revealed that King Alakole is in an unhappy situation, the depression of the monarch has made him an important and one of the Queen (Ayaba) who was pregnant and in labour for three days. The monarch Alakole sent for his Ifa priest (The Vulture), is a had well knowledgeable Ifa priest but his conditon is poverty, offered a sacrifice but he no money to buy the ingredients, so he decided to fetch firewood in other to sell it and make money for the ingredients.

One day, he was carrying the log along the road, one of the Queen from king Alakole’s palace saw him and asked him, how much is the lumber? The woman bargained with the vulture but she asked him to follow her to the palace. As the vulture dropped the lumber outside the palace, he entered and met the Ifa wooden tray in front of the king, the Odu Ifa was inscribed inside the tray, he started to recite the Odu He stated that:

1. The person that this Odu Ifa appears for is unable to have sex with his wives
2. There is a pregnant woman who has being in labour about three months
3. It is a disease that prevents this one from having sex He prescribed several items for sacrifice and the king complied and make the sacrifice. The king was happy when his wife delivered a baby after the sacrifice has being performed and he was able to enjoy his sexual life afterward. Hence, the vulture became the priest of Alakole monarch i.e. His Babalawo in residence.

Another Odu Ifa to examine is Oturupongbe; Gaa was another name of Ifa priest in the palace of Alaafin of Oyo, both king and Ifa priest were very close friends, every week Gaa would make divination for the king and the entire city of Oyo and the king always comply with interpretation of Odu Ifa.

One day, the stanza of Odu Ifa revealed that there will be an outbreak of a thief at palace of Alaafin, the king find the difficult to believe the statements of Ifa, he said with all the security measure of the palace, no thief can survive it, but Gaa insisted that Alaafin had to make the sacrifice to prevent the occurrence but the King declined. Babalawo Gaa had to use his own money to performed the sacrifice, to protect the palace. One day, the thieves broke into the palace, they stole several valuable items from the palace like Crowns, Money, Clothing, Beads and so on and in the following day Gaa was depressed and he feel ashamed that as a powerful priest, how will thieves broke into the palace of his friend, so he used a charm to transformed into a bird, the king felt sorry for his actions and he went to look for Gaa had already transformed into the bird, the king praise him for his honesy and also thank him for his guardian, but it was too late when the king realized his own mistake, That bird is known today as **AYEKOOTO** (Parrot). Hence he saying:



*“Awo saka saka
Awo ela se kara se koro”*

*“The honest priest
The priest of absolute truth”*

The king then gave the velvet dress in which he was wearing to the parrot.

The king and priest didn't only discuss affairs of the town, but their own private confidential matters as it was forbidden for the priest to reveal any confidential matter to the public, a Yoruba adage says:

*“Wiwo lenu awo n wo”
The lip of a priest must be sealed”*

The Ifa priest sometimes extremely respect their friend (king) and may probably omit certain things that would help them. Out of fear or hesitation, some of them divine before they left for the palace and sometimes if the priest ignored some necessary sacrifice before going to the palace, it may results to Chaos and those mistakes sometimes affects all, This was the case of Ede Alumo, the day he was invited by the king Olupo Alaelu, Olupo while he was a prince was a good friend to Ifa priest Ede Alumo, they both went through ups and downs together and they achieved many success together.


At last, the prince became the new Olupo, the monarch Olupo make Ede Alumo head of all his spiritual advisers. Every week the king consult Ifa, the interpretation is always revealed to the king. One day, Ifa divination revealed outbreak of war, in other to prevent this, the king Olupo must offer a princess (a light complexion young lady), the expensive fabric that the king loves most and the king declined this and soon the war broke out from Oyo and the soldiers like to take the fabric from Olupo and give it to the Alaafin of Oyo because no one has such expensive fabric. The war had captured everyone including the king, his soldiers, the priest, Chiefs, and all inhabitant of Omupo.

They all arrived at the city of Oyo, then the monarch Alaafin asked the Olupo that “where did you get this expensive fabric from?” The Alaafin removed the cloth from Olupo and he took Olupo's princess as his own loot of the war as he would like to marry light complexioned princess of Olupo, After the distribution of the outcome of the war, Agbe bikan jifa, Ifa priest of Alaafin advised the king Alaafin to reject all the war loot because it will cause Chaos and war, the king declined the advice of his Ifa priest.

Esu Elegbara went to inform king of Ilorin about the expensive fabric that was in possession of the Alaafin, and also about a beautiful young Princess of Olupo, the Olu of Ilorin wage war against Oyo, they took all of them to Ilorin. At Ilorin, the king separated the dress and the princess for himself and in the following day, The Olu of Ilorin seek advise of his Ifa priest and he was advised to reject all the loot from the war but Olu of Ilorin declined.

Later Olupenjiga heard about war and loots, so he sent his military troops to arrest all of them and everyone must be brought to his palace at Nupe Country. So Alaafin Oyo, Ede Alumo, Olupo Alaelu, Olu of Ilorin and everyone was brought to Nupe Country. Olupenijiga made the same mistake; he took the fabric and princess for himself. Then in the following day, the king Olulenpe sent for his spiritual adviser





and it was revealed that king Olulenge must reject all the loots from war and he complied with the revelations of Ifa and he also performed the sacrifice and they put up white flags on a bamboo tree up to three miles away, they separated the priest among inhabitants and there are four of them;

Ede Alumo
Agbe bikan jifa
Okuta pete inu omi
Bi papa ba jo loko

The monarch Olulenge asked them to explain the story of the war, so Ede Alumo said that he is the Ifa priest of Olupo Alaelu and also said that they were good friend and also said that Olupo always comply to instruction of Ifa but only decline this one, Then it was clear that it was King Olupo who originates the war by refusing to make sacrifice and the king Olulenge gave a sword to Ede Alumo in other to behead Olupo for his non challant attitude but Ede Alumo refused blatantly

*"Ede Alumo mele polupo"
Ede Alumo koni polupo Alaelu"*

*"I will not be able to behead Olupo
Ede Alumo will not kill Olupo Alaelu"*

The king Olulenge ordered Olupo behead Ede Alumo, he gave him the sword, then king Olupo refused and he said;

*"Oba me ma je palumo
Me ma le pa lumo
Iyan ta jo nje o je"*

*"Monarch, I will be unable to behead Alumo
I will be unable to killed Alumo
We wine and drank together
I will be unable to kill Alumo"*

When king Olulengejiga realize that none of them will kill one another, he gave the princess of Olupo to Ede Alumo as his wife and the fabrics that was the factor of the war was tore and water began to drop from the dress and it becomes a river and the river is being called Odo Oya "the river that tore", this river had prevent the Fulani to wage war into Nupe Country:

*"Oya o je O
Fulani mati roko
Won fe re Tapa
Oya o je O"*

Fulani had weapon to wage war against Nupe but Oya prevents it

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