

CONCEPT OF HUMAN PERSONALITY; 'AYANMO', 'AKUNLEYAN', 'AKUNLEGBA', 'KADARA' AND 'AKOSILE' AS BELIEVED BY THE YORUBA

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"As it has been discussed in chapter one of this long essay, a person according to the traditional Yoruba comprises of the Ara (body), Emi (soul) and the Ori inu (inner head) or destiny. Then, in connection with the third aspect of man, Ori which is the bearer of one's destiny also have to make use of some concept such as Akunleyan, Akunlegbe Ayanmo, Kadara and Akosile. These concepts are to justify their belief in destiny or predestination of human personality. Each of them is used in their turn according to the demand of the circumstances. Some of them, as I will show later have their own special period when they are employed. As a method of explanation, I will try to review each of these concepts one after the other.

The explanation was given in chapter one of Bolaji Idowu's work where he excluded the personality of Ajala in his own concept of Ori partly because of the questionable character of his nature.

In close examination, for him, as for that which determines the essence of every individual's humanity is received from Olodumare. This destiny could be seen as "pre-ordained portion of life wound and sealed up on Ori. Human beings have an allotment of this destiny which determines the general course of life"¹

In Idowu's view, Ori is depicted as a complete human personality who knelt down before Olodumare to receive his destiny. Depending on how ones destiny is received, we have the trimorphous conception of destiny' viz Akunleyan (kneeling down, choosing), Akunlegba (kneeling down, receiving) and Ayamo (that which is affixed to one). According to Gbadagesin, his view of Ori as a full personality who knelt down to make the choice of destiny is also confirmed.² However, it could be seen according to these views that no entity called Ori is chosen or picked by any individual in Orun (heaven) instead, the 'incomplete individual', kneels down before Olodumare to either choose by verbal declaration or passively receive that he/she would simply be in Aiye (world).

2.2 AKUNLEYAN AS BELIEVED BY YORUBA

In Akunleyan as destiny, (which could also be applied to other two concepts) Idowu puts it that "whatever is thus conferred is unalterable and becomes one's portion throughout life. That is what the person goes to the world to fulfil"³ Thus in Yoruba belief, it is held that even if a person wants to achieve anything contrary to his Akunleyan, it would be an impossible task or an unachievable goal because this thing would not allow such change to be possible. This is seen in such comment as, "o fe se rere, sugbon akunleyan ko gba". (He wants to do well but his Akunleyan does not allow him). This is mostly used when a person is seen making all sorts of effort to succeed but all to no avail. Again, the Yoruba confirms the strength of Akunleyan, in the usage of words such as "a kunle a yan eda, a d'ele aye tan oju nkan ni" "we knelt down (in heaven) and choose our destinies, but when we arrive on earth, we become impatient"⁴ Another tradition of importance speaks on Akunleyan. According to Adeoye C.L, Eleda, summoned all his creatures in Orun together to think of what they wanted to do in Aiye. Eleda was to be calling each breed's representative, after their deliberation, one by one to recount their assignment, they are given enough time to think on their mission, According to Adeoye, "Eleda then allowed each of them to make his/her own Akunleyan, that is, to think and pronounce whatever one wishes to go and accomplish in Aiye then Eleda would seal it"⁵ Eleda also gives chance to all other creatures to make their Akunleyan or Akomoleda. There, bed-bug, lice, mosquito and others confess that they would be sucking blood and Olodumare sealed it. So, all other creatures did and Eleda sealed it.

2.3 AKUNLEGBA AS BELIEVED BY YORUBA

In close relation to Akunleyan is Akunlegba which has been said above is used interchangeably in the Yoruba society to depict destiny. This is seen as that which was received from somebody. This person could be Olodumare. It is partly presented as if somebody made the choice and gave it to one. It could also be presupposed that one Supreme Being handed the already sealed up destiny to one which was received kneeling down. But, however it is construed; the recipient is seen as not involved in the making of the destiny and thus does not include the notion of human freedom but that of strong destiny (SD).

According to Bolaji Idowu:

“Akunlegba lo wa l’owo eda

Ko s’ogbon owo Ko’s ogbon omo”

Meaning:

That which is chosen kneeling is what the creator holds.

There is no (other) means of (possessing) money.

There is no (other) means of (possessing) children.⁶

The implication of this is apparent. Since what individual person is necessarily going to be has been strictly determined and sealed up by Olodumare, then, struggling or making any effort here would be necessary and individual person could not be held responsible for what happens to him. It could also be partly seen here as similar to fatalism which will hold the view that ‘what will be, will be’. Evidently clear, the traditional society could be said to believe in this ‘what will be, will be’ syndrome. However, with the concept of Ise and hard work which shall be mentioned later, it could be seen that the Yoruba does not hold strictly to this belief.

2.4 ANYANMO AS BELIEVED BY YORUBA

Among the most often used in all these concepts is ‘Ayanmo’. Ayanmo as could be linguistically understood means (that which is affixed to one). Evidently, this also includes a notion of choices as contained in Gbadegesin. “Eniyan P 162”. The Yoruba people take it to mean that which is affixed to one without your consent. In that case, it could be observed that man was not allowed to play any active part in the making of his destiny. Man is only seen as a passive recipient of the already actively made and sealed up destiny which could be arguably seen as representing the divine will of the choice maker of Olodumare. Thus, in the Yoruba traditional society, if a person is prosperous or wealthy, they say ‘ayanmo tire ni’ (that is his own destiny). Most often, people, as a matter of supernatural incapability, to justify themselves of not being wealthy or as wealthy as the men in question, use this. This is still very much in use till date, even among the elite. Ayanmo as a concept-depicting destiny could be employed to either positive or negative consequences in a man’s life. As a matter of emphasis, it is most commonly used in positive consequences or circumstances.

It could be seen from the explanation above that Ayanmo is strictly identical with strong destiny (SD) as oppose to Akunleyan which is seen as weak destiny (WD) since it implies choice. There are many traditional words which are used to establish the strictness and the rigidity of ‘Ayanmo’ which is taken to be identical with man’s destiny in the Yoruba society. For instance, they say ‘ayanmo ko gboogun, ori lelejo’ (ayanmo is unchangeable, it is a matter with Ori) ⁷ or ‘ayanmo mi, ko si eni to le yi pada’ (My destiny is from Olodumare, no earthly creature can change it).

In most cases, Yoruba take each of these three concepts to be identically similar with the manifestations of the content of one’s ‘Ori’; this is used when they see what is becoming of individual person in aye either good or bad. A very pertinent example of this could be seen in Wande Abimbola’s Ifa corpus.

“He who is wise

is made wise by his Ori

He who is not wise

Is made more foolish than a piece of yam by his Ori 8

This is to signify that whatever happens to man is an inevitable part of the content of one's destiny. Given this, it could support the idea that 'what will be, will be'. If this is arguably followed up, it could support to idea of strong destiny (SD).

2.5 KADARA AS BELIEVED BY YORUBA

'Kadara', like any of the three concepts also stands to mean 'destiny'. It is also frequently used in the traditional society. Few of the scholars included it in the mention of the conceptual list to explain predestination. Kadara is intimately seen as strictly identical with destiny. As a matter of clarification, Gbadegesin saw Kadara as the real destiny, which is woven into the 'Ori' but to him; Ori only stands as the bearer of the Kadara which is the destiny. In his word, "There is thus a close relationship between 'Ori', the bearer and Kadara' (destiny) the portion of life that is born"⁹. If this is further considered, the entire appellation given to 'Ori' as the real destiny is a mistake, they should have been directed to Kadara if the view is accepted. Gbadegesin got the clue of 'Kadara' from Abimbola's Ifa exposition.

Wande Abimbola establishes the difference between Ori and Kadara in his Ifa corpus as follows:

"O o mo 'bi olori gbe yanri o.

O ba lo yan tie

O o mo 'bi Afuwape yanri o,

O ba lo yan tie

Ibikan naa la ti gbe yanri o

Kadara o papo ni"¹⁰

This implies that what is chosen, probably in Ajala's house or received directly from Olodumare, is Ori but the content therein is the real Kadara to which Ori just stands as a receptacle or container. If this is accepted in lieu of the quote above, then, it means in order of importance, Kadara is more important than the much celebrated Ori. Although, as it could be seen in various scholastic works, Ori is portrayed as the real destiny and even in the Yoruba conversation, one cannot hesitate to conclude that Ori is the same thing as Kadara or Ayanmo. Ayanmo and Kadara are mostly used interchangeably but has been said earlier, I make bold to assert that Ori is just the bearer of destiny. While Ayanmo is often used in positive matters, Kadara is often used in negative circumstances or in the comportment of consequences. For example, a wife who lost the husband and sympathizers are there to console her, there you would hear the word such as 'o je gba kadara, nkan to ti baje, ti baje' (you better accept your Kadara, what is spoilt is spoilt), not only in that alone, but also in word such as 'eni ti ko gba kadara yoo gba kodoro' (He who does not accept his destiny, will forcefully loose everything). This is used when a person is being consoled for having failed in some endeavours. But, in all indications, Kadara stands to mean destiny which has been sealed up in Ori to inevitably happen here in Aiye to each individual human being.

2.6 A-KO-SILE AS BELIEVED BY YORUBA

A-ko-sile (that which is written down) is a concept used in relation with destiny in the Yoruba society. In fact, A-ko-sile is used to mean destiny like Ayanmo, Akunlegba and Akunleyan. This 'A-ko-sile' stands to mean that each person's destiny and everything which will come to pass in that person's life has already been written down in heaven. This could be supported by such Yoruba linguist usage such as 'A-ko-sile to gbe' (that which is written down has dried up). This is used to signify the rigidity and irrevocability of the destiny. It means all that has been written down about a person in the "Book of Destiny" will certainly come to pass. Here, if this is true, so many things will definitely be implied about 'A-ko-sile'. First, who wrote those things down and how? The answer could be that it was Olodumare who wrote it down. This is because it can't be written by the possessor

of the destiny as no one would write anything bad for himself/herself and that would be lacking in explaining the unfortunate, poor, sick, deformed people on earth.

Now, let us assume that Olodumare was the one who wrote down the A-ko-sile which we are discussing as Idowu rightly supposed (Idowu, Olodumare, 1962 p. 182), it will first of all paint Olodumare as human or mortal character, or how else can we explain someone writing down something without agree to the fact that the person did so with his hands? However, how can we, at the same time maintain that Olodumare does not have hands because he is spiritually supernatural? If Olodumare is a spirit, can spirit have hands? Can someone write without hands or legs and writing materials? This will surely mean that is Olodumare has hands then he does not have hands?

It could be argued that Olodumare did write those things himself but he did not use hands or any physical writing materials since he is not physical but spiritual.

If Olodumare wrote down the destiny but with the spiritual writing material, then it readily means that his own idea of writing materials, then it readily means that his own idea of writing is different from how it is conceived in the world. Then , I want to say that the word 'write' in English or 'Ko' in Yoruba will not apply to Olodumare if we hold the argument consistently, the conclusion will be that there is no 'A-ko-sile': Since word or concept, the way we understand it', does not apply to the character Olodumare. This is because Olodumare is not man and does not do thing as man does. But, it must also be noted that for such a position to be arguably held, it would mean the revocation and the invalidation of all other previously treated concepts since they are not from 'Orun' but means conceptions. Taking another look at this, is this argument strong enough to nullify the widely held concepts in Yoruba society? The concepts are of so much importance to an average Yoruba for such an argument to disprove them.

'A-ko-sile ko lee tase' is a popular saying in the Yoruba society meaning that it has been written down and would come to pass. In a brief view, if it was Olodumare that wrote all those things concerning a person, it would be rational and consistent with the position of Olodumare as the supreme deity. In understanding this, it will remove the confusion and encountered when dealing with the issue of Ori in connection with Ajala. But, this also will have certain problem. If 'A-ko-sile' is the sole work and thought of Olodumare, then moral justification would also be impossible since in A-ko-sile also, man was not given any slight participation in the writing down of his destiny.

SUMMARY

This chapter centres on the identification of some metaphysical concept such as, Akunleyan, Akunlegba, Ayanmo, Kadara and A-ko-sile which are used by the Yoruba in relationship with the concept of Ori and destiny. But it must be clearly stated here that these metaphysical concepts do not present philosophical questions since they are metaphysical and are only being used in the society to refer to destiny. But, however any discussion of the Yoruba concept of human personality and predestination without mentioning them will definitely present a blurry picture.

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