

Kingship and Integrity in Yoruba Traditional Society

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Abstract

Integrity in Kingship should be one of the most important components in the Yoruba Traditional Society, no wonder a town or a village does not exist without having a ruler. Unfortunately, the traditional process of selecting kings in some parts of Yorubaland is sometimes compromised with a preference for the highest bidder. The traditional method which vested the power on Orunmila is also sometimes manipulated. This consequently affects the character and the attitude of the eventual king. The paper addresses the procedure for selecting kings and administration in Yorubaland to ensure the integrity of the Kinship institution. It also seeks to address the integrity of kingship in Yoruba traditional society as specified in Traditional religion, to sanitize the society. The paper adopts a qualitative method of information gathering with a documentation method in analysing data. It is therefore recommended that the sanctity of the kingship in Yoruba traditional society should be maintained. The principles of checks and balances are enforced, to ensure the control of the institutions involved. Furthermore, that integrity, honesty and hard work which are the integral attributes of the Yoruba race should be upheld at all levels. The paper concludes that there is a need for proper reorientation of the whole society to know the implication of their actions and inactions. Once this is put in place, the Yoruba Traditional society will be a better place with high integrity and moral values.

Keywords: Kingship, Integrity, Yoruba Traditional Society, Olodumare

Introduction

Integrity as a way of life is gradually becoming scarce and impossible in our society. Yoruba Traditional society is not an exception to this. Webster's online dictionary explained integrity as "a firm adherence to a code of moral or artistic values or incorruptibility in the society or any Organisation."¹

Kingship is nowadays a popular concept that relates to power; authority²; politics³; policy; administration⁴; government; management and organization⁵. The opinion from scholars put Integrity of Kingship to mean paying attention to the moral values and norms of policymaking and policy implementation. Unfortunately, the level of respect for Kings in some of our societies is gradually fading away due to a lack of integrity in the process that produces them. Some are even becoming negative willing tools in hands of Political Officeholders. The fact that integrity concerns all members of the society or system makes the involvement of Kingship at all levels essentially important to the success of any policy. This paper will look at an important aspect of the Yoruba Traditional society which is Kingship with its integrity for the throne. It will also seek to delve into some aspects which needed adequate attention so as not to reduce the Traditional beliefs of the Yoruba to nothing. Yoruba people began their civilization at Ile-Ife where the gods descended to earth.⁶ Their homeland is in the South-West of Nigeria and the adjoining parts of Kwara and Kogi State. They could also be found in countries such as Benin and Togo. These entire regions had come to be known as Yorubaland but mention shall be made to prominent cities such as Ile-Ife, Oyo kingdom and few amongst many to avoid unnecessary generalisation. A qualitative method of information gathering shall be employed with the Theological approach in data analysis to discover the influence of religion in the making of Kingship in the Society. This will take us to discuss the concept of checks and balances as a way of maintaining good moral standards and better social values in our society. It will show at the end that Yoruba traditional society is culturally endowed in all spheres of the societal structures; which are guided by social values and integrity that seem to be the bedrock of their culture. These social values cover every range of sectors such as religion,

economics, politics, morals and many more. The Yoruba social values make them remain unshakable irrespective of the invasion of foreign values. Also, the attributes of the Yoruba social values include a sense of good human relations, communal living, hospitality, respect for authority and elders, extended family and religiosity. It will further present Kingship in the Yoruba race as an epitome of integrity, honesty and hard works which are the integral attributes to be upheld at all levels. The paper shall conclude with the understanding that there is a need for proper reorientation of the whole society to know the implication of their actions and inactions. The Yoruba Traditional society will be a better place with high integrity and moral values once these are put in place.

A Panoramic View of the Yoruba Traditional Society

The Yoruba Traditional Society is comprised of the traditional and spiritual-religious concepts and practices of the Yoruba people.⁷ Yoruba religion is formed of diverse traditions and has no single founder.⁸ Yoruba religious beliefs are part of *itan* (tale), the total complex of songs, histories, stories and other cultural concepts which make up the Yoruba society.⁹ Yoruba traditional religion is a concept that has beliefs in *Orisha*, which are in various forms with the manifestations of *Olodumare* in the Yoruba spiritual or religious system as the Supreme Being.¹⁰

Olorun is the manifestation of the Supreme God of the Yoruba pantheon, the owner of the heavens in the Yoruba language. The supreme God is also called *Olodumare*, the supreme creator, who is the conduit between *Òrun* (Heaven), and *Ayé* (Earth).¹¹ This religion has found its way throughout the world and is now expressed in practice throughout areas of Nigeria and other parts of the world. While estimates may vary, some scholars believe that there could be more than 100 million adherents of this spiritual tradition worldwide.¹² Every society in *Yorubaland* is attached to their religion. They founded their roots, basis and origin in the understanding of the gods. These gods protect and guide society respectively on behalf of *Olodumare* the Supreme Being.

It must be emphasised that the Yoruba have unique and rich cultures with robust civilizations which have remained resilient to any other cultural

domination. Though it must be noted despite the good values displayed in the society some of our heritages had been bastardized such as losing our mother tongues to foreign languages, respect for elders is fading out, integrity in hard work and other aspects of our culture is no more. Yet, in all walks of life, the Yoruba people have utilised their rich cultural heritage to contribute greatly to national development in Nigeria. They are pioneers in all fields of human endeavours in Nigeria. The fact that colonialism grouped the Yoruba with other ethnic groups made them realize that they had to share a wider and common identity with other Nigerian ethnic groups. The Yoruba interacted politically, militarily, economically, socially and culturally with the Hausa, Nupe, Edo, Borgu, and others for centuries before the colonial period.¹³

The richness in dynamism and resilience of Yoruba culture also helped to a large extent in the development and growth of stable administration in Nigeria. In the sphere of religion, the cosmology of the Yoruba has influenced the vibrant interaction between the Christian and Islamic religions,¹⁴ which has identified with some of the local religious practices with a sense of continuity that is established in the mind of the convert. The usage of some traditional elements in naming ceremony and introduction of chieftaincy title peculiar to Yoruba culture in churches is a good reference. The Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi said the Yoruba Traditional Religion is very unique and important. He said the religion of Yoruba gave birth to the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity (ROF) which derived its inspiration from the traditional Yoruba Ogboni cult. This has been serving as a potent instrument for religious and social harmony as well as national integration which enhance the integrity of the society.¹⁵ Thus, evidence of Yoruba religious practices is in the South West and wherever the Yoruba had a vibrant interaction with their neighbours.¹⁶ Implicit in this development is the ease with which national unity could be forged if these unifying cultural strands are carefully studied and emphasized. It will build the integrity needed in our society.

The Yoruba are heirs to an ancient, rich and cultured civilization. This culture is known for its artistic triumphs, extraordinary oral literature, the complex pantheon of gods and an urban lifestyle.¹⁷ The Yoruba society is embedded in the ideas and beliefs about what is right or wrong, what is a

good or bad character. The conception of satisfactory social relations and attitudes held by the members of the society is very important. The Society encourages cooperative training which allows elders in a compound to watch over the younger one with adequate discipline embedded in them. The Yoruba have also created sophisticated institutions of government through the leadership offered by the Kings or Traditional rulers. This Yoruba cultural impact is so great not only in Nigeria but anywhere their religion and culture have remained pervasive. This remarkable cultural triumph makes the Yoruba experience one of the most fascinating subjects in the issue of integrity and moral values.

Kingship in Yoruba Traditional Society

Kingship is a word derived from the term “King”, which is attached to the statehood of the King.¹⁸ A king is identified as the most supreme or paramount sovereign in any village, town or city. Generally, he is recognised by his subjects as their spiritual leader and Chief Custodian of traditions.¹⁹ Kingship in Yorubaland has experienced unpleasant changes in leadership and socio-cultural hurdles. Among these are revolutions, wars and the incursion of British rule.²⁰ In Yoruba kingship, the king assumed total dignity befitting royal office on the day of coronation. The Oba would be imbued with the ritual power along with paraphernalia of royal office. Among these were crown, robes, sceptre, horsetail and umbrella. The crown is the most significant of the royal insignia. It stipulates the sacred royal power of the king. With the loss of political authority in recent times to government policies, Yoruba kings have been struggling for relevance in the scheme of things. The struggle for relevance earned them symbolic or nominal authority because it is believed by some people that the glorious pre-colonial status of the traditional rulers should be scrapped since they are old-fashioned, reactionary and obsolete.²¹ In essence, the nominal authority has made them ceremonial rulers not leaders of their communities; worse still, the attainment of this nominal recognition is a herculean task in the light of post-independence political developments.²² However, Yoruba Traditional society is chosen as a case study, because of its political power and influence as we have Ile-Ife for Oonirisa, Oyo where Alaafin is the paramount, Egbaland where the Alake is the paramount ruler to other Yoruba Traditional Societies.

The Making of a King in Yorubaland

The institution of the Oba in Yorubaland is still very entrenched and powerful. The role of the Oba is that of the father figure of the community. He also has a spiritual covering over his people. Bearing these in mind choosing the king places a huge responsibility on kingmakers. Historical records showed ruling houses in Yorubaland take their origins and titles from myth, tradition and values such as Oonirisa, Alaafin, Owa-Adimula to mention but a few. The titles of the kings which are represented by unique names are linked to the source of the crown which is the authority to rule. In most Yoruba communities there are more than one ruling houses to choose from. While the choice of the king could rotate among the ruling houses, some towns or cities do not have that privilege. Rather than praying and fasting over who becomes the next Oba, these communities go spiritual by invoking the *Ifa* to tell them the candidates for the Kingship. Those communities still believe, it is better to keep it real by consulting *Orunmila* to protect the tradition of the land. In the ancient town of Oyo, choosing the Alaafin requires its unique process of enquiring from *Orunmila* likewise in Ile-Ife. This enables the *Oyomesi*, the kingmakers to make ‘the right choice’. In the heart of Osunland, the Ataoja of Oshogbo emerges through the help of the deity of the river Osun.²³ It is good to note that some contemporary society has allowed civilization to take away this sacred function of the gods in nominating who ascend the throne, thereby opening doors for lack of integrity and good values in the land. The Kingmakers sometimes demand money from the aspirants of the stool. The position is sometimes given to whom, who can offer the highest in terms of money and other benefits to them. This has raised the integrity errors in Society.

After such divinations, the inquisition follows with a thorough investigation. The aim of the investigation is meant to crosscheck what the divination may have revealed. The investigation presents the democratic process of choosing the head of a community. When the final choice is made, the *Oba* still does not rule absolutely. His regime is under checks and balances to determine the level of his integrity and to know the kind of person he is plus what will happen to the Kingdom under his reign. When the selected prince or candidate eventually becomes the Oba,

as being chosen unanimously by the kingmakers, he is in some instances shown to the community in form of a parade around the town.²⁴ The aim is to ensure that ordinary folks have input or say in whom eventually rules over them. Interestingly the Oba is meant to be the father of all religions practised in his locality. This means apart from taking part in traditional rites of passage, the Oba must also identify with all the religious practices in his domain such as the Muslim and Christian communities. An elaborate coronation ceremony is mostly put in place to welcome their new king.

The Administrative System of Yoruba Traditional Society

Religion was a critical element of administration in Yoruba politics. Political activities derived their source and legitimacy from religion. There is unanimity among all oral traditions regarding the foundation of Yoruba social organization that Ife is the traditional home and centre of dispersal of the Yoruba people.²⁵

Before the advent of the British in Yorubaland, Yoruba kingdoms maintained an orderly and unified political system which is still in effect today.²⁶ A Yoruba kingdom was made up of headquarter and other local towns with villages. However, its political administration consisted of a central level and subordinate units. The central level was headed by the Oba (king) and assisted by a handful of chief and other political figures in the administration of the kingdom with the help of a priest whose divining guides the territory.²⁷ The subordinate units are headed by *Baales* and concentrated only on the administration of the towns and villages in the kingdom.²⁸ Like the Oba, the *Baale* also had a group of chiefs that assisted him in his area of jurisdiction. However, the *Baale* of each town and village is entitled to pay annual homage (*isakole*) to the Oba at the central level. Any erring *Baale* can be relieved of his post or sanctioned to certain punishment respective of his offence since all *Baales* were responsible to the Oba at the central level, but this must have the consent of some other officers in the administration.²⁹

In Yorubaland, the King (*Oba*), or in the case of Ife and Oyo specifically, the *Ooni* and *Alaafin* respectively, were the chief executive, in whom was reposed both religious and political authority.³⁰ The traditional authority

in Yorubaland was perceived as divinely ordained and, therefore, was revered by its subjects. According to Afe, ‘Kings in Yorubaland were regarded as the divine representatives of the gods on earth. They were often credited with various kinds of supernatural powers, including that of divining.’³¹

The political organization of the old Oyo Empire was analogous to that of Ife, where the King (*Alaafin*) personified political and religious authority. Falola aptly described this political complexity:

“The *Alaafin* combined spiritual and temporal powers in his office. In his spiritual capacity, the *Alaafin* was seen by his subjects as the companion of the gods. As far as temporal powers were concerned, he exercised political control over central administration; designated administrative officers reported to him as well as owed him allegiance in exercising powers over provincial matters. But whilst in theory, the *Alaafin*’s power was absolute because he was *Ekeji Orisa*, that is to say, the companion of the gods and owner of the land, in practice, the *Alaafin* was circumscribed by a system of checks and balances which greatly limited his influence and power.”³²

Generally, therefore, kings in Yorubaland were to be accorded utmost reverence by the people whose perception was otherwise acting contrary to the demands of traditions, which could incur punishment from the gods.³³ In this theocratic monarchy, reverence is attached to the Oba’s authority not because of his temporal standing but due to the spiritual endowment, which put him beyond ordinary mortals. Religion was, therefore, a cornerstone of Yoruba politics.

In Yoruba communities, a more reserved way of life remains one that expresses a theology that links local beliefs to a central citadel government and its sovereignty over a hinterland of communities through the monarch. The seat of the king (*oba*) is responsible for the welfare of

its jurisdiction, in return for confirmation of the legitimacy of the oba's rule over his subjects.³⁴

This basic culture and civilisation which the Yoruba have built still endured and remained the pivot of the political, economic, religious and intellectual development of the country till today. Yoruba Religion developed a highly sophisticated system of government with effective checks and balances, spiced with a high level of gender consciousness, adding that the Yoruba traditional system of government is indeed one of the oldest forms of democracy in the world with effect to equity and fairness to the sharing of available resources in the land.³⁵

The Integrity of the throne and Kingship in Yoruba Society

Integrity is the practice of being honest and showing a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values.³⁶ In ethics, integrity is regarded as the honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one's actions.³⁷ Integrity can stand in opposition to hypocrisy,³⁸ in that judging with the standards of integrity involves regarding internal consistency as a virtue and suggests that parties holding within themselves conflicting values should account for the discrepancy or alter their beliefs. The word integrity evolved from the Latin adjective *integer*, meaning whole or complete.³⁹ In this context, integrity is the inner sense of "wholeness" deriving from qualities such as honesty and consistency of character. As such, one may judge that others "have integrity" to the extent that they act according to the values, beliefs and principles they claim to hold.

The integrity of the King on the throne in Yoruba Society is important because they are chosen, appointed, or elected to serve the society. To be able to serve, Kings are given the power to make, execute, or control the policy of the Traditional Society. They have the power to influence something or someone. There is, however, a risk that Kings will not use this power to serve society. Aristotle said that because rulers have the power they will be tempted to use it for personal gain.⁴⁰ an Oba must withstand this temptation, and that requires integrity.

Integrity also demands knowledge and compliance with both the people and the spirit. Integrity is also acting consistently not only with what is generally accepted as moral, what others think but primarily with what is ethical, what a King should do based on reasonable arguments.⁴¹ Furthermore, integrity is not just about why a Kingship acts in a certain way, but also about who the King is. Questions about a person's integrity cast doubt not only on their intentions but also on the source of those intentions, the person's character. So, integrity is about having the right ethical virtues that become visible in a pattern of behaviour.

An important virtue of every Oba in Yorubaland is faithfulness, humility,⁴² and accountability. Furthermore, they should be authentic and role models. Bolaji Idowu identified integrity as the crown of the virtues, distinguishing it from vanity, temperance, and humility.⁴³

Kingship should come with positive promises and when they give promises carefully, or reluctantly, but once they have given that promise, they follow through on that promise without fail. The Kingship represents *Olodumare* who cannot fail in his promise.

Jack Welch believes that if you are afraid of making promises then you do not have the guts to be an effective leader in any society. Such an Oba will surround himself with yes people, who will say what he wants to hear instead of saying the truth. Integrity in Kingship produces a better Society.⁴⁴

Kingship in Yoruba Traditional Society should not be afraid of Truth. A King with integrity should not be afraid to face the truth. This is called the reality principle, or "seeing the world as it is, not as you wish it to be." It is perhaps the most important principle of leadership and is dependent on integrity because it demands truthfulness and honesty. Many societies and communities fail because they do not follow the reality principle. Integrity means telling the truth even if the truth is ugly. Better to be honest than to delude others, because then you are probably deluding yourself, too. Unfortunately, most of the Kings in Yorubaland had failed to speak the truth, especially to the political class. In the past, some traditional rulers in the South-West gathered around a particular

candidate for Presidency in Nigeria. They prayed and gave him false promised of winning the election. The result later showed where they belong.

Kings need to be courageous and be open to the idea that they could be wrong. Many Obas eventually fail because they refuse to question their assumptions or conclusions. Yoruba Traditional Society is so sophisticated that any King ruling in it must be ready for different ideas and advice from people especially the chiefs.

There should be no exceptions to honesty and integrity in any Traditional Society. Integrity is a state of mind and is not situational. If we compromise our integrity in small situations with little consequence, then it becomes very easy to compromise on the small situations and the communities will lack the necessary development. A King with integrity always errs on the side of fairness, especially when other people are unfair. The true mark of Kingship is how fair a King can be when other people are treating one unfairly.

The Principle of Checks and Balances in the Administration of Yoruba Traditional Society

The principle of checks and balances is not alien to Yoruba culture and tradition. It is a good factor that enhances integrity in the land. Available historical evidence abounds on societies in Nigeria that had maintained a sophisticated government with the adherent bites of the principle of checks and balances before the emergence of the colonial era. History shows that Yoruba Religion is no stranger to checks and balances. It is entrenched in the political-social system of governance in all Yoruba communities.

Old Oyo Empire grew to be the dominant power and a wealthy kingdom among other kingdoms in the Yoruba-land in the 16th century. The principal factor that made Oyo supreme was its centralized system of government through the guidance of *Olodumare*. One of its paramount features was the "principle of checks and balances". This made the old Oyo empire to be referred to in history as one of the centres of African civilization in the 15th and 16th centuries A.D.⁴⁵

At the apex of the administration of the government was the king who was known as *Alaafin*. He was usually referred to by his subjects as *Kabiesi –Alaseikeji Orisa* meaning one who no one dare question his authority because he is next to the gods. This impression given to the king by his subjects made the position of the king divinely. Despite this divine tag, the *Alaafin* was not autocratic. This was because their position and activities as king were checked by some council of chiefs known as the *Oyomesi*.⁴⁶ Any King that lacks integrity will be shown the way out of the Kingship or the throne.

The *Oyomesi* was saddled with the responsibility of enthroning a king after the demise of the incumbent and also, dethroning any king that was not responsible and violated the regulations attached to his position as king in the empire. Also, the *Oyomesi* had the authority to dethrone any king that defaults on the being of his sovereignty which included peaceful co-existence, management of wealth and resources in his realm and defending the empire from within and without. Any breach in these sacred functions by the *Alaafin* or any Oba signifies the beginning of the end of his reign. This is why Yoruba Traditional Religion is unique.

The *Oyomesi* will dethrone the kings by sending an empty calabash to the king, with some incantation that “the people reject you, the earth reject you.”⁴⁷ On receipt of this gift, the king is expected to commit suicide.⁴⁸ This was the case of *Alaafin Odarawu* and *Alaafin Jayin* in the 17th century when they violated the regulations attached to their positions as kings. They took their rejection lightly and committed suicide. The council of the *Oyomesi* was headed by *Bashorun*.⁴⁹

As a result of the strong measure of checks and balances that was present in the system of government of the Old Oyo empire made the activities of the people in governing council be just and fair which brought development to the kingdom and made it grow large to become an empire and a dominant power in the Yorubaland in 17th century A.D⁵⁰ We can go back to the root and revive some dead principles that brought growth and development to our societies in the past. This principle served as a watchdog that checked the activities of the people in the governing

council of these societies. People in the governing council been aware of this measure and the penalty they will face if they violate the regulations attached to their positions as members of governing council made them be just, fair, and accountable to their subjects and also engaged in any activities that will bring satisfaction to the interest of their subjects.

Theological Appraisal of the Integrity of the throne and Kingship in Yoruba Society

Theologically, the true king is to be chosen by God from among the society to establish integrity and value of lives. However, God works through recognized society leaders to execute his will in the selection process. For example, Samuel is the one who identifies Saul and then David to be the first of Israel's kings. Biblical kings were anointed rather than crowned. From one point of view, the king was merely one man among many, a man representing all citizens. From another point of view, the anointing is an essential characteristic of a king marking him as in a special relationship with God to be the king and shepherd of Yahweh's people (2 Samuel 5:1-3; Psalm 2:6).

In the anointing, the emphasis was on God's relationship with the king rather than the king's preeminence over his subjects. Instead of accepting a crown of authority, the king subjected himself to a ceremonial purification rite whereby God's power was conferred upon him to accomplish all the good envisioned in the covenant promises for the people and their land. Annually the people expected the king to come before them and renew his commitment to following the covenant relationship with God. In this service of humility and moral conduct, the king swears an oath of fidelity to the covenant. He also expressed his sincere desire to promote justice and peace by his conduct throughout the land (Psalm 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 132, 144; 2 Samuel 23).

It is believed by some scholars that the integrity of the throne and Kingship in Yoruba society has dwindled to such a level that the subjects have lost confidence in their paramount rulers. This is contrary to what was obtained in the past when the voices from the thrones are laws as this was in tandem with Bible traditions. Many passages adduced to this claim; King David gave an instruction that the people be counted before

they proceeded to war as against God's instruction but people obeyed the King even though they knew that the repercussion will not be pleasant.

"So David said to Joab and the commanders of the army, "Go, number Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, and bring me a report, that I may know their number."

But Joab said, "May the LORD add to his people a hundred times as many as they are! Are they not, my lord the king, all of them my lord's servants? Why then should my lord require this? Why should he bring guilt upon Israel?"

But the king's word prevailed against Joab. So Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came back to Jerusalem.

But God was displeased with this thing, and he smote Israel.

And David said to God, "I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing. But now, I pray thee, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."(1Chr. 21: 2-4; 7-8. RSV).

When David realised his foolishness, he held up his integrity by pleading with God not to visit his punishment on his subject rather, he should be made to face the consequence of his actions. In our contemporary society, investigations show that not many Thrones and Kings command such authority. The pre-election melodrama that took place in 2014 and 2018 whereby some Obas in the South West gave their tacit support to one of the political party candidates but their positions were disregarded by their followers and those candidates lost in the elections. This was large because they felt those Obas may have been compromised.

Annually the people expected the king to come before them and renew his commitment to following the covenant relationship with God. In this service of humility which took place at the New Year Festival and in response to questions by a priest regarding his moral conduct, the king swears an oath of fidelity to the covenant. He expressed his sincere desire to promote justice and peace by his conduct throughout the land. The

"Royal Psalms" record the speeches and hymns that kings presented at this annual event. See for example: Psalm 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 132, 144; 2 Samuel 23. (Kenik, 1976; Selz, 2008; Rengstorf, 1962).

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Recommendations

- i. It is therefore recommended that the sanctity of the Kingship in Yoruba Traditional society should be maintained.
- ii. The principles of check and balances be enforced, to ensure the control of the institutions involved. Furthermore, that integrity, honesty and hard work which are the integral attributes of the Yoruba race should be upheld at all levels.

Conclusion

It suffices to conclude with the claim that the Kingship in the traditional Yoruba society has the elements of integrity with the involvement of *Olodumare*. The system ascribed central and executive power to the Oba. Kingship with superstructure within Yoruba traditional society should be

able to accomplish lots of development. The function of Kingship should be seen with integrity in the community development. This will involve ruling their kingdoms or domains to bring progress and economic freedom for subjects. The Kings will become the voice of the grassroots to the three tiers of government. The positive functions they perform through *Olodumare* in their communities should join the following as recommendations.

Traditional rulers should be allowed to chair meetings of the council of elders which formulate and enforce the rules that govern the domain. This gives direction, political and economic stability in the Society. It will ensure better advice to the Government Officials for Development of Their Locality. The functions of traditional rulers in community development are vital for the success of society. These traditional rulers, who are most highly influential and experienced citizens, are available to give wise counsel to political office holders when they consult them. This helps the governments to make good decisions and increase their competence. In addition, the government works with them to provide projects that are beneficial to the generality of the people, such as health centres, maternities, boreholes, and repairs of local roads, and schools. Further, they make sure there is peace and safety in the community and that the citizens obey the laws of the land. They communicate these ideals through town criers, the village at age-grade meetings and social gatherings summoned by the traditional rulers.

Another area where the function of traditional rulers in community development is necessary is in the correction and punishment of wrongdoing in society. Fear of the community deity is the beginning of wisdom. The use of these gods enables Traditional rulers to maintain the peace of the community, punish bad behaviour and encourage goodness for economic development to thrive. They mobilize the community to pay taxes to the local council authority to enable them to repair community roads, public schools, and other public utilities. It is the responsibility of both the traditional rulers and the government to educate the populace to perform their civic duties such as registration to vote, pay tax, vote in elections and participate in Census.

ENDNOTES

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