

PEACE AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA: LESSONS FROM YORUBA TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria is in dire need of peace and security; considering diverse security challenges bedeviling the country; ranging from suicide bombing, ethno-religious crises, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and the like; which are in no small measure drawing the nation backward in its efforts towards greatness. It is in the light of these that this study sets out to bring to the fore the peace and security aspects of Yoruba traditional education as models for Nigeria which can serve as one of the strategies to check the aforementioned challenges. Aspects of Yoruba indigenous educational system on peace and security are juxtaposed with their equivalents in the modern Nigerian setting while the ones conceptualized as incongruous in the setting are merged with their match in contemporary Nigeria.

There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria is currently under siege of diverse security challenges. Bitter experiences of bombings, kidnappings, robberies and other dastardly acts are being unleashed on innocent and defenseless citizens almost at regular intervals. Evidence of these abound in Nigerian Newspapers and some of the captions are reproduced in this paper.

It is not an over statement to state that these menace have drawn the nation backward on all fronts in its quest for greatness. These enormous security challenges bedeviling the nation, Nigeria call for solutions from all ends to halt the menace which necessitated this study.

Yoruba traditional education is chosen as a focus in this study as models for Nigeria. The paper is delineated into sections for detailed analysis starting with the introductory part. In subsequent sections, the major concepts of the study were defined and an over view of security challenges in Nigeria was given before exemplifying the issues on traditional education with a particular reference to Yoruba traditional education which were juxtaposed with their equivalents in the modern Nigerian settings. A conclusion was drawn that a lot of lessons can be learnt from Yoruba traditional education in combating various security challenges confronting Nigeria.

Conceptual Exemplification

Security

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2000:1063) defined security as “the activities involved in protecting a country, building, or person against attack or damage”. In the same vein, *the Free Online Dictionary* (2012) also defined security as “precautions taken to ensure against theft, espionage etc.

From the foregoing definitions, it means that the challenges confronting Nigeria at present is that of how to protect the country and its citizens against attack.

The Yoruba

The Yoruba is one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria who occupy the South-Western States of the country. (Ogun, Lagos, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, and Ekiti) mainly, and some parts of Kwara and Kogi States in Northern Nigeria. Apart from Nigeria, the Yoruba are also found in sizeable numbers in the South-eastern parts of the Republic of Benin, and Togo in West Africa. (Balogun, 2009:1).

Gbadegehin (1991:174) also stated that:

While the Yoruba can be found in different parts of the globe, a thriving Yoruba culture can be found in South-America and the Carribeans, especially Brazil and Cuba where the descendants of the unwilling immigrants to the new world have been able to maintain their identity and preserve their cultural heritage.

All these descriptions of the Yoruba bring to the fore who the Yorubas are, whose traditional education system is a reference point in this paper.

Yoruba Traditional Education

Fafunwa (1974:1) stated that “traditional or indigenous education is the educational system prevalent in Africa before the arrival of Islam and Christianity.

This description is also in congruence with Yoruba traditional education. Fayemi and Macaulay Adeyelu (2009:3) elucidated further on Yoruba traditional thus:

Yoruba had an indigenous conception of education before their contact with the west ... Education for the traditional Yoruba is a lifelong process. Education is seen by them as any act or experience that has an integrative and formative effect on the mind, character, skills, physical and spiritual abilities of the individual to enable him/her live effectively and respectably in the society.

The deduction from these descriptions of Yoruba traditional education is that it is the informal educational system prevalent in Yoruba culture before contact with any foreign culture. This kind of educational system does not require all the paraphernalia of modern educational system like, classrooms, chalks, chalkboards, professional teachers and the like but a system whereby the parents, siblings, family members and elders constitute the teachers.

The goals of traditional education in Africa which also corresponds with that of Yoruba traditional education are highlighted by Fafunwa (1974:1) thus:

- to develop the child’s latest physical skills
- to develop character
- to inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority
- to develop intellectual skills
- to acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour.
- To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs
- To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

An Overview of Security Challenges in Nigeria

Olanibi, (2012) cited some captions from Nigerian Newspaper headlines thus:

- Four feared dead in Kaduna bomb Blast
(The Nation, April 23, 2011)
- Over 100 dead in Kano blasts
(Sunday Tribune, Jan., 22, 2012)
- Police discover bomb making factory in Kaduna. Terror in Bauchi; 2 soldiers, DPO, 8 others killed. Explosions rock 2 churches. Fresh bombs defused in Kano.
(Nigerian Tribune, Jan 23, 2012)
- 8 killed, 39 injured in fresh Jos Church blast.
(National Mirror, February 27, 2012)
- 4 soldiers, 4 policemen killed by gunmen.
(Nigerian Tribune, March 2, 2012.)
- Kidnappers place N60m ransom to free lecturer in Lagos.
(Zimbio Inc, May 27, 2012).
- Slaughter of two Indians, others, JTF kills 4, arrests 50 in Maiduguri.
(Weekly Trust, July 28, 2012).
- Gunmen attack Ogun Monarch, ex-lawmakers.
(The Punch, June 13, 2012)
- 15 year old bombs mosque, kills 10.
(Sat Tribune, July 14, 2012)
- Gunmen attack Sambo’s house in Zaria. As suicide bombers hit Sokoto.

- (Daily Trust, July 31, 2012)
- In Yobe ... Borno ex-commissioner shot dead
(Daily Trust, August 6, 2012)
- Genocide going on in Borno
(Daily Trust, August 17, 2012)
- Bayelsa kidnapped monarch: Abductors demand N50m ransom for his release.
(The Nation: quoted by ZimbioInc, Aug 28, 2012)
- Evil Banker: Female Cashier sends robbers after customer. Gang snatches N5m from victim.
(Daily Sun, September 18, 2012).
- Nine killed in renewed Plateau clashes
(Daily Trust, April 23, 2013)
- Hundreds killed in Baga
(Daily Trust, April 23, 2013)
- How gunmen kidnapped Monguno in Maiduguri. Abductors demand ransom-son
(Weekly Trust, May 4, 2013)

All these captions which cut across the length and breadth of Nigeria are worrisome and demand solutions from all ends (Olanibi, 2012). The next sub-headings are devoted to the peace and security aspects of Yoruba traditional education system. The cardinal point in Yoruba traditional education to achieve the goal of having a peaceful society devoid of crimes is hinged on:

Moral Education: Character training forms the ultimate goal of Yoruba indigenous education. As stated earlier, the Yoruba traditional educational system major goal is to produce honest, respectable, skilled, and socially responsible manpower that would be socially responsible. These instructions are spiritedly offered by parents, siblings, and family members as exemplified in this Yoruba adage: “*Enikan ni i bi mo, gbogbo aye ni i wo o*” (It is only a parent that bears a child, but the moral upbringing is the duty of everybody)

This aspect of the educational focus is congruent with the modern Nigerian setting in the form of moral instructions being taught in schools. The additional efforts required here are that of intensification of moral instructions in schools and an emulation of Yoruba traditional education where parents, siblings, and family members see the proper upbringing of children as theirs. The modern parents should not see moral education as a duty to be left to the formal school system alone. To achieve the aforementioned objective, one of the tools employed by the traditional teachers is a special communicative style known as proverb which is discussed below.

Proverbs: Proverb is a well known phrase or sentence that gives advice, or says something that is generally true. (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000:939). Proverbs have the potentiality of conviction than mere expressions. Some of the Yoruba proverbs which caution against all manners of crimes are:

Ija o dola,
Oruko ni i soni

Fighting does not translate to wealth.
It only gives one a bad name.

Ojo gbogbo ni tole,
Ojo kan ni tolohun

Every day is for the thief
A day is for the owner

Kaka ki n jale
Ma kuku deru

I will rather be a slave
Than being a thief

Eni ba jale lekan,

To wa daran bori,
Aso ole lo da bora.

He who steals once
But later wears expensive clothing
Is wearing a thief's attire.

These samples from the numerous list warn against all sorts of crimes which is still relevant in modern times, which can be used as jingles on mass media condemning crimes, cautionary statements on sign boards and posters at strategic places, etc. Intensification on this existing modern practice is highly desired as it has the potentialities of preventive roles, as buttressed by Adejumo, (2008:97), who stated that "the role of communication in crisis management is preventive as the norms and values of the society are imparted and internalized by every member of the society.

Youth Empowerment: One of the strategies of Yoruba traditional education against crimes is the prevention of idleness in youths as exemplified in the adage, "an idle mind, is the devil's workshop". Fafunwa (1974:9-10) lays credence to this in traditional education thus:

... Children and adolescents were engaged in particular participatory education through ceremonies, rituals, imitation, recitation, and demonstration. They were involved in practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, knitting and so on. Recreational subjects included wrestling, dancing, drumming, acrobatic display, and racing.

The lesson derived here is that the youths who are mostly the perpetrators of crimes should be engaged to prevent them from being idle. Even their free hours can be occupied by various recreational programmes obtainable in their localities. The unemployed ones can still be occupied in forms of youth empowerment schemes. Examples of these are operational in Osun and Oyo State tagged Osun State Youth Empowerment Scheme (O-YES) and Youth Empowerment Scheme of Oyo State (YES-O), respectively whereby the engaged youths are paid allowance after various useful activities to keep them busy thereby, distracting their attention from crime.

Taboos: This is a strong weapon in prevention of crimes in Yoruba traditional education. According to Akintola (1999:189). "Taboos are not mere superstition among the Yoruba but tangibly forces which if ignored, flouted, or handled negatively wreck havoc on the flouter".

It is a taboo to kill, steal, or kidnap in the setting under focus whose deviance culminates in serious reprimand for the offenders. While noting that the use of constitution, law courts etc as replacements for taboos in the modern settings, the issue of using taboos to check crimes which is religions can still be juxtaposed with the dominant religions in the modern Nigerian setting where the religious leaders like pastors, imams, *alfas*, bishops etc are expected to play important roles in constant reminder of the need to avoid crimes by their adherents. What is regarded as taboo in the traditional religion is analogous to sin in Christianity and Islam.

Conclusion

Attempts have been made in this paper to bring to the fore the issues inherent in Yoruba traditional education on prevention of crimes as models for Nigeria. The paper also juxtaposed the scenarios with their equivalents in modern Nigeria to justify their practicability in guarding against crimes in order to achieve peace and security in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In view of diverse security challenges confronting Nigeria, the inclusion of diverse security strategies enumerated in this paper such as youth empowerment, intensification of morality, emphases on religious teachings against crime, and communicative strategies are suggested as complimentary panacea to peace and security challenges in Nigeria.

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