

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF ALAAFIN KANRAN: ITS SOCIOLOGICAL RELEVANCE AND HISTORICAL REFLECTION IN THE 21ST CENTURY POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF NIGERIA

Adeyemi Oluwadamilare Oresanya
Department of Performing Arts,
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye
&

Taiwo Adebayo Adeyinka
Department of History and Diplomatic Studies,
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye
&

Adejoke Adetoun Fadirepo, PhD
Department of Performing Arts,
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye

Abstract

This study juxtaposes the reign of a tyrant monarch known as Alaaḡin Kanran with the corrupt political administration in Nigeria. Tyranny can be described as the ability to be cruel, rigid, and obstinate to the plight of the people especially subordinates. The play in focus reflects the history of the reign of two different Kings in Old Oyo Empire in the 17th century. It is a known fact that the role and relevance of traditional and political institutions in general and traditional rulership in particular, continue to generate intense and sometimes, quite serious debates in Nigeria concerning their relevance in the current period especially as regards what they offer to modern political settings. This paper therefore employs the use of the descriptive method of research where themes, historical and sociological relevance of the play Alaaḡin Kanran are examined. In present day Nigeria, both traditional and political leaders are not only to be blamed for bad governance; they should also endure widespread criticism for bad policies, wrong appointments and dwindling economy. This study reveals that autocracy and totalitarian act result to disobedience to the rule of law and it should not be allowed in 21st century democracy. A government with strong policies on good governance for the people must ensure execution and implementation of the good policies. This paper concludes on the message of hope and unity, a people united can never be defeated. This study therefore recommends the strong use of the ballot to reject evil and corrupt leaders in the society.

Keywords: *Alaaḡin Kanran*, Tyranny, corruption, tradition, political system

Introduction

Poverty, severe hardship, class struggle, discrimination and marginalisation have been perpetual recurring issues in the history of Nigeria, most especially since independence. During the colonial era, there were several protest and agitations from the educated Nigerian politicians yearning for self government, resource control and actual state independence from the colonial government. Many would have expected the country to have experience prompt and absolute development since her independence but unfortunately, the political class has only used their position to enrich themselves to the detriment of the masses.

The play *Alaaḡin Kanran* written by Lekan Balogun is set in the Yoruba traditional kingdom of the old Oyo Empire. Fadipe in his book “*Sociology of the Yoruba*” outlines the locations of the people. The Yoruba kingdom in history according to him was domiciled at the Egbado and Awori of the Ilaro division of Abeokuta Province of Nigeria; the Egba of Abeokuta Province of Nigeria; the various

groups of Ijebu in Ijebu Province; the Oyo and Ilorin Provinces; the Ife and Ijesa of Oyo Province; the Ondo, the Idoko, Ikale, and Ilaje of Ondo Province; the various small groups of related people collectively known as the Ekiti, the most important of which are the people of Otun, Ado, Ikole and Efon; the Yagba and Igbomina of Ilorin and Kabba Provinces (2012, p.29). All the indigenes from the various provinces above speak the same language known as Yoruba. The prevalent system of government in Yoruba kingdom is monarchical (Fadipe, 2012, p.198). The sovereignty of Oyo Empire brought about civil rule in the whole kingdom. There was never a record of equal distribution of wealth as it is done in a communal state. The empire experienced a class structure where the upper class was given palatial treatment while the lower class was subjected to paying of various taxes.

The Nigeria society has always experienced tough leaders who barely consider the feelings and yearnings of the people. A nation that the citizens do not enjoy the benefits of nationhood like the fundamental human rights, basic amenities etc can be regarded as a desert. A society cannot also exist without anyone to pilot the affairs of the people. The society begins to exist when the inhabitants can reflect, think, ponder or mull over on the way in which things should be organised appropriately. Kobiowu, (2022, p.1) opines that even when human beings are not conscious of themselves as members of a group, they still act and think in ways and part determined by their group membership. This simply means that as soon as people begin to hold views on their leaders (especially the President), various appointments and policy implementations, the positive and negative situation in the country among many other occurrences, they suddenly realise the sense of belonging as citizens.

Bronowski, (1976) posits that sociology is concerned with a range of social phenomena (facts/experiences/situations), from the most microscopic (smallest unit) i.e individual level, to the most macroscopic (largest unit) i.e the societies (cited in Kobiowu, 2022, p.2). Sociology deals with the study of individuals, organisation, and societies and their interrelationships. Sociology expresses the systematic study of social behaviour and human groups. It focuses on social relationships, how these relationships influence people's behaviour, and how societies, the sum total of these relationships develop and change. This study using the play *Alaafin Kanran* reflects deeply on the suffering of the people, the state of the nation and the historical antecedents of the leaders in their penchant for embezzlement of public funds and perpetual distribution of national cake among themselves without proper governance and sympathy for the people.

Synopsis of the play

Alaafin Kanran as written by Lekan Balogun, centres on the history of the old Oyo kingdom in the 17th century i.e. 1600. The play revolves around the reign of a tyrant monarch known as Alaafin Kanran. A tyrant does not respect the plight of the people especially subordinates. Kanran's reign came after the death of Alaafin Odarawu who many thought was the worst tyrant the kingdom could ever witness until the reign of Kanran. As usual, newly crowned monarchs just like political leaders make promises to the people as an insight or a forecast into what the future holds. Thus, Alaafin Kanran whose reign is under analysis assured the people of good and quality leadership with welfare of the people as the core of his agenda to lift the people out of poverty, unfortunately, such assurances were mere empty promises. The reign of Kanran happens to be worse than the people could ever imagine. His tyranny affected old and young, poor and rich, middle class and the upper class and even the first class chiefs were not left out of the embers of the king's wrath. Kanran's neglect for rule of law was made manifest on how he deposed or removed Bashorun Woruda (the head of the king makers in Oyo at that time).

Historical and Sociological relevance of the play in the 21st century

History is an important factor in human existence. This is necessary to guide the path of one's ideology, belief, custom and tradition and most importantly the understanding and implementation of the law (constitution) which is the grand norm upon which other laws take precedents. The play in focus reflects an existing history of the reign of two different kings in old Oyo Empire in the 17th century. It is a known fact that the role and relevance of traditional political institutions in general and traditional rulership in particular, continue to generate intense and sometimes, quite serious debates in Nigeria concerning their relevance in the current period especially as regards what they offer to modern political settings. Heated, bitter and rancorous debates on the relevance of those who preside over indigenous political institutions who are variously designated numerous nomenclature as *Chiefs, Emirs, Oba's, Obis, Olus, Attahs, Aiotse* and so on, in modern day Nigeria elicit a great deal of interest and response both in scholarly writings and on the pages of newspapers and news-magazines (Agbese, 2004, pp.34-35). Yet the Obaship institution has been in existence for centuries prior to modern day Nigeria especially among the Yoruba people that the play depicts.

According to Olaoba (2002) in Yoruba Obaship, "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 and horsetail as umbrella" (p.89). The crown is the most significant of the royal insignia. It stipulates the sacred royal power of the king. In the same vein, Lasisi and Jimoh (2005), noted that "the royal prerogatives of wearing the crown are restricted to the king. This is simply because only the *Oba's* crown has a horn called *Iere Okinin Yorubaland*" (p.3). Moreover, it can only be found in the palace and that distinguishes them from commoners. Significantly, at installation, the *Oba* prostrated for the last time before the kingmakers in the public gaze of the people. He is thereafter restrained from doing obeisance to men. This is probably why Olaoba (2002) concluded that an *Oba* in Yorubaland could declare war and make peace, conclude alliances, send and receive ambassadors, levy taxes, administer justice and appoint subordinate officials.

Anyawu (2002), maintain from a general point of view that "the Obaship stool clearly shows the office of a king in the kingdom. In essence, the Obaship revolves around the statehood of a king.

In Yorubaland, *Oba* and their offices were to be accorded utmost reverence by the people whose perception was that doing otherwise was acting contrary to demands of traditions, which could incur punishment from the gods" (p.67). While Obaship refers to the ruler in his Kingdom, the *Oba* in Yoruba context is addressed as *Oba, alaseekeji Orisa* (King, the ruler and deputy of the gods) (Olaoba, 2002 and Johnson, 1921). He is also addressed as *Kabiyesi*, an expression which is a contracted form of the sentence *ki a bi nyinkosi* (there is no question of anybody querying your authority or action) (Johnson, 1921, p.40).

According to Samuel Johnson (1921), "*the Alaafin is the supreme head of all the Oba's and princes of the Yoruba nation; he is the direct lineal descendant and successor of the reputed founder of the nation*" (pp.3-4). However, this statement is too encompassing as the *Alaafin's* authority did not extend to the entire Yorubaland even at the apex of Oyo's wealth and political fame between 1500 and 1800. In pre-colonial times, clairvoyance was credited to a typical Yoruba *Oba*. He was regarded as the most powerful, the most knowing, the wisest of all men and the paramount ruler with larger than life image (Ige, 2005, p.107).

Meanwhile, an *Oba* was expected to reciprocate this reverence and power accorded him by ensuring the prosperity of his kingdom. Likewise, misfortunes like scarcity of food, epidemics were usually

blamed on the ill-luck of the Oba, since he was expected to establish a direct communication link with the divinities either by magical means or by rites or both. The usual remedial measure was to propitiate the divinities to avert negative tendencies usually through an ordained priest. On occasions where such approach could not reverse the situation, the king was removed through popular insurrections. In the old Oyo Empire, a calabash bearing the head of a parrot was presented to the king, which signified suicide or total banishment from the kingdom. In Akure kingdom, the nakedness of the town's women signified the urgent removal of the *Deji* (Ige, 2005, p.107).

Practically, there were efficient checks and balances on an Oba's functions and power. In most cases, the kingmakers participated in decision making. In old Oyo, the *Bashorun* was the head of the *Oyomesi* that served as constraints to the *Alaafin's* power. In other parts of Yorubaland, the fame, power and integrity of the traditional ruler were fundamentally different from that of the *Alaafin*. In Akure, for example, the *Deji* was held in highest esteem and regarded as a divine king. In theory, he possessed absolute power, but in practical terms, he did not rule alone. He was assisted by some groups of Chiefs that included the *Iare*, *Ikomo*, *Ejua*, *Ogbe* and *Owose* (Ige, 2005, p.108). The situation in the play has continued to occur even after demise of *Alaafin Kanran* and in fact very peculiar in 21st century Nigeria political space. This was noted by Terhemba (2015) that the reign of *Alaafin Awole* from 1789-1796 was very chaotic that at the end, he had to commit suicide. He noted that there has been a history of Yoruba leaders from the pre-colonial down to modern Nigeria that fail to give the Yoruba people the kind of leadership that Yoruba people are used to. This therefore suggests two strong genres in the play, satire and tragedy. A satire is usually a fiction and less frequently non-fiction, in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, often with the intent of shaming or expose the perceived flaws of individuals, cooperation, government, or society into improvement. Tragedy therefore dwells on pity and fear.

In juxtaposing *Alaafin Kanran* and the current crop of political leadership in Nigeria, one thing is common, and that is selfish interest. *Alaafin Kanran* lack feelings and emotions for his subjects. His believe is that the king must conceal all form of emotions in order to be able to rule properly. He believes that any iota of emotion expressed can be taken for granted by the people. After several appeals to the sense of emotion of the king, *Bashorun Woruda*, the most outspoken among the king makers and chiefs in his lines confront the king:

Bashorun:...A leader is the one who feels passionately for his people, and tells them what they want to hear, does what makes them happy, proffers solutions to their problems and not compound it. He does not put their peace of mind in turmoil with his decisions. If we cannot achieve all these, then, we are nothing but failures.(pp.28-29).

The Muhammadu Buhari administration witnessed highest level of bias in political appointments into public offices. The then President allegedly favoured his ethnic region (Hausa/Fulani) more than every other region in the country. Majority of the heads of the security apparatus in the country were of Hausa/Fulani region. In a multi-ethnic nation as Nigeria, where is the principle of federal character? Was the President saying the only competent persons qualified are those from his region? It is obvious that President Muhammadu Buhari is more interested in himself than the masses that voted for him. If it is true that a leader must listen to the yearning of the people, then the President must realise that total inclusion of all region is a must for peace and tranquillity and also for proper development to take place without bias or sentiment for a particular region. The society needs unbiased and selfless leaders in all sectors. The youth's movement in the play is another similarity in 21st century Nigeria. Oyo militant youths' stood firm in their resolve to confront the tyrant king and with the support of *Bashorun Woruda*, tyranny was defeated:

Bashorun: ...*Alaafin Kanran*, I have no powers over you; our gods do. Our tradition

embodies and dictates it. It is the tradition that I, BashorunWoruda, invoke with such authority with which such authority I speak in the presence of the people of Oyo. Now, the gods reject you. The people reject you. (p.95).

In the case of Nigerian youths', the intention was not to overthrow the government, rather, their grouse was against the neglect of government to Nigeria police brutality against her citizens. A section of the Nigeria Police force known as the "Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) has been alleged several times of extortion, unlawful killings, brutality, maiming and heinous crimes that is not befitting of an arm of government meant to protect the citizens. All over the world, there is a social awakening on the part of the youth to be politically conscious and sagacious. This is evident in Nigeria in October 2020 when the Nigerian youths' protested against police brutality, though, it was recorded that some of the youths lost their lives in the alleged military shoot out on the night of October 10, 2020 at Lekki toll gate, one of the venues for the protest.

The most important resolve is that the voice of the people was loud enough for the deaf in the government villa to hear and make proper amendment in the police force. The Special Anti-robbery Squad was banned by law, signed by the president and a special tribunal was set up for trial against erring police officers in the line of duty. A nation where the youths are united, the government will eventually listen to their plight. This is because; the youths of every nation form a larger part of the population. Politicians and political parties deal with numbers and when the odds are against them, they do their best to favour the majority so that they can retain power.

Political deceit is another similarity between the monarch and the president in focus. Just like every political winner in any election take oath, the monarch make endearing promises to the people.

Kanran: Even though my selection was not without some opposition, our policy shall however be reconciliation and not retaliation, reconstruction and not demolition, particularly in the interest of our need for a progressive evolution of concrete ideas to strengthen our brotherhood. Together, we shall fashion out new course with decisions and actions that would transform into great achievements for us today, and for coming generations. And, today shall mark the birth of greatness never known in the history of our kingdom before now.

The words above are enough to melt a stone into liquid. It portends positive changes as against the pyridine evil reign the people later experienced during the reign of Alaaafin Kanran. The people demanded good governance but the callous nature of the king negate the promises. It is difficult to give what you do not have. A man who perceives emotion and compassion as weaknesses can only met out anguish on the people through brute force.

In present day Nigeria, the leaders are not only to be blamed for bad governance; they should also endure widespread criticism for bad policies, wrong appointments and dwindling economy. A government with strong policies on power stability for the people must implement good policies in the generation and distribution of power to various discos at the appropriate time. The duty of the government is to monitor implementation and not act as major players. All the politicians do is campaign with the epileptic power supply in the country but on getting to office, the ministry becomes an avenue for embezzlement. If truly ensuring power supply is not rocket science, why is Nigeria still suffering epileptic power supply? The power grid needs to work at optimum level. The people at the helm of affairs in the ministry of power must begin to face real consequences. It is wrong for the whole nation to face blackout and yet no one is fired for such misdemeanour, it is time politicians should wake up to reality and emulate good policies of the American and European

nations. Nigerians should not just be seen travelling abroad on medical tourism or for academic studies, the health sector and education sector should be improved to standard so that the money spent abroad can be diverted to our own relevant indigenous sector here. The deceit from political actors cannot help but rather dampen the values of the citizens and the country at large.

Thematic structures in the play are explained below.

1. Tyranny

This can be seen in the play from the very beginning of the king's reign to the end where he was made to commit suicide by the king makers in accordance to the law of the land. A tyrant ruler is one who is cruel to his subject and thus fails to consider the welfare of his people in his rule. Alaafin Kanran portrays obvious tyranny; he does not consider the advice of his chiefs as words with wisdom. This can be deduced from his response to Agbaakin and Bashorun his senior chiefs.

Agbaakin: Our loyalty is sincerely to your Highness. Yet, we need to show a lot of understanding to our people in some cases such as this. We need to be sincere in handling their affairs, particularly their right to fair hearing at all times.

Kanran: Their right to fair hearing? Very well. But do you acknowledge the fact that absolute power rests with the crown?

Bashorun: In the hands of our ancestors, Kabiyesi.

Kanran: I shall proceed to demonstrate that straight away. A fool who toys with the smooth blade of the sword surely invites a visitor... the deep red stain of blood. Abore, let this goat, even with his carcass, serve as meal for the gods tonight!(pp.27-28)

The argument above signifies the king's blunt refusal to allow citizens right to fair hearing. His attitude coincides with the common parlance which says "absolute power corrupts absolutely", he forgets that power can be poisonous, no matter how eminently place ones position is/could be. And so, in Kanran's quest not to be feeble or effeminate, he found himself doing the things opposed to what he initially promised the kingmakers which includes to rule with the love of the masses at heart. His wives appealed to him to take things easy with his chiefs, but instead of yielding to their appeal, Kanran's heart appears stronger than a rock.

Kanran: ...Women are indeed great assets to the household and community. Especially those gifted with sense of reasoning like yours. It is only a fool who fails to listen to the opinion of others. Your points are clearly made, royal ones. Perhaps it is necessary for me to ask you some questions that would make my actions in the past clearer to you. As women, what do you expect most from your lord? I mean your real husband?

Second Olori: His unalloyed love towards us, Kabiyesi.

First Olori: His affection in all matters of great interest to us. And his attention, which is devoid of blemishes whenever the occasion demands.

Kanran: Very well. Now, what do you think the Alaafin would expect most from his subjects?

First Olori: Their unflinching loyalty to his rule.

Kanran: In a situation where they fail to give such loyalty to him, what do you think would happen?

First Olori: He reprimands whoever might have failed to do so.

Kanran: that is the relevant point, my women of honour. Our land drifts in recent times. It has begun to change from a law-abiding society to one of arrogance and lawlessness. Arrogance against constituted authority. It is however most shameful that our elders are aiding such blatant display of arrogance to royalty. Should I fold my arms across my chest and do nothing? Should I, with a smiling face, pretend while insults are forced down my throat like morsels? Certainly, a man does not sell his father's

ancestral land simply because his wife is beautiful. The rule is simple, whoever is unwilling to move should be abandoned, left to fall by the wayside...

Second Olori: We do understand how you feel about it, my lord. But we think it would be enough if you make peace with the elders in the interest of all. Also, because of your earlier resolve to take Oyo to the pinnacle of greatness.

First Olori: Kabiyesi, *e fowowonu. Agbatiobinul'omo re npojajo!*

Kanran: I have heard you. I thank you both most sincerely. You may take your leave. (They exit.) Man's greatness is measured by whatever he faces and accomplishes, whether in life or in death. To head a household or community is not the problem, but facing the challenges involved in it. Only cowards flinch at a time like this. I shall face mine to the very end! (pp.54-57).

Kanran's insistence above on facing his challenges to the very end leads him to the point of ignoring sacred tradition. He spilled the blood of Alagbe at a time when the village is expected to be sacred without bloodshed. He vehemently misused his powers at every point it is required of him to exercise powers over his subjects as it is seen in the removal of the head of the kingmakers in person of Bashorun.

2. Violation of culture and tradition.

It is pertinent to note that all ethnic groups, race and communities have their laws. Culture can be said to mean the concord on knowledge, belief, morals and values shared among the people in a particular society. The understanding of how life should be followed morally, socially, traditionally and psychologically can be termed the way of life of the people. Alaafin Kanran who is fully aware of the law governing the kingdom as the paramount ruler in the land failed to preserve the culture of the land but instead chose to defile it. He picked the wrong time to punish Igbayilola the head of the market women.

Lagelu: The obstinate one, Kabiyesi!

Iyaloja: Do to me whatever your mind tells you. Our tradition must be safeguarded! Our custom must be venerated!

Abore: Shut your trap, Iyaloja! What tradition outlaws the instructions from the palace?

Kanran:...How dare you, Igbayilola? How dare you question my rule?

Iyaloja: Kabiyesi, *Oluwa mi*, I did not mean to question your order. But you know that our tradition stipulates a break in market activities seven days to any major festival. Why the sudden change of that sacred custom when Bere is just three days away? And why is it that your highness did not, at least, put me in the know before such an important decision was taken? I was lost. I did not have any genuine reason and explanation to give to my assistants and people except that the decision was from the palace. We had no choice...

Kanran: ...It is rather a big shame that you could not use the powers of your position to enforce obeisance to my rule. You shall lose that position now! Lagelu, lock her up in the gaol until I decide what manner of punishment she deserve!

3. Reward for evil

The law of karma is real, the evil men do not only wait to live after them; it also hunts them in multiple folds in their lifetime. Alaafin Kanran failed in his bid to make the whole kingdom subject themselves to his evil reign. The militant youths in the play formed alliance with Bashorun and successfully defeated the king.

Bashorun: Come out Kanran and face your people. You have bitten off more than you can chew. Now the meat sticks in your throat!...Alaafin Kanran, the powerful and the

mighty king of this great empire of Oyo. How time flies! For some time now, you have exerted authority over this land. This was done with a trust you betrayed. You were reckless with your use of power. Would it not have been useful if you learnt from the past? Perhaps, power is poisonous. After all, it is a disease which destroys the conscience and feelings of fools like you. You even invoked the gods to aid your misrule. But you forgot that the gods never support tyranny. As our fathers say, the ashes will follow the thrower when the wind blows. Alaafin Kanran, I have no powers over you; our gods do. Our tradition embodies and dictates it. It is that tradition that I, Bashorun Woruda, invoke with such authority with which I speak in the presence of the people of Oyo. Now, the gods reject you. The people reject you. Alaafin Kanran, the entire land demands that I present you with this! (*Hands him the traditional white calabash*) (pp.94-95).

The white calabash symbolises bad omen; there is no record of a king who open and looks into it and still survive. The opening of the calabash is suicide. Everything done in life; be it good or bad has a reward. Reward is what you get in return for a particular feat or deed. This is reflective in the law of karma which states that “whatsoever you sow, you will reap”. Kanran's reward for his evil, wicked and tyrannical reign was negative and a bad end. Kanran was more or less a perpetrator of evil from the beginning of the play till the end and so what he reaped for his evil action was rejection and death.

4. Fear

The ungodly deeds of Alaafin Kanran instilled fear in the heart of the villagers, even his wives could not be bold to speak the truth to his face when he seek their opinion on the issues in the land. Fear simply means absence of peace or living in the trepidation. Due to the reign of the tyrant, the people lived in chaos and in so much fear as seen in the words of the trader;

First Hawker: ...Olodumare, *Oba atererek'aye, when will this threat to life end?* When will the people know true peace again? When will Oyo people sleep again with their eyes closed in true rest?

Second Hawker: It baffles everyone in the land, not only you, IyaAdio. Our bird has perched on a rope; its stand is full of unrest, just as the rope is denied its own rest.

Third Hawker: May we know the cause of your worry, our women?

First Hawker: Are you a stranger in the land? Does the albino need any introduction in the marketplace? Of course, you should know that everybody's source of worry is no other person than our lord and master, Alaafin Kanran!

Fourth Hawker: Alaafin Kanran? Please, let us talk about something else. My children are still very young! (pp.30-31).

The fear of Alaafin Kanran makes most of the youths in the village to elope to neighbouring town. No one could fathom his next move. Egbinlola shed more light on the reason for which the youths are leaving the village en-masse.

Egbin: I remember they were the first to draw the people's attention to the growing evil Kanran now personifies. But then, you silenced them. When they drew your attention to Ogundeji and Keshinro's case involving Abore, you chastised them for daring to look an elder in the face when indeed Chief Abore had been most unbecoming with his utterances. You failed to speak up against Kabiyesi's decision to stop the age-long tradition of giving out some of the war booty to the warriors so as to encourage them...People like Asaju, Kudeti, Ojekunle and the rest of them ran away to safety outside the land. Oyo to them had become a place where the powerful does anything and commits any crime without being questioned. But let the commoner raise his voice, he goes into the gallows or is scourged front and back just like Alagbe whose crime still

remained unknown to everyone... My lord, the youths now live outside Oyo where death sentence had been passed on most of them...(p.45).

Fear is an unpleasant feeling caused by threat, oppression and danger. In the lines above by Egbinlola and the people of Oyo become so afraid of the king because of the fear of the unknown actions which most probably is death sentence.

Sixth Hawker: What really baffles me is the number of wars we fight as against the number of peace we negotiate. Oyo is always waging wars with her neighbours, yet, these are lands, which pay tributes regularly. I was much afraid when I heard whispers that our warriors have been instructed to move against Iwere.

Third Hawker: Will our land think of the stand of tradition on the issue of Iwere? Will Alaafin even listen to the voice of tradition if he has made up his mind to sack the ancient land? Aja was destroyed despite the hands of peace they extended to Oyo. I heard it is now the turn of Dahomey. Yet, in all these wars, our men die at the battlefield. Our women become widows before they are old. We even send warriors to assist other lands provided the booty will be sent to our palace here. Those who refused among the men are dealt with severely for their act of cowardice. Is it not in this same land that Olabanji's two sons were hanged for refusing to join their mates in the war against Aja?

First Hawker: Imagine all the appeals to save Alagbe. Yet, the poor man was slaughtered for a crime he never committed. Several have gone the way in recent times. Many have to run to neighbouring lands for fear of being killed. In fact, the devil himself will give kudos to Kanran for a job well done! (pp.32-33)

The above conversation between the hawkers indicates the level of terror and turmoil the king has plunged the whole kingdom into and how much fear he has implanted into his subjects. The mere mention of the name of the king sounds like tsunami, bombshell and all kinds of evil occurrence. The people wish his reign is a nightmare they can wake up from and make amends, unfortunately, Alaafin Kanran was their reality at that time. He practically coerced the people to have a hypertensive lifestyle. A situation where any man can be drafted into the king's army to go to battlefield without prior knowledge, information or training and any form of psychological feature for refusal is death penalty. No sane individual will ever wish to remain in such a town or country, hence the mass migration of the youth out of the town.

Conclusion

The voice of the people resonates deeply in the play *Alaafin Kanran*. The result of unity is always unmatched and it can never be silenced by those who regard themselves as constituted authorities. A common knowledge is that the people live in fear and trepidation; they are ignorant of the powers they embody. When united, the enemy becomes defeated; the people resolve to remain resolute and united. Unlike in the case of a monarch in Nigeria where the kingmakers seek the guidance of *Ifa* deity before crowning a king, in a democratic nation, the people are the government themselves because the leaders are elected into power by the people and the moment the leader proves to be a dictator and autocratic, the case is usually settled at the ballot and as a result leads to a change of government. Several people have been rejected at the polls, many will still be rejected, and the appeal is that the momentum should continue on a high note so that the leaders will be compelled to serve the nation with the fear of the God and the people.

References

- Agbese, P. O. (2004). Chiefs, constitution and policies in Nigeria. *West Africa Review*, (6), 34-35.
- Anyawu, U. D. (2002). Kingship and leadership in Igbo culture, historical portrait. In Oguntomisin, S. O. and Ajayi, S. A. (eds), *Readings in Nigerian History and Culture, Essays in Memory of Professor J. A. Atanda*, Ibadan: Hope Publications Ltd, 67-69.
- Balogun, L. (2006). *Alaafin Kanran*. Ibadan: Macmillian Books.
- Fadipe, N.A. (2012). *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- Ige, T. (2005). *A history of Akure before the colonial era*. Ondo, Afro-Orbis Publishing Co. Ltd, 107-108.
- Johnson, S. (1921). *The history of the Yorubas from earliest time to the British Protectorate*. Lagos: C. S. S. Bookshop, 3-4, 40.
- Kobiowu, S.V (2022). *Readings in Sociology and Social Research Methods*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.
- Lasisi, R. O. and Jimoh, S. (2005). *Imeri kingdom: origin and record of civil appeal from the high court of justice Ondo State*. Akure: Judicial Division Holden at Akure to the Court of Appeal Benin, 3.
- Olaoba, O. B. (2002). Yoruba kings in concert: the tradition of seclusion and its violation. In Oguntomisin, S. O. and Ajayi, S. A. (eds), *Readings in Nigerian History and Culture, Essays in Memory of Professor J. A. Atanda*, Ibadan: Hope Publications Ltd, 89.
- Terhemba, V. (2015, June 22). *Yoruba leadership and the Aole curse*. Retrieved on November 23, 2022 from <https://waidigbenro.wordpress.com/?s=Yoruba+leadership+and+the+Aole+curse>