



Leadership as a Bane to Development in T.M. Aluko`s His Worshipful Majesty

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ABSTRACT

Leadership gives purpose, meaning, and guidance to collectivities by articulating a collective vision that appeals to ideological values, motives and self-perceptions of followers. It foregoes the individual self-interest for the good of the collective. Earlier, critics have examined the clash between two opposing systems of government the monarchial and colonial authorities absolute authority of feudal monarchies, and the decentralised, shared-responsibility system brought by the British. But they have not focused on the flaws of leadership. This paper, therefore, examines how T.M. Aluko portrays leadership in his novel *His Worshipful Majesty*. The paper adopts literary narrative analysis while Marxist criticism is used as theoretical framework for analysis. For Marxism, getting and keeping socio-economic power is the thought process behind all social and political exercises. Marxists` examination of human occasions and preparations center around connections among socio-economic classes, both inside a general public and among social orders and clarifies every human movement of monetary power. The novel is purposely selected for its satirical content on leadership and development. This paper reveals factors impeding development, such as poor leadership qualities; perversion of justice by chiefs who act as Judges and their involvement in forestry scam; offering of bribe to tax collectors by tax evaders who are mostly young men that pretend to be palace messengers; and the claim by the Oba to possess all valuables in Ipaja, as factors obstructing progress.

Keywords: T. M. Aluko, Leadership, Oba, Chiefs, Satirical novel

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1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership, according to House (1995:413) is the behavior that gives purpose, meaning, and guidance to collectivities by articulating a collective vision that appeal to ideological values, motives, and self-perceptions of followers. The outcomes of such behavior heighten awareness of organizational values, unusual levels of effort, and the foregoing of self-interest of followers for the good of the collective. The traditional leader in the novel is Alaye, who is assisted in administering the kingdom by his chiefs. This is a revered group in Aiye community. Based on this notion, the leaders of Aiye kingdom have important roles to play to enhance her development. The people of the kingdom could not fully support the leadership, due to the leaders` insensitiveness to the people`s plight. At a point, instead of the leaders to create conducive atmosphere for the people, its reverse is the case. It eventually lead to agitation for secession in a part of the kingdom.

The earlier study by Olaniyan (1988) presents a clash between two opposing systems of government, the absolute authority of feudal monarchies, and the decentralised, shared-responsibility system brought about by the British. Anaso (1985) similarly acknowledges two conflicting elements. Mr. Morrison, the Chairman of Aiye Local Government who symbolizes westernization while Oba Olayiwole, the Alaiye of Aiye is the embodiment of traditional life and wisdom.

This paper therefore focuses on challenges of leadership. It unveils how the chiefs who serve as representatives of the Oba in some instances, are involved in financial malpractices in the forestry sector. They also act as judges in the traditional courts, impose heavy fines on offenders. The chiefs collect tax as part of their duties. They compromise with eligible tax payers in tax evasion. The imprudence of the Oba similarly calls for scrutiny. The paper adopted narrative literary analysis as method of data collection, while Marxist criticism is used as the theoretical framework. What Marxist writers do is to expose the oppressors' class and its mechanism of oppression. This is realized as settings, themes, characters and events conflating are discussed thereby creating the avenue for the Marxist critics to demonstrate their craft (Balogun, 2001). Marxist's ideas as expressed, could be found in the novel. Leaders and elders abuse the trust vested in them at the expense of ordinary man.

2. FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

2.1 Situational Irony in *His Worshipful Majesty*

Situational irony renders an event as a contrast of what is expected (Singh, 2012). In *His Worshipful Majesty* Oba Olayiwola Adegoke, the Alaye of Aiye Kingdom, wholeheartedly believes that his Kingdom and Britain are partners in progress, whereas Britain relates to Aiye Kingdom as her colony. Aiye kingdom, right from the beginning of its existence, has been under the sole authority of the monarch –Alaiye. The arrival of British threatens the monarchical powers. The British relations with Aiye Kingdom in *His Worshipful Majesty* bears imperialistic nature. Galtung (1971) conceives imperialism as a dominant relation between collectivities, particularly between nations. It is a sophisticated type of dominant relation which cuts across nations, basing itself on a bridgehead which the center in the Center nation establishes in the center of the Periphery nation, for the joint benefit of both. Thus, imperialism is a species in a genus of dominance and power relationships. Dominance relations between nations and other collectivities will not disappear with the disappearance of imperialism; nor will the end to one type of imperialism (e.g. political, or economic) guarantee the end to another type of imperialism (e.g. economic or cultural). Imperialism is a system that splits up collectivities and relates some of the parts to each other in relations of harmony of interest, and other parts in relations of disharmony of interest, or conflict of interest. The British exercise enormous control in administering Aiye kingdom, to the extent that the traditional authority gradually loses its supremacy. This development was not envisaged by The Alaye. The traditional system of governance has its own challenges. The unexpected outcome of the relationship between the British and Aiye Kingdom, could be viewed as situational irony.

Balogun (2001) opines that the theory of Marxism stresses socio-economic determinism (monetary survival) as a record of social battles. The Marxist ideologists trust that every single social battle is economy-based whose determination mixes clashes among the distinctive classes possessing a social milieu. In this case, the British seek for the control of Aiye kingdom for economic and political reasons. The advent of the British into Aiye kingdom is expected to usher in development and respect the traditions of Aiye. This could not be achieved entirely as the British rather succeeds in sowing a seed of discord between the traditional ruler and his subjects. The economic control of Aiye kingdom drifts to the British. The Oba no longer enjoys the unlimited powers over everything within his domain, as he used to. The control of his territory politically, economically and in other ways gradually slipped out of his authority. This eventually develops into a conflict between the Imperial power and its colony.

In Aiye kingdom, the colonial powers undermine the traditional authority. The Alaiye has never considered the colonial authority superior to his. The colonial laws mean nothing to him. Mr. Morrison remarks as he reflects on the Alaiye's attitude to Mr. Roberts:

All the time we go to great lengths not to offend the Alaiye. But how much is he doing not to contravene the local Government Law?..The Alaiye was in every sense above the law. (Aluko, 1973:50-1)



Aiye Kingdom under the leadership of Alaiye is actually considered by the British authority not to be autonomous in terms of administration. This is made known during the inauguration of Aiye Local Authority, in the comments of the Governor:

When I was in my country I had the very special privilege of being received by audience by...my own king. I expressed to him the warm greetings of all the obas and chiefs, and of all his subjects over whom the obas rule on his behalf. (Aluko, 1973:4)

In *His Worshipful Majesty* there was a tussle for supremacy of power between the British and traditional authority headed by Oba Olayiwola Adegoke, the Alaiye of Aiye Kingdom. Taxes are no longer paid to the king. A notion of the King, that everything within his territory belongs to the Oba, gradually becomes an illusion. His unending demand for cement could not be met. The response he gets is a signal that such requests need to be paid for, implying that he does not have an authority over the goods. An opportunity for a conflict between the modern and traditional authority in *His Worshipful Majesty* arises when a new arrangement is made for traditional rulers to start sharing power with the more educated members of the society. A conflict becomes inevitable, as this new structure means an 'erosion of the powers and authority of the traditional rulers. The new council formed as a result of this union is chaired by a brilliant barrister, Morrison. Morrison who is committed to bringing efficiency and progress into traditional life and eradicating such social ills such as corruption and dishonesty. He rather strives to accommodate their traditional norms. For instance, during the construction of a building, the adoption of traditional method of spicing work with work-songs, so as to make executing the task faster, less tiring and more efficient is seen. This receives Morrison's endorsement as he says:

Whatever happens to the rest of our customs, this communal labour system must be preserved. (Aluko, 1973:28-9)

Traditional methods of maintaining discipline are also borrowed to help maintain a congenial work spirit at the construction site. Those who fail to turn up for work, have to slaughter two goats and the blood is dabbed on the offender's house. For a start, this accommodation of the traditional and the modern administration goes on well. So well, that the traditional authorities themselves become convinced of the need for modernisation. This is the realisation that prompts the Alaiye's suggestion to Morrison to build a new courthouse where lawyers like Morrison himself could work.

2.2 Deflation as bravery in *His Worshipful Majesty*

The Alaiye of Aiye Kingdom is a revered personality in his domain. He is considered as the spiritual and administrative head of his community. However, the signs of uneasiness soon start showing as some workers are torn between their loyalty to the traditional ruler and to the new regulations. The Accounts Department Staff, for instance, were caught between these two conflicting loyalties - loyalty to the new stores regulations and socio-economic instructions, and loyalty to the Alaiye. The Alaiye is the main cause of the conflict. He fails to understand the implications of the new regulations and his new role in the new system. He therefore fails to make the necessary adjustment to fit himself in, thus continuing to behave as autocratically as before. Despite Morrison's effort to remain as reasonable as possible by increasing the traditional rulers' salaries, introducing an entertainment allowance for the Alaiye and giving him a special vote for repairs of his court, the Alaiye still remains difficult. In the end, the conflict results in a confrontation. Morrison then pledges that to avoid a total failure in their assignment, the Alaiye should be made to move with the progressive elements into the future. For such a failure, he realises, will be catastrophic, as there will be a head-on clash between the Alaiye together with his forces, on the one hand, and the progressive elements and the majority of the people who are already showing signs of impatience with his autocratic and oppressive rule, on the other.



Morrison stresses:

There must be a change in the people and their way of thinking. Such a change must be gradual and as painless as possible, brought about by those of us chosen to guide them on the new route they have not trodden before. There must be a change in the attitude and thinking of the Alaiye, who has for generations been the sole ruler of the people. When we undertook this new assignment we all thought that he would understand the need for change and make some effort to change in the interests of the land and of his people (Aluko, 1973:101)

A probe into the Alaiye's unethical and corrupt practices leads to an irreversible position that he takes:

If we do not know where the next step forward leads, we at least know how to retrace our steps to where we started from... Now tell them all to mind their own businesses. We shall mind ours. We do not want Morrison. We do not want the Improvement League. That is our decision (Aluko, 1973:134)

The arbitrary and unilateral decision of the Alaiye to increase the number of council members (Chiefs) soon becomes another source of worry to the British administration, although this demand is met. The uncooperative attitude of the Oba over the eligible tax payers within the palace becomes a "boiling point". The actual number of King's messengers (emeses) is unknown, thereby making tax collection from the palace impossible. The King's messengers attack whoever they perceive to represent the British authority, including Mr. Roberts (Sekiteri), the Council's and Alaiye's Secretary. He is not spared despite his closeness to the Oba. At this point, Aluko sarcastically exposes the mediums adopted by those defending their tradition as crude and dangerous, in battling the modernists. The clash in the end proves to be very riotous and bloody with buildings destroyed and people assaulted. Jelenke, the King's masquerade, is not left out in protecting the age long royalty. He unleashes curses upon Morrison:

The dog that follows the track of the wolf is asking for trouble. He is asking for trouble... A commoner that knocks his head against the head of the royalty... He will have his skull broken... And when the skull is broken what comes after?... Madness! That is what comes after the skull is broken. Madness! That is what comes. Jelenke sees one man in chains... Chained to the stake in the lunatic asylum!... That is the man that knocks his commoner's head against the royal head. (Aluko, 1973:151)

Morrison becomes insane a few days later and eventually dies. The relationship between Alaiye and his subjects becomes deplorable. As noted by Balogun (2001) that Marxism identifies social and economic factors as crucial denominators of relationship in society, therefore the subjects of Alaiye feel overwhelmed by the introduction of a new tax regime and heavy fines imposed on the absentees at communal labour, and the justice system. These resulted into resentment towards the traditional institution, prompted by high-handedness of the traditional leadership. The British administration creates a window of opportunity for them to protest. Agbesse a district within Aiye kingdom, and is one of the areas attempting to denounce the authority of Aiye. The town refuses to engage in communal labour involving the construction of a road to a neighbouring town. The action of Agbesse people is a violation of the existing rule guarding communal labour, but no explanation is rendered, which indicates that trouble is at hand.



We are informed that:

The Alaiye had sent two emeses with his royal, beaded staff to the Olu of Agbesse for an explanation of the conduct of his people. Instead of being accorded the respect traditionally accorded the Alaiye`s representatives, the emeses had been beaten up by the people of Agbesse. That was sacrilege. It amounted to beating up the Alaiye, their royal master, himself. The two emeses return to the Afin with swollen lips and bruises on their bodies confirmed to the rest of the royal household that the story was not a fabrication (Aluko, 1973:160)

The rift within the polity of Aiye kingdom metamorphoses into a revolution that gradually leads to the breakdown of law and order, spreading rapidly into other districts. The British authority through the Ministry of Local Government traces the main culprits responsible for the mayhem to the Oba`s household. It therefore deposes the Alaiye from the throne. The Oba, in reaction, commits suicide.

2.3 Incongruity of the judiciary in *His Worshipful Majesty*.

Aluko reveals how the judicial arm of traditional government in Aiye Kingdom functions. In the kingdom, there are traditional ways of settling disputes. This practice guarantees peaceful coexistence among the people, and respect for traditions, but came under a serious criticism, by the exposure of its inadequacies.

For instance:

First the head of the family heard both sides to a family dispute at dawn and decided who was right and who was wrong. In the same way the quarter-head listened to disputes between neighbours in the same quarter, and decided who was right and who was wrong. Regardless of who was right or who was wrong both sides made gifts to the chief – a cock or yams, nothing more than that at that time. A token of appreciation of the way the chief had exerted himself in the cause of peace and order in his ward (Aluko, 1973:130)

This traditional justice system comes under threat with the advent of the British administration. The development could be considered to be a stain on Aiye`s culture. Selden (1993) states Marxist claim that legal systems ultimately reflect the interests of the dominant class in particular historical periods. In *His Worshipful Majesty*, Aluko puts the process of the traditional justice system in Aiye kingdom into ridicule by exposing its flaws which are absent in the British system. This system is quite different from the modern judicial system introduced by the British authority, its emergence has rendered the traditional courts redundant. Consequently, the interests of the Chiefs who act as judges in the traditional courts are weakened. The punishments imposed upon offenders tend to be harsh in the traditional courts, when compared with the judgment passed in courts established by the colonial administration. Aluko exposes the weakness of the traditional judicial system.

As a result, preference for the modern courts by litigants gradually grow.

People are now against both the Alaiye`s and the chiefs` courts because of the fines they impose. And the fines are heavy and unfair in a number of cases. (Aluko, 1973:130)



There are situations whereby accused persons are not given adequate opportunity to defend themselves in the traditional courts, especially in issues concerning the Alaiye. It is observed that there is a conflict between the two judicial systems and the supporters. For instance, Kabaka Joe, a resident in Aiye and kinsman of the narrator, is accused of inciting people not to pay the ten shillings education levy. Even though he goes to the palace of his own free will, neither forced, nor invited, he is not permitted to make any comment:

“Hold your tongue”, thundered the Alaiye from the dias as Kabaka Joe was beginning to make a statement. So it is you who said that the people should not pay the ten shillings tax which we say they should pay for education? It is you who has been going round saying bad things against us, and against the councilors who assist us in our administration? We see, we see...(Aluko, 1973:47)

On sensing danger, Kabaka Joe makes frantic efforts to get out of the palace. This is in order to avoid the severe consequences of the allegations levelled against him. The manner Kabaka Joe is treated is in contrast to the notion popular in the modern times that “an accused person is innocent until proven guilty by a law court”. Kabaka Joe’s failure to turn up for the community work also earned him a penalty. Though the reason for his absence from the work is not known, he is not asked before being ordered him to pay for the cost of goats slaughtered on his behalf to serve as fine:

The young men were running in different directions in pursuit of sheep and goats... In front of the mud house of Kabaka Joe’s father, the first goat was slaughtered by a hefty man, with a knife he produced from under his garments. After the unfortunate animal had stopped the involuntary twitching of its limbs following the first stroke of the knife, it was carried to the door of a house, and its blood sprinkled both on the door-jamb and on parts of the wall. A second goat was similarly despatched and its blood sprinkled on the door and walls of the same house. (Aluko, 1973:30-1)

Mr. Morrison who witnessed the scene asked about what would happen to the absentees. The pastor responds: They will pay the owners of the goats whatever price they ask for them (Aluko, 1973:31). In a Council meeting, Chief Eketa, a member of advisory council to the Alaiye, has a contrary opinion regarding the increase in Alaiye’s salary. He is not permitted to defend his view when he shows up at the palace. The Alaiye judges him thus:

You Eketa, you call yourself a chief in our domain...You, Eketa, you call yourself a chief in our domain, the Alaiye repeated... You, Eketa, you drink of the water of the streams that flow in our territory... And you eat of the oil that is extracted from the nuts of the palm trees that grow in our domain... Now you went to the Council meeting to say bad things against us... We do not want you to attend the meetings of the Council any more. (Aluko, 1973: 62)

Besides the pronouncement of Alaiye, the Eketa was stricken with paralysis of the right arm and leg two days after, which is the consequence of the curse Alaiye places on him. The modern courts introduced by the British face some challenges during the course of discharging its duties. The system deprives the quarter-heads and chiefs their rights to perform part of their responsibilities. Aluko succeeds to depict the fallout from the traditional judicial system in *His Worshipful Majesty*.



2.4 Disparagement of corruption in *His Worshipful Majesty*

One of the issues highlighted in *His Worshipful Majesty* which is corruption within the administrative system of Aiyem kingdom, which is alarming. It is a challenge that affects the growth of that community. The illegal income that accrues to various individuals who engage in corrupt practices would have boosted the state's revenue. It is a practice that is as old as the society itself, which cuts across every group within it. The greed among the traditional leaders and followers and even among the administrators call for scrutiny. The traditional administrative system in *His Worshipful Majesty* harbours a lot of corrupt practices ranging from taking and offering of bribes to boost individual's income illegally, at the expense of developing the State. Tyson (1999:50) states that in Marxist wording, socio-economic conditions are alluded to as material conditions, and the social/political/ideological climate produced by material conditions is known as the material circumstance. The Central Department of Agriculture had written reports to show that there was illegal felling of timber, and recommended the retirement of the Senior Forest Guard on age grounds. A bill to increase the tree-felling license fees is lying before the Council for deliberation.

The Chiefs who are Council members are not favoured by the new bill due to their involvement in the corrupt practice:

The chiefs did not like the adverse comments about the forest officer, because they were all in the racket of enjoying the fruits of illegal felling, and they understood the increase in license fees to mean a corresponding decrease in the official's fees and their own corrupt revenue, since whoever paid higher license fees would have less money for bribes and gifts. (Aluko, 1973:61)

The chiefs traditionally have some civic responsibilities to perform, among which is tax collection within their various communities. By doing so, they receive commission based on the amount of tax collected. But tax evaders have devised means of compromising with these chiefs. The latter also succumb:

Each chief is persuaded by tax evaders to accept bribes in lieu of tax, and indeed, the chiefs needed, the chiefs needed no encouragement in a transaction that brought both sides demonstrably large advantages. The tax evaders paid a bribe of a quarter or a third of the flat rate assessment, and the chief was that much richer through a single client only. If both sides were happy, why should anyone worry? (Aluko, 1973:64)

Tax evasion is also engaged in by impostors who parade themselves as "emeses" - King's messengers, and they reside in the palace but do not have any relationship or business with the monarchy. Their act is perfected by the involvement of tax officers who shield them:

The King's messengers were traditionally entitled to a number of privileges – non-payment of taxes was one of these. But in the last few years it had been customary for a number of the hanger-on at the palace to claim that they were emeses so that they might evade tax. The tax officers usually took a few shillings bribe from them and recorded them in the book as King's messengers and therefore officially exempted (Aluko, 1973:106-7)

Corruption had eaten deep into the administrative system during the colonial era. It had no barrier, starting from the monarchy. To be precise, during the disbursement of salaries to some Chiefs, some highly placed individuals and government officials deduct illegal commission from such salaries, thereby creating a problem for the payee.



A victim of such practice, Chief Losi, exclaims:

But I see only one pound at the end of the month. The clerk and the police orderly who bring the money to my village take ten shillings, and they tell me that Bada, chief of the palace boys, takes ten shillings. I see only one pound after have taken their shares. Do you call that a salary? (Aluko, 1973:64)

The corruption saga extends to the Treasury Department. A contractor, Sebotimo employed dubious means in getting a voucher signed by relevant officials in order to get paid. He succeeds but his success exposes the fraudulent acts in the administrative system and the societal greed. Alaiye's request for a new court house is not covered by the budget, and he could not be convinced by anyone not to pursue his aspiration. Activities on the site commences, the contractor requires payment and a dubious medium of payment is devised to ensure this payment by the treasury department:

The treasurer had allowed himself to be persuaded by the sweet tongue and long purse of Sebotimo, the contractor, and of course the illegal orders of the King, to do what he knew was wrong. Sebotimo had bribed the Works Supervisor and one of his assistants... and finally the Treasurer and the paymaster in the Treasurer's Department... Sebotimo the contractor had spent a substantial fraction of the face value of the voucher in bribing the various people involved. (Aluko, 1973:128)

Aluko did not only lay bare how corrupt practices in Aiye kingdom are perpetrated but also present corruption as an end that the beneficiaries are few members of the society, whose aims are for satisfying their selfish desires. For instance, the contractor mentioned above, under normal circumstance will not be able to execute the contract as required, because significant part of the contract fee has been spent on bribery. So he would be left with very little funds.

3. WEAK SOCIO-ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT

The writer decries the poor management of Government's finances. This is another element of incompetency in the traditional administration of Aiye kingdom. The growth of any community entails the commitment of its people to that cause. In *His Worshipful Majesty* the relationship between the ruler of Aiye and his subjects gradually turns bitter. The people of Aiye kingdom have not been prompt in their tax payments, the primary source of funding its development. The Alaiye is not impressed about the situation, he therefore decides to embark on a sensitisation tour of his district. Whereas the palace messengers are exempted from paying tax, and they are increasing in number. The king is to make his subjects aware of the importance of tax payment and the education levy.

Though the motive of Alaiye is good, but very expensive to implement. However, this could not be opposed by anyone.

Four days before the tour was due to start officially, courtiers had started to go to places allotted to them along the royal route. They were followed two days before the tour by a number of minor chiefs from Aiye. They were in turn followed the day before by a number of more senior chiefs. These waves of chiefs and courtiers were to ensure that the hosts in the various villages knew exactly how and what to prepare fit for the royal guest (Aluko, 1973:70)



How can a community raise the sum of £76,000 and has just £124,10 in its coffers, expected to play host to Alaiye's large entourage? Balogun (2001) states that Marxist ideologies believe that all social struggles are economy-based, and their resolution stirs conflicts among the different classes inhabiting a social milieu. Aluko has portrayed the local administrators as unserious leaders. The Alaiye rides in his car, but accompanied by a large entourage in several other cars.

The cost of hosting such a number of guests, if properly channeled, could have brought relief to the communities having socio-economic constraints.

The Chevrolet was in the middle of a convoy of nine vehicles, three cars carrying chiefs and palace officials in front, and five behind carrying more chiefs, members of the Improvement league, and more court officials (Aluko, 1973:71)

The traditional system of administration is portrayed as not prudent. It is a factor which has been identified as being responsible for its underdevelopment.

4. CONCLUSION

Critics earlier examined the clash between two opposing systems of government the monarchical and colonial authorities, while the focus of this paper is on the portrayal of leadership by T.M. Aluko in *His Worshipful Majesty*. In this paper we have discussed the inadequacies of those occupying leadership positions, ranging from the Oba, his chiefs and government officials. The Alaiye does not envisage the gradual assumption of leadership role of Aiyem Kingdom by the British, which is perceived as situational irony. The Alaiye's position as a paramount ruler threatened by the British which prompted him to demonstrate bravery by committing suicide. Litigants incur unwarranted expenses to suit the elders who act as Judges in the traditional courts. Consequently, preference for the British courts gradually drives the traditional courts into extinction. Tax evaders compromise with some chiefs saddled with the responsibility of collecting tax. The size of Alaiye's entourage during a sensitization tour of the districts unveils his imprudence. The activities of these leaders menace Aiyem kingdom of adequate development.

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