

VIOLENCE, POLITICS and CONFLICT MANAGEMENT in AFRICA:

Envisioning Transformation, Peace and
Unity in the Twenty-First Century



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Publisher

Langaa RPCIG
Langaa Research & Publishing Common Initiative Group
P.O. Box 902 Mankon
Bamenda
North West Region
Cameroon
Langaagrp@gmail.com
www.langaa-rpcig.net

Distributed in and outside N. America by African Books Collective
orders@africanbookscollective.com
www.africanbookscollective.com

ISBN: 9956-763-54-3

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Chapter Seven	
Recognition Politics and Violence in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.....	173
<i>Ehlabhi Odion Simon</i>	

Chapter Eight	
Envisaged Trends in Post-2016 African Development Agenda and their Impact on World Economic System.....	199
<i>Takavafira Masarira Zhou</i>	

Chapter Nine	
African Indigenous Knowledge as Panacea for Conflict Management and Transformation in Africa: The Cae of <i>Ifa</i> in Nigeria.....	233
<i>Òkèwándé Olúwólé Tẹ̀wógboyè</i>	

Chapter Ten	
Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35) as a Model for Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Global Political Agreement.....	261
<i>Tobias Marevesa</i>	

Chapter Eleven	
Ubuntu/Unhu as Communal Love: Critical Reflections on the Sociology of Ubuntu and Communal Life in sub-Saharan Africa.....	287
<i>Munyaradzi Mawere & Gertjan van Stam</i>	

Chapter Twelve	
Instrumentalisation of Traditional Institutions in Xenophobic Violence against Zimbabweans in Botswana during the New Millennium.....	305
<i>Fidelis Peter Thomas Duri</i>	

Chapter Thirteen	
Problematising Victimhood and Agency: Women and Terrorism in 21st Century Africa.....	327
<i>Sibangeni Ngono and Fidelis Peter Thomas Duri</i>	

Chapter Fourteen	
The Order of Things: Changing Identities in Eritrea through ICTs.....	367
<i>Mirjam van Reisen and Zecarias Gerrima</i>	

African Indigenous Knowledge as Panacea for Conflict Management and Transformation in Africa: The Case of *Ifá* in Nigeria

Òkèwándé Olúwolé Tẹ̀wógboyè

Introduction

Conflict simply means divergence of interest or a process whereby two or more parties attempt to “punch” the other’s goal, objective or attainment. Many contemporary sociologists have viewed conflict occurring among many groups and interest, including ethnic, religious, labour and political conflicts. Maciver and Page (1950) identified two forms of conflicts: Direct and indirect conflicts. According to them, direct conflict occurs when individuals or groups thwart or impede or injure one another in the effort to attain some goals. Indirect conflict occurs, when individuals or groups do not actually injure the efforts of another party but nevertheless, seek to attain their ends in ways which obstruct the attainment of the same ends by other.

Conflict theorists believe that disorder and instability in particular and conflict in general should be seen as normal aspect of social life. Conflict is as well believed by the conflict theorists, such as Marx (1947), Simmel (1903) and Lewis (1934) to be part of social change, transformation, development, functionalist and destructive. The problem of conflict in Africa is endemic. For instance, Àjàdí (2012: 19) argues:

Africa is often framed as a space bereft of ideas and approaches to transform herself and prosper its people. Over the years, the failures of heads of government and their approach to governing, the regular conflicts and the seemingly precarious lives of most Africans have entrenched the stereotype of the continent’s hopelessness. In fact, the most damaging example of this view was the cover of the

Economist of 13 May 2000, which read: 'Africa, Hopeless continent'. Hopeless? How can a continent of over 700 million people be written off so casually?

This statement was credited to the continent of Africa because the colonial masters believed that, African countries cannot develop as a result of series of conflicts in the continent. Sequel to the incessant conflicts in Africa, it is worth the trouble, to come up with pragmatic approaches towards stemming down the level of conflicts in Africa. This chapter therefore focuses on the adoption of African indigenous knowledge, especially those embedded in the *Ifá* that is practiced among the Yorùbá of Nigeria to manage crises emanating from the interaction of people. Akintolá (1999: 1) sees *Ifá* as the philosophy of or wisdom divinely revealed to the Yorùbá deity of *Ifá*, *Ọrúnmìlà*. According to Farrow (1926: 36), *Ifá* is the greatest oracle of the whole of the Yorùbá that is "consulted on all important occasions." *Ifá* is regarded as the spokesperson not only for the gods but also for the living, this is because, *Ifá*'s knowledge and wisdom is based on the past, present and the future. The dead, among who are the ancestors and spirit beings, the present and future generations are evinced by *Ifá*. *Ifá* is regarded as the living foundation of Yorùbá culture (Abimbólá, 1977a: 14). Munoz (2003: 179) sees *Ifá*'s scope beyond the Yorùbá cultural society when he says "*Ifá* is the most universal divinity among the Yourubá and other West African people." *Ifá* is known to different people by different names throughout the world. For example, *Ifá* is known as *Fa* among the Fon of the Republic of Benin, *Eva* to Nupes, *Ifá* in Cuba, USA, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Surinam and Togo. *Ifá* is referred to by the Ewe as *Afá*, *Ephod* by Jews, *Geomancy* by Europeans and Magasy (Ọdẹyẹmí 2013: 5). With this different nomenclature across the nations of the world, the spread of *Ifá* is not in doubt.

In 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed *Ifá* as one of the 86 traditions of the world to be recognized as masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage of humanity (Robinson 2008: 1). By this proclamation, *Ifá* joined the league of heritages. Yémitàn and Ọgúndélé (1970: ix) assert about *Ifá* that:

*ó jé ìmò jìnṣẹ́ lóṣò ara rẹ,
 ohun tí a lè pè ní ẹ̀ka ìmò sáyẹ̀nsì.
 Èkẹjì, ó jé oríṣú ẹ̀sìn ibílẹ̀ ilẹ̀ Yorùbá kan.*

it is knowledge of science on its own.
 Secondly, it is a separate Yorùbá religion.

Ifá, as a religion, science or literary text, has over time been of great interest to scholars in different areas of human endeavour, like medicine, philosophy, religion, art and culture. In other words, there is no aspect of life that is not entrenched in *Ifá*. Therefore, it is difficult to dissociate *Ifá* from Yorùbá, because the philosophy, religion, ideology, history and science among others of the Yorùbá people are referenced from *Ifá*. For instance, the work of Lóngé (1983: 41) discusses the links of computer science to *Ifá* Divination. His work concludes that, the relationship of computer elements to *Ifá*'s elements that:

That brings me to the end of my illustration of some similar basic concepts of *Ifá* Divination and Computer science. You will probably now agree with me that *Ifá* Divination, as an ancient Yorùbá knowledge system reveals to us the coherence, logicity, precision and profundity of the thoughts, philosophy, mathematics and computer science as known and practiced by our forefathers (and mothers) before the 11th Century A. D. well before the same ideas were rediscovered in the West in later centuries.

His work is premised on the scientific analysis, which, in the end, paved way for us to describe the relationship between the elements of computer science and *Ifá*. Likewise, the work of McGee (1983) relates some Mathematical concepts to *Ifá*. He based his work on mathematical theories to establish his claims. The adoption of *Ifá* philosophy in the dispensation of justice was addressed by Òkẹwándé (2013). He concludes that the Yorùbá has a dependable judicial system that can contest with modern judicial system entrenched in

Ifá. *Ifá* also has its philosophy on conflict management and transformation, the challenge that is taken up in this work.

The chapter discusses how the *Ifá* epistemological understanding influences the various types of conflicts management, including: preventive (pre-conflict) and corrective (post-conflict), which is management of conflict after it had occurred, that is, the cure to conflict. It examines conflict management methods such as non-retaliation, tolerance, patience, power, and forgiveness as well as conflict transformation. A chart showing the inter-party or individual's conflicts in relation to transformation is to be provided for analysis. It is further argued, the more Africans are able to explore their traditional institutions and values to solve their problems or challenges, the better for peaceful and harmonious co-existence, thereby, transforming the entire continent. As well, this is an attempt at enhancing African solutions to Africans problems.

Conflict management: Types, causes and solution

Conflict management is dealing with, or how conflict is handled with a means to achieve the status quo (resorting to the initial or before the conflict period). There are various methods of conflict management, especially as contained in *Ifá*. This work discusses non-retaliation, tolerance, patience, mediation, reconciliation and negotiation as some of the ways of resolving conflicts. Some of these methods are seen as ways to prevent misunderstanding or disagreement from resulting to conflict, since; there may be no conflict without initial disagreement. It is easier to manage crises from degenerating into conflict, than to manage crises. An inability to manage conflict may lead to a war. The *Ifá* philosophy prefers to nip conflict in the bud, so as not to degenerate into a war. In other words, crises should be managed from generating to crises. This among the Yorùbá people is encapsulated in the proverb that guides everyday conduct which says *ìgbóná gbooru láà jòpòlò bó bá pé awọ rè máa n' yì ni*. Translated it means, frog flesh is better eaten when it is hot; afterwards, the flesh turns turgid. In other words, issues at conflict should be promptly addressed. Delay, postponement or deferment may cause destructions of lives and properties. The

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Yorùbá also pleads with the parties in disagreement to “sheave their swords,” so that the disagreement does not degenerate to conflict. This is captured in the proverb that *omọ àlẹ̀ ní rínú tí kẹ̀ í bí, bẹ̀ẹ̀ sì ní omọ àlẹ̀ ní a máa n bẹ̀ tí kẹ̀ í gbà*. That is, a bastard will not be hungry on matter that demands to be temperamental, but a bastard is begged and refuses to pave way for peace. In other words, ones anger must be managed or controlled so as not to cause civil disorder or conflict. *Ifá* teaches that, it is better not to be at loggerhead with another. But since, it is naturally impossible to maintain total peace always. They create rooms to accommodate settlement of dispute. The Yorùbá do say that *bí a bá jà tí a tún rẹ̀, eré ò lè dàbí àpilẹ̀ṣe mó*. That is, if we fight and reconcile again, the friendship can no longer be as before. To this effect, *Ifá* gives preference to the prevention of crises rather than to manage it. This means management of crises is costlier than its prevention. The *ẹ̀ṣẹ-Ifá Ìròsun Èlérin*, Oḍégbolá (2014: 242) discourages any form of conflict or misunderstanding. The *Ifá* corpus claims that:

Òrúnmìlà ní kẹ̀ á mó jà ló dùn.
Ifá mo ní kẹ̀ á mó jà ló dùn Bara Àgbọ̀n m̀règún.
Ifá ní tí a bá jà, inú kẹ̀ í dùn mó...

Òrúnmìlà says what is preferable is that we should not fight.
Ifá, the father of *Àgbọ̀n m̀règún*,
 I says preferably we should not fight,
Ifá says should we fight,
 we will be unhappy.

However, since the tongue and the mouth do fight each other sometimes, there are traditional precautions to minimize disagreement so as not to snowball into conflict. There are three things that the Yorùbá will not underrate: fire, sickness and conflict. A stick of matches can burn a whole city, so is conflict or war. Most of the time, the language in relation to the dead is “after a brief illness.” There is no little sickness that cannot claim life. Likewise, any conflict between two parties or nations may lead to war, claiming millions of lives. The Yorùbá frowns at a situation, whereby, conflict

degenerates to claiming of lives. To the Yorùbá people, *bí a bá n'jà bí i ká kú kó*, that is, conflict should not degenerate to claiming lives. To this end, the Yorùbá people encourage the virtue of *omoluabi* well behaved to all issues. Some of the virtues of *omoluabi*, are *iwàpèlẹ* good character and *Ìwà rere* (well mannered). A well behaved individual is regarded as *omoluabi*. These virtues guide the individual's behaviours in the Yorùbá society Abimbólá (1975: 389-420). To the Yorùbá people, *eni tí a bá pè ní Fólórúnṣọ kò gbọdọ fókun ògèdè gun òpẹ* or that, whoever is Fólórúnṣọ (literally means in God's care) must not climb a palm-tree with a banana's rope. Meaning that, one should not risk something naturally known to cause a hazard. The *Ifá* corpus, *Ìwòrì* fore-warned and reminds the Yorùbá that:

Ìwòrì tejú móbun tí nṣeni.
Awo má fẹjá igbà gun òpẹ
mó pé nitorí pé o ti sawo ko tó figbà tó ti já tán gun òpẹ.
Ìwòrì tejú móbun tó nṣeni..
Awo mó fìbínú yòbẹ
Ìjà kẹ i dé kòrò gún ra wọn káwo wọlé yòbẹ.
Ìwòrì tejú móbun tó nṣeni.
Awo jìnnà sẹjò tá à bẹ lór.í
Awo kẹ i lejo
Ìwòrì wá tejú móbun tí nṣeni.
Káwo mó sán bànté awo...

Ìwòrì mind your own business.
Awo don't climb palm-three with partially cut rope
 don't say you are somebody and be committing unlawful acts.
Ìwòrì mind your own business.
Awo don't draw out a knife while temperamental
 don't because of a little misunderstanding draw out a knife
Ìwòrì mind your own business.
Awo, be far from a snake with head uncut
Awo do not run after a snake.
Ìwòrì come and mind your own business
 Let not *Awo* put on a wrapper of another person ... (Àládé
 1978: 17).

An *omoluabi* (well behaved individual), metaphorically referred to as *Awo* in the above *Ifá* corpus, will distance himself or herself from doing something unjust or immoral and will be far from being temperamental, will be tolerant, flee evil and not trespassing by doing things unlawful. By so doing, the society will be in peace.

Another virtue of *omoluabi* is called *suuru* (patience) is always encouraged by *Ifá* to be applied to all issues in life. There is no stage of conflict that *Ifá* excludes this virtue called patience. It must be encouraged and applied to all conflict situations in human life. For instance, the Yorùbá (*Ifá*) philosophy believe that *suuru ni baba iwa*, that is, morality is entrenched in patience. According to *Ifá* verses contained in Abimbóla (1975: 402):

Iwa rée
Suuru lo bi i.
Akóbi Olódumare si ni baba rẹ náà.
Suuru, baba iwa...

And what breeds morality is patience.
 It is the first given by *Olódumare*
 Patience brings about morality...

It is generally believed by the Yorùbá through *Ifá* philosophy that *eni to ni suuru lo lobun gbogbo*, meaning that, whoever is patience have all things. Explaining the concept of *suuru*, Abimbóla succinctly puts it that:

The significance of this is that in order to have good character, a man must first of all have patience...Out of all the attributes which a man with good character have, patience is the most important of them...One must therefore be patient with people and learn to tolerate them in order to have good character...

The Yorùbá also believe that conflict occurs as a result of the denial of some rights and privileges to individuals, groups or nations.

For instance, one of the causes of conflict, especially, in a federal system of government such as Nigeria is marginalization, that is, when an ethnic group feels that they have been short-changed. This was the situation with the people of Middle-Belt in Nigeria. According to them, they were denied of some rights and privileges by the federal government of Nigeria. The Middle-Belt became intolerant of the hegemony of the Northern People Congress. In the same vein, it will be difficult to talk about political/ethnic conflict in Nigeria without reference to the declaration of State of Biafra by Lieutenant Cornel. Ojukwu on May 30, 1967. According to Adeyemo (2000: 19):

At the end of thirty months of bitter and bloody civil war, Lt. Col. Ojukwu flew to Cote d'Ivoire (former Ivory Coast) when he knew that military victory was not on his side. A few hours later, his number two announced "Biafrans" formal surrender. This ending Africa's bloodiest civil war in the early seventies. More than a million people perished as a result of the war aimed at crushing the secession of Eastern Region from the rest of Nigeria.

The setback caused by conflict cannot be quantified. In other words, conflict should be managed early before it results to claiming of lives and properties. There were peace talks to end the political crises of Nigeria 1968. Among these are the Aburi accord (Ghana), London, United Kingdom and Kampala (Uganda). The Organization of African Unity (O. A. U.), Peace talks of Addis-Ababa under the auspices of O. A. U. and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. The talks could not yield any positive result as both sides in conflicts unyielding to shift for peace. In the words of Chinua Achebe, the Biafran Information Services during the war said "that Igbo people had been discriminated against and that they have been marginalized" (p. 20). In theory, both Nigeria and "Biafra" sides were supposed to have genuine reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. But, in practice, it was very difficult. According to Hobbes (1977: 21):

The irrational human nature leads individuals or groups to a state of war in which the life of no one is secure. This civil strife or disorder

and instability are caused by human nature or irrational human nature. One of the causes of conflict is human nature such as anger; aggressions, cruelty, brutality and hostility, these negative human values, tendencies together produce violent behaviour.

These two forms of conflicts, political and ethnic occur mostly in a multi-ethnic state or nation; where there is an ethnic dominated political party in order to have a share from the government. Ethnic differences are one of the commonest causes of conflicts in Nigeria. For instance, any political party formed is likely to gain popularity in one region than the other, if such a political party rules, other ethnic groups are likely to be marginalized. The Kano riot of 1953 in Nigeria is a good example. As noted by Adeyemo (2000: 15):

Regrettably, the 1953 Kano riot widened the gap between the three regions in Nigeria, especially, between Northern and Southern Nigeria. For the first time the Northerners talked openly about the possibility of secession rather than accepting humiliation from the Southern counterparts. In addition, Western Nigeria which was governed by the Action Group (A. G.) a political party formed by the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, threatened secession over the non-inclusion of Lagos in Western Region in the 1954 Constitution.

The Action Group conflict of 1962 led to the State of Emergency in the Western Nigeria. The Benin and Delta provinces also felt agitated, which led to the creation of Mid-Western region from the Western Region. It is noted that this did not solve the political conflicts in Nigeria.

Ifá teaches that there is no any substantial development in an atmosphere of conflict. There is no any benefit as a result of conflict for an individuals, groups or nations. *Ifá* philosophy teaches that whoever inherits patience inherits all good things in life. Patience will prevent an individual, group or nation from anger which breeds conflict. According to Agboola (2012: pp. 127 & 8) as contained in *Ogbè yónú* that

Ìbínú ò ʃe nnkankan fún ní
Sùúrù ní baba ìwà.

*Àgbà tó ní sùúrù oun gbogbo ló ní.
 A díá fún Igúnnugún Ògègè
 tí sọmọ Oloḍumare Agòtún
 Oba atẹni lejeleje fori sapeji omi
 Nijó tí nsogbogbo àrùn
 tí nnara kíkà aláìlè dídè.
 Ìbínú ò ẹ nńkankan fún ni
 Sùúrù ni baba iwà.
 Àgbà tó ní sùúrù oun gbogbo ló ní...
 Èni tí ò bínú nire rẹ npọ.*

Anger does not do anyone good,
 patience is the father of character
 The elder who has patience has everything
 Ifa's message for the Vulture
 one of the children of God.
 The king who uses the mat as the sky and water as the pillow;
 when Vulture was suffering from undisclosed illness
 and found it difficult to do normal work.
 Anger does not do anyone good,
 patience is the father of character
 An elder who has patience has everything
 Whoever avoids anger is blessed with all good things...

This *Ifá* corpus teaches that patience in all situations brings peace and series of development and progress to mankind, since the major cause of conflict is as a result of human behaviour. *Oḍù Ifá Èjìogbè* relates this with the story of snakes of different species, associated with different characters. These snakes are traditionally known as *Oká*, *Erè*, *Sèbè* and *Níní*. *Níní* is the youngest of them all. It was the only one that was made the chief as a result of its gentle character. *Sèbè* misbehaved the attitude that disqualified it from occupying the chieftaincy position. According to the *Ifá* corpus (with author's translation):

*Inú bíbí ní i sọ ibi tí wón tiwá
 Alájàngbílà nń fira rẹ éhàn*

Ó tún gbé'se rẹ́ dé, orúko nǹi sọ́ ní
A dífá fún Ọkà
A dífá fún Erè
A dífá fún Sèbè
A dífá fún Nìní
Tí sọmọ ikeyìn wọn lénje-lénje
Níjọ́ tí wọn nloọ́ jẹ́ Oyè Alápà-nràwé
Nílé Oníyànjà
Ẹbọ ní wọn ní kẹ́ wọn wá sẹ
Nìní nìkan ní nḡ lẹ́yìn tí nṣẹ́bọ
Lóóótọ́ lá mú Nìní jọba
Sèbè ló sìnà wù, ló ba isẹ́ è jẹ́
Lóóótọ́ lá mú Nìní jọba.

Excessive anger portrays their upbringing
 He who ignores mediation easily exposes himself
 "You have come again with your bad attitude" will only give
 one a bad name;
 These were the *Ifá* cast for *Ọkà*, the Cobra
 And to *Erè*, the Boa constrictor
 And to *Sèbè*, the Black poisonous snake
 And to *Nìní*, the Beautiful snake
 When they were going to become the *Alápà-nràwé*, the
 King in the household of *Oníyànjà*
 They were advised to offer *ẹbọ*
 Only *Nìní* complied with the advice
 Truly, we have installed *Nìní* as *Ọba* (king) is the
 Misbehaviour of *Ọkà* that ruined his career
 We have installed *Nìní* as *Ọba*
 The misbehaviour of *Erè* was it that ruined his career
 We have installed *Nìní* as *Ọba*
 The misbehaviour of *Sèbè* was it that ruined his future
 Truly, we have installed *Nìní* as *Ọba*."

In Yorùbá tradition, *Ọkà* is associated with wickedness, *Sèbè* with
 temperamental and *Erè* with harmful attitude, but *Nìní*, is not harmful
 but gentle. The natural behaviors of *Ọkà*, *Erè* and *Sèbè* which will not

bring peaceful atmosphere, but conflict disqualified them from being rulers and leaders. The *Ifá* corpus, *Ìròsùntúúrùpòṇ*, as contained in Akintóla (1999: 178) describes this situation with *Igbá* (calabash), who cannot achieve anything because of series of conflicts it involved itself in. The question was put to *Igbá* by the *Ifá* corpus that:

Igbá, èèṣe t'á ò rí ọ l'Ọjà t'irún-ni?

Ìjà ni;

Àwo, èèṣe t'á ò rí ọ l'Ọjà t'irún-ni?

Ìjà ni;

Ìjà ni ò jẹ....

Calabash dish, why did you not come to the last fifth-day market?

It is conflict;

You container, did you not come to the last fifth-day market?

It is conflict;

It is conflict that barred me ...

The *Ifá* corpus states that in an atmosphere of ranchos, generated by human attitude is detrimental to peace and development.

Religion is also one of the causes of conflict between individuals or groups. These religious conflicts occur over religious beliefs, doctrines and practices in Africa and across the world. There have been series of religious conflict in Nigeria. For instance, towards the end of 20th century religions violence erupted in some parts of Nigeria with the declaration of Sharia laws. On 27 October 1999, Zamfara State declared the state under the Sharia law. As Ahmed Sani Yerima, the Governor of Zamfara that proclaimed the State as an Islamic State declared that "without Sharia law Islamic faith is valueless." He appealed to other Northern States to follow the example, the attempt by the Kaduna State that brought about religious conflict towards February 2000. The reason behind this crises was as a result of religious conflict, in which Christians that constitute about half of the population felt they have been marginalized. According to Adeyemọ (2000: 21) "If the violent had not been properly handled by the Ọbasanjó administration, it would

have led to another tragic "civil war" in Nigeria". This is to affirm that there is likely to be conflict, when there is a clash of religious interests. In other words, when a party, individual or nation feel that their religious beliefs have been marginalized they may foment conflict. The *Ifá* philosophy teaches and preaches religious tolerance by saying that all religions worship the same God. The difference is only in the mode of worship. Religious practices are observed through different ways, but towards the same goal. For instance, the use of white cloth by the Islamic worshippers with that of the white garment Christians worshippers, including the white garment worn for Christian baptism purpose and that of the white garment worn by the *Obatalá* worshippers symbolizes holiness in all the three modes of worship mentioned above. Therefore, there is no need for worshippers of one religion to look down on the worshippers' of other religions. According to *Odu Òfún Òyèkú* contained in *Salámi* (2002: 873):

...Orò yí lá n' se bí àwọn babaláwo bá ta aṣo funfun
 Òun náà ni ọn n' se ní Mèkà
 t ọn bá sán aṣo funfun...
 Èní jẹ onígàgbó yòò lódò
 yòò se ìtẹ̀bomi.
 Wọ́n ó fun ní aṣo funfun...
 Bẹ̀ẹ̀ náà ni lódò Ọlọ́ya,
 Eléégún,
 Ọ̀ṣà,
 Gbogbo aláwo pátá...

It is the same cult performed by the *babaláwo* wearing white cloth.

The same in Mecca

When they put on white garments...

The believers will go to the river for baptism

She will be in white clothing.

The *Oya* worshippers,

The Masquerades' worshippers,

and all the religion cultists...

Ifá calls for tolerance across religions, even when somebody is converted into another religion. S/he must not be waged war against. *Ọ́rúnmìlà* says he never fought his children for converting into Islamic religion. *Ifá* corpus established that Islam was first practiced by *Gámíbí*, *Kìlátù* and *Dáúdù*, who were all the children of *Ọ́rúnmìlà* (The *Ifá* progenitor). According to *Oḍù Ọ̀túá Méjì* verses two and three, contained in *Abimbólá* (1968: 96-9), the children took their father's cloth and turbaned with it.

Wọ́n sì wé e gèlè nàà sọ́rí bàntútú
Wọ́n na igi méréin sílẹ̀ níbùùníbùù
Wọ́n wá kó sí ààrin igi nàà
Wọ́n nṣenu wúyẹwúyẹ
Wọ́n n fọ́rí kanlẹ́,
Wọ́n n díde
Wọ́n n kúnlẹ́,
Wọ́n sì n nàró
Bàbá wọ́n sá n wó wọ́n ní.
Wọ́n n ẹ̀ bẹ̀ẹ̀ lẹ̀ẹ̀marùnún lójójúmọ̀
Ó wá rántí Ifá tí àwọ́n awo rẹ̀ kẹ̀ fún un
Kò bá wọ́n já...

They wrapped the cloth on their heads in big manner
 They crossed four sticks in four breaths
 They went to the middle of the sticks formed.
 They were voicing silently with only their lips moving
 They were worshipping with their head touching the ground.
 They were standing up.
 They were bending down.
 Their farther was just looking at them.
 They were doing this five times daily.
 He then remembered an *Ifá* divination to him...
 He did not fight them...

Ifá is against any form of religious conflict in whatever situation. In order to ensure the sustainability of peace and security in Yorùbá communities, the divinities were not left behind in governance. As

Káyòdé (1984: 4) argues “each divinity has a role to play in the ‘government’ set-up of life in the community...” By this, the African experienced a conflict free society before the colonial administration was instituted. This is because; African religion was part of their culture. According to Işòlá (2010: 36) “if you leave out the religion, you are left with deformed culture. Therefore, safeguarders themselves must espouse African traditional religion.” African nations hardly have religious conflict before the coming of the whites to their communities. Religion is a powerful or potent means, it transcends to other aspects of human lives such as politics. In one of the Nigerian dailies, *The Nation* of October 6, 2012, it was reported by Şòbòwálé that “overall, religion hang like a sword of Damocles over contemporary local and international politics and relations, as well as security.” This means that religion is a recipe for peace and security. To uphold the Yorùbá virtue of *omolúabí* referred to earlier, there must be religious tolerance. To the Yorùbá people, *ìwà lẹ̀sìn* meaning that religion is character. The character of a religious faithfulness must be Godly. According to Àtandá (1980: 29) “...the Yorùbá feared violating moral laws, particularly in their dealings with their fellow human beings. The results of all this was that the rate of crime among the Yorùbá up to 1800 was extremely low...”

There can also be conflict as a result of retaliation. *Ifá* is against retaliation. The Yorùbá people believe that vengeance belongs to God. This is associated with forgiveness. When a party or individual feels offended, there should be readiness for the individual to forgive. The *Ifá* corpus, *Odu Òdí Ògbè* as contained in Sàlámì (2002), even though, *Ìgbín* (snail) got the wife of *Òòşà*, since *Òòşà* noticed the remorse in him, pleading for forgiveness, haven recognized his mistake, he forgave him and there was peace. The *Odu Ifá* enjoined all that:

*Afi kí Òòşà ó forí jì òun ló kù.
 Òòşà bá n bínú bọ.
 Ká ti gbọ pé Ìgbín ló gbobínrin Òun?
 Bí ti n bọ lóòòkán,
 Ìyáàlù Ìgbín bá nàró,
 Ó n pé fí jìn*

Òàṣà, f'Ògèlé jìn mí
 Òàṣà, f'Ògèlé jìn mí
 Òàṣà, f'Ògèlé jìn mí
 Jìn mí
 f'Ògèlé jìn mí
 f'Ògèlé jìn mí...
 Òàṣà ní, bàà
 Oun á ti ṣe bàyíí?
 Èni ó gba obìnrin òun náà ló tun bẹ òun yíí
 Ifá pé gbogbo èni tó bá n wá iforíjì
 pé ká dákun ká ṣe suúrù
 tí kù ba n ṣe èni tó n ṣagídí.

There is no way, but that Òàṣà should forgive him.
 Òàṣà was coming furiously,
 How can we say that it is Ìgbín of all that took his wife?
 As he was coming afar off,
 the chief drummer of Ìgbín stood up drumming.
 He was saying,
 forgive me of the act/misdeed.
 Òàṣà fardon me of Ògèlé's matter.
 Òàṣà pardon me of Ògèlé's matter.
 Òàṣà fardon me of Ògèlé's matter.
 Forgive me.
 Forgive me of Ògèlé issue.
 Òàṣà then said, what should I do now?
 The one that took his wife
 is the one pleading for forgiveness now.
 Ifá enjoined that whoever wants forgiveness
 should please exercise patience with the one that offended
 them.
 Those that shows penitence or remorse... (p. 154).

Ifá is categorical about forgiveness as one of the pre-conflict resolutions. Forgiveness will pave way to avert conflict. Ifá enjoined that, peaceful co-existence will lead to development in the society. More importantly, African leaders and oppositions should learn to

forgive wrong doers and put the past behind them. Therefore, instead of going into conflict or war, they argue that *fijà f'Ólórún já fowó lérán* meaning that, let God fight on your behalf, keep on looking.

Ifá encourages individuals, groups and nations not to retaliate, even, when one has been offended or wounded. *Òrúnmìlà* had this experience in the city of *Ìlawẹ̀*, in *Èkìtì* State of Nigeria. He was attacked with dangerous weapons such as cutlasses, clubs and guns. Instead of challenging them to fight by retaliating, *Òrúnmìlà* says, he never fought back to revenge against his enemies but instead was chanting *Ifá* song, *ìyẹ̀rẹ̀*; appealing to the people of *Ìlawẹ̀*, that, he is a peace lover and would not want trouble makers to destroy him. The enemies abandoned *Òrúnmìlà*. He prevailed over them by "offering an olive branch" to his enemies. According to *Odu Ejògbẹ̀* verse five, contained in *Abimbólá* (1968: 18):

... *A díá fún Ọrúnmìlà*
Ifá nṣowò epo relé Ịlawẹ̀.
Gbogbo ará Ịlawẹ̀ nìyí, ìkà nì wọn.
Ìgbà tí Ọrúnmìlà rubọ tán,
lọ bá múra, ó di ilé Ịlawẹ̀.
Bí àwọn ará Ịlawẹ̀ tí fojú kan Ọrúnmìlà
Nì wọn bá dide sí i.
Èlòmíràn mú gbóngbó;
Èlòmíràn mú kùmò.
Nwọn ló kú ibi tí Ọrúnmìlà ó wò.
Nì Eṣù bá di atẹgùn,
Ó tẹ lé Ọrúnmìlà.
Ó nì kí Ọrúnmìlà ó má ẹ bá wọn já,
Orin nì kí ó máa fì wọn kọ.
Nì Ọrúnmìlà bá fì ìyẹ̀rẹ̀ sòhùn arò.
O nì ará Ịlawẹ̀,
Mo rupo o.
Ará Ịlawẹ̀,
Mo rupo.
Epo tí mo rù,
È mọ mọ jẹ ó fọ
Ará Ịlawẹ̀,

...cast divination for *Ọ́rúnmìlà*,
Ifá was engaging in palm-oil business.
The people of *Ìlawẹ̀* are known for wickedness.
After *Ọ́rúnmìlà* performed sacrifice,
He prepared, and set for *Ìlawẹ̀* town.
As soon as the people of *Ìlawẹ̀* sighted *Ọ́rúnmìlà*
They rose against him.
Some took club,
Some took stick.
They were saying that they will see how *Ọ́rúnmìlà* will escape.
Then, *Eṣù* turned to wind
He followed *Ọ́rúnmìlà*.
He told *Ọ́rúnmìlà* not to fight them,
He should be singing of them.
Then, *Ọ́rúnmìlà* was chanting a melodious *ìyẹrẹ̀* (*Ifá* chants).
He said, people of *Ìlawẹ̀*,
I am carrying palm-oil (a peaceful individual).
People of *Ìlawẹ̀*,
I am carrying palm-oil (a peaceful individual).
The palm-oil I am carrying (my ambition in life)
Don't let it break (don't terminate my life ambition)
The people of *Ìlawẹ̀*,
I am carrying palm-oil (I have ambition in life).

The non-retaliation approach of *Ọ́rúnmìlà* made his stay in *Ìlawẹ̀* to be peaceful and successful. He knew very well that he could not succeed in an atmosphere of conflict, and that, no development in an atmosphere of conflict. Conflict terminates individuals, groups and nation's ambitions.

Conflict can erupt between one community and the other. This type of conflict is as a result of demand for independence, agitation, representation among other things in the national cake. For instance, there were Warri and Itsekiri/Ijaw communities in Delta State of Nigeria, the Ijaws fighting the Itsekiri for their own local government and separate headquarters. Sometimes, there may be conflicts devoid

of political intonation, but still inter-ethnic conflict. For instance, in the South Western State, in the Ifẹ/Modákéké, there has been a recurrence of ethnic Conflicts claiming lives and properties worth millions of United States dollars. In March, 2000, the then Governor of Òṣun State, where the two towns belongs invited them for peace talks as according to him "the use of force has not even resolved the dispute between the two neighbouring communities" (Adéyẹmọ, 2000: 22). It is clear that the only lasting way to resolving conflicts in Africa is not by military, force, confrontation or neglect but rather by peace through negotiated settlement, persuasions, dialogue, mediation, adjudication and political approach among others as illustrated in the many philosophies that emanate from the *Ifá* practices.

Conflict resolution

Conflict resolution has to do with settlement of conflict. There are different methods of conflict resolution such as mediation, reconciliation, negotiation and adjudication. The first step in resolving conflict is by inviting the two or more parties in conflict to peace meeting. This method applies to both pre and post conflict stages as entrenched in *Ifá*. This is normally initiated by a neutral party who should not take sides. In a situation that it involves a very large population, like a community in conflict with another, representatives of individuals of very high integrity and of high repute are chosen from each parties. Adéyẹmọ (2000: 123), thus, notes:

An enabling and conducive environment must be created to enable the main actors including the armed groups or rebels to participate under a neutral Third Party Mediator. It is only peaceful resolution of the African Conflicts and wars that can bring about desired peace and political stability needed for socio-economic developments, free movement of people and goods.

The Yorùbá precept of this form of conflict management is reported by Adéoyè (1971: 114) that:

*Èlédàá fún wọn láyè àti ànṣààní tí wọn tọrọ yíí...
Àwọn ẹdà ìsọrí yíí dídè wọn sì kó ara wọn bó*

*sí ègbé kan níbi tí ohunkòhun kò gbé le yò wọn l'enu,
 tí ẹnikéni kò sì gbé le ti gbó ọrọkọrọ tí wọn bá sọ.
 Díde tí nwọn dé ibi tí wọn gbé jẹ tẹ, wọn kọ yan olórí kan
 láarin nwọn. kò sí ita, kò sí ijà tí wọn fi panupò pé ẹni tí
 yóò sasoju fún wọn láti ibẹrẹ ọràn yi...*

Then, the creator gave them opportunities that they requested for this group stood up and gathered themselves together to a place where no one could hear their discussions. On getting to their meeting they selected representatives out of themselves. There was no any rift among them on who and who are to represent them on the matter...

Depending on the 'volatile' nature of the conflict, parties to the conflict may be invited together or to meet them separately in the first instance before both or all the parties are invited for adjudication. In case, the conflict demands representatives, they must be elderly people with experience of life. In many African communities, age is venerated because it is thought to be associated with wisdom. To the Yorùbá, *àgbà kẹ́ í wà lẹ́jẹ, kórí ọmọ́ titun wọ* meaning that, things must not go out of hand in the presence of an elder. Most of the time, the presence and the intervention of elders in conflict, lead to conflict resolution and transformation. This is as a result of pools or the wisdom of the elders in the Yorùbá society. The Yorùbá believes that the youth may be wealthier than the elders or occupy honourable and respectable positions than the elders, there is no way for the young ones to possess, acquire wisdom like the elders. This is natural endowment that is accorded to the elders most of the time. To the Yorùbá, *ọmọ́ dé ọ̀ lẹ́ láşọ bí àgbà, kó tún lákúńsà bí àgbà* which means, a child cannot have cloth and rags as the elder. This is also realized as a form of power. The elders know the past history, the memorial heritage that is relevant in the adjudication of a case. To the Yorùbá people, *ìrírí ş'àgbà ọgbón*, that is, experience is greater than wisdom. In many African societies such as the Yorùbá, experience is considered as the springboard of wisdom. One cannot be considered wise unless he or she has acquired some experience, the experience of which is normally associated with age. The elders employ the past relevant memory of a case to resolve a current

The representatives,
should represent well.
The delegates,
should serve the interest of the people...

Conflict transformation

254

Why conflict transformation?

The parties involved in conflict should have a flash back to the social, economic and political events that brought about various conflicts in the society, looking into the origins, development, management, strength, weakness, success and failures of the past conflicts. This largely derives from the thinking that without the past, there cannot be present and today determines tomorrow. To the Yorùbá people, *bí ọmọ dé bá ṣubú a wó iwájú, bí àgbà bá ṣubú a wẹ̀yìn wò* meaning that, if a child stumbled and fell down, S/he looks forward, but if an elderly person stumbles and fell down S/he looks back. On one hand, a child who is immature and who lacks in life experiences will never learn to use the present mistake as the input for future benefits. An elderly one on the other hand, looks back to see the mistake of the past so as not to fall prey of the same in future. To the Yorùbá people, *ọgbón ọdún yìí, èrè ní ló dún tó n bọ* meaning this year wisdom is a gain for the next year. This is contained in *Odu Ọfún Ìrẹ̀tẹ̀*, contained in Sàlámi (2002: 917):

*...N tó bá ṣeni lẹ̀kẹ̀kan,
kò tún gbọdò ṣeni lẹ̀kẹ̀kẹ̀jì mó...*

...whatever is a mistake made once,
must not befall one the second time...

In conflict transformation, balance reconciliation, mediation or negotiation should be made between the parties in conflict. The end should be 'win-win' resolution. No parties should claim total victory and the other(s) blames. This can only happen in a situation whereby adjudication to conflict is made by the Courts of Law, which integrates the strict application of law or legal machineries into conflict transformation. There should be spirit of 'give and take' between the parties in conflict. Each of the parties should shift ground for each or one another, so as to create rooms or gap for peace. The concern should be on future. Efforts must be made to correct the mistakes of the past, in order to prevent the recurrence

of it in the future. Talking about conflict transformation generally, Akpenpuun (2006: 149-150) observes that:

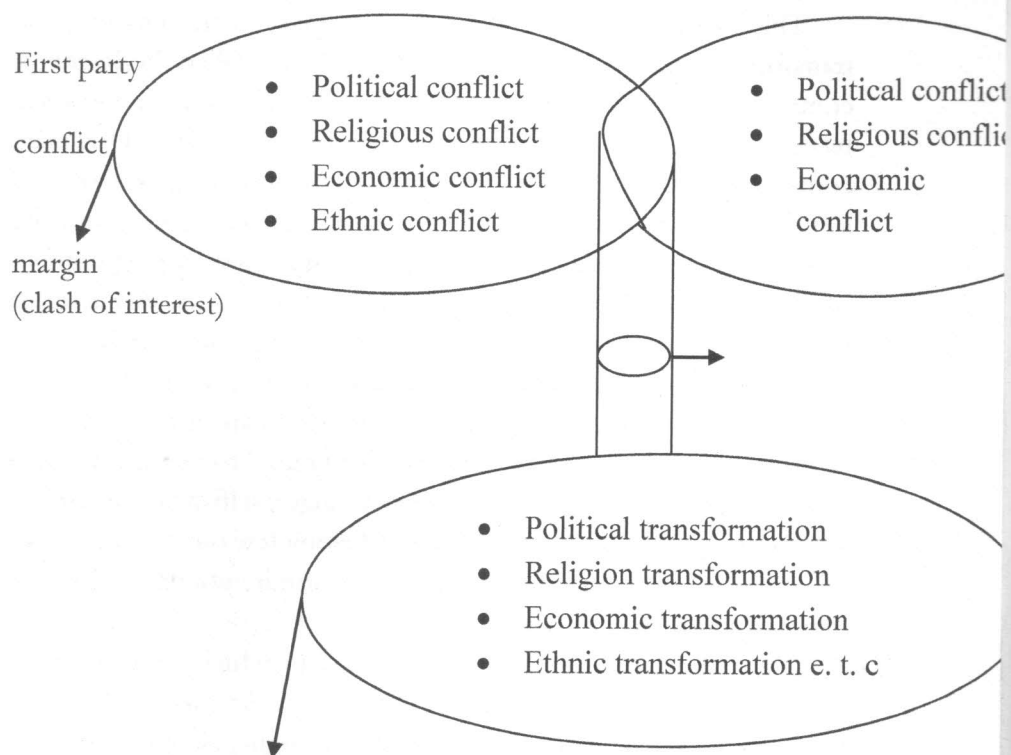
Through the study of the totality of conflicts, they are able to gain insights and understanding of the importance of ideological perception human nature, moral values, material values, experiences, causes and effects in a conflict situation. The methods, strategies and logistics of the past are reviewed by linking the past to the present and predicting the future history enhances the continuity of the phenomenon of conflict. This is an important benefit of the historical heritage in the study of conflict. It is in the context of the historical past that certain changes becomes desirable and are effected by the parties to the conflict.

To Marxism, violent revolution is the means of bringing about change in the society. The Russian revolution of 1917 was violent and bloody. As Akpenpuun (2006: 150) tells us:

It became an outstanding reference point for all Marxists. At the time of decolonization in Asia, Africa and South America, there were many violent revolutions in which governments were overthrown through military coups. Since that time, the Marxist theory of violent revolutionary change has continued to influence a large number of conflicts in the world today.

On the contrary, to the Yorùbá people, *ohun a fẹ̀lẹ̀ mú kẹ̀ í bàjẹ̀*, *ohun a bá fagbára mú koko ní í lẹ̀*, meaning that, whatever is resolved peacefully succeeds, but whatever is forcefully resolved breeds hostility. Therefore the use of raw power should be discouraged in conflict resolution and transformation. Peace in conflict transformation must not be the peace of the graveyard type, which is peace not in the true sense, a deceptive peace. Conflict management and conflict transformation can be represented by the diagram I have provided below:

A Chart Showing Conflict Management and Conflict Transformation



Conflict transformation

The parties in conflict are represented by the first and second circles on top. However, it is possible for the parties in conflict to be more than two. Where the circles interwoven each other, is described as 'areas of conflict'. This is where there is conflict of interests that brings about conflict. Some of the interests are itemized inside the circle. The down circle that joined the two circles is represented by conflict transformation. The issue(s) in conflict is/are equally itemized.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed conflict management and transformation from the African traditional way, called the *Ifá* that is commonly used among the Yorùbá of Nigeria. The chapter discussed two forms of conflicts: pre-conflict and post-conflict. However, controls as a result of preventing conflict from occurring is described as pre-conflict type of conflict in this work; while controls after the manifestation of conflict had occurred is regarded as post-conflict type of conflict. The Yorùbá concept of *Omoluàbí* (good character) is seen as the bane of character control among the Yorùbá. It is observed from the discussion that most of the causes of conflict, especially in Africa are as a result of vices; which are against the spirit of *Omoluàbí*. Some of these vices, but not limited to these, examined in this chapter are retaliation, intolerance, anger, selfishness and greed among others. These vices are discussed along few out of many types of conflict that we may have, such as economic, political, ethnic or regional and religious crisis among others.

The chapter equally addressed the ways by which conflict can be resolved and conflict transformation achieved. Among the different methods discussed are negotiations, dialogue, Court of laws, mediation, and force among others. It is established that conflict transformation by negotiation and dialogue are best suited for a lasting solution to African conflicts. It is established that African methods of indigenous management to conflict and conflict transformation may be best suited to African conflicts and potentially can bring lasting solution to economic, ethnic, religious and political conflicts among others confronting the African continent in this century.

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