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## Historical Pragmatic Exploration of Sakky Jojo's *Afonja*

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### Abstract

*This study is concerned with examining some historical misconception in respect of the decline values of Oyo Empire and the alleged act of betrayal often associated with Afonja in some quarters. In addition, it looks into the circumstances surrounding the death of Afonja with a view to determining the involvement of Alimi. The study used historical linguistic approach while Social Identity Theory was adapted as the theoretical framework. Findings reveal, among others, that Afonja acted with clear conscience (good intention) as his action was simply to uphold the constitutional provision of the Empire. The allegation that he wanted to become king was also unfounded. Alimi never anticipated staying longer in Ilorin, let alone becoming the ruler, and he did not have any direct involvement in the religious crisis under which Afonja's life was lost. As a matter of fact, Alimi was no more alive when Afonja was slain. The study concludes that some of the alleged wrongdoings that the two great men (Afonja and Alimi) were accused of are not true. So, bringing this fact to the attention of the public is important in order to keep the record straight and restore their positions of dignity in the annal of history.*

**Keywords:** Pragmatics, History, Ilorin, Afonja, Alimi

### Introduction

Many people occupy important position in history such that their names can never be forgotten for as long as this universe exists. These kinds of people lived at different times and places in human history. Besides, they played different roles for which posterity shall never forget them. In the history of the Yoruba legends, such people include, but not limited to, Oduduwa, Oramiyan, BashorunGaa, Afonja, Kurunmi, EfusetanAniwura, Moremi Ajansoro, and LisabiAgbongbo Akala to mention but a few. Of course, no comprehensive history of Oyo kingdom could be told or written without mentioning some of the above stated names. Of particular interest to this paper is Afonja, the Generalissimos of the Oyo Empire whose rebellious disposition against the AlafinAole was believed to have contributed to the decline of Oyo Empire.

Afonja was also credited for his heroic roles in the establishment of Ilorin as a sovereign city under the Emirate system of traditional institution. Ilorin is the Southern-most Emirate in Nigeria, so the history of its establishment has remained a contestable topical issue among historians,

linguists, sociologists, Islamic scholars, among others. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the roles of Afonja and Alimi in relation to the above stated traditional institutions with a view to providing answers to questions concerning the relationship between the two great men. These questions are: Did Afonja betray Alaafin Aole and consequently contributed to the decline of Oyo Empire? Was Alimi calculative of becoming the ruler after the liberation of Ilorin from Oyo Empire and consequently masterminded and executed by Afonja?

Providing answers to the above questions is the thrust of this paper. To achieve this objective, the paper adopts historical pragmatics as a tool of analysis, while it uses social identity theory as its theoretical framework. The choice of historical pragmatics is informed by the nature of the subject matter being studied. According to Agbalu (n.d.), from a modern revisionist approach, all history is in fact revisionist since it is almost always told by the victor. What this implies is that history, in most cases, is told by the victor, and there is always the need to revisit some of the age-long misconception that might have been passed down either consciously or otherwise. This is in order to avoid what Chimamanda Adichie refers to as “single story”. The choice of social identity theory is to critically examine how certain information in the text are structured with a view to unearth some societal interest that the two camps are identified with. So, dissecting the structured information, along the historical lane, provides a veritable platform to contextualise the information for proper understanding of the text. Therefore, the analysis and findings of this paper largely depend on the information provided by the author of the play text. However, external information that is in conformity with the facts provided in *Afonja*, written by Sakky Jojo is considered useful. Describing the goal of pragma-philology (historical pragmatics) Jacobs and Jucher (1995, p.11) posit that:

Historical linguists have spent most of their efforts on sound changes and on the phonology and morphology of historical texts. Syntax and semantics have always been less popular among the language historians. Pragma-philology (Historical Pragmatics) goes one step further and describes the contextual aspects of historical texts, including the addressers and addressees, their social and personal relationship, the physical and social setting of text production and text reception, and the the text.

It is in view of the above submission that *Afonja* by Sakky Jojo is examined alongside the social and personal relationship between the two major characters (Afonja and Alimi) in the text. This is in a bid to unravel historical facts embedded in the text as evident in the philology of the text.

This principle agrees with the sociological broad-based view of historical pragmatics which according to Jucher (2008) is considered as a field mainly concerned with the study that wants to understand the patterns of intentional human interaction (as determined by the condition by society).

### **Afonja: A Synopsis**

Afonja (Aare Ona kakanfo), the generalissimo of the Oyo Empire had a rough relationship with Alaafin Aole Arogangan. While Afonja was desirous of ensuring the defense of the Empire against both the internal and external aggressions, Aole was worried with strengthening his grip on power. He felt unsafe and the throne unsecured in the hand of Afonja as the Commander of the Empire's army. Therefore, he plotted a plan to eliminate Afonja by ordering him to embark on a military expedition to Iwere. Afonja refused, claiming that Iwere was the home to the mother of Alaafin Abiodun, the immediate past ruler of the Empire, and it was against the custom and tradition to wage war against the home town of a mother of Alaafin. Iwere was also notoriously known to be indomitable as no war was ever successfully waged against it. According to Jimoh (1994, p.31) "This town (Iwere) was chosen because it was militarily fortified and believed to be impregnable." Having clearly violated the cultural provision of the Empire, Aole was pressurized by Afonja to commit suicide. It was obvious to all that Aole allowed himself to be deceived by the Oyo nobility who felt unsafe with the military might of Afonja as the Commander of soldiers of the Empire, in addition to being a royal blood. Furthermore, allowing Afonja to partake in the administration of the Empire by the immediate past Alaafin (Abiodun) was like wetting his tongue for an insatiable appetite for power.

Afonja returned to his base in Ilorin where he was informed of the newly crowned Alaafin Maku. Neither did Afonja recognize Maku, nor did he pay the expected traditionally homage to the new ruler. War loomed large over Afonja's roof in Ilorin. Realising the danger ahead, Afonja invited a Muslim cleric, Alimi Janta with his fellow Muslim disciples (Jama'a) to help him in prayers and military support. The war was fought and won by Afonja and his supporters. However, the victory and the associated peace was short-lived as misunderstanding broke out between Afonja and the jama'a (disciples of Alimi). The text clearly shows the misunderstanding was not between Afonja and Alimi as the latter himself was unhappy with the level of lawlessness, anarchy and violence that some soldiers and members of Jamaa unleashed on the innocent people. Rather, the misunderstanding originated from the loyalists of both Afonja and Alimi. It led to open confrontation as full-blown war ensued between the two camps and Afonja fought gallantly and died as a hero.

## Review of Literature

Sakky Jojojoins several other writers whose works discussed the lives and histories of legends. Such legends, whose lives have become useful historical and literary data include Julius Caesar, Hercules, Alexander the Great of Egypt, King Henry IV, King Arthur, to mention but a few. In the home front, particularly in Yoruba history, they include Oduduwa, Oranya, Jaja of Opobo, Ovaranwen Nogbaisi of the great Benin Kingdom, Queen Amina of Zaria, Lisabi of Egba Kingdom, Moremi, Efusetan Aniwura, Bashorun Gaha among others. These are individuals whose names in history are written in gold, as they will never be forgotten due to their heroic or legendary performance while they were alive.

Considering a few examples, Agbalu's (n.d.) work titled "Bashorun Gaha: Tyrant or misunderstood Freedom Fighter" challenged age-long held belief that Bashorun Gaha was a tyrant. According to him, Gaha remains one of the Yoruba's most popular characters in history. From a modern revisionist approach, as all history is in fact revisionist since it is almost always told by the victor, Gaha may have been a misunderstood republican. In a similar way, Okunola and Ojo's (2012) work titled "Social Historical Crime Review on Efusetan Aniwura, Bashorun Gaha, and Aare-Ago Ogunrinde Aje", examine various atrocities by the three historical leaders. The work contends that the crime being committed by the present (political) leaders is not new in history, with emphasis on the shameful and ignoble circumstances under which the tyrants of the past died. This, according to the authors, should be warning to all leaders who have tendency to use power recklessly, that there are consequences for all human actions.

Bakare's (2019) x-rays the fictional work of Tunde Leye. In a work titled "In Afonja the rise, Tunde Leye bridges the gap between history and the now". The work highlights the circumstances surrounding the rift between Afonja and Alafin Aole and maintains that thirst for power and dominance has, for long, been part and parcel of human existence. Bakare postulates that the struggle for power among the politicians of today is nothing but the replica of the past. He asserts that:

The fine details may be different. But how human beings interact with power, the people in power, and motivation for power are essentially the same across history and political system....That is why you will study and you will see mirrors of the current.

One of such legends in the history of Yoruba race is Afonja (Are Ona kakanfo) the Generalissimo of Oyo Empire. Afonja lives in the minds of many people today, and so will he live in the minds of generations of people yet unborn. His heroic performance at wars, his desire to defend and expand the

territorial control of the Empire, his restless spirit, honest disposition, sense of humour and accommodating nature stand him out among his peers. However, in spite of all the accolades associated with Afonja, his personality means different things to different people, and it is on account of this that this paper attempts a “Historical Pragmatic Appraisal of Sakky Jojo’s *Afonja*”. This is aimed at ensuring that misconceptions about the personality of Afonja in the annals of history, is placed in the proper perspective.

### **Methodology**

This paper is basically concerned with addressing three often contestable historical matters in respect of the declining and the eventual collapse of the Oyo Empire in general, and the demise of Afonja in particular. The three matters are: the involvement of Afonja in the death of Aole (the Alaafin of Oyo); the involvement of Alimi in the death of Afonja; the circumstance(s) under which Afonja lost his life. A purposive sampling procedure is adopted as data sampling technique. Social Identity Theory (SIT) is used as the theoretical framework while historical pragmatics is adopted as the tool of analysis. The choice of historical pragmatics is imperative because drama texts cannot be interpreted outside its social, situational and linguistic contexts. The descriptive analytical procedure is used in relation to relevant sections of the text, and supported with some published historical facts from earlier researchers on the subject matter of the study.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

Excerpts related to whether Afonja was a betrayal or not are presented below:

Ona-Efa: Your Majesty, who or where should your might be felt. The dry season is upon us. May the Kingdom not disintegrate under your reign.

Alaafin Aole: My councilors, I have told you before now what rumbles my stomach is too dangerous.

Aremo: May the gods forbid! Chiefs and slaves are all yours, your Majesty. The King decrees, he does not suggest. He who plays with fire must get burnt. How formi-dable is your enemy that he cannot be brought to scrub the ground with his mouth on your feet?

Alaafin Aole: Thank you. You must know that my adversary also has my blood. Since the Last expedition stopped at Gbeji, then the next expedition should continue from there.

Otun-Efa: Well said your Majesty. But Gbeji is below the status of our army. I will suggest that the army should be sent against Iwere. That is where the valour of Kakanfo and warriors will be tested. Expedition, Your Majesty should be to Iwere. Have I said it well?

Aremo and Osi-Efa: You have said it well. In fact, you are too fast for us. That is where we have in mind as well.

Alaafin Aole: You think Iwere is not too formidable for the army?

Ona-Efa: It is only in war that men of valour are known. Only in one's vocation can be charged of laziness.

Alaafin Aole: (smiles) Then let the battle begin at Gbaji. Iwere is not far from there. Pp. 34-35

Osi-Efa; Aare! This town is to be taken by the order of Alaafin.

Afonja: Ah ha! This is the wish of Alaafin? Since when have missions become a secret even for Aare? I, Afonja, son of Laderin, Aare Ona Kakanfo for the whole Oyo Empire cannot be taken for granted! Onikoyi: Are you aware of this mission? I thought Gbeji is our Target?

Onikoyi: So do I, Aare. I know nothing of this mission.

Adeyanju: It is the wish of the Alaafin. Is Aare afraid to take this small town? The Alaafin trust in your favour

Owota: Now this is treachery. If the Alaafin does not wish for our perdition, would he have asked us to take this town whose hills are more dangerous than its warriors?

Osi Efa: You dare challenge the wish of the Alaafin? I know it! You have malice against the Alaafin since he ordered the killing of Jankalawa, your protégé. It is you who has Treachery under your sleeve!

Basorun: Abomination is served before you. You can choose either to eat it or smash the calabash.

Afonja: [Agitated]. It is against the custom to attack the hometown of the mother of an Alaafin.

Shall we be a party to a breakdown of custom of custom and constitution that has given Oyo its power and pride, to satisfy the whims of an Alaafin? What manner of Alaafin

Have we not seen? We shall not be a party to the breakdown of custom and tradition.

Even Alaafin has limits to his whims [The royal parties sense danger and are visibly shaking] Pp. 36-37

The above excerpts provide adequate information to unravel the circumstances surrounding the rift between Alaafin Aole and Afonja. On the basis of the excerpts, the following facts can be deduced:

- i. that Afonja is a member of the royal family through his mother, and that he has the chance to be Alaafin, that Alaafin Aole is

- ii. not comfortable with Afonja in control of the Army of Oyo Empire because Afonja is perceived as a threat to the throne, that Alaafin Aole declared expedition against Iwere with Afonja expected to lead the war as a ploy to eliminate Afonja, and consolidate his (Aole) position on the throne, that it is against the custom and tradition of the Empire to wage war against the hometown of the mother of an Alaafin, that Iwere is the hometown of the immediate past Alaafin's mother, that Iwere is spiritually fortified and that no war has ever been successful against it,
- iii. that Alaafin flouts the constitution of Oyo Empire by declaring war expedition against Iwere, and that Alaafin Aole knows that Afonja has to commit suicide if he fails to conquer Iwere.

All the above inferences are clear indication that power intrigue, mutual suspicion and general lack of trust, coupled with the mounting pressure on Alaafin Aole by his Chiefs are the reasons for the rifts between Alaafin Aole and Afonja. According to Jimoh (1994, p. 31):

Initially, the Alafin withstood the pressure and resisted all menacing attempts by his Chiefs to goad him into collision with the Aare Ona-Kakanfo (Afonja). However, at last the Alafin succumbed to blackmail and intimidation by his Chiefs and accepted that Afonja was an enemy. But before accepting this suggestion, he warned the nobility about the grave consequences of making Afonja an enemy and about the abomination involved in an Alafin declaring such enmity, without justification against a blood relation, which Afonja was maternally.

In view of the above submission, Afonja acted within the constitutional provision of the Oyo Empire by forcing Alaafin Aole to commit suicide. Therefore, his action is wrong to be classified as an act of betrayal. Posterity should be kind to Afonja as he remained resolute in the face of threat and persecution, checkmating the excess and reckless use of power by Alaafin Aole who knows too well that it is an abomination to wage war against the hometown of mother of an Alaafin. It is equally important to note that Afonja on several occasions, distanced himself from the throne. On page 51, he asserts: "What is the world coming to? Why are they after my downfall? How wrong they are. They thought I want to be king? King! He who is a prisoner in his palace. A warrior is a free man, the whole world is his place..."

The above excerpts show that the two warring parties (Alaafin Aole and Afonja) have different motives, and are consequently, preoccupied with different agenda. While Alaafin wants to consolidate his grip on the throne by eliminating Afonja who he perceives as enemy; Afonja is desirous about the

protection of the constitutional provision of the Oyo Empire. The Admittance of Alaafin Aole's about Afonja being a royalty underscores why he (Aole) feels power of the army should not be vested in the hands of somebody who, by birth, is eligible to be king. In addition, the alleged forceful circumstance through which Afonja emerged as Aare Ona Kakanfo (The Generalissimo) of the Oyo Empire makes him to be feared and perceived as a threat to the constituted authority under the reign of Alaafin Aole. This assertion is supported by Johnson (2017, p. 224). On the strength of the above submission, Alaafin Aole is preoccupied with consolidating his position as the supreme ruler of the Empire, and he could do anything, even if it means violating the provisional constitution of the Empire.

Afonja, on the other hand, is believed to be identified with the preservation of the custom and tradition of the Empire. His seemingly insubordination to the king is no basis to assume his interest on the throne. Afonja's personality from birth is associated with restless spirit. This could be responsible for his fearless and confrontational attitude, particularly in relation to how he interacts with Alaafin Aole. Afonja repeatedly distances himself from the throne. He even likened the occupant of the throne to prisoners who are caged. As a warrior, no palace is big enough to accommodate his free-flying spirit. He would rather allow his spirit to be free and move across the world. However, Afonja would neither contemplate, nor accept any desecration of the constitutional provision of the Empire. As a General of the army and a major stake holder in the Empire, allowing Alaafin Aole to have unlimited powers over his subjects amounts to tyrannical; allowing him to scot-free after his deliberate violation of the custom and tradition is inimical to the cultural preservation of the Empire.

On the circumstances surrounding the misunderstanding between Afonja's loyalists and disciples of Alimi, the following excerpts are considered relevant:

Afonja: We are doing fine Alfa, what is it I hear that you want to leave us?

Are you feeling lonely in our midst? But your Fulani brothers are here and enjoying their stay.

Alimi: My ears are full of complaints, of warriors molesting people around.

We do not want to be where injustice prevails. Moreover, you know Scholars move around and have no permanent abode, like the nomads.

Afonja: Warriors will always be warriors; they can be troublesome sometimes.

We can always call them to order.

Alimi: Your prayers have been answered. Ilorin is now safe and people are coming in. We should move ahead, spreading the religion.

Afonja: We thank you for your prayers and charms but we do not want you to leave. I think loneliness is partly responsible for this desire to leave. You know I was told not to allow you to stay or fight with us when

you first came. Are not all benefitting from our victory? Do not give the enemies the chance to say 'Alfa has left Afonja.' I ask you, where are your family, your wife and children?

Alimi: They are far away in Gwandangaji, near Kebbi, where I was before coming to this part.

Afonja: Then I ask you to bring them down here. If they are near you, you will think less of leaving. Having one's family near at hand is a cure for loneliness and wondering. Do bring them. They will find in these parts a good place to stay.

Alimi: I do not want to bring my children. They are restless and may not be tolerant of some of the things around here. The blood of the youth is boiling in them.

Afonja: bring them nevertheless. They will keep your company.

Alimi: Alright, I will send for them but you will say I warned you. Pp 66-67

The above excerpts from the play text are indicative of many inferences regarding the remote causes of the rift between Afonja and Alimi. To start with, Alimi repeatedly declares his intention to leave Ilorin after helping Afonja defeat the army of Oyo Empire. In his opinion, it is better for him as a scholar who is committed to the spread of Islam to move to other places, propagating the religion. However, Afonja kicks against this decision and persuades Alimi to stay, demanding that he (Alimi) brings his children to Ilorin as a means of fighting the loneliness and boredom. Afonja reasons that it is a bad decision for Alimi to leave Ilorin just when the town has secured its freedom from Oyo Empire, and it is becoming more prosperous as people from different parts of the world flock into the town. Also worthy of note is the open admittance by Afonja that he is aware of the unruly behaviour of some of his soldiers who are busy molesting people and causing untold hardship everywhere. Alimi opines that he cannot stay in a place where injustice is perpetrated. To this, Afonja responds that the unruly soldiers will be cautioned.

Third Elder: with all these followers of yours, why would you want to leave us? And We have fought together successfully against the invaders from Oyo

Alimi: Thank you for the concern shown to us. You have not offended me but you know there are many complaints of the warriors harassing and molesting people. I know some of the jamaa are with them. We cannot stay too close to where injustice is becoming the order of the day. You should know our ways encourage moving from place to place to spread the word of Allah.

Third Elder: Now we know why you want to leave! We too are concerned over

over the excesses of the men of the Aare. But we cannot say anything. We know Aare listens to you, that is why we want you to stay. You know he is not an easy person. Only you can calm his roving spirit.

First Elder: See, Alfa, you are already one of us and you can see the town is growing every day; we can even make you a chief over your people, and you are a community already.

Alimi: Thank you for the kind words but we cannot accept any worldly title. We do not know if Allah will accept our little effort at piety. We keep on seeking the the mercy of Allah. Worldly title or gains will go but the Baraka of Allah will be everlasting. What do we want in this life other than aqiba, a pious end to this filthy life? P. 69

The above excerpts are clear indication of several inferences and presupposition in relation to the circumstances surrounding the death of Afonja. To start with, it is clear that Alimi never wants to stay any longer in Ilorin. This is partly because of his determination for the propagation of Islam which he has been doing long before his encounter with Afonja, and also because of the molestation and harassment of people by Afonja's soldiers. According to him, it is nor proper for him to stay too close to where injustice is becoming the order of the day. I It is also worthy of note that pressure is mounted on Alimi to change his mind, by accepting to stay in Ilorin. As part of the ploy to make Alimi stay, appeals are made to him (Alimi) to help speak with Afonja to caution his soldiers who have become so dreadful to the innocent people. Another important point to note is the desire of elders to offer Alimi a chieftaincy title over his people. The decision is rebuffed by Alimi who appears passionate with eternal gains than the worldly benefits. The fact here is that the relationship between Alimi and Afonja remains healthy to the point that Alimi is pressurized to admonish Afonja to caution his people. The above facts are corroborated by Johnson (2017, pp. 239 – 240). On the causes of the confrontation between Afonja and the opposing camp:

Some of the jamaa are seating, reading religious texts, some standing. Then a masquerade with two followers come into their midst, with accompaniment of bells. He dances around them. One of the Jamaa tries to drive them away but the masquerade is adamant.

**Jamaa man:** Subhanlilah! La ilahailahlahu! You cannot bring your idol into Our midst. [the men of the jamaa swoop on the masquerade and one of them removes the head cover of the masquerade]

**Masquerade:** Eewo Orisa! You dare to remove my robe.

**Masquerade boy:** The elders must not hear of this! What effrontery, in our land? [both try to recover the head cover. The men of jamaa overpower them and chase them away]

**Jamaa men:** Allahu Akbar! La ilahailhlahu, Allahu Akbar! P. 77

It can be deduced from the above excerpts that the major cause of friction between Afonja warriors and Alimi's loyalists is religious difference. The difference has always been there as Alimi opines that he would not enter Afonja's residence as long as those idols are there. The appearance of a masquerade in the midst of the Muslim faithful is sacrilege of the highest order, an affront of unimaginable proportion. On the other hand, the act of removing the head cover of a masquerade is a grave disrespect of the religious values of the traditional worshipers. The following excerpts provides useful insight:

Alimi: what is the matter? What is chasing you?

Masquerade boy: [panting] Abomination! The mask of the-one-from-the - other-world

Has been removed by a mere mortal! The men of jamaa attacked us and disrobed our father. [Seeing the Fulani maidens, points at them] ah ha! It is their brothers. These sly beings cannot be trusted.

Masquerade: I have not seen anything like this before in my life! There must be repercur-  
Sion for this abomination. Sango will strike down on those who dare it.

Masquerade boy: [Swinging his cane] I should have used my charmed cane against them. They should have scar to show their men.

Afonja: This height of insolence! Who dares dip his fingers in my eyes? They take my Hospitality for foolishness. What do they take me for?

BaaleIkolaba: They carry themselves like they own the land. Everywhere they go. The people gave them a wide berth out of fear. But Aare, you gave them to much Freedom, that is why they could insult us in our land. How can former slaves come And be lording it over us?

BaaleImule: Aare, remember I warned you about the Fulani priest and his jamaa. The cunny of a Fulani has no limit. You give him a mat; next he is sitting on your stool. You said they are here to help us. Now they want to tell us how to live our lives.

Afonja: I will deal with them! There is limit to what a man can endure. Can't they see as the Okesuna brothers live by themselves? The fate

of the Ogowere will soon be theirs. When a matter refuses to be put up and refuses to be put down, there will always be a place to put it. The fang with which the dog plays with its puppy that it also bites with. Time has come to take action. When the farmer delays catching the thief, the thief catches the farmer as the thief. If action delays no one, then, one should not delay action. [Beckons and whisper to the ear of BaaleIkolaba and BaaleEsinrog-unjo] Bugare! [Bugare comes out] You will deliver a message to Onikoyi for me Now. [Afonja goes in and returns shortly] take this aroko to Onikoyi, it is very urgent. [He hands over two cowries tied back-to-back with a black thread] this spit must not dry before you return, hurry now! [spit on the ground. Bugare collects the symbolic item and hurries off].

Pp. 78-80

It is clear from the above excerpts to know that the appearance of masquerade and its consequent desecration annoyed both Afonja's loyalists and Alimi's disciples. While Alimi's reaction is not known, Afonja, with his roving spirit was annoyed and threatens that there will be repercussion. The two leaders do not see each other for possible peaceful resolution of the crisis. The reaction of Afonja's Chiefs who are with him when the news of removing the head cover of a masquerade filters in does not help matters. The Chiefs should have sued for peace. They should have advised Afonja to meet Alimi towards a peaceful resolution of the misunderstanding. On the contrary, they use inciting words that go into Afonja's head and he loses his control. He thereafter sends for Onikoyi to help with military support in the wake of a war to be fought with the men of jamaa of his erstwhile friend, Alimi. At this point, the misunderstanding has got to a boiling stage as the stage is set for full blown crisis.

[Abdulsalam addresses the jamaa]

**Abdulsalam:** Jamaa! It has come to us that our existence in this land is under threat. You must remember the path of the true God is full of trials. We must defend faith and ourselves. We have not sought the trouble of anyone but we have been provoked.

**Shitta:** Jihad is upon us. Time and circumstances have changed from first coming of our leader, Alimi to these parts. May Allah forgive him and rain mercy on his grave. Today, we must take action before action is taken against us. This community must stand as one. [there are shouts of jihad against the Infidels and chants of Allahu akbar]

The above excerpts are pragmatically embedded with some facts. To start with, it is an indication that the jamaa men are bracing up, determined to

defend themselves and their religion in what is believed to be a religious war. In addition, it is clear that Alimi is no longer alive at the time of this open confrontation between the erstwhile allies, hence the prayers for the reposed of his soul. Of equal importance is the fact that there is no ethnic or tribal division between the opposing camps as the bone of contention is purely religious differences. And finally, the much-anticipated combat ensues: [the jamaa besiege the house (Afonja's residence), some throwing stones at the Roof]

**Jamma:** Allahu Akbar, Allahu akbar! Come out Aare, come out Aare! Allahu Akbar.

**Man:** Set the house on fire! [Some run off stage and return with fire, they throw on the thatch roof] Afonja bursts out with his warriors, chanting incantation into a ram's horn. ...He waves his hands in the direction of his opponents, many falling on each other. Fierce fighting ensues. Many fall by his hand. Both sides suffer losses. A spear struck Afonja in the back. In quick succession, other spears hit him by the side and front slowing him down. Some of his men in the heat of the battle run away. He remains on his feet, propped up by the many spears, head downcast. [The jamaa are afraid to go near him. One of the jamaa approaches him cautiously, collects a weapon from his hand]

**First Man:** Be careful! He is pretending! [The first man places an arrow in Afonja's hand, the arrow falls out. There is wild eruption of joy and shouts of Allahuakbar.] He is dead! Allahuakbar!

**Second Man:** Burn him! Burn him! Allahuakbar! Allahuakbar!

The above excerpts explain the final minutes of the existence of one of the greatest men in the history of the entire Yoruba race in general, and the Oyo Empire in particular. As a warrior that Afonja was, he fought doggedly till the end, even at a point that some of his warriors and loyalists had deserted him. He was feared when alive, and even at death; people were afraid of moving closer to him, let alone touch his body. Such is the might of Afonja, one of the greatest warriors in the entire history of Oyo Empire.

### **Discussion of Findings**

On the premise data presentation and analysis, it is clear that the dispute between Afonja had no primordial interest in forcing Alaafin Aole to commit suicide. He acted simply based on the constitutional provision of the Empire. The massive support of his lieutenants in this mission speaks volumes of how appropriate his action was. Afonja and Alimi maintained healthy interpersonal relationship which started from when the former invited the

latter to assist him regarding the impending attack by the Oyo army. The level of cordiality between the two was so good that Afonja bluntly refused Alimi's request to leave Ilorin after the victory of Afonja over Oyo Empire. Alimi's willingness to leave Ilorin is an attestation to the fact that he could not have had any imperial agenda in his heart. To sum this up, the text reveals that Alimi had died before the rebellion in which the mighty Afonja fell. Hence, it is practically impossible to point any accusing finger at Alimi in respect of Afonja's death. In addition, the circumstances under which Afonja died was principally due to religious violence which had been brewing long before the final faceoff between the two camps. It should be noted that while the two camps are miles apart religiously, neither of their principals (Afonja or Alimi) was mentioned as either the originator or a supporter of the crisis.

Contrary to the impression in some quarters that the molesters were perpetrated by only members of Jaama, and some slaves who had deserted their masters after the liberation of the town from the grip of the Oyo Empire, the above statement clearly indicates that even warriors from the camp of Afonja were principally to blame. A good example of this is the "ogo-were" who were part of Afonja warriors. The "ogo-were" became so dreadful, terrorizing the people so much that people could no longer sleep with their two eyes closed. Following this development, Afonja pleaded to Alimi to stay, and even persuaded him to bring his family to Ilorin. This cordial relationship is enough evidence to argue that both parties enjoyed each other's company even after the war. Afonja sent for Onikoyi, Solagberu at Oke Sunna and a host of other allies, but all his efforts were too little, too late. He died in the battle that ensued before any help could come his way.

## **Conclusion**

As earlier mentioned, that modern revisionist approach to history enjoins history to be revisited and reexamined over and over in order to bring fresh insight and perspectives to matters earlier discussed with a view to cross-check facts, and dispel information that are not true. With reference to *Afonja* by Sakky Jojo, fresh insights are provided with respect to the role of Afonja in the decline of Oyo Empire, particularly during the reign of Alaafin Aole. It also reexamined the circumstances surrounding the death of Afonja as well as the alleged roles played by Alimi. The work concludes that the two heroic men acted with clear conscience as they demonstrated mutual trust towards each other in particular, and placed societal interest above personal sentiment in general. Afonja was not a traitor as he was pre-occupied with the preservation of the custom and tradition of the Empire he was determined to serve at any time. Afonja's death was aftermath of religious misunderstanding between the two camps, and Alimi is believed to have died prior to the crisis in which Afonja lost his life.

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