

The Socio-Cultural Context of the Household Family Compound (Agboile) Feature among the Yoruba States in Nigeria: From Social Religious Perspective

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Abstract:- The wisdom of God is not like that of Man this is the reason why the author is trying to express the uniqueness of God in the unity of mankind and the social cultural content all the household family in Yoruba land. This publication made us to understand that human being believe in the peaceful coexistence.

Coexistence of each other and that man is an Igneous animal. The author also explained that in groups people have managed to adapt themselves to very rigorous condition and made the best of what they got.

The author of this publication expressly discuss that as people settle on the face of the earth, reproducing and improving on their technical knowledge for industrial connivances. The author X-Ray how human being lives in caves, Valley, on the top of the mountain even near the river, etc. The author examined the Yoruba traditional Home settlement. He also explained the structural layout of a typical family compound Agboilein Yoruba land. Functions and roles of elderly people in Yoruba Society was also mentioned. The function of each group in this society was also explained by the author.

Keywords:- Institution, Obligations, Valleys, Settlements, Traditional, Compound, Family Compatible And Community.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the wisdom of God he created human beings with special distinction higher than the lower animals. Man is fully equipped with the highest degree of brain, whereby he is capable of not only thinking, but also reflecting, appreciating, loving, hating, inventing, reproducing, capable of improving on he is potentialities, recognising his insufficiency and therefore dependent on powers (Seen and unseen) that continually assist him.

Huxley placed Man as “the first family in the order of primates¹”. Dampier² notes that psychological gulf between Man and ape is greater bet the vertebrates animals show mental processes corresponding to the human once, though of less power and complexity.

Man nature is of varieties or races chiefly by physical characters, through the idea of a correlation between physical character and mental traits and had been claimed a reality. The colour of the skin has always been used to separate the white, yellow, brown and black races, and it is clear that other characters linked with colour give a real racial distinction between the four categories of human beings, though subdivisions are necessary.

Man is essentially united being. Man loves to dwell together with his other mates. He is desirous of settling his immediate problems such as food, shelter and security. When a child is born it needs food, shelter and security and the three needs charm him up to adulthood and old age. We gathered that the first man and woman lived on Earth millions of years ago multiplying after their own kind and obtaining knowledge by trial and error by intuition and observation.

At one time or another they ate various fruits plants animals etc, after which they regarded them as favorites. The cold, wet and dry weather in condition have taught them to take shelter in various places such as in caves, on trees, in the bush or even Forest. They considered it necessary to increase in population and therefore face together any external danger like wild animals and other ferocious human beings than themselves.

The concepts of desiring security eventually became part and parcel of themselves. When lives of their kinship groups were forcibly taken from their midst, they became convinced of the necessity to always arm themselves with relevant defensive materials such as stones, clubs and eventually spear, bow and arrows and guns. Raymond Firth is correct when he said that “Man is an ingenious animal” Groups have managed to adapt themselves to very rigorous conditions which at first sight seem impossible for human existence³. Eventually, the people become used to the situation and made the best of what they got. Indeed any specific environment forces to some degree a material way of living upon the people subjected to it. The old wise saying “Necessity is the Mother of invention fits in adequately here.

As peoples settle on the face of the earth, reproducing and improving our their technical knowledge for industrial achievement they are then faced with choices but based on conveniences. The living in caves and trees later gave way to making tent and building of houses of various architectural shapes given consideration for climate and security from external forces.

All over the world, human beings have names for identifying their living environment as distinct from other locations. We therefore have houses built along streets, avenues which referred to broad Streets, often bordered with trees, or houses built in quadrangles (Having four angles and four sides). Compounds are enclosures containing a residence. There are other special names for calling the residence⁴ of peoples in society in our modern times.

We would not lose sight of the relative terms used by anthropologist, ethnologist, sociologist, etc. for describing pre-literate societies. Gulliver uses ‘parish’ to describe the settlement of people are among the Arusha of Tanzania. To him, a parish⁵ is a local community especially on the mountain slopes organised on institutionalized age-grade each comprising a former status and a cluster of lumps of behaviour, obligations and privileges.

Other terms used include homestead which is a house and its lands, occupied as a home. Kraal – in South Africa a village or groups of native huts usually surrounded by a stockade⁶. Apart from all these social scientists use other relative terms such as “unit”, Hamlet, village, town, city, district, division, state, country, nation and continent, - all the referring to human settlements capable of expansion or extension, so long food, shelter and security are guaranteed.

II. YORUBA TRADITIONAL HOME SETTLEMENT

A. National Strategy Favorable to Settlements

For the natural strategic settlements we shall note the following:

- Settlement on hills: Many Yoruba towns and villages are situated on hills which provide the means of identifying external attackers from afar and so the settlers could get prepared to confront and face the intruders. We have as an example such towns like EfonAlaayein Ekiti State and Idanre, Okitipupa all in Ondo State, Abeokuta in Ogun State.
- Settlement in valleys: Such settlements are considered strategic to also combat the enemy or enemies where he/they descend(s) into the town. We could refer to such places like Idanre, Ilawe, Ado-Ekiti, (surrounded by rocks) in Ekiti and Ondo state, OtanAyegebaju, Iresi, Iree, Ila-Orangun in Osun and Oyo state.
- Settlement near rocks: Such a settlement offers the opportunity for taking a strategic hide to combat external intruders examples here could be cited of Ikere-Ekiti, Abeokuta, Ado-Ekiti, Akure.

- Settlement on water: Those who settle on or near water have equal advantage with their land settlers to be able to combat enemies that may come to attack them. We have people in Yorubaland in this category in Ikale, Ilaje, Ese-Odo, Igbokoda, Ayetoro, among others.

In Forest: Forest especially in the ancient times in Yoruba land give a considerable measure of strategic for converting external invasion. Those who were covering will not know the nooks and corners of the forest and easily run into the hands of those who settled there. Samuel Johnson discussed a series of traditional wars⁷ that supports reckoning with Forest as natural strategies.

In all the years settlements discussed above the fundamental concepts of both the young and the old, male and female, is to work for the peace and prosperity of everyone. It is the Spirit of “collective consciousness”⁸, of placing the interest of the society above the individuals which propels all in unity towards harmony.

B. Utility:

The end in view in Yoruba traditional home settlement is based on the theme of this conference which is religion and national unity. People settle together in order to share in one another’s Joys, problem, sorrows, etc.

We therefore have *abule* which means “village, Hamlet, farmhouse”⁹ where people settle far away from the real home (town) in order to save their frequent coming and going to work on their farmlands. An *Abule* could start off with two or three huts, gradually increasing to six, ten, fifteen or more. Such houses are built with mud or clay and palm leaf, thatched or leaf or grass thatched roofs. Each may contain one or two families and Houses are arranged in not more than thirty yards, (900m) from each other. Such settlements are various points in the area are often referred to as *Igberiko* farmhouses.

Ilato means a hamlet or village and *Ilu* town which is bigger than *Ileto* could also be called a village which may have thirty or sixty houses. A town is any considerable collection of dwellings and other buildings larger than a village and constituting a geographical and political community unit but not incorporated as a city.

Agboole is a compound, household. The word *Agbo* means a group, existing or settling or moving together. *Ile* means house. The Yoruba therefore speak of *Agbo-Agutan* (sheepfold, *AgboAgbado*) – sheaves of corn tied up in a conical shape.

A house built in a horse-shoe formation where several family units live is called such locations could contain two, or more houses not arranged in the modern type of settlements which we know our Street, flats, avenue etc.

➤ *Structural Lay-out of a Typical Agboole:*

The traditional Yoruba house is a large compound, usually square, which encloses a courtyard; inside a verandah runs all the way round and on to this open the doors of the various houses, made of palm sticks or bamboo or carved wood.

The walls of the compartment of houses are generally eight feet (2.34m) high, built of mud, the inside for the most part is finished off with a polished surface of black, or red health or covered with the paste of crushed leaves.

For the roofing is the tall grass or gbodogi leaves, or with layers of palm leaves. The supporting posts which stand at the gate of the verandah of the house sometimes carved. Formerly there were no latrines except a few places enclosed for the purpose of the bush around the town was commonly used.

For the security of the house, walls were constructed outside the town and a belt of forest was often left uncut round the walls, to guide against a sudden attack and to provide a place of refuge in case of defeat.

Rooms are allotted to each family, that is a man his wife and children and under one roof could exist forty to fifty souls. P.C. Lloyd made a penetrating analysis of the Yoruba compound as the unit of common residence of platinum descent groups¹⁰. As females marry out, males marry in, which keeps in balance male-female household population.

Yoruba traditional houses were arranged to reflect what may be described as the political organisation of the society which in itself was involved to meet the challenges of the environment. In this arrangement the inmates of a compound are responsible to the health of the simple families who in turn make the head of the extended families, the unit of building in the settlement are built, as far as compatible with the terrain, around the compound of chiefs to whom they are related, or owe allegiance thereby forming a district, ward, quarter of the town in our modern terms.

Afolabi Ojo refers to the Yoruba need in this respect by saying "As to the disposition of houses' there was a tendency towards compactness rather than dispersal...In some places (Abeokuta for example), the habitations were are closely packed as cells in the honeycomb"¹¹. Indeed it is of the same pattern in Yoruba land to settle together in great number.

➤ *Functional Roles of inmates*

From the oldest to the youngest in a household are rules clearly structured for fulfillment. Everyone is expected to observe the traditional worship of the family or community; there is no exception. It is not a formal teaching to be religious, people are born into and grow in the traditional Faith.

Knowledge is imported true oral tradition for the right conduct of behaviour in the house extending also to the extended family and outside the new age group. All participate at rituals both occasional and annual and impact morality through songs Proverbs and Wise sayings.

Song: *O basotito ka rija re gbe 2ce Olorun mbe lehin a sododo o.* This means will you be truthful that we may support your cause god is behind a truthful person.

Proverbs: *Bikuile o pani, tode ko le pani.* This means if an outsider kills one he must have got hair from once inmates.

Wuse saying: *Eniti o funi lomo saya O pari ore.* This means a person who gives his daughter to another has done him the greatest favour.

The song enjoy one to be truthful the proverb is a warning not to be a bad inmate to others and by saying support maximum love to exist endlessly particularly to the one who gives his daughter in marriage. Such words of wisdom are embedded in the upbringing of the children.

The oldest people's roles: In the household company it is the duty of the most senior man and woman to super-intend the welfare of all members. They informally call on and the old, praying for them and recalling their as younger male prostrate why the female snail. The plants for the day are outlined by each head of family or the wife has the assignment marked out that the weather one intend to go to the distant farmland or a fiction or to a particular market place or the other.

Little children are put in the care of the eldest mother who looks after them just as what we now call nursery home. She tells them stories and factors which border on good behaviour, or the history of their great grandparents. She is looked up to as the architect of the allies virtuous life is looked up to as the architect of their life righteous life to be dutifully honest kind, hygienic, respectful and a God-fearing; to run away from all sinful acts because God, the divinities and their sisters are believed to be watching then and can punish or blessed according to their behaviour.

Young men (husbands)– Each has a location to hold but family being the popular traditional occupation no one should be in doughnuts or be flippant.

Agbe ti o yana pe nile, A yanape loko. This means: the farmer who goes to his family at warming himself at the fire spot we eventually work in the scorching heat of the sun arise in which urges want to keep to time is.

➤ *Atetesun ni ateteji. This means early to bed early to rise*

At the cool hour of the day, members gathered under the compound traits or at the front of the compound house to watch Ayo (Warri games being played). There is the sharing of palm wine, kolanuts and discussion on how the day has been

spent. Problems confronting individuals could be tackled idle as relating to the health of any member (old or young), or of the community – when to clear the bush part, or clear the community spring or well.

Housewives :Housewives know their positions in order of seniority and normally keep to all the norms of Yoruba household.

They obey all rules of the senior wife and I called her due respect. There could be division of labour such as who has to grind pepper, pound yam, pound coin, wash dresses. However a housewife may have to combine all such roles she has to be cheerful respect her husband's relations and be good outside the family cycle she must not be correct some and must not commit any dishes or shameless crime such as theft, adultery, lying inflicting poison on anyone etc.

If there is any quarrel and adults gather to settle the same she must be cooperative. Generally, for both male and female if there is a settlement, adults expect the two disputants to share drinks from the same cup or cut kolanuts as evidence of no further animosity.

Young boys and girls: We refer to children in this group as teenagers who have to assist their parents and conform to the norms of the society at large.No one must go out to quarrel, or engage in a shameless act like stealing, late night roving, lying, indeed refraining from what can damage the good image of the family and community.

Values on co-existence:Like many other women groups the ultimate end in view of life is in the *agboola* is “to exist with others in harmony” that peace and prosperity me constantly prevail. It was by this part that Durkheim arrived at the famous proposition that Society is always the real object of religious veneration¹².Although do for our time, the proposition may not be fully acceptable yet he identify the aspiration or roll of each individual towards attaining the common good.

Cordial relationship is maintained with the family unit or compound level for which the Yoruba say “*Ile ni a ti nko eso rode*”“charity begins at home”. All social and religious affairs involved everyone participating whether it's been naming ceremony marriage or burial of the agent parents.

Waging of war against external forces is the concern of all. No one there act as an “isolated island”.What effects the compound or the community she also be once concern.Traditional ceremonies is one of those occasions when people demonstrate oneness with their own people, with the ancestors and with the divinities.People come out in their best and the festival is characterized by eating, drinking and general rejoicing.The coming together of the people is re-enacted,and many people for the first time in the year meet on festival locations. Men and women are brought together in one

will crowd,and there is usually a short of social reunion¹³. We have quoted at length in view of their vivid presentation of the content of observing festivals which is adequate for a purpose.

N.A. Fadipe¹⁴ speaks of *Owe* and *Aro* which are two kinds of collective help of a productive nature which an individual May male May rely on in certain circumstances.The first is *owe* which is used for the building of a house or the rebuilding or re-roofing of one, and the clearing of land or push or Forest growth. In this kind of cooperative help, a man's sons-in-law and other relatives together with friends and neighbours will take part.

The second one *Aro* is set up as an association whereby a member is entitled to call upon the entire group to come and help him on his farm, either clear the land of weeds prepare a tree to planting or to plant seeds. All the obligations that falls upon the host is as in the case of *owe* to fill feed his associates and *Aroto* reciprocate in kind, but food and drinks are normally provided.

➤ *Ajo (monetary savings)Association*

We cannot lose sight of the Savings Association which exist among people or group settlement. Women, or men may organise savings project whereby assistance is given to the individuals in turn to utilise the lump sum for any particular person/projects like building a house, getting prepared for marriage ceremony building a house getting prepared for marriage ceremony by movable or immovable properties (however sending of land is a late-comer),building new dresses, opening up a trade and such other worthy projects. All rules pertaining to the contribution are strictly adhered to.The Yoruba say *Alaye ko kajo*. That is, “No explanation or tax collection of contribution” in which case what has to wait for one stone and that the one must be over-ambitious as to dabble in any unreasonable expenses.

Palace Household:We need to make a passing reference to the palace as constituting and *agboole*, though on a wider basis than the simple compound structure we have been describing. The Oba's palace – Aafin is of relatively large edifices full stop in ancient times it was common to find that policies were situated near a large Forest this is because provision should be made for a variety of things and people which include shrines and living apartments for the other day servants the eru(slaves) and other officials. Afolab iOjo content that the reason for having the palace situated near a large forest is “to provide a convenient area for the abyss outdoor activities”¹⁵.

Kayode presents the structure of the palace house rooms and apartments has a following – palace shrine living rooms, palace court, ile orori (wives apartment), ileodi(slaves apartment),Prison,Hall,or rooms craves images rooms,Courtroom and ritual rooms (maybe for installation ceremony only¹⁶ etc).

Palace functionaries include the drummers who announced the arrival of any important visitor or to place the Oba with their music as location may demand. There are the palace servants (*Baba nki o* - The Father sends greetings to me). The Chief who deliberate on issues of the community interest and to advise the Oba. They sit in his council and work towards the peace and progress of the town, or village. There are the balance policemen who are vigilant on those who come in, or go out. They also look after prisoners, or the details pending their trial in courts.

Women follow all the directors on their roles, either wives, or has maids, towards the smooth running of life in the palace. Matters pertaining to land disputes, inheritance, or any other societal matters are handled by the Oba and everyone is bound to give his unflinching support.

III. CONCLUSION

Definitely there is a great departure from the traditional 'home settlement pattern among the Yoruba and what we have in our contemporary ege. What people knew of *agboola* is almost lost and has now become individualistic concept as we have in crescents, houses in layout flats, reservations etc. The Young ones lack knowledge of their great-grandparents mode of living together and sharing ideas and aspirations. In the *agboole* pattern, mutual understanding was fostered by which life was fully enjoyed and modern popular elements such as high blood pressure or hypertension work or common or even unknown. Both the religious and social spheres are blended as indispensable component parts. One wonders if it is possible to go back to the original state of compound structural mode of living among the Yoruba; the mode of living can be recommended for people of diverse faiths and ethnic groups.

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