

**CENTRE FOR BLACK CULTURE AND INTERNATIONAL
UNDERSTANDING
ALAAFIN LAMIDI ADEYEMI 111(1938-2022) A ROUNDTABLE
AND
DAY OF TRIBUTES**

Theme: Oba Adeyemi 111: End of an Era?

**LEAD SPEECH DELIVERED BY HIS GRACE ARCHBISHOP
EMERITUS AYO LADIGBOLU ON 24TH MAY, 2022**

Introduction

I like to start this speech with a commendation for the Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding. More than any other globally recognized Institution both at home and abroad, this Centre has done so much in adoration, recognition, appreciation, and proclamation of the Alaafin. The Centre initiated and executed an International Conference in honour of Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111 from October 8-11, 2018 on the theme: “Alaafin in Yoruba History, Culture and Political Power Relation at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo. The robust intellectual exchange at the Conference produced the now popular concept of Alafinology as a specialized area of study in community leadership and administration spearheaded by the Eminent Nigerian Scholar, Professor Toyin Falola.

Here we are again today in Osogbo to participate in another unique Roundtable and a Day of Tributes organized by the same Centre in loving memory of Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111, the 44th Alaafin of Oyo, who triumphantly joined his ancestors on Friday April 22, 2022.

By this noble gesture, the Management of the Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding has demonstrated to the whole world its genuine love and admiration for Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111, the Majesty of the Oyo Throne, and the uncommon legacies of the Alafinate in the socio-political and economic spheres of the Yoruba Nation, and the entire Federal Republic of Nigeria.

I greatly commend the Centre for recognizing the phenomenal achievements of Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111 in all fields of human endeavor, and for creating a platform for an unbiased appraisal of his life and times in order to draw out lessons, inspiration, and warnings for both our generation as well as those yet unborn. This gathering has brought to the fore the popular Yoruba wise words of our Elders; ENI TO SE OJU KO SE NKAN. ENI TO SEHIN LO SE PUPO. I thank the organizers of this

Roundtable very much on behalf of The Oyomesi, The Ayabas, The Omo Obas, the Oyo Metro Obas and Chiefs, the Entire Oyo Metropolitan Community, and Yorubas at home and in the Diaspora. . E se pupo. A dupe.

The theme of this Roundtable is: Oba Adeyemi 111: The End of An Era?

I like the inquisitive tone and direction of this theme. It is strongly probing in its approach and coloration, and will certainly attract diverse reactions and responses. I will provide my own answer later. But please permit me to say a few things about Oba Adeyemi 111.

BEBE FESTIVAL: Salute to Courage

When discussing the Great Oyo Empire, Professor Banji Akintoye made a brief mention of *Bebe* on p. 249 of his book, A History of the Yoruba People.

“ The Alaafin had a great festival, a sort of jubilee called **Bebe**, with which he celebrated long or successful reign. When the Alaafin Agboluaje celebrated the **Bebe** in the 1760s, 1060 vasaal rulers (according to Oyo tradition) came to Oyo Ile to honour their Zuzerain.”

Johnson,s The History of the Yorubas pp. 71, 163, 179 and 329 contain greater details about the **Bebe** festival, upon which I like to dwell a little with particular reference to the enigmatic subject of this Roundtable. We have records of the 3-year Bebe festival of a previous Alaafin, as well as the one day *Bebe* festival of another. But one significant thing about the *Bebe* festival is that it is termed the IKU or FUNERAL RITES, as if it is intended to mark the close of a long reign. This arose from the fact that the few kings who celebrated it died a short time after.

Ajiboyede was the fourth and last King buried at Igboho. He celebrated *Bebe* to mark his victory over the Tapa King as well as his long reign. Alaafin Abiodun Adegoolu also proclaimed one day *Bebe* to mark his victory over Basorun Gaa and the prosperity and contentment that pervaded the Empire.

In 1858, Alaafin Adewinmbi Oromajogbo Atiba Oba Afibonrohinajo, celebrated *Bebe* in Oyo Atiba to mark his long and peaceful reign (1839-1858).

Over one and half centuries later, a reincarnation of Atiba, Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Atanda Adeyemi 111 summoned the courage to celebrate a modern day Odun Iku known as *Bebe* to mark his Golden Jubilee as the longest reigning, literate Alaafin of Oyo.

This unique Monarch has represented the very best of what distinguishes a true Yoruba Monarch, a National Leader, and a Global Role Model in all areas of culture, tradition and royalty..

Despite the knowledge that **Bebe** festival, this man of great valour decided to openly proclaim his own **Bebe**, and proceeded to celebrate it with gait and grandeur on January 14, 2020 just like Alaafin Atiba did in 1858. Permit me to repeat one of the songs composed to mark the unique festival in Oyo by this Speaker:

*Layiwola se Bebe, Ilu dun aye roju
Alatanda se Bebe, Iku dun aye r''oju
Alaafin s'ase aadota, Layiwola s'ase aadota
Tani ko mo p'aye Oba dun
Gbongbon to kan si l'a n dunnu si;
Alaafin se Bebe, Ilu dun aye roju.*

How noteworthy it is that this King did not only see or predicted his death, but had the nerves to celebrate it gleefully and triumphantly (see Sunday Tribune: 24th April, 2022 page 1).

Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Atanda Adeyemi 111 has proudly manifested Atiba attributes of courage, invincibility, retentive memory, uncommon intelligence, superb eloquence, sharp wit, uncompromising determination, strong penmanship, oratorical acumen, and unquestionable native intelligence(Ogbon Inu ati Laakaye) encapsulated in the uncanny Ajagbo ingenuity. These attributes have been passed on from generation to generation of the Alaafins hewn from Oranyan the Rock and built upon the indestructible foundation of our Progenitor Oduduwa

His pace-setting transforming impact on the Entire Oyo Metropolitan Area as well as the rest of the State can be best appreciated when you listen to the People sing their testimony in the now popular song:

*Layiwola ti s'Oyo d'Eko fun wa
Alatanda ti s'Oyo d'Eko fun wa.
O so Kimji dile, O s'Owinni d'oja
Alaafin ti s'Oyo d'Eko fun wa*

Is the Passing of Alaafin Adeyemi 111 the End of An Era?

Let us cast our minds back to the glorious reign of Alaafin Siyanbola Onikepe Adegboyega Akanbi Erin. He was known and respected both all over Yoruba land and around the world.

His Era marked the introduction of Western education and the Princes Schools in Oyo.(191-1916). The roofing of the Palace with iron sheets. He hosted the first ever Conference of Yoruba Major Obas at the Palace Garden Hall, Ogba Koko Oyo(built specially for the hosting of that Conference) His Palace hosted the Customary Court of Appeal. His era marked the adoption of the name Yoruba by other Rulers of the distinct Units of Kaaro-oo-jiire, and the Oyo Yoruba became the language of communication among all indigenes of Yorubaland from around 1917.

He was given the Oriki,

*Oba Ololo ti o lo ile Oyo gbo
Omo Onilearan ti o lo Ile Oyo
L'a lo ya peregede bi aso*

Meaning: The Ruler whose rulership of Oyo will be unsurpassable

There was also a song about him:

*Siyانبola f'Oba gbaye tan, Adedokun f'Oba gbaye tan
Oladigbolu ko to lo s'Orun o, Siyanbola f'Oba gbaye tan*

Meaning: Before his transition, Ladigbolu conquered the whole world

We are familiar with the prayerful song of the Yoruba concerning the era of Alaafin Abiodun as compared to the eras of Aole and Arogangan:

*L'aye Abiodun la roju jaye
Laye Aole la di adikale—
Laye Arogangan ni Opolo gbode
Abiodun iba dehinbo ko wa j'oba ilu Oyo*

The passing of Alaafin Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111 cannot be the end of an era. It can only continue to be the trigger for greater nostalgia and stronger challenge, and enduring determination for Oyo and the Yoruba Nation to excel. Just like Alaafin Abiodun and Siyanbola Ladigbolu, the succeeding generations of Alaafins will seek to out perform as they cherish the glorious heritage of the Alaafin gone before. The new Obada Market will become a greater booster for our economy. The on-going 132/33KV Transmission Station at Oluewu Village will eradicate epileptic power supply and promote industrialization. The anticipated reticulation of pipe borne water from Erelu Water Works will breed a healthier community, while the new Passport Office in Oyo will ease global tourism for our People. No new Alaafin can afford to abandon the beautiful Oranyan Festival inaugurated ten years ago by Alaafin Layiwola Adeyemi in honour of the Oranya (the first Alaafin of Oyo); nor would anyone attempt to stop the World Sango Festival which will soon attain the status of a Global Human Heritage Festival. Who can dare obstruct the excellent work of renovation of Ancient Shrines being done in Oyo by Alaafin's Cultural Ambassador, Dr. Paola Gomes? And, of course, Oyo Alaafin will remain ever proud of hosting the famous Ifa Heritage Institute, which is the only higher education Institution in the world that specializes in the study of all aspects of Yoruba culture and religion. Please note that in 2006 UNESCO proclaimed Ifa as one of the 86 Traditions of the World to be regarded as the masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity).

The Alaafin as a global brand will continue to be relevant, respected, and honoured by all and sundry, and the heights to which Oba Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi 111 has brought Oyo and Yoruba royalty will continue to soar even beyond the pinnacle.

Long live the Alaafin.

Welcome to this Roundtable as we all eagerly await the illuminating insights and perspectives of our resource persons. I also thank you for your attention.

His Grace

Archbishop Emeritus Lawrence Sanda Ayo Ladigbolu