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Inaugural Lecture Series 154

**RECONCILIATION:
THE MYTH AND THE FACT**

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Obafemi Awolowo University
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Introduction

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, the Registrar, Colleagues, Students, Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to stand before you this afternoon to deliver my inaugural lecture on this topic that has engaged my attention over many years.

Reconciliation is as old as human civilization dating from about 6000 years ago. Throughout history, men and societies have been conditioned and propelled by phobias, frustrations, and desires in the pursuit of their aspirations. Available evidence shows that from ancient to modern and contemporary times, men have competed for territories, hunting grounds, economic trees, water holes and ponds, and other resources, private and communal properties, etc.

Blind pursuit of these and other objectives have bred and fuelled conflicts and violent struggles all over the world. As a matter of fact history is replete with accounts of wars and a variety of conflicts caused by intense hatred for and intense competition between rivals over common or inadequate resources, ideological positions or religious beliefs. Thus, conflicts and disputes have been endemic in human societies but most of these have been resolved one way or the other and those involved reconciled, otherwise human societies and civilizations would have perished long ago.

Reconciliation is a term, a concept and a process. The term is elastic and its meanings are many. Ordinarily, reconciliation is amicable settlement of dispute between two (or among more than two) persons, communities, organizations etc. In another breath, the term also covers resigning oneself to fate, a surrender to, or an acceptance of situations that cannot be helped, for example Moses at Bethpeor (Deut. 3:23) and Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Christian Community at Corinth (2 Cor. 12:7-9). In the former, God repeated his judgment for the final time to wit, that Moses would not lead the Israelites to the promised land and in the latter, Paul revealed his acceptance of the

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finality of his sickness. Reconciliation in Christian doctrine is restoration to friendship and happy fellowship with God again through the mediation of Jesus the Christ.

However, in this lecture, I am going to focus on the restoration of peace between/among disputants. In this exercise, reconciliation is the ultimate in peace-making, the high water mark of social engineering. It is more than fence mending. Reconciliation bridges communication gaps and restores friendly or harmonious relations, peace and good will between two or more disputants. Hurt is like a wound, so, reconciliation helps to heal the wounds of the victims/sufferers and aborts or averts vengeance. With reconciliation, parties hitherto at logger-heads with one another are made to forget the matter and resume relations as if the conflicts never existed. The reality of life is that dispute is inevitable in human societies and effectual reconciliation of the disputants is its panacea. A Yoruba lyric poem encapsulates the basic philosophy in this way:

ahon b' enu binu

won tun pada ba 'ra da 'ro so ...

(translation)

the tongue quarrelled with the mouth

the duo quickly reconciled and resumed

their intimate talks ...

Thus, reconciliation is all about learning to live together as brothers and sisters, forgiving one another whatever offences one has committed against the other in the past.

The Myth and the Fact

When cordial relations have broken down between those who hitherto enjoy them, a gulf of difference usually appears in their normal harmonious social relations. Such gaps in communication and the resulting strife are more often quite apparent to ordinary members of society,

families, etc.

Disputes, disagreements and conflicts are disruptions in human relations. Normally, these disagreements have a variety of causes, most of them real or actual and many of them ostensible, but they are known to the parties concerned. Petty disagreements, abuses and insults, clash of interests between persons and communities usually cause conflicts. Inter-personal, domestic or family disputes could break out among blood or classificatory brothers or relatives over many things including property, marriage of widows, succession to chieftaincy, rulership and other titles. Causes of inter-communal disputes include disagreement over boundaries, instances of abduction of women or children by marauders, cross-border cattle stealing by rustlers (in pastoral societies)(Schapper, 1960:193). Aggression, oppression and maladministration cause unrest and political upheavals; refusal to hand over fugitives, disregard and treating offence with unconcern could infuriate opponents and could have disruptive influence on relations between two parties.

As a matter of fact, actual or potential causes of conflicts are inexhaustible. For instance, although a satire, the book, Gulliver's Travels relates the cause of the internecine strife (war) between the kingdoms of Lilliput and Blefuscu. In Lilliput, the old tradition of breaking eggs at the larger end altered after an accident which occurred during the time of the incumbent ruler's grandfather, and as a result, eggs began to be broken at the little end. According to information provided Gulliver (Man Mountain) by Reldresal, Principal Secretary of Private Affairs to the Emperor of Lilliput, the people resented the new tradition to the extent that 'there have been six rebellions ... wherein one emperor lost his life, and another his crown' (Swift, 1963:46-47). A neighbouring kingdom, Blefuscu which harboured refugees and renegades from Lilliput earned the hatred of the latter and both kingdoms became sworn enemies. The episodes illustrate one of the frailties of human nature and a propensity for stirring up trouble,

often times, unnecessarily.

Conflict resolution and reconciliation, altogether peace making require deliberate efforts (intervention) of third parties which may consist of ordinary folks, and highly trained professionals as the case may be. Petty disagreements, abuses or insults are common occurrences, they do not entail much formalities or require the intervention of highly trained persons. Ordinarily, eye-witnesses and individuals associated with any of the parties or are interested in restoring the *status quo ante* can intervene promptly, sooner or later. Conflicts that necessitate investigation, arbitration and adjudication entail much formalities, and the services of trained and practising professionals.

Many people who have thought about resolution of conflicts maintain that there must be a dispute, a fight before any resolution could take place, that there cannot be a resolution of a conflict that has not taken place, a war not yet fought. But peace efforts could begin before the outbreak of conflict, that is, as soon as certain developments (episodes) portend danger to the society's social peace. Actual hostilities have not broken out but disputants are brooding over their misfortunes and problems, avoiding each other; soon disputes degenerate to the extent that those involved begin to trade charges, accusations and insults. Mediators could step in purposely to lessen latent offence retaliation, violent outburst or aggression, impress it upon the disputants to exercise restraint so that neither their actions nor utterances could complicate matters, breed tension and suspicion and jeopardise eventual resolution and reconciliation.

There are mistaken assumptions that simple societies have no facilities comparable to what exist or are provided for in the judicial system of advanced societies especially in Europe etc for peace making. This assumption is premised on the erroneous belief that justice in a dispute presupposes arbitration and adjudication, especially the latter which involves arrests, trials etc and where judges on convicting the accused

for the crimes, impose fines, terms of imprisonment or execution, etc are necessary to restore harmony between two individuals and groups, offenders and the offended. Contrast this with the judicial system under the traditional laws and customs in many traditional, non-literate societies, where, the laws stipulate that, blood must repay blood. But while the laws in advanced societies insist on avenging murder on the convicted murderer by judicial execution, social customs of the so-called simple societies are basically reconciliatory in spirit and content on such crimes. While the judge in the western-type court is an independent umpire, the elders in traditional societies are involved as benevolent neutrals, are more interested in ensuring compromise, amicable settlement and reconciliation of the parties, hence the axiom: 'when there are no elders, the community is ruined' (Ellis, 1974:239).

On this point of view, I rely on available evidence in the various intelligence reports, gazetteers and numerous ethnographical notes on the social customs of several ethnic and sub-ethnic culture groups and colonial administrative units especially in Africa. These notes contain valuable information on the history and social customs of traditional societies in the colonial empires. A District Officer of Dikwa Division of Borno in northeastern Nigeria, Stanhope White's vivid account of a conflict may suffice for an illustration. He has recorded an inter-communal conflict involving two villages about 16 kilometres from Ashigashiya, a village on the Nigeria - Cameroon border, southeast of Boma and Maiduguri. To begin with, stalwarts from one of the villages, Ngoshe abducted a woman from a neighbouring village. Young men from the latter village intercepted the criminals and in a scuffle between them, Ngoshe men killed two of their challengers named Phurso and Umar. Normal relations between the two villages were disrupted until the District Officer (the author) mediated in the dispute and both communities agreed to bury the hatchet as stipulated in their shared/common tradition. 'Two men have died' Agapalawa, head of the aggrieved village announced at the gathering of elders of both communities,

'two others must die (from Ngoshe) or blood money must be paid'. At a stage in the peace process the two village heads, Agapalawa and his counterpart, Kubo from Ngoshe, led four of their respective village elders and met at the middle of the common border stream. Kubo handed over the abducted woman to Agapalawa who promptly returned her to her husband. Kubo and his village elders brought a live puppy which was cut in half so its blood flowed down the river 'to sweeten the earth and remove the taint of human blood which (they believed) might harm the harvests of the two villages' (White, 1966:63, 68-69). The village authorities swore solemn oaths of peace and amity. Ngoshe elders handed over 10 heads of cattle to the relatives of the two dead men thus replacing with fresh blood those who lost their lives in the scuffle.

By their nature, a number of activities such as litigation, mediation, concession etc associated with conflict resolution correlate with, correspond to and are oftentimes complementary to reconciliation. However, they are not, by themselves, true or proper reconciliation. Western litigation is adversarial even in civil and criminal matters. In such litigation, plaintiffs seek the intervention of the courts and matters (cases) are formally referred to judges who settle disputes and conflicts brought before them by returning verdicts either of guilty or innocent to litigants. However, in the perception of a large section of traditional societies, the imported judicial system rarely achieves harmony. The major pre-occupation of traditional authorities and their courts is not to decide who is right or who is wrong but to get to the root of dispute and reconcile the disputants in such a way as to restore harmony in the system. But the whiteman's judicial system and the courts are exceedingly stressful and expensive.

Mediation, a 'process of getting parties to resolve their difference under a non-adversarial setting' (Albert, 2001:83) is an essential part of the peace process. Since it is more or less a negotiated settlement of conflict through persuasion and the application of overt and covert pressure, the focus of attention in mediation is to bring disputants to agreeable and

amicable settlement. Actually, mediation is interposing between two warring parties or interest groups such as employers and their workers and between private individuals in serious disagreements, to lessen tension, create right atmosphere and mutual confidence.

The mediators are more often third party individuals of many descriptions. Some could (and have been known to) intervene/mediate in disputes and conflicts because it is incumbent upon them, on account of their offices as elders, traditional rulers etc to mediate or intercede in conflicts involving members of their own or neighbouring societies/communities. Many other persons are motivated by close degree of consanguinity, family ties, neighbourliness, old time sake, association, camaraderie, idealism and altruism. Whichever of the circumstances motivate the mediator, he/she is usually a personage of high social standing, believed and seen to be neutral and impartial. Thus, he/she wears the toga of a benevolent neutral. For instance, in 1844 during the 2-year long Bateye war of attrition between Ibadan and Ijaye, Alaafin Atiba mediated, he despatched his traditional envoy, a high chief carrying an emblem of Sango. The belligerents understood the message, 'what the king on earth may not be able to effect, surely the king from the other world can, (and) this ... conflict must now cease' (Johnson, 1969:301). The belligerents ceased their hostilities forthwith. Twenty years later, Alaafin Adelu despatched envoys - a Sango priest and an *ilari* (palace chief) to the camps of Egba, Ijaye and Ijebu allies on the one hand and their Ibadan adversary on the other. The envoys delivered their sovereign's message. 'Sango has enjoined a cessation of arms and return of each belligerent to his home' (Johnson, 1969:358).

In one of the instances the common dynastic ancestry among the principal Yoruba Obas was exploited to the full, Owa Atakunmosa of Ilesa is reported to have taken refuge in the court of Oba Ehengbuda (1578-1606) of Benin and to have sought the Oba's intercession with his chiefs for him. Oba Ehengbuda probably sent for the aggrieved chiefs,

interceded on the Owa's behalf and reconciled the Owa with his chiefs. It seems certain that Oba Ehengbuda resolved the conflict because following his mediation, the Owa regained his throne (Abiola, *et al*, 1932:36). In a similar instance in 1841, Usman Zaki, Emir of Bida, lodged complaints with the Emir of Gwandu against his half-brother Mama Saba (Massaba) a rival and contender for the throne. The Emir invited the duo to Gwandu and reconciled them (Nadel, 1965:89).

Mediation, intercession and intervention are interchangeable terms; except that the latter refers more to a situation in which the 'mediator' entreats others to show mercy or pleads for some favour in order to save an ugly situation. It is here recalled how Ogedemgbe escaped death by the whiskers in 1867, because his Ijesa companions and compatriots fully exploited the camaraderie among young soldiers to save him from execution for 'treason'. Ogedemgbe had sojourned in Ibadan where he attached himself as a war-boy to a prominent war chief named Bada Akii koo, and he took part in a number of battles on the side of his Ibadan masters. But in 1867, he escaped and joined his Ijesa compatriots against Ibadan in the siege of Igbajo. Luck ran against him, he was captured by Ibadan forces and led away as a prisoner-of-war. Basorun Ogunmola the military ruler gave orders for his execution but Ogedemgbe's mates got Latosisa who was then head of the Basorun's war boys to plead for clemency. Ogedemgbe's life was spared but for his 'disloyal' act, Ogunmola ordered a *baramu* facial mark cut across his cheek to the base of his nose. (Johnson, 1969:377).

Intervention may take many forms, but ordinarily and in the context of this lecture, it connotes coming or interposing between and separating disputants with a view to settling their dispute/conflict. The intervention of the British administration of Lagos in the wars going on between the 1850s and 1890s in the Yoruba hinterland is instructive about some of the motives of mediators. The Christian missions in Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan and agents of European (most especially British) commercial firms were

optimistic that peace would open the region to rapid and impressive missionary activity and increasing flow of legitimate trade in export produce from the hinterland into the Lagos port and European merchandise from Lagos into the interior markets (Kopytoff 1965). Thus, the intervention was partly motivated by economic and imperial self-interest.

Mediators (and interventionists) often step in to douse the fire and calm strained nerves when conflict is fast assuming frightful dimensions. Oftentimes, a party takes prompt actions to avert a predictable deterioration of relations with a potential opponent. Doing so, and timely, too, is tantamount to addressing issues at stake. For an illustration, when Efunsetan Aniwura, an Egba woman domiciled in Ibadan where she attained the prestigious position of boss of women-folk, Iyalode, was murdered at the end of June 1874 (Johnson, 1969:392) Abeokuta authorities cried out in exasperation, demanded an explanation and justice from their Ibadan counterparts. The latter carried out a prompt and thorough investigation and found the late Iyalode's adopted son, Kumuyilo the prime suspect of the murder and two of the deceased's domestic slaves as culpable accessories to the crime. Ibadan authorities executed the trio early in July, by impalement at the Basorun market place, and appointed Omoko, a distant relative of the late Iyalode as head of her house. These conciliatory actions of Ibadan authorities cleared the air about suspected complicity of Ibadan authorities, doused the mounting tension in Ibadan-Egba relations and averted a potential retaliation and sub-ethnic cleansing in Abeokuta.

It is needless to point out that conciliatory measures could (or have been known to) pacify the offended and assuage their pain and injured feelings. Needless and unprofitable arguments and disputes are averted. An episode involving apostles Paul and Silas at Philippi will suffice for an illustration. The missionaries were publicly flogged and detained overnight in the local prison (Acts. 16:23-39). The following morning, the local authorities were so terrified out of their wits when Paul revealed to them that he was a Roman citizen, that the fervently pleaded with the apostles to forgive and forget the assault and battery.

Conciliatory (placatory) moves/measures generally emanate from the offender and oftentimes take the form of grovelling apologies offered to the offended. However it's not every time that the offenders succeed at pacifying the aggrieved, and when this happens, or conciliatory - soothing words with or without material gifts would not avail, matters would degenerate into conflict and/or open hostilities. Reference is here made to an affray at the market place at Effon Alaaye during the region of Owa Aponlese in mid-19th century between local marketers and an Ijesa woman of note, named Kujemoya, one of the wives of Chief Odole Ariyasunle of Ilesa. Tradition says that when the woman was identified as to who she was, the offenders and other concerned marketers pleaded with and pacified her to no avail, she did not condone the assault. A local war is said to have broken out on this account between Ilesa and Effon (Abiola et al 1932:57-58).

Disputants are often prevailed upon at various stages of conflict to shift or modify their positions and claims in order to achieve peace. Usually parties declare their interests and rights and insist on them as prerequisites for a return to the *status quo ante* or an acceptable peace. This shifting of positions and claims is concession, the underdog and the vanquished could make it to buy peace and the powerful and victorious to demonstrate magnanimity. Peace makers could come up with concessions when both parties are on the brink of hostilities, to avoid actual outbreak of war or when the conflict or war rages fiercely, to speed up its termination. Concession is not the same as conciliation and most often does not lead to reconciliation. A party may have cause to reconsider its interests and decide to repudiate an agreement reached through concession. This cannot be ruled out where the injuries and the scars survive as sad reminders of the conflict.

Appeasement, defined by Lipson (1960:407) as a 'political idea that peace can be obtained by giving an enemy what he demands' is actually a surrender to threat of sanctions, war or moral pressure of an aggressor. Appeasement is capitulation. Its sponsors usually have good intentions

and their actions represent genuine efforts to secure peace at any price, the local Yoruba equivalent of '**gba, je ki n simi**'. However, appeasement only whets the appetite of an aggressor and creates a situation of permanent tension in inter-personal, inter-communal and inter-state relations. Usually Absalom (2 Sam. 13:14-15) the aggressor generally remains inconsolable in his/her injured feeling and undeterred in his/her resolve to achieve his/her end. Whatever is offered by way of appeasement only provides a respite to the aggressor.

The term applies to a variety of situations, but it is a question of expediency in each case: a baby or child in his/her tantrums, a boss or colleague etc in the sulks, even a tout. One of the most well-known instances was when Britain and France resorted to it between September, 1938 and March, 1939 to douse the fire of irredentist claims of Nazi Germany specifically for the excision of Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia and its annexation to Germany. Britain and France were intimidated by Adolf Hitler's threats that he was 'prepared to risk a world war' to annex Sudetenland. As a matter of fact, that region of (the then) Czechoslovakia was inhabited by German-speaking people of Bohemia, Moravia and Austrian Silesia separated from Austria in 1919 and merged with Czechs to constitute a new post-(First World) war nation Czechoslovakia. Britain and France had swallowed Hitler's assurances that Sudetenland was Nazi Germany's last territorial claim in Europe and the British Prime Minister, since 1937, Neville Chamberlain and his French counterpart Mr. Daladier had convinced themselves that the annexation of the region by Germany would satisfy Hitler and avert war in Europe. The two Prime Ministers signed a treaty with Hitler at Godesberg (Munich Agreement) in September, 1938 following which Sudetenland was ceded to Germany. The fragility and hollowness of appeasement became apparent when, in March, 1939, Germany went ahead and annexed the rest of Czechoslovakia which did not contain German-speaking people. It is instructive to note from the disclosures of Konrad Henlein, Nazi Party leader in the Sudeten region that even after the Munich agreement, Hitler's ploy was that 'we must

always demand so that we can never be satisfied' (Bullock, 1962:443).

Appeasement falls short of true reconciliation where none of the parties suffers any loss of its vital interests or any injury to its honour. The appeasers generally mount pressures on the weaker party, target of aggression to succumb, it does so to avoid being accused of obduracy and out of fear of isolation- being left alone to face its awe-some aggressor.

Compromise is closely related to concession as both of them are measures adopted in peace-making to get each side in a conflict to yield grounds on some of its prerequisites for the restoration of mutual confidence and good will with its opponent. Compromise is of paramount importance to conciliation for, where neither party in a conflict makes no compromise or grants no concession but rather remains intransigent, expecting and insisting on the total surrender or complete acceptance or adoption of its own position by the opponent, no progress can be made and reconciliation is out of the question.

However, compromise is more often useful in the settlement of inter-personal and family/lineage conflicts where 'wise counsel' is expected to prevail and disputes are largely resolved through conciliation. For instance, where disputes arise between tradition and modernization, compromise has been relied upon to provide the necessary palliative. The burial ceremonies of Joe Appiah, member of Parliament for Atwina Amansie, heir to Akroma-Apim, elder and hereditary owner of Nyanduom, Ashanti, Ghana, will be cited for an illustration. The credentials show that Barrister Appiah was a scion of the ruling Ashanti aristocracy, Christian, western-educated and a member of the political elite. His sister is queen of the incumbent Asantehene Otumfuo Nana Opoku Ware II. Mr. Appiah wrote a will which contained, among other instructions, a wish that his church and wife, 'Peggy' directed the performance of his funeral rites at the Church and cemetery. This is contrary to Ashanti customs where funeral obsequies are the responsibilities of the deceased's brothers, sisters, children of the deceased's mother's sisters, and brothers if they are still living, and most of black Africa, including Ashanti, where interment

is intramural. To bury Mr. Appiah elsewhere even in spite of his will was regarded by his relatives as an affront to their cherished custom. Mr. Appiah died on 8th July, 1990 (Appiah 1992:183-84). The ensuing conflict matched the Church, Mr. Kwame Appiah (son) and Mrs. Appiah (wife) insisting on executing the will, against Mr. Joe Appiah's sister, the queen; her husband, the Asantehene, the Asantehene-in-council and many of the relatives of the deceased insisting on traditional rites and burial. However, after much ado, compromise won the day, the deceased was buried on 26th July, 1990 at his home after church service.

Compromise also falls short of true reconciliation; by definition, it is reaching an agreement between two positions, ideas, situations, prices, etc previously in opposition. Settling a dispute by each side agreeing to some of the demands of the others such that the solution is 'agreeable' to both sides. Compromise is not feasible in disputes over faith and principles, because compromise represents a surrender, an acceptance of less than the usual. Although it (compromise) can be a palliative, as it may be expedient to make a bad situation better or tolerable than a total loss of face, yet, compromise in conflict resolution may be sheer escapism, it might be dishonest and it often leaves a scar especially when problems arise later over the matter. However, it provides a precedent for the future.

Restitution is a principal remedy for a civil wrong, indeed one of the measures oftentimes applied in peace-making to whittle away the thick walls of anger and frustration of the aggrieved and sufferer. Ordinarily, restitution translates as returning stolen materials/items to their owners or paying damage if such items are damaged or lost. Restitution cancels the wrongful acts of trespass as the borrowed or stolen properties are restored, unfulfilled contracts are carried out and all disputed rights are restored. (Schapper, 1960:200). What obtained in traditional Bautu - speaking communities in southern Africa is common practice in other traditional societies. Actually the owner is free to exercise unlimited rights to dictate his/her price but this is open to negotiation between the owner, the trespasser/thief and his mentors. Generally speaking, much is saved and

rancour averted when stolen goods are returned to their owners. In an instance during the colonial period, a Swiss trader in Madagali in old Adamawa Province removed a stone boulder worshipped by the local people as good luck charm. The communities around the Gwoza hills bemoaned the loss of their sacred object and the youths became so restive about it that the District Officer had to retrieve the stone boulder from the expatriate trader and returned it to the people (White, 1966:64).

There is some ambivalence in the way restitution and the thief are treated especially in traditional societies. In many African societies especially in pre-colonial times, restitution terminated the conflict hitherto generated by the loss of items of value to individuals, groups and communities and a tradition has this to say, when one catches a rogue, he drops his loot and one recovers one's stolen items, what else? Yet, rogues so caught and dispossessed were for posterity, made the butt of lyric songs. Of course the least a rogue can face in modern society is prosecution for his intention to commit a crime.

Dialogue is the medium for ventilating pent-up grievances and differences in the course of conflict resolution in all human societies, however simple or advanced and however trivial or complex the private, family, inter-communal, inter-ethnic conflict could be. When hostilities break out or when disputes or fighting have abated or ended, opponents generally return to dialogue. Dialogue and parley are synonyms in this regard. Usually, the parties involved in dialogue would have reached a stage in their conflict when they are ready and willing to discuss their differences, and negotiate acceptable settlement. Dialogue opens the door to meaningful and mutual recognition of each other's rights. Dialogue is talk-shop and is best arranged under the auspices of a mediator (or mediators) who for effectiveness and result-oriented, must exercise control and provide a guarantee of security. He must act as and be seen as a neutral. He must ensure that every participant expresses himself/herself freely, that no one monopolises the conversation with long speeches and thus hold other

colleagues and the entire audience captive. As dialogue is not the actual negotiation, the moderator must ensure that the occasion does not degenerate into a protracted discussion.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict reached this stage in the early 1990s and the peace process reached its high water level in the May 1994 Gaza-Jericho Accord signed in Caru (The Middle East Peace Process 1994). Earlier in September, 1993, the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Yasser Arafat had written a letter to the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhad Rabin wherein, among other things he recognised the right of Israel to exist in peace and security, accepted the United Nations Organization (UNO) Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, renounced terrorism and other forms of violence and committed himself and the PLO to a peaceful resolution of conflicts. Israel had reciprocated by giving a corresponding recognition of the PLO as the authentic voice of Palestinian interests in subsequent negotiations. These much-publicized developments raised hopes that violence which had characterized relations between Palestinians and Arabs on the one hand and Israel on the other since the birth of the state of Israel in 1948 had ended.

Parley appears somewhat of dialogue and at the same time peace talk meant to achieve reconciliation of the parties. Here the delegates are more concerned about reaching amicable settlement, one that clears away all outstanding problems among belligerent parties. Usually, the nature of conflict, of laws and customs, the people etc concerned affect the type of delegate and form of parley. In domestic squabbles, disputes and dissensions, etc the gathering or court where the parley takes place may consist of family or lineage elders, hereditary and other chiefs whereas in intra- and/or inter communal conflicts, the peace makers may consist of traditional rulers, hereditary chiefs, priest etc. These constitute themselves as third party neutrals. All the above personages are versed in traditional history, of relationships, rights, succession to titles etc. As a result, they are able to resolve conflicts involving their own people. Oftentimes, the local leaders serving as mediator, and arbiters, could invite skillful

counterparts from neighbouring communities to lend their weight and expertise.

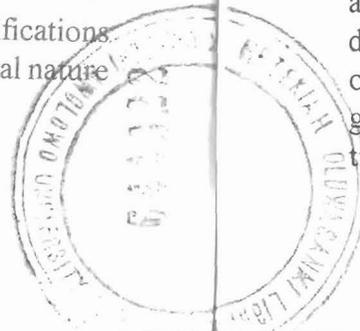
Parleys and palavers are peace talks between parties (delegates of parties) in search of settlement, the former consists of delegates of relatively equal status while those of the latter consist of superior and subordinate elements as between pre-colonial European super-cargoes (merchants) and their local African or Asian agents and trading factors. These delegates or merchants usually assembled to settle their differences and disagreements over their commercial activities. Parleys are held after belligerents have laid down arms, even if temporarily. The victorious party summoned the defeated opponent to make its submission or the defeated party made overtures of surrender (sued for peace). Delegates of both parties would consist of leading military and civil dignitaries. The conqueror generally chose the place of parley or, if there was a mediator, he selected a suitable place, usually a neutral place where delegates, especially of the weaker party could express themselves freely. Where the conquerors were notorious for their ruthlessness in victory such as the ancient Assyrians of Mesopotamia and the Middle East in the 7th Century B.C., or the Mongols of Central and Eastern Asia in the 13th and 14th century A.D, both parties discussed terms of peace all the same. But the option for honourable peace was brighter where the conqueror was humane in victory, like the Persians of the Middle East about the 6th century B.C. Delegates assembled, discussed demands, accepted some, rejected some and came to a general agreement. For instance, Muslim Arab conquerors obtained hostages from the Byzantines in Egypt in 641 A.D and Alaafin Ajigi obtained hostages from Agaja Trudo during the 1730 treaty.

Reconciliation per se

Having examined a number of terminologies and ramifications of reconciliation, it is necessary now to dwell on circumstantial nature of true reconciliation; how achieved and sealed.

True reconciliation can be achieved without a third party mediator as Jacob-Laban peace accord clearly shows. About 4000 years ago, a man and his uncle who also was his father-in-law settled their conflict without a human mediator. Jacob (that was before he became Israel) and Laban poured out their grief before a little audience consisting of Jacob's wives and children who were Laban's daughters and grand children, Laban's workmen and sons. Laban accused Jacob of stealing his daughters, flock and idols while Jacob accused Laban of ruthless exploitation. Each accused-turned-accuser accepted his own blame. Both reconciled and decided to forget the past. They then planted a memorial (a covenant) pillar at Mizpah (Genesis 31:44-52). Using this and similar episodes as basis of argument, we can say that boundary delineation exercises, usually accompanied by elaborate ceremonies as among the Yoruba, for example (Olomola, 1977:162-166) have a smack of true reconciliation.

True reconciliation often comes through apologies and confessions of guilt. Offer of apologies often speed up the peace process because a wrong doer who apologizes to the victim for his wrong-doing wants dispute to end. Anyone who has caused harm and inflicted injuries and who later discovered his mistakes (the enormity of the wrong doing etc) and resolves to apologize to his victims, confesses and begs for forgiveness has opted for a quick way to reconcile with the offended. Similarly it is generally believed that, he who forgives ends quarrel (Ellis, 1974:219). One here may recall the spate of confessions at the South African Truth Commission or at Nigeria's Human Rights Violation Commission especially the latter and the confessions and beggings for forgiveness by certain individuals and the grant of pardon right before Honourable Justice Chukwudifu Oputa (This Day Dec. 3, 2000). The problem with confession of guilt or offer of apology is the difficulty of ascertaining whether either is an afterthought or the one confessing is actually remorseful. It is also difficult to ascertain the genuineness or otherwise of the acceptance of apology and the accompanying forgiveness. Where confession of guilt and offer of apology come as afterthought, they may not produce true/lasting reconciliation. Similarly, hasty or forced apologies cannot



produce resolution of conflict and reconciliation with the offended parties. Hasty or forced apologies and of pardon are not genuine, are often caused/motivated by fear of dire consequences and a desire on the part of the offender/wrong doer to obtain pardon. Such apologies preclude reconciliatory efforts, and could produce undesirable results especially where the scars of the injuries still rankle, and whatever agreement reached are repudiated sooner or later.

It will suffice here to cite the episodes involving David King of Israel and one of his subjects Shime'i to illustrate the point. About 970/940 B.C. David repudiated the pardon he granted Shime'i, a Benjamite native of Bahurim and relative of king Saul. Shime'i had rubbed salt into David's sore by stoning David and raining grievous curses on the king at Bahurim as his royal train fled from Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam 16:5-13). But, as soon as the rebellion was crushed and David was returning to Jerusalem, Shime'i at the head of a large retinue of men of Judah, met the king's party at the river Jordan and offered his apologies. David was probably overwhelmed by the show and he pardoned the offender (2 Sam 19:16-23). However, things turned sour later for on his death bed, the king recalled his injuries during the flight from Jerusalem and Shime'i's affront; and he repudiated the pardon (1 King 2:8-9). The question that arises is about the transient nature of pardon!

There is the presumption that time could heal wounds and bring about a reconciliation of the parties in conflict; that 'left alone, most conflicts will peter out as the belligerents become exhausted' (Freedman, 1962). This presumption is about folding hands and doing nothing even when conflicts fester, because they will abate and die out on their own accord, and time would provide the necessary panacea. Although, time may heal the wound yet, the scars, the bitterness, the bickering and rancour (ote tutu) may remain as potential seeds of future trouble. Moreover, it is not often that both parties in a conflict fight themselves to exhaustion, usually one party is more exhausted than the other. Granted that both parties are exhausted, either party or both parties might bid for time to regain necessary

strength, if war, they might recoup their arsenals of weapons, and then the possibility of a recrudescence of the conflict on a larger scale cannot be ruled out. Conflicts about succession to rulership, chieftainship and other titles including public/political offices show that most losers and their stalwarts usually remain inconsolable, until they are either exhausted economically and become socially and politically irrelevant (Olomola, 1994:46). Oftentimes, the need might arise for some concerned neutrals to broker peace and bring all the parties concerned to reconciliation.

The way and manner conflicts end and the way the victor metes out punishment to the defeated opponent are very crucial to the achievement of true reconciliation. The pain of defeat could be made more gruesome by the excesses of war and arrogant behaviour of the victorious party making reconciliation more difficult than where the victorious party is humane and magnanimous showing clearly that they bore no grudge. About 1484, when Sonny Ali, King of Songhai invaded Mali, he treated the Mansa of Mali with such respect that he invited him to sit at his side (Chu, et al 1965:94). Another instance, Henry IV of France (often referred to as Henry of Navarre because he came from Navarre in South-Western France) was popular for his dousing the fire, indeed terminating the wars of religion (Catholic and Protestant adherents) that went on and off in France between the 1560s and 1590s. Henry was a Huguenot protestant and the death in 1584 of the Duke of Anjou left him as heir to the throne of France. Yet, he was unacceptable to the majority of the citizens and he eventually laid siege to Paris. Eventually, claiming that 'Paris is worth a mass', he converted to Catholicism, was king of France and his Edict of Nantes reconciled the Catholics and his former Huguenots by granting complete liberty of religion (Green, 1964:264).

However, the outcome of the episodes of the various culture heroes, generally called eponymous ancestors in the process of state creation/formation illustrate the issue of true reconciliation through magnanimity and generosity in victory. To begin with, in many cases

there were aboriginal societies with their rudimentary or relatively advanced social and political systems in existence before the incursions of some new aristocratic groups. The invaders, oftentimes better armed and better led and perhaps more cohesive than their aboriginal counterparts, conquered the latter and disrupted the erstwhile social and political arrangements. At a stage, the emergent dynasties resorted to the stratagems of reconciliation through leniency, by integrating powerful or important elements of the old regime in their new political order, and appointing them into essential but subordinate positions. For instance, after the conquest of the aboriginal people of Ife, and in the wake of reconciliation, the House of Oduduwa appointed Obameri, a scion of the House of Obatala as commander of his (Oduduwa's) forces while Obalufe and Obajio important elements of the old (Obatala) regime were given important roles to play in the installation ceremonies of the Oba (Mackenzie, 1922:12; Akinjogbin, 1992:83) such reconciliatory process of accommodation occurred in Benin in the wake of the Oranmiyan's episode, where his grandson Ewedo preserved Ogiamwen and other Uzama high Chiefs, (Egharevba, 1960), in Idah (Igalaland), Kanem-Borno, Kano; etc in Nigeria, in Buganda and Kitara in Uganda and other parts of the world.

Another way of looking at this matter is to consider the system of direct rule of imperial colonial subjects by indirect means as an adaptation of reconciliatory measures to suit imperialists' purposes. Erroneously associated with the British Colony of Nigeria as its birthplace in the 1900s and ascribed to General Frederick Lugard as its initiator, indirect rule is a reconciliatory strategy of local administration which imperialists, from ancient times have generally resorted to when faced with expediency of having to administer vast territories consisting of a multiplicity of ethnic nations and correspondingly large variety of traditional, social and political systems.

A glimpse of the history or roll call of imperialists the world over will reveal that between 2000 and 750 B.C. ancient Egypt established its hegemony over the Sudan; between 600 and 330 B.C. the Chaldeans

(Medes) and Persians established vast empires that covered most of Mesopotamia, Palestine, Egypt and Asia minor while between 146 B.C. and 476 AD, ancient Rome established a vast empire that covered North Africa (from Morocco to Egypt), Palestine, Asia Minor, all Southern Europe up to the basins of the rivers Rhine and Danube and Southern Britain. In the 9th century AD, the Abbasid dynasty established the vastest Islamic empire that spread over most of Mesopotamia, Egypt etc. (Pirenne, 1956:139-141, 169-171, 384-385). African empires include those of Mali in the 13th and 14th centuries AD, Songhai in the 15th and 16th centuries especially the latter over all of present-day Niger and Mali Republics as well as western parts of Hausaland up to Katsina. Old Oyo in the 18th century AD was lord over present day Oyo state, western parts of Ogun state and parts of the Republic of Dahomey (Benin). Between the 16th and 19th centuries, Benin empire covered all of Edo, Delta, Ondo and Lagos, parts of Ekiti and Anambra states. The Sokoto and other caliphates of the 19th century covered vast areas of savannah west Africa. There were in modern times, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries European empires in the America and Asia, and in Africa and Asia is the 20th century.

Apart from a few places where imperialists conquered the people and established ruthless capitalism and direct rule, the imperialists faced the problems of the vastness of the colonial empire, paucity of personnel from the metropolitan country to man essential posts in the colonial administration and were forced to seek individuals, groups and interests capable of serving as agents for effective conduct of internal affairs and channels of communication between the alien rulers and their own societies (Strausz-Hupe *et al*, 1958:4). For their convenience, imperial authorities usually divided their territories into provinces, placed each under a governor who was head of military prefects and a number of administrative personnel, altogether constituting a thin layer of foreign officials over a vast and more numerous elements of indigenous people appointed as functionaries of government. These teeming population of imperial subjects and their

spiritual leaders were under constant surveillance but otherwise, were left with large measures of liberty and freedom of association.

Reconciliation (and oftentimes where conflict resolution ends with conciliation etc) is usually concluded and/or sealed with oath taking, hostage taking and planting of regenerative trees, in short, ceremonies meant to celebrate the successful completion of the peace process and hope that the effect would be long lasting. In non-literate societies, for example, the Yoruba, the mediator cuts/splits indigenous kolanut (*cola acuminata*) with either his thumb or teeth, eats a part thereof where-upon each disputant repeats the act. If palm wine or liquor is provided the mediator pours some quantity in a utencil, drinks a portion, and the wine etc is passed round the disputants and the entire audience for a communal drink. Any refusal to drink therefrom is a registration of disapproval and non-acceptance of the reconciliation. (Johnson, 1969:47). In many places, the items which may include a rooster or a goat or a cow, etc which is/are cooked for a communal feast, represent a crucial part of the reconciliatory as well as purificatory rites (White, 1966:101). In literate societies and generally in modern and contemporary times, disputants, mediators and the audience may sign some papers but more often than not, they clink glasses and drink to each other's health, give one another a hug and or pat each other on the back to show their great delight in the reconciliation and to congratulate one another to celebrate their success.

Conclusion

Conflict is a part of life and of common or frequent occurrence in society. Its management, containment, resolution and reconciliation of the disputants are vehicles of social and political change and development in the life of persons and institutions.

Any member of society can resolve conflict and reconcile those involved. As a matter of fact, most persons have, on various occasions intervened in disputes and conflicts and restored amity and good will

among disputants. Of common and everyday occurrences in the cottages, villages, towns and cities, market and other places of work, arguments, disagreements and conflicts usually arise; mere passers-by and eyewitnesses have sometimes intervened as peace makers. Family and lineage elders, members of formal and non-formal associations, including the courts have played their parts. In modern societies, professionals such as lawyers, psychologists, police officers, social workers and other public officers have assumed the role of mediators/conciliators, etc. For example in November, 2001, the conflict between Pastor Chris Okotie of the Household of God Church, and Pastor Chris Oyakhilome of the Christ Embassy on Oregun Road, Ikeja, Lagos reached its climax. The dispute was over the credibility of Pastor Temitope Joshua of the Synagogue of All Nations also in Lagos. Prominent leaders of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), the United Pentecostal Church of Nigeria (UPCC) and even the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of Nigeria (RCCG) intervened in the raging feud in order to douse the fire (Sunday Tribune Nov. 18, 2001. The Comet, Thurs. Nov. 8, 2001). The Lagos State Governor, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu and the Lagos State Commissioner of Police Mr. Mike Okiro also mediated in the raging conflict. Subsequently, the conflict abated at least since December, 2001.

A pertinent question arises as to whether a conflict-free or enduring peace is feasible in human societies or in a world of perpetual opposites, apology to the Greek Philosopher, Heraclitus, or whether it is inevitable to have a frequent recurrence or cycle of harmony-conflict-resolution-reconciliation and so on. What about the great landmarks and monumental breakthroughs, how they are often misplaced and dashed! One of the best known landmarks in the Israeli-Palestinian relations attained between 1993 and 1994 has not lasted. So much hope has attended the accord. The Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin was so elated at the signing of the 4th May 1994 accord that he welcomed it as 'a historical reconciliation' between the Israeli and Palestinians whom he said had, before that date; lived by the sword in the alleyways of Khan Yunis and the streets of Ramat-Gam, in the houses of Gaza and the plazas of Hadera in Rafiah and Afula...

Hope is rising that the two Koreas can reconcile in no distant future, considering landmarks represented by the historic exchanges of family visits in North and South Korea, the pledge of better endowed South Korea to assist North Korea economically, the hope of the visit of South Korea by Kim Jong II the president of North Korea, and the demonstration of commitment to reconcile when delegates of North and South Korea to the Sydney Olympic Games in June, 2000, marched under one flag. (The post Express Sept. 30,2000).

True reconciliation entails more than the courts can offer. All over the world, the injured, defrauded and aggrieved are often left in the lurch, inadequately compensated and the plaintiff goes without satisfying relief. The situation has made former friends become sworn enemies and enemies remain unreconciled. Nigeria has had its own fair share of conflicts, somehow bitter and endemic inter-ethnic and religious, etc. It may be worth our effort to look at the issue of conflict resolution and reconciliatory efforts and ask whether the human societies and their organisations can achieve true and lasting peace. Perhaps, that's what lay at the back of the mind of Pope Paul II when he declared at the end of his second visit to Nigeria early in 1998 that:

Blessed are all who in Nigeria and Africa work for genuine peace.

Blessed in the eyes of God are those working leading the continent of Africa to a new phase of stability, reconciliation development and progress ... Ultimate success in this venture will come from the Almighty, the Lord of life and of human history. (Sunday Tribune, March 22, 1998).

Note: I have had the privilege of being the first home-grown doctoral graduate in the Department of History of this University. My thesis is on traditional ways and means of maintaining inter-state amity and good will among the Eastern Yoruba states. Many of my publications and

monographs are drawn from the research. Hereunder is a list of twelve of these publications. In the early 1980s, I expanded the subject matter to cover the entire common-wealth of Yoruba states and kingdoms. I have also had the privilege of applying my knowledge in conflict management especially in chieftaincy matters between 1987 and 1991 when I was a member of executive council in old Ondo state (now Ondo and Ekiti states) with 248 recognised traditional rulers. While I was Commissioner of Local Government and chieftaincy Affairs and related departments, my units resolved a large number of Chieftaincy conflicts and filled many outstanding vacancies some of them dating to the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, this is my humble contribution to the subject of reconciliation. I thank you all for your attention. May God bless you.



'Note

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