

Liars and Logistics: A Prejudiced Priest and His Poetic Justice

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Abstract

The Unanimous Declaration of Independence of The United States of America, penned by Thomas Jefferson, and dated July 4th, 1776, is one of the greatest political documents in human history.

Key words: liars and logistics; prejudiced priest; poetic justice

Summary

The Unanimous Declaration of Independence of The United States of America, penned by Thomas Jefferson, and dated July 4th, 1776, is one of the greatest political documents in human history. The Chambers Encyclopaedia begs to differ-

"In the light of later historical research neither the philosophy nor the grievances are wholly convincing. Some of the grievances seem distorted, inconsequential and not fundamental to the conflict. But the declaration was not written as a closely reasoned analysis of political theory nor a strictly impartial statement of the controversy; it was a document of propaganda The "patriots" were generally of the middle or poorer classes Except among the radicals there was little desire for independence". [1]

You guessed right; the Chambers Encyclopaedia is a British encyclopaedia.

What sore losers!

They say that history is written by the winners. But there is a famous history book that was penned by a loser. A very sore loser.

A History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate [2] is widely regarded as the best history book written on any sub-Saharan African people. Its author The Reverend Samuel Johnson [2] was an Anglican priest and Pastor of Oyo. At the dawn of British colonization, the Yoruba people were divided into two factions, which were at war with each other. The first faction was the Oyo-Ibadan faction, while the second faction was the Ife-Ijesa faction [3-5]. After decades of oppression by the Oyo-Ibadan faction, the Ife-Ijesa faction had rebelled and was at the cusp of a victory [5]. It was then that The Reverend Samuel Johnson and other western educated Oyo-Ibadan sympathizers stepped in and invited The British to mediate and [unfortunately] colonize [5]. The

Reverend Samuel Johnson's disdain for the Ife-Ijesa faction is written all over his book viz-

*He describes the Ife-Ijesas as being of low intelligence [6]

*He portrays the Oyo-Ibadans as being noble warriors and the Ife-Ijesas as being incompetent rebels.

*When giving casualty figures of wars he gives the names and ranks of fallen Oyo-Ibadan officers but does not give the names of fallen Ife-Ijesa officers.

*When he does give the names of fallen Ife-Ijesa officers he often fails to mention their ranks.

*He interviewed the Royal Historians at the Oyo Palace but did not interview the Royal Historians at the Ife-Ijesa palaces [7]. As a result, only the King's list of the Oyos is contained in his book [8]. The King's list of the older Ife-Ijesa Kings is not featured at all. As a result of this there is no coherent Ife-Ijesa King list today. [9] It has been said that whatever a man sows, he reaps. This certainly applied to the Reverend Samuel Johnson and his tactless tome. After completing his manuscript, he sent it through the Church Missionary Society to London for publication. The publishers declared the manuscripts to have been lost! [2] Of course the manuscript was not lost. The manuscript was suppressed by the white supremacist British Empire. The disdain of the Church Missionary Society for Yorubas can be summed up by this quote from the Church Missionary Intelligencier, while describing Yoruba textile manufacture-

"Their principal manufacture is that of cotton cloths. The weaving apparatus is extremely simple, and the whole process is LAUGHABLY similar to the making of what are called sword-mats...the framework to beat the cross

threads together being substituted for the wooden sword, and a spindle for the balls of rope yarn” [10]

As a shipper and logistician, I can feel the not-so-good Reverend’s pain, but I cannot help but chuckle. You guessed right- I come from The Ife-Ijesa faction!!!

“A singular misfortune, which happily is not everyday occurrence, befell the original manuscripts of this history, in consequence of which the author never lived to see in print his more than 20 years of labour. The manuscripts were forwarded to a well-known English publisher through one of the great Missionary Societies in 1899 and—mirabile dictu—nothing more was heard of them! The editor [Obadiah] [11] who was all along in collaboration with the author had occasion to visit England in 1900, and called on the publisher, but could get nothing more from him than that the manuscripts had been misplaced, that they could not be found, and that he was prepared to pay for them! This seemed to the editor and all his friends who heard of it so strange that one could not help thinking that there was more in it than appeared on the surface, especially because of other circumstances connected with the so-called loss of the manuscripts. It has now fallen to the lot of the editor to rewrite the whole history anew from the copious notes and rough copies left behind by the author who died in 1901 Apart from the mishap that befell the original manuscripts as above stated its vicissitudes were not yet over. When the task of rewriting it was complete, it was forwarded to England by The Appam [12] which left Lagos on the 2nd of January, 1916. The Appam was first supposed to be lost, but was afterwards found in America, having being captured by the Raider Moewe [13]. Nothing was heard of the manuscript again for nearly two years.

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