

The Church of the Lord (Aladura, CLA): An Examination of a Charismatic Movement in Ekitiland (South-Western Nigeria), 1937-2005

Jegede Gabriel Gbenga

Department of Religious Studies, University of Ado-Ekiti, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

Abstract: The South-Western part of Nigeria is a fertile ground for the germination and growth of different Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches. The Church of The Lord (Aladura) (C.L.A.), is one of the Charismatic Churches which has changed the course of church history in the country as from the 3rd decade of the 20th century. This study reveals the unexplored history of the C.L.A. in Ekitiland from 1937-2005. It examines the roles of ego and personal idiosyncrasies in the various schisms that bedevilled the C.L.A. as a Charismatic Church in Ekiti. It further brings into focus the issue of women priesthood in the Church. For instance, two of the schismatic groups within the Church were (up till 2005) being led by women. Besides, the issue of women infertility was discovered to have created unique roles for Charismatic Female personalities in the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Ekitiland.

Key words: Charismatic Churches, schismatic groups, women infertility, fasting, prayers, Ekitiland

INTRODUCTION

Harold Turner has written extensively about the origin of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in his two-volume book titled: *History of an African Independent Church: The Church of the Lord (Aladura)* (Turner, 1967). According to him, the Church of the Lord (Aladura) (CLA) was formally inaugurated at Ogere on 30th July, 1930 (Turner, 1967). The Church was founded by Ifakoya Dawodu (Josiah) Oshitelu, who was born in 1902 to a family that was an ardent adherent of African Traditional Religion (Ray, 1976). Oshitelu was a Catechist in the service of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) Anglican Church. He started with a fellowship in which nine other members of the Anglican Church were actively involved.

In 1925, as Oshitelu was about to start his teacher training course at the St. Andrew's College, Oyo, he suddenly began to experience series of terrifying visions (Ayegboyin and Isholaz, 1999). The development was considered to be the handiwork or evil machinations of witches. Given the devastating effects of the spiritual attack on his psyche, he was granted a year's leave to seek for solutions to the problem (Ray, 1976). At first, Oshitelu tried traditional remedies but these seemed to be complicating his problems.

Consequently, he sought the advice of a respected Christian elder called Shomoye. Pa Shomoye interpreted the spiritual attacks and visionary experiences of Oshitelu to mean that he (Oshitelu) had been called to work in God's vineyard as a Prophet (Ray, 1976). Shomoye further

assured him that he was not bewitched but being tested by God for a very important mission. He therefore, advised Oshitelu to do away with his traditional charms and medicine by putting absolute faith and trust in God. Shomoye postulated that evil forces and powers could be subdued through the constant use of fasting and fervent prayer. Oshitelu followed the counsel of Pa Shomoye hook-line-and-sinker and discovered that his (Shomoye's) spiritual prescriptions were greatly effective. In fact, he dreamt of how his tormentors were reduced to harmless animals. At the end, he transformed his own cure into a new gospel with the theme: "Faith in God, prayer and fasting are the solutions for the evils of the world (Ray, 1976).

After attaining full recovery, Josiah Oshitelu received several revelations (Turner, 1967). The visions were replete with new religious symbols and taboos which prohibited the eating of unclean animals. The visions also revealed holy names of God such as: Kadujah and Taroja. With his new visions and strange devotional techniques, Oshitelu could no longer be accommodated within the Anglican Church (Ishichei, 1999). In about 1927, he was dismissed from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) for unorthodox beliefs and practises.

From 1927-1928, Oshitelu fasted and prayed fervently for spiritual fortification. During this period also, he served as an aperture to his adviser-Pa Shomoye who had already established an Aladura Church of his own. Towards the end of 1928, Oshitelu claimed that he received divine orders to found his own church (Ray, 1976).

At this period, there was a severe outbreak of plague in Ijebuland and many parts of Yorubaland. These epidemics resulted in serious economic depression and acute famine. These unfortunate developments and the resultant upheaval in the urban centres necessitated the Aladura revival movement in which Oshitelu was actively involved.

Furthermore, Yoruba Christians experienced serious ideological crisis as from the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century. After several years of missionary endeavours, the indigenous religion of the Yoruba was waning and Christianity was steadily growing but the bubonic plague had caused widespread distress and the new cash economy of the towns and cities was in state of collapse (Ray, 1976). Peel (1968) explains the prevailing mood at that time in the following words:

The Yoruba were inflicted with a series of natural disasters influenza, plagues, famines and depression following the rapid growth of a monetary economy, these demanded a religious interpretation. Their unusually severe nature meant that the traditional religion, already fast declining, was inadequate to explain or relieve them and Christianity (which had every sign of permanence and was generally associated with what the young and ambitious felt desirable) was so used. The God whom the Christians preached had sent the disasters as a punishment but the Christian religion provided a way out (Peel, 1968).

The prayer group led by Oshitelu was of the strong conviction that a total commitment to Christianity and a reformation of the extant Christian practise were the pragmatic solutions to the myriads of social and economic crisis that afflicted the Yoruba society in the second decade of the 20th century. The belief of the Aladura movement was that many of the Christians of the era were nominal ones who were still partaking in traditional religions rites without taking cognisance of the underlying contradictions (Peel, 1968). Oshitelu particularly rationalised that conversion to Christianity was a religious revolution (Ray, 1976). The lack of inner conversion of many of the Yoruba Christians left them with one foot in the Christian fold and the other in the traditional religious world.

Informally, the Church of the Lord (Aladura) was founded in the modest family compound of the Lisa family of Ogere on Sunday, 27th July 1928 (Guardian 19th July 2006). However, for administrative convenience, the founding of the CLA was recorded as 30th July, 1930,

being the date it was officially registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) (Guardian 19th July 2006).

From 1930-1940, Primate Oshitelu and his disciples, prominent among whom were: Evangelists Adeleke Adejobi and Oduwole, embarked on successful evangelistic campaigns that resulted in establishment of the CLA in many Oyo, Ijebu, Ondo and Ekiti towns and villages (Ayegboyin and Isholaz, 1999). In the mid 1940s, Evangelist Adejobi also succeeded in establishing some branches in Lagos, where earlier emissaries sent for that purpose had failed (Ayegboyin and Isholaz, 1999). The success recorded in Lagos acted as catalyst in the establishment of the CLA in Edo and Eastern parts of Nigeria. People from Edo and Igboland who resided in Lagos acted as agents in the planting of the church in their homelands.

In 1945, Primate Oshitelu claimed that he had a vision on the expansion of the CLA beyond the shores of Nigeria. Consequently, he commissioned Evangelists Adejobi and Oduwole on a mission to other African countries. While Adejobi embarked on a mission to Sierra Leone, Oduwole did his own missionary exploits in Liberia. The two evangelists equally established the CLA in Ghana through joint efforts (Guardian 19th July 2006). Besides, the Church was established in Glasgow in 1961 by Evangelist Adeleke Adejobi, while he was on a 2 years course.

Before his demise in 1966, Primate Josiah Oshitelu was said to have appointed Dr. Emmanuel Adeleke Adejobi as his successor. Oshitelu claimed that the choice of Adejobi was made through divine revelation. From 1966-1991 when Primate Adejobi served as the spiritual leader of the church, the growth of the CLA was boosted as more branches were established in Germany, Britain, USA and Australia (CLA *Isipaya Mimo* 2006). Also, more branches were established in Benin Republic, Ivory Coast and Togo in the West African sub-region.

Following the death of Primate Adeleke Adejobi in 1991, the mantle of leadership of the CLA fell on Gabriel Olusegun Oshitelu, the first son of the founder. Hitherto, he was the Principal of the School of Agriculture at Moor Plantation, Ibadan. Primate Olusegun Oshitelu died in 1998 and was succeeded by Dr. Rufus Okikiola Oshitelu whose tenure as the spiritual leader of the CLA was still extant by 2005.

THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH OF THE LORD (ALADURA) IN EKITI

The establishment of the CLA in Ekiti was a product of the nationwide evangelistic campaigns embarked upon

by Primate Josiah Oshitelu and his disciples. The corollary of the missionary endeavours was the evangelical ministry of Pastor Moses Opeyemi who settled at Ikere in 1937 with the aim of establishing a brand of the Church in the town. After a month of his missionary exploits in Ikere, he succeeded in making converts. The pioneer members of the CLA in Ikere were the following: Joseph Ayeni, Adedara John, Esther Aladejobi, George Adewumi, Rachael Fadahunsi, Abraham Adegbola, Jonathan orimoloye, Adu Adegbesan, Mary Adeosun, Luke Adebayo, Solomon Alo (Ayeni, 1987).

The early converts were originally members of the mainline Churches such as the Roman Catholic, the Anglican and the Baptist Churches. They (converts) decided to join the CLA because they were miraculously healed of their various diseases and afflictions in the course of the revivals in the CLA. The first open service of the Church was held at the house of John Adedara on 4th February, 1938. In November, 1938, the first Church building was completed at Odo-demo Oke-Ikere, through the efforts of Chief Ola Saruku who was the owner of the piece of land on which the church was the owner of the piece of land on which the Church was erected. In 1940, members of the CLA requested for a piece of land from the reigning Oba Aromolaran I which he granted. In September, 1940, the second branch of the CLA was sited at Odo-Oja, Ikere. In order to make the Church accessible to people in the various parts of Ikere, the third branch of the church was established and sited at Oke-Osun in May, 1960.

As from 1960s to early 1970s; CLA in Ikere suffered series of persecutions, which was due to its spiritual proclivities, which was considered strange. Besides, the other mainline Churches were depleted because many of their members changed to the CLA, where they felt that their earthly problems could be better taken care of because of the perceived potent spiritual power of the Church. The opposition from the other Christian groups equally emboldened the adherents of the traditional religion to persecute members of the CLA as the Church was more critical of the activities of the traditional religionists.

In 1978, there began a crisis of confidence between Mrs. R.O. Gbadura and the Prophet in charge of the CLA, Odo-Oja, Ikere. Mrs. Gbadura was a charismatic figure within the Church. Given her spiritual gifts and activities, she became more popular than the Pastor in charge of Church. There arose mutual suspicion and envy. When the intimidation from the Pastor in charge and his supporters became unbearable for Mrs. Gbadura, she appealed to Apostle J.O. Bankole who headed the Diocesan Headquarters of the CLA at Akure to intervene in the crisis (CLA Constitution, 1944).

On 13th March 1983, Apostle J.O. Bankole invited Mrs. Gbadura and the belligerent Pastor to the Diocesan Headquarters Akure in order to resolve the crisis. Apostle Bankole equally used the opportunity to ordain Mrs. R.O. Gbadura and accorded her the following titles:

Clinical mother	= Iya Awerno
The Lady Captain of the Army of Jesus	= Olori Ajagun fun Christi Obirin
The Chief Soul Winner	= Ajere Okan (CLA Constitution, 1944)

With the new title conferred on Mrs. Gbadura, Pastor Bankole had thought that problem would be resolved but instead, it aggravated the more. It must be noted that the bone of contention between Mrs. Gbadura and her Pastor was that she was acting unilaterally in the dispensation of her spiritual gifts. Also, notable leaders of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) Odo-Oja, Ikere felt that whenever God revealed anything to her, it should not be given direct interpretation and that such vision must only be delivered after due consultations with the top echelons of the Church. The motive of Mrs. Gbadura's opponents was that the interpretations of such visions ought to be means of making money for the church. However, she claimed to have refused bluntly to compromise with such spiritually debased idea.

As a result of the refusal of Mrs. Gbadura to bend to the wishes of her Church leaders, it became impossible to resolve the crisis. Thus, on 20th September, 1984, she left the CLA, Odo-Oja (Ikere) to establish her own branch of the CLA in the town. But this did not solve problem. There soon began a serious crisis of confidence between her branch and the other branches of the CLA in the town. Not even the intervention of the National Secretariat of the CLA at Ogere-Remo could solve the festering face-off. To resolve the problem, members of Mrs. Gbadura-led branch of the CLA decided to adopt a new name. It was after this resolution that the branch changed its name from The Church of the Lord (Aladura) to The Church of God (Aladura). The Schism and autonomy was effected on 6th July, 1985.

The Church of the Lord (Aladura) at No. 1, Odundun Street, Ado-Ekiti was established in 1965. There were very few members attending its Sunday services due to the predominance of the Anglican Church and the Christ Apostolic Church in the area. Though, members of other denominations used to attend its open revival services.

The Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Ado-Ekiti was relatively unknown until 1974. The event that brought the church into prominence was the claim by a hitherto barren woman, Mrs. E.O. Babayemi that she had the fruit of the womb when she became a member of the Church. The woman thereafter became a devoted member of the Church (CLA).

Mrs. Olufunke Babayemi was born on 28th December, 1942 to the family of Late Mr. and Mrs. Omokehinde Adubiario of Odo-Ado in Ado-Ekiti. As an ordinary person, Miss Olufunke Adubiario got married to Mr. M.O. Babayemi in 1970. The marriage became unpleasant as Mrs. E.O. Babayemi suffered temporary barrenness. While she was looking for solution to her problem, she was introduced to the Church of the Lord (Aladura) at Odundun Street, Ado-Ekiti in 1974. It was claimed that she received her miracle of child bearing in the CLA, Odundun, Ado-Ekiti. Besides, she was said to have received the gift of Holy Spirit.

Thereafter, Mrs. Babayemi who was a member of the Anglican Church in Odo-Ado and a successful trader decided to show appreciation to God by making a vow not to leave the CLA. Within the Church, Mrs. Babayemi concentrated on the problems of barren women and children by taking them to the mountains for prayers. As a result of her activities and charismatic gifts, Mrs. Babayemi was said to have got more followers than the Prophet of the Church of Lord (CLA), Odundun. Her popularity among members gave rise to crisis of confidence between her and the Prophet of the Church. To clip the wings of Mrs. Babayemi, a committee was set up by the local branch of the CLA to examine critically her sources of spiritual power. The development led to a serious schism within the Church at Ado-Ekiti.

On the 13th September, 1987, Mrs. E.O. Babayemi claimed that she received God's directive to leave the Church of the Lord (Aladura) at No. 1, Odundun Street, Dallimore, Ado-Ekiti to establish her own branch (JCLI, 2006). Thus, on the 20th September, 1987, the church which was named Jerusalem Church of the Lord International (JCLI) held its first service under a palm tree at its present site under the spiritual leadership of Mrs. E.O. Babayemi. The emergence of the JCLI greatly depleted the parent church at Dallimore in Ado-Ekiti as many of the female members decided to team-up with Mrs. Babayemi.

On the 19th March, 1988, the foundation of the first church on Ado-Ikere road was laid. The site was acquired through Late Pa. O. Adesina who owned the saw-mill beside the church. On the 18th March, 1989, Mrs. Babayemi claimed that the Lord made the pronouncement that the Church shall henceforth be named and called: Jerusalem Church of the Lord International (Home of Children) (Jerusalemu Ijo Oluwa fun gbogbo agbaye (Ile Ewe). Hitherto, the Church was known as Church of the Lord (Aladura) no. 1B. In 1990, the Church became incorporated as a registered Church with the Corporate Affairs Commission, Nigeria (JCLI, 2006).

From the inception till date, the Church has been under the leadership of Primate Dr. (Mrs.) E.O. Babayemi.

The Church had been a sort of oasis for women in search of the fruits of the womb (children). This was one of the factors, which had endeared the hearts of many people in Ekiti and its environs to the Church. Branches of the Church, some of which were established between 1996 and 2004 could be found in Ijero-Ekiti, Igede and Igirigiri road in Odo-Ado, Ado-Ekiti. There were also many branches outside Ekiti and other countries such as Britain, Ghana and USA. The ministers or priests who served in the Church (JCLI) up till 2005 were as follows:

Primate Dr. (Mrs.)	
E.O. Babayemi	: Hq. Ado-Ekiti, 1987-2005
Ven. R.S.A. Ayodele	: Hq. Ado-Ekiti, 1987-2005
Bishop P.A. Babayemi	: Hq. Ado-Ekiti, 1987-2005
Rev. A.A. Eigbehi	: Hq. Ado-Ekiti, 1987-2005
Rev. L.O. Arowosegbe	: Igede-Ekiti, 1997-2005
Rev. J.D. Ibitoye	: Hq. Ado-Ekiti, 1997-2005
Evang. J.A. Ayodele	: Hq. Ado-Ekiti, 2001-2005
Evang. P.A. Ayeni	: Hq. Ado-Ekiti, 2001-2005
Pastor P.F. Oluwatukeyi	: Odo-Ado, 2003-2005
Rev. S.K. Babalola	: Hq. Ado-Ekiti, 2003-2005
Rev. J. Falodun	: Hq. Ado-Ekiti, 2003-2005 (JCLI, 2006: 2)

In conclusion, it is worthy of note that the restrictions hitherto placed on women by the mainline churches notwithstanding, the Aladura movement exemplified by the CLA had tried to rediscover female spirituality. The attitude of this Aladura church to women could be seen as an appreciation of the creative and mystical powers of women.

Ayede Ekiti was another town where the Church of the Lord Aladura (CLA) had made an impact in Ekitiland. The Ayede-Ekiti branch of the CLA was established in 1977 by an indigene of the town-Prophet Nathaniel Olorunsola. He was formerly a member of the choir at the Emmanuel Church Cathedral (Anglican), Ado-Ekiti.

Nathaniel Olorunsola was not satisfied with the level of spirituality in the Anglican Church at that time. He therefore, decided to compliment his spiritual power through rigorous prayers on top of a mountain called Oke-Ibukun (Mountain of Blessing). He consequently formed a prayer group christened Aduralere Prayer Group under his leadership. As he could no longer operate within the Anglican Church he decided to join the Church of the Lord (Aladura).

In 1980, he received a morale booster when Primate Adejobi implored Bishop Bankole who was then the Ekiti Divisional bishop of the CLA to provide the enabling conditions for Prophet Nathaniel Olorunsola to start a branch of the church. In the same year, he (Nathaniel) became the chairman of Ado-Ekiti zone of the CLA. On 1st January 1993, he broke away from the CLA to establish his own independent Church with the nomenclature-Gospel Church Aladura (GCA) with its headquarters at Opopogboro in Ado-Ekiti. Consequently, the branch of

the CLA at Araromi Street, Oke-Adura, Ayede-Ekiti lost many of its members to the new church established by Prophet Nathaniel Olorunsola.

Finally, in spite of schism led by Primate E.O. Babayemi, the Jerusalem Church of the Lord International remains essentially the same with the Church of the Lord Aladura in its administrative structures and doctrinal beliefs. The same could be said of the schismatic group led by Mrs. R.O. Gbadura at Ikere-Ekiti. However, the group which Prophet Nathaniel Olorunsola led out of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Ekiti have divergent doctrinal values and organizational structures. All the same, it seemed apparent that the incident of schism that rocked the CLA in Ekiti was occasioned more by personal aggrandizements rather than deep-rooted religious convictions nor differences.

THE NOTABLE DOCTRINES OF THE CLA

The belief in the power of prayer was a prominent feature of the CLA. The Church provided a great number of prayer booklets and techniques for its members. Members of the CLA were expected and exhorted to pray every 3 h, day and night (Ray, 1976). Prayers at midnight and at 3 am were considered to be particularly effective (Ray, 1976). Every branch had a special mercy ground, usually located within the church's premises, where members could go at any hour to offer prayers for special requests for God's mercy on specific pressing issues. This is called struggling in prayer. According to Turner (1967), it was a special form of wider concept of strenuous endeavour, which emphasises the earnestness, frequency and importunity of prayer. It was observed that within the Church, most petitions concern the avoidance of evils and dangers, healing or the gift of children, promotion, business prosperity and examination success, among others. Petitions could also be made in the form of special Psalms and the recitation of Holy Names. This seems to be in line with the Yoruba traditional idea that ritual language and sacred praise names have an intrinsic power of their own. Below was an example of the use of Psalm in the CLA:

If enemies rise against you, recite Psalm 7, standing and facing the East in the midnight with the Holy Name-ELL ELLIJJONI. You will be naked and the enemy will be defeated (Turner, 1967).

According to the doctrine of the CLA, fasting was another spiritual technique, which was widely practised in the Church. The main purpose was to purify the individual so that this ritual state could support his prayers and make him/her more effective. The CLA also believed that

fasting could help to induce revelations in the form of dreams, visions and voices.

Besides, prophecies were often given in course of worship services or in private homes. In the CLA, adherents often asked their ministers for special revelations concerning personal problems. Prophecies could also be obtained about notable or significant events within the Church, such as the marriage of a minister, the appointment of main Church officers and the building of a Church. In addition, annual prophecies were usually announced to the public concerning the course of the New Year and the general welfare of the people (Oshitelu, 2005).

Spirit possession was also a common occurrence in the Church of the Lord. At the peak or climax of public worship, members of the congregation would come forward to dance, sing, clap and engage in all forms of gyrations. These acts were often used to induce spirit possession. Adejobi, a former Primate of the Church lends credence to this position:

Why do you need to sing, dance, clap and engage in all sorts of lively entertainments before the Holy Spirit could descend? Because sweet songs, drums and the like are relished goods of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would therefore descend on hearing them (Turner, 1967).

After the singing of hymns, prayers, dancing, spirit possession and sermon, the members of the congregation would be called forward to be healed. In the course of the spiritual exercise, it was usually claimed that people were healed of some infirmities such as: asthma, fever, earache, influenza, among others. Sometimes, holy water would be directly applied to the afflicted part of the body. Both Sunday and open revival services were usually concluded with the consecration of holy water which the laity would take home for healing purposes.

The CLA equally held tenaciously to the belief that church members should wear white garments during the Church's activities. The Church claimed to have got the inspiration for this practice from the Bible. A number of Biblical references were used to support the claim. The Church leadership claimed that at the tomb of Jesus Christ, an angel in white apparel was seen guarding the entrance at the time of the Lord's resurrection (Matt. 28: 2 and 3). Other verses relied upon by the Church are: Rev. 3:4; Dan. 7:9 and Mk. 9:3. During worship, the members of the congregation were expected to touch the clean or bare worship ground with their heads nine times at the beginning of service and three times at the close of service. The CLA also preserved certain practices of the Anglican Church. For instance, the CLA observed the lent, Easter and Palm Sundays, among other practices.

Unlike the Anglican Church, the pews of CLA were usually cleared, while worshippers would sit on the floor; the altar and the sanctuary would be covered. In addition, ministers and choristers might wear black gowns, while drums and other musical instruments were usually discarded.

Another prominent feature of the CLA was the annual festival of Mount Taborar. The festival took place on 22nd August every year at Ogere, where an elevated site called Mt. Taborar was constructed. The annual ceremony at Mt. Taborar was primarily a pilgrimage festival, which usually attracted members of the CLA from different parts of Nigeria. During the ceremony, members of the CLA would be clad in white gowns. Commonly, they would carry special banners on behalf of the Church's congregations (Ray, 1976). The festival was not an exclusive one as it was opened to non-members of the CLA as well. At the end of the ceremony, a spokesman would read aloud a litany of general prophecy concerning the country, citizens, the rulers and their welfare during the succeeding year (Oshitelu, 2005).

The sociological importance of the Mt. Taborar festival was that it was a source of unity among people of diverse religions and social background. The festival was also an expression of the accommodation between the Church of the Lord (CLA) and the larger social structure. It equally epitomised the general pattern of religious toleration and eclecticism in Nigeria.

The CLA was equally noted for the use of sacred words and secret names for God. This practice belongs to a spiritual template for invoking the Holy Spirit. Examples of such secret names and words include: Ajagorah, Huillah, Aogola Sakula, Elli Yowarah, Yawotta-Saharah, Iyama, Elli, Ajuba, Sajubba, Kajubba, etc. These were considered to be names for the power-changed attributes of God. These names were in most cases the exclusive preserve of the glossolaletes (Elemi). They were however, made to be potent and efficacious in the CLA through the use of Psalms. The CLA considered the verses of some of the Psalms as sacred words, which were relevant to the adherents and believers' contemporary problems and religious situations.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE OF THE CLA

The administrative process of the CLA followed the congregational method of Church administration as decision-making processes were the joint responsibility of both the clergy and the laity. The laity took active part in the running of the church government through appointment into various positions. Members of the Church might serve as treasurers, secretaries, chairmen

and members of committees, among others. In administrative set-up of the CLA, there were three major strata: National, Divisional and Local. While the National Executive Council of the Church supervised the activities of the various divisions, the Divisional Councils were charged with the coordination of the activities of the Local Councils and the various units within each zone. The Divisional Councils or zones were also called Dioceses.

Each Church within a Diocese was called a Branch Church and this was the seat of the Minister who shall normally be in position to support the Divisional and Central fund with levies from time to time. The Branch Church also had the power to appoint representatives to the Diocesan committee (Fig. 1).

It must however be noted that the phenomenon of schism which pervaded the Aladura Churches in general had equally taken its toll on the CLA in Ekitiland. Thus, apart from the branches of the CLA at Oke-Osun, Odo-Oja

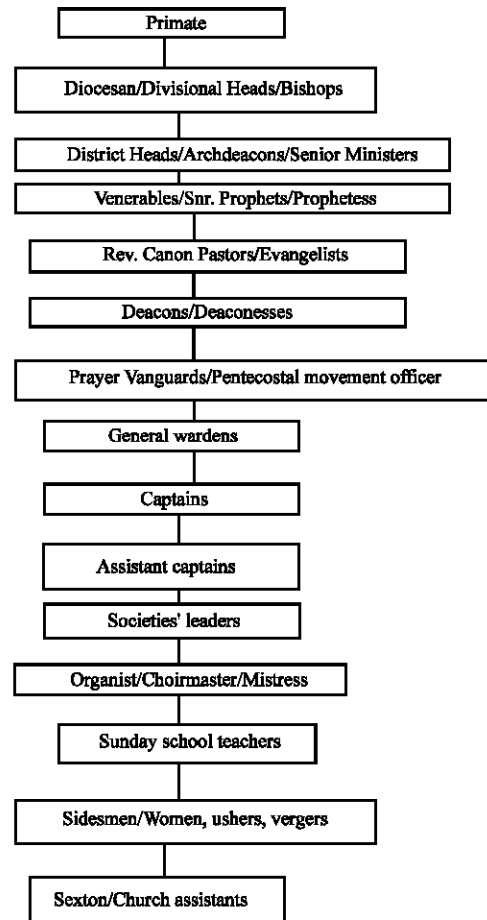


Fig. 1: The Common Organogram of The Church of The Lord (Aladura) by 2005

and Odo-demo (Ikere) and Odundun Street, Ado-Ekiti, other branches seemed too autonomous. The schismatic groups such as the Jerusalem Church of the Lord International (JCLI) and the Church of God (Aladura) (CGA) operated semi-independent ecclesiastical governments. Nevertheless, the nomenclatures for the spiritual offices of these Churches were almost the same with that of the parent body. The hierarchical structure as at 2005 was as arranged in the Fig. 1.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the debut of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Ekitiland since 1937, it did not have as much tentacles in Ekiti as the Cherubim and Seraphim Society (C and S) and the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) which were in the same genre of Aladura Christianity. The major strongholds of the CLA were Ado-Ekiti and Ikere-Ekiti. There were other branches of the Church at Ayede-Ekiti and Ijero-Ekiti but the members of the Church in the two towns were very few.

The earlier presence and preponderance of the Cherubim and Seraphim (C and S) in Ekiti with its beliefs and doctrinal practices, which were analogous to that of the CLA also affected its membership drive. Apart from that at its fledging stage in Ekiti, the CLA was bedevilled by factional crisis at Ikere and Ado divisional headquarters. The net-gain of the crisis went to factional branches of the Church which by 2005 had become more prominent than the parent body in Ekiti. The schismatic groups were: The Jerusalem Church of the Lord International (JCLI), led by Primate E.O. Babayemi and the Church of God (Aladura), Worldwide under the spiritual leadership of Primate R.O. Gbadura, with headquarters at Ado and Ikere, respectively.

Nevertheless, the Church of the Lord (Aladura) had made significant religious impact on Ekiti communities through its spiritual proclivities and activities. There were claims that the Church had provided solutions to certain serious terminal diseases like hypertension, diabetes, stroke and provided fruits of the womb for barren women. The claim by the Church that it was capable of providing

solutions to an avalanche of human existential problems had made it to enjoy the confidence of the adherents and the patronage of many others in Ekiti.

Another attractive feature of the CLA in Ekiti was the fact that the two notable schismatic groups within the CLA in Ekiti, the Jerusalem Church of the Lord International and the Church of God (Aladura) Worldwide were led by women. Their successes seemed to have inspired many spiritually inclined women in the various Churches in Ekiti. It was equally probable that Primates E.O. Babayemi and R.O. Gbadura spurred some other Churches (especially the Aladura ones) to assign more roles to women in their fold.

REFERENCES

- Ayegboyin, D. and S.A. Isholaz, 1999. African Indigenous Churches: An Historical Perspective. Greater Heights Publications, Lagos.
- Ayeni, R.O., 1987. History and expansion of christianity in Ikere-Ekiti, 1898-1975. An original long essay submitted to the department of philosophy and religious studies, faculty of arts, Ondo State University. Ado-Ekiti: In Partial Fulfilment of the Final Examinations for the B.A. (Combined Honours) Degree in Philosophy and Religious Studies.
- Ishichei, E., 1999. A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, New Jersey, USA.
- Oshitelu, R.O., 2005. Isipaya Mimo Lati Ori Oke Mimo Tabieorar Fun Odun 2005 ti Ijo the Church of the Lord (Aladura) Worldwide. Grace Printers, Nigeria Limited, Sagamu.
- Peel, J.D.Y., 1968. Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Ray, B.C., 1976. African Religions: Symbol, Ritual and Continuity. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, USA.
- Turner, H.W., 1967. History of an African Independent Church: The Church of the Lord (Aladura): The Life and Faith of the Church of the Lord (Aladura). Vol. I, II, Clarendon Press, Oxford.