

11-1-2012

## Negative Life Events And Aggressive Behavior Of Efunsetan Aniwura

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### Recommended Citation

Okunola, Rashidi Akanji and Ojo, Matthias Olufemia Dada (2012) "Negative Life Events And Aggressive Behavior Of Efunsetan Aniwura," *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 12.

Available at: <https://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu/ajcjs/vol6/iss1/12>

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**Research Note: Negative Life Events And Aggressive Behavior  
Of Efunsetan Aniwura**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Proofs have emerged in Psychology that people with negative life events can be subjected to various anti-social behaviors, especially ones that are very aggressive and very inimical to the peace and order of the society. This paper examines the negative life events of Madam Efunsetan Aniwura and the consequential effects of such events on her behavior. It traces the history of the woman and examines the negative life events she experienced. The paper diagnoses the effects of her psychological problem on the society and the life end of this woman. Finally, it recommends the thorough examination of other pre-colonial personalities who shared similar life circumstances and using the findings to explain the current behaviours of the people undergoing the same or similar socio-psychological problems.*

**Keywords:** Efunsetan Aniwura, Negative Life Events, Aggressive Behaviour, Psychological Problem, Ibadan.

**INTRODUCTION**

In the field of Psychology, it has been discovered that negative life events were a general risk factor for anxiety and depression and that cognitive vulnerability for depression interacted with negative life events to predict future depression (Hanklin et al 2004) Individuals with such cognitive vulnerability when experiencing negative life events are likely to become hopeless and that such sense of hopeless will lead to hopelessness depression (Hanklin et al, 2001).

It is recorded historically that Madam Efunsetan Aniwura had some life

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challenges which cumulated into psychological problems that consequently led to her behaving aggressively to her household and the community at large. These aggressive behaviors eventually made her a dreadful feminine monster in Ibadan history and Yoruba race at large. The negative life events that occurred in her life, and how these negative life events acted as causal factors that contributed to psychological problems in her life would be examined. The wickedness which these psychological problems created made her unforgettable in the history of Ibadan land and Yoruba race at large.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This paper relied on, and made use of historical documentary method in gathering of information. The historical method calls for a study of events, processes, and institutions of past civilization for the purpose of finding the origins or antecedents of contemporary social life and thus, of understanding its nature and workings.

The underlying idea is that our present forms of social life, our customs or ways of living have their roots in the past (Inkeles, 1987).

The historical event research investigates questions concerning the past times. This method is used increasingly by social scientists in Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, and Economics, as well as by many historians (Schutt, 2004). The documentary information on the life of Madam Efunsetan Aniwura were gathered and subjected to content analyses, to bring out the negative life events which engineered her aggressive behaviors that portrayed her as a wicked monster in the history of Ibadan land.

### **LIFE HISTORY OF EFUNSETAN ANIWURA**

Efunsetan Aniwura, the Iyalode of Ibadan (Minister of women affairs) was a woman of Egba ancestry who migrated to Ibadan (Ilesanmi, 2010; Osewa, 2005). She had hundreds of slaves on her farms with many others at home (Osewa, 2005). Oral evidence reveals that she had three large farms in each of which no less than 100 slaves worked (Ilesanmi, 2010) Efunsetan Aniwura was a notable woman entrepreneur (Olukoju, 2010) She was involved in trading with Europeans, taking goods from the hinterland to the coast and bringing imported goods; especially arms and ammunition back to the hinterland. She was a big-time farmer and producer of food crops in Ibadan. At a stage in her life she rose to wealth and fame and was ranked among the social, economic and political elite in city (Osewa, 2005)

According to Ilesanmi (2010),|Efunsetan extended credit facilities in the form of ammunition to the various war lords when they were going on their military expeditions in 1872. She fielded 100 slave soldiers under her head slave 'Ogidan'

to join the Ibadan forces on their expedition to the Ekiti country. Even before then, she had been made the Iyalode of Ibadan. However, the date on which Efunsetan Aniwura became the Iyalode of Ibadan is not certain, but it has been situated around the 1860s. What is certain, however, was that she was the second Iyalode of Ibadan (Osewa, 2005).

Ilesanmi (2010) described Efunsetan as an example of an African woman who stood against male chauvinism and gender inequality in her time. She wielded economic power in that she had her own household full of slaves. As her name depicts 'Aniwura' meaning owner of gold (wealth) was a woman of wealth, power and authority.

Fadare (2007) saw Efunsetan as a powerful woman in the old Ibadan province with a name to reckon with, powerful, fearsome, terrific, rich, audacious and daring. As one of the chiefs, nobody in her time could rubbish her. Efunsetan was a woman of spiritual depth. Her magical prowess and affluence made her a terror to everybody that had one contact or the other with her (Ilesanmi, 2010; Fadare, 2007; Washington, 2005). Hence, Efunsetan Aniwura was an eponymous heroine (Ogunleye, 2004). She died in June 1874. According to Ajayi (2005), the story of Efunsetan Aniwura was made popular by professor Akinwumi Isola who first wrote it as a play. Professor Akinwumi Isola is a Nigerian playwright, actor, dramatist, culture activist and scholar. He is known for his writing and his work in promoting the Yoruba Language (Wikipedia, (2012).

### **EFUNSETAN ANIWURA'S NEGATIVE LIFE EVENTS**

Riskind and Alloy (2006) argue that cognitive vulnerabilities are typical purported to create liabilities to psychological disorders after individuals encounter stressful events. Psychological disorder, according to Riskind and Alloy (2006) is caused by a combination of predisposing and precipitating factors. A critical examination of the life history of Efunsetan revealed that there were some factors which predisposed her into psychological problem and which precipitated such problem.

It is not a gain saying that Efunsetan Aniwura was the richest person of her time in Ibadan land. The woman was a great entrepreneur who had a great wealth. However, among the Yoruba natives, children are considered very important than any a great wealth. Children are considered greater possession than money and other material wealth. Children are progenies to inherit one's legacies.

Unfortunately, Efunsetan Aniwura had a very terrible life experience in area of having progeny to inherit one's wealth, fame and honor. Her only child and daughter died during child labour in 1860. With terrible sense of loss and the stigma of not having a progeny to inherit her legacies, she blamed God for her tragedy and she in turn, vent her anger on the society she swore to defend while

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taking oath on her installation as the Iyalode of Ibadan. She became a wicked, cruel, callous, bitter, heartless and a monster dreaded by the society (Ilesanmi, 2010; Osewa, 2005). Having no child to inherit her mass wealth was the immediate predisposal factor to her psychological problem.

Efunsetan Aniwura political woes arose from her participation in the war effort (Osewa, 2005). As the leader of the women in Ibadan and a successful trader in arms, she was in a position to contribute to the debate on the issues of war and peace. She became the spokesman of the antiwar group in Ibadan. She was against the expansionist policy of Aare Latoosa which brought many towns under Ibadan jurisdiction (Ilesanmi, 2010) However, this did not go well with Aare Latoosa who saw her action as an insubordination and a serious political confrontation. Hence, her action pitched her against the tent of Aare Latoosa (the then Ibadan Community Head and the entire Yoruba Generalissimo) However, the counter actions from Aare Latoosa can be considered to have emanated from the spirit of jealousy and envy for the woman who was growing in wealth, fame and honor than Aare Latoosa himself.

No doubt, the political confrontations between the duo eventually created a serious psychological problem to the woman. Latoosa deposed her on May 1, 1874, replacing her with her Otun (first lieutenant), despite the fact that Efunsetan paid all the fines imposed on her for the entire political allegation leveled against her.

Another factor which precipitated her psychological problem was the debt that Latoosa and his chiefs owned her. According to Osewa (2005), Latoosa and his chiefs were becoming tardy in the payment of debt owned Efunsetan. She was a financier of the war efforts and a supplier of ammunition. She therefore, stopped extending credit facilities to them. This action further angered Latoosa and compounded the political confrontations between the duo.

### **AFTERMATH EFFECT OF HER PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM**

Parker (2000) posits that in people with early experience of a negative event (e.g loss, abuse, threat to personal safety) the bias toward optimism may be reduced and their vulnerability to decompensate in response to a future negative event is increased. Parker (2000) argues further that subjects with experience of serious and/ or threatening events (victimization) have significantly greater perceived vulnerability to psychological distress. In Santor (2003), such high risk individuals reported more severe hopelessness depression symptoms. According to Husky et al (2007), the hopelessness theory posits that depressogenic cognitive styles, including attributional style, act indirectly by increasing the likelihood that an individual will experience negative inferences about the self or about the causes and consequences of events. Once, hopelessness develops, depression is inevitable (Abela and McGirr, 2007).

The negative life events which Madam Efunsetan Aniwura underwent, especially the pain from the death of her only child, created hopelessness for her. No child to inherit her massive wealth and possession. Such hopelessness, no doubt, created depression in her life time. In addition to this, the rift between her and Aare Latoosa created a severe problem to her psychological state of mind because, according to Santor (2003), how individuals respond to events, such as outperforming or disagreeing with a partner, can affect status and rank and the extent to which they can garner support from allies and respect from competitors, within a social hierarchy. The removal of Efunsetan from her chieftaincy position no doubt, affected her social rank, and the social prestige she enjoyed from the community.

Meyer et al (2007) were of the opinion that continued stimulation from inflated self-evaluations and overly optimistic expectations provide vast sources of energy and drive the individual into continuous goal directed activity. However, the negative life events really shattered the hope, aspiration and goal achievement of Efunsetan Aniwura.

Osewa (2005) argued that all these negative life events gave Efunsetan Aniwura some psychological problems which led to her behaving in a cruel fashion towards her slaves and her entire household: Even, her immediate family members were not spared from her transferred aggression.

As a result of her negative life events, Efunsetan Aniwura became a great abuser of humanity. She greatly abused her slaves (over 2,000 of them) She had the habit of beating and torturing them whenever they violated her rules. Such beating and torturing is an abuse of humanity. In Yoruba land, slaves were considered the property or possession of their masters and mistresses but at the same time, Yoruba natives respected the sanctity of life.

Efunsetan Aniwura was also known for using her male slaves in attacking any neighbor who crossed her way. Her male slaves were fond of molesting and embarrassing people who dared or went against the interest of their mistress.

The most grievous aggressive behavior of Efunsetan Aniwura was recorded in act of murder. In Efunsetan's household, it was a 'law' that no female slave can get pregnant. The irrevocable punishment for this rule violation was beheading. Furthermore, no male slave can propose love to any woman. The punishment violation of the standing rule was also beheading. Altogether, thirteen female slaves and twenty-eight male slaves were ordered beheaded in her life time (Isola, 2010).

Efunsetan Aniwura got to a stage in her life when she became a political institution on her own. She made laws, interpreted the laws, and executed the same laws herself. She had a chartered executioner who carried out the punishment of beheading at her order. Her cruel and wicked behavior eventually

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turned her to a monster; a dreadful person within the then Ibadan community. However, Aare Latoosa saw the aggressive and wicked deeds of Efunsetan, prompted by her negative life events, as an avenue to revenge her insubordination and her audacity to dare him. Hence, Aare Latoosa started plotting how to get rid of her.

### **THE END OF EFUNSETAN ANIWURA**

In pre-colonial Ibadan community, an erred high chief cannot be publicly executed (Ogunniran, 2007). It was a standing rule and regulation to preserve the dignity and honour attached to chieftaincy. Hence, Aare Latoosa cannot order the public execution of Efunsetan Aniwura. However, Latoosa and his collaborators bribed Kumuyilo (Efunsetan adopted son) and some other relatives to get rid of her (Osewa, 2005).

Efunsetan was also aware of the fact that her family or domestic staff could be used against her, so she spent miserable nights and days running from her own shadow. She cooked her own food and changed her sleeping place nightly. However, on the night of June 30, 1874, Kumuyilo knowing where she slept, instructed two slaves who entered the room from the ceiling and killed her by dashing out her brain (Osewa, 2005).

However, her Egba blood relatives sent emissaries to Ibadan, requesting for the circumstances surrounding her death. Hence, faced by insurrection and possible reprisal attacks from the Egbas, Latoosa had Kumuyilo summoned for interrogation. Kumuyilo named three chiefs, who were Latoosa's close aides in the conspiracy of her murder. The rest of the chiefs did not want to disgrace Latoosa publicly, so they deposed Kumuyilo from the headship of Efunsetan's family and had the actual murderers executed on 10th July, 1874.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Schutt (2004) argues that accumulation of large bodies of data about the past has stimulated more historically oriented research. Hence, the documented information on Efunsetan Aniwura was the real stimulant for this paper. The studies in Psychology have proven the linkage between stressful life events and psychological disorders (Riskind and Alloy, 2006). The negative life events which Efunsetan experienced in her life time have been explained and the consequential effects of these on her behaviour examined. This is a psychological analysis of the pre-colonial Yoruba personalities. It brings history closer to the present generation and proves that any contemporary socio- psychological problems of individuals can be explained in the light of past related historical events.

The paper recommends the thorough examination of other pre-colonial personalities who shared similar circumstances with the personality examined in

this paper. Such examinations will expand the pool of knowledge on psychological problems and demonstration of aggressive behaviour. Moreover, such historical and socio-psychological findings can be used to explain the current behaviors of the people undergoing the same or similar socio-psychological problems. The underlying idea here is that the present forms of life can be explained using the past related historical context.



Figure 1

The statue of Madam Efunsetan Aniwura at Challenge Round About, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The statue was erected in memory of her contributions to the pre-colonial Ibadan entrepreneurship and economic development.

Source: Field Research (27/02/2012.11.07am Nigeria Time)

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