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IDENTITY AND PATRONAGE: A PORTRAIT OF CHIEF SAKARIYAU ADÉYÍNKÁ ỌPẸ̀ỊFÁ ASIWAJU AWORI 1917-2015

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Abstract

Historical biography has long been ignored in historical scholarship in Nigeria. Nonetheless, it has remained a popular genre among the general public. Recent heightened interest in biography among academics has some speaking of a biographical turn, even as it has not attracted the attention of historians in Nigeria and Africa generally. This paper argues that the discipline of history should take concrete steps in strengthening the subfield of Historical Biography. It, therefore, appraises the roles of Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá in the annals of the Awori and Ketu people in Lagos and Ogun States, Nigeria. It highlights his contributions to the social, cultural, and economic developments of the Awori society generally during his lifetime. The study uses historical methods of data collection. These include primary and secondary sources of data that were evaluated descriptively. Primary sources include oral interviews from families and friends, which were used to corroborate information elicited from Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá. Personal documents/letters from his home; newspapers, textbooks and journals was also used as secondary data. Primarily, the paper examines the leadership qualities of Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá by leading his people out of socio-political doldrums and pillage to social emancipation and self-determination. It falls within the genre of biography that discusses distinguished personalities who transformed their societies through their contributions to religious, economic, social and political spheres, among others. The paper submits that biography could be employed to increase our understanding of history. It also discusses how biography/the study of human lives is essential to the study of history.

Keywords: History, Biography, Leadership, Development, Society.

Introduction

The idea of historical necessity does not in the least undermine the role of the individuals in history; all history is made up of the actions of individuals, who are undoubtedly active figures (Lenin:1917). Therefore, when we reconstruct the history of an individual, we are reconstructing the history of the society that produced him, corresponding the position of Haule that personal identity emerges from communal identity (Haule:2015). Thus, this work,

a biographical work examines the life and times of Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá, the Asiwaju Awori 1917-2015**.** The work falls within the genre of biography that discusses distinguished personalities that transformed their societies through their contributions to religious, economic, social and political spheres. The work appraises the social activity of Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá, including the conditions that ensure the success of his actions and what guarantee is there that these actions will not remain an isolated act host in the water of contrary acts. It is, therefore, an historical biography that encompasses both the events of his life, the narrative and the interpretation of his characteristics, which determines his ability to adopt the right strategies that leads to the advancement of his society.

Traditions of Origin and Birth

Omo onikoyi eso,
Omo a di pele mo loju ogun,
Omo a dise kogun o to de,
Omo pon fun yoyo da igba ofa s'enu,
Odirawo iju olote,
Ogun ikoyi ba mi nigbo modolu igbo,
Ogun ikoyi ba mi lodan modolu odan,
Ogun ikoyi bami ni ori okiti mo dolu isinsin,
Gbegbe aya ni ikoyi fi gboku bo wa sinu ile,
Omo apo meje, ofa meje…,

Afun Iroko was the grandfather of Chief Sakariyawu Adéyínká Opeifa. Afun left Abeokuta to settle at Ketu-Imosayi in the late 19th century. Oral interview with Ms Asiawu Opeifa, a.k.a Ìyá Ìbàdàn (Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá's younger sister) avers that Afún Iroko, was a warrior who fought the Ẹ̀gbá-Dahomey war. He later settled at Sienu from where he moved to Ketu-Ìmọ́ṣàyí with his family after the war. Afún, according to Mrs Asiawu, was from Ìjẹmọ̀-Ṣódẹkẹ́, while his wife was from Ile-Olówu in Ìtòkú area of Abẹ̀òkúta. Afún Iroko, according to the informant, had many wives and children, some of whom presently settled in Ìmẹ̀kọ, Àjàṣẹ́ and Ìpòbẹ́. The family until now shared the above lineage poetry and praise poem of *omo onikoyi*. The family relationship with Abeokuta apart from Ikoyi from where they moved to Ketu supports the position of Adeboye Babalola on the feature of oriki as a means of explaining the activities of individuals. Afún Iroko is also known as '*Ọmọ Ẹ̀gbá arálÌmọ́ṣàyí, Afún Àjàbí Ẹ̀gbá, ọ̀wọ́ṣòkòtò-bí-kò-lókùn, ọpẹ́lọpẹ́ ọ̀níní'* meaning that he is the son of Ẹ̀gbá but a citizen of Ìmọ́ṣàyí, a warrior in the Ẹ̀gbá mould.

The above claims are again supported by Ketu traditions which explained that certain Afun Iroko was a Ketu warrior with a private army in the 19th century. Afún Iroko, according to Ìyá-Ìbàdàn, was the progenitor of Ilé-Aṣubi in Ìmọ́ṣàyí, where he lived and died, leaving many sons and daughters including Salami Ìrókò Opeifa who later migrated to Aworiland in the later part of the 19th century and was settled at Ago-Ketu, from where he married Aina-Atan, the daughter of Olaorokun.

The marriage was blessed with four children. The firstborn was Mrs Rafatu Yahaya, aka Màmá-Hun (she was married to Mr Yahaya), Mr Sakariyau Adeyinka Ọpẹ́ifá, the subject of this biography was the second child, and he was born on October 10, 1917. The third child was Mrs Asiawu Ọpẹ́ifá (Màmá Ìbàdàn). The last born was Mr Lamidi Ọpẹ́ifá, a.k.a Bàbába.

Oral interview explained that as a young boy, Sakariyau Adeyinka Ọpẹ́ifá, was diligent and hardworking. He was very courageous, honest and always assisted his parents in their daily vocations. His parents' daily activities include the practice of traditional medicine (herbalist) and farming. Indeed, his father was a practising traditional birth attendant or traditional midwife. His disposition to people within the neighbourhood of Agege made him a cynosure to almost everybody around him. He was intelligent, brave, honest; approachable and more sincere among his peers within the Mulero and Orile-Agege communities. While commenting on his youthful days, Chief Malowo, the present Chief Immam of Orile-Agege noted that Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá displayed candour and brilliance among his contemporaries, though older than him. They always looked up to him for support and encouragement.

The attributes of Sakariyau Adeyinka Opeifa probably endeared him to another relation, Mama Zaria. She took an interest in him, and this eventually prompted her to take him to Lagos. While in Lagos, he was also assisting Mama Zaria in house chores and whenever she wanted to travel to the North, and particularly Zaria, Sakariyau always assisted her in carrying her goods to the Iddo train station, where she would board the train. He later lived with some other people in Lagos Island and was probably with some families as house boy until he returned to his parents at Orile-Agege at the age of nine. Before this time, his father, Iroko Salami Ọpẹ́ifá had relocated to Ewu Village, in Ifátedo (now Salami Ọpẹ́ifá Street). With the relocation of his father, Sakariyau had to trek from Agege to Ewu and through the bush path, to join his father and the other siblings on the farm. He later moved to Ewu village to stay with his father to assist him and continue his schooling at Oshodi, which was closer to the farm. However, he always visited Mulero to see her mother whom he adored till death. She was later sent to school by his mother at the age of ten years.

Childhood and Education

Sakariyau Adeyinka Ọpẹ́ifá started his academic career at the age of ten at the Methodist Primary School, Oshodi, Lagos in 1928. As earlier said, he was the second among the four children of his parents and the first and probably the only person among the four that had formal education. This was because his parents were farmers. Since education at that period was not the children's right, his parents, like many others, were not so much bordered about their children's education until the day Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá went to her mother to appeal to her that he should be sent to school. According to Sakariyau Opeifa, his request was sequel to a presumed embarrassment he suffered from some members of his family who came to Orile-Agege from Lagos for an event. He explained that he could not understand what they were discussing' and he took it for embarrasment and thus, he reported the urgly incident to his mother.

In fact, he thought that he was being abused by the people. As a 'big boy' in Mulero and Orile-Agege communities, he was not happy and as such believed that he needed to go to school to further boost his ego and forestall future embarrassment. He therefore went to his mother and told her point blank that he wanted to start schooling (*ma lo school o, ma lo school o-I will go to school o, I will go to school o*).

Sakariyau Opeifa's mother initially did not take him serious but when he persisted in his request, she started making consultations with some of her family members who were Christians and had the knowledge to assist in enrolling him in school. He was later enrolled

at the Methodist Primary School, Oshodi, Lagos with the support of Mrs Ajibadi Ayawo (Mama Igbobi's mother). His school was the only school within Agege district at that time. He was therefore, alternating between Oshodi, Ifatedo and Agege. His mother was in Agege but his father was in his farm at Ifatedo, Ewu village. Therefore, he would trek from Ewu Vilage, Ifatedo to Methodist Primary School, Oshodi, Lagos every day. Chief Òjòlowó while corroborating this information stated that Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká always came to their house at Ewú village to take his brother to school. Chief Òjòlowó later lived with Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá as an apprentice, where he learnt electrical works.

The school academic calendar at the period was from January to December, therefore, Sakariyau must have started his education in January 1928. Secondly, his double promotion in standard one was due to his age in relation to his other classmates. He was already ten years old when he started standard one. Apart from this, he had also lived on Lagos Island where he gained some experiences and was more matured than his classmates. Iya Ibadan explained that his experience while in Lagos assisted him greatly when he started working on his own. Besides, the most important factor that assisted in his education was the contribution of his mother who was a Christian. Her mother's religion exposed her to reading the Bible in her early life and therefore, she was able to read and write. She also taught her children the art of reading including Sakariyau Opeifa at home. Thus, he could read and do some little writing before his enrolment into the primary school.

In fact, Sakariyau Opeifa explained that his mother was his first and best teacher who provided him the right platform through which he was able to develop his career. Therefore, with his solid background, he was able to progress far and ahead of his classmates in Standard One. Whenever his class teacher wrote anything on the Black-board, 'Saka' would be the only student that would read it properly. His class teacher, a white man was so amazed at his perfomance. One day when he wrote 'B-A-B-A' on the Black-board and Sakariyau pronounced it correctly, he had to call the attention of his other colleagues to his cleverness and brilliance. The white man later invited one of his colleagues to his class to discuss the issue. While the discussion was on going, the white man was pointing at him which he misinterpreted as an attempt to either purnish or discipline him. He, therefore left the school that day and refused to return to the school weeks after. But whenever his classmates saw him on Orile-Agege or Mulero street, they always informed him that the teacher was looking for him. He, however, could not go back to school, because he was afraid of the teacher. Rather, he would threaten to beat any of his classmates that dare to inform his class teacher that they saw him. His classmates feared him because he was older and more energetic than them. He could beat any of them.

Nonetheless, he could not run longer than necessary due to his passion for education. He returned to school a few months after and was promoted to standard two on trial. He later discovered that the class teacher was only informing his colleague that he was more advanced than Standard One. With his promotion on trial, he was able to complete Standard Three in two years, that is December 1930 and proceeded to United School, Orile Agege, Lagos in January 1931 to complete his Standard Six in December 1933.

The primary aim of the missionaries that established the schools at the early period of colonial government was to train people as mission officers who would be assisting them in the

propagation of Christian faith. Therefore, the schools were administered with the denominational doctrines and creeds, while in some cases, only the adherents and members of a particular denomination are allowed access education. In other words, one could only have access to education within a school established by one's denomination; meaning that one could not attend the Methodist School except one was a member of the Methodist Church or one's mother or father was one. This was somehow not peculiar to the Methodist; several other churches were doing the same because the schools were being used to propagate their doctrines. It was seen as a fertile ground for the propagation of Christianity in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. His mother was a Methodist by birth which probably made it easier for him to be enrolled in the Methodist Primary School, Oshodi, Lagos.

From the foregoing, we can see the connection and bond between Sakariyau and the Methodist Church Missionary, in relation to his mother and the foundation of his career in life. His mother being a Methodist must have influenced his enrolment in the Methodist School first in Oshodi and later in Orile Agege. His academic performance, along the line, endeared him to his teachers, to the extent that he became very close to some, and often visited his teachers in their dormitory. This enabled him to learn the Bible the more, and when he graduated in 1933, he was among those who had the best result in Christian Religious Knowledge. Hence, he was engaged by the Methodist as a pupil-teacher. With the Methodist Mission, he joined the train of young teachers. He was posted to Ìdànrè in the present Òǹdó-State as a pupil-teacher and perhaps, as a catechist to the Methodist Church, in Idanre, being the tradition of the Church Missionaries at that time. Sakariyau Opeifa was among the first set of missionaries that pioneered Methodist Church and Ministry in Ìdànrè. However, he left the mission work in 1936 to enrol as a Technical Training Officer (Electrician) with the Federal Ministry of Works.

Careers as Pupil Teacher, Evangelist and Public Servant, 1933-1939

Sakariyau Opeifa started his career with his Grade Six Certificate with the Methodist Missionaries in 1933 at Idanre in the present-day Idanre Local Government Area of Ondo State. He was a pupil-teacher under the Methodist Missionaries in Ìdànrè, a town that was then under the Òǹdó Province. Perhaps not satisfied with the Mission work, he resigned in 1936 and returned to Lagos. But before his return to Lagos, he had interacted with the people of Idanre both the indigenes and the non-indigenes, mainly the Hausa migrants. His relationship with the Hausa community gave him the opportunity to learn and speak Hausa language fluently. He avered that he loved Hausa culture, to the extent that he had to learn the language, which he was good at speaking until he breathed his last in 2015.

He further stated that Hausa language readily endeared him to Hausa soldiers in the military when he eventually joined the army in readiness for World War II. But before this time, he had given up the mission work and was working with the Federal Ministry of Works as a training technician from 1936 to 1939. At the FMW, he was posted to the Public Works Department (PWD) where he was until the outbreak of the Second World War of 1939 when he was conscripted into the army.

Veteran of World War II, 1939-1946

Sakariyau Opeifa joined the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) in Lagos in 1939. The West African Frontier Force (WAFF) was formed in 1900 as a multi-battalion field force in the British

West Africa Colonies, comprising Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia. It became the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) in 1928. The West African Frontier Force was responsible for the maintenance of internal security in British West Africa Colonies. Following the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, it became very active in international expeditions and provided a "stubborn resistance" to the Germans in their West Africa Colony of Cameroon in 1914. The Force remained active until the end of the First World War in 1918. However; in 1939, it was transferred from the Colonial Office to the War Office in the United Kingdom under General George Gilford, the West Africa GOC designate. Thus, it began the preparation for recruitment and training of Africans for the prosecution of the Second World War. This was also when Sakariyau Opeifa was recruited into the army.

The military training and tutorials took place in Lagos and lasted for a few weeks. Again, like a golden fish without a hiding place, his endowment and brilliance betrayed him during a class training session. On this particular day, the tutor, a white man, probably a Briton asked the members of his class to explain the goal of a soldier, and they all responded that the goal of a soldier is to kill and destroy. The tutor again threw the second question to the class that 'where is the farthest point of a place', but none of his class members could answer the question except Sakariyau. According to him, he raised his hand and said that the farthest point of a place is the Horizon. Horizon is the place where the earth meets the sky. The tutor was so impressed by his answer that he recommended him into the artillery unit of the WAFF immediately. Sakariyau Opeifa explained that the tutor told him that he was well endowed and had the right knowledge fit for Artillery section of the army. The artillery division of the army is a section which houses the large and powerful military ammunitions including cannon and howitzers, missiles launchers and mortals. Therefore, it would not be an overstatement to say that he was among the best during his training at the military outpost in Lagos.

Sakariyau Ọpẹ̀ifá's decision to join the army despite his lack of military training should not be a surprise as he came from warrior's lineage. He was a descendant of Oníkòyí whose military prowess in Yorùbáland was remarkable; he was *arógunyọ̀*- always happy at the beat of war drums. Of note also was the lineage relationship with Ṣódẹ̀kẹ́ of Ìjẹ̀mọ̀-Abẹ̀òkúta. Ṣódẹ̀kẹ́ was the generalisimo of the Ẹ̀gbá people. He was regarded as the first Seriki of Ẹ̀gbáland who led the Ẹ̀gbá people to Abẹ̀òkúta. All these features indicate that war blood runs in the veins of Sakariyau Ọpẹ̀ifá. His successful career in the military clearly epitomised his forebear's character and courage as *Ọmọ Ìkòyí ẹ̀ṣọ́, adìpelemọ lójú ogun, o dìílẹ̀ kógun ó tó dé, Ọmọ pọ̀nfun-yọ̀ẹ̀yọ̀-dagba-ọfà-sẹ́nu.* This (lineage) trait was, in fact, a rare disposition of the Ìkòyí people anywhere they find themselves. This must have also influenced his winning many laurels from all fronts of life endeavour. He was a distinguished soldier of the Second World War (WW II). As a result of his role in the Artilery Division of the Army during the WW II, he was decorated with laurels.

Sakariyau Opeifa served the WAFF in Abyssinia, Somalia, Italy and Burma as part of the force that created the background for the 81 and 82 Divisions of the Queen's Army in the Second World War until the force was later reverted to the colonial army in 1947 and was placed under the colonial control while the soldiers were also divided along their nationalities. While in WAFF, he served as the Anti-Aircraft Regiment Officer in the artillery division of the Queens regiment. As an artillery officer, he was into reading and calculating the radar. Hence,

he was able to develop himself in the subject of physics which later assisted him in his vocation even as an electrical contractor.

Besides, he enjoyed the friendship of soldiers from different countries, including Israel (Jews) that participated in the war and on the side of the British government. To this group of soldiers, he would preach the gospel of Jesus Christ because he was then a Christian. But the Jewish soldiers always referred to Jesus Christ as their cousin, wondering how he would love him more than them. The relationship with the Jewish soldiers enlightened him about the personality of Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, he remained a Christian until he returned from the army.

By and large, Sakariyau Opeifa was certified an unassuming soldier, a very dedicated, efficient and quiet army officer; a rare and essential quality that probably accorded him respect among his peers and superiors until he retired from the army in 1946. He retired from the army as an Operation Fire Control Gp III (Middle Ranking Officer) and returned home to his family at Ṣọ̀funtéré Street amidst a heroic welcome.

At the United African Company (UAC)

After he retired from the army in 1946, he returned to the Federal Ministry of Works (his former place of work), and he was reinstated immediately. Subsequently, he was also posted to the Public Works Department, his old department and he served in the department between 1946 and 1947. He, however, left FMW to join the United African Company (UAC) as an Electrical Supervisor in 1947. While he was at the UAC, he began to have a passion for electrical work. Hence, he registered with several organisations both at home and abroad for the theoretical aspect of electrical engineering, while he settled for the practical aspect at the UAC. He had trade test in Electrical Engineering and several other areas of electrical works, including house wiring, cable installations and would partake in every available programme in Electrical and Electronic works, in order to possess the needed ability and experience. His friends and co-workers in the UAC confirmed how dedicated to duty and honest he was in dealing with staff and colleagues, many of whom later became his friends. According to them, Sakariyau Opeifa would not go for break even when his colleagues went home to take their bath, instead, he would stay at his duty post-learning or doing one thing or the other. His hard work later paid-off when people began to look for experienced electricians and those who could handle the electrification of essential projects correctly. As a matter of fact, he later became a king and a household name in the electrical industry not only in Lagos but also across Nigeria.

As an Entrepreneur

The exposure and experience acquired from UAC alongside his natural attributes of courage, intense focus and mental alertness motivated him to start a new life as noted above. Though he received support, training and encouragement from many people at the start of his career as an electrician, he acquired much of his training as electrical practitioner from his friend, Chief Samuel Ikúdáísí Ọdúnmbákú (the Akúkù Manager). He usually stayed with after returning from work. Chief Odumbaku had his office and house at number 36, Oṣhòdì Street, opposite Apènà Cemetery, Èbúté-Mẹ́ta, while Sakariyau Ọpẹ̀ifá lived on Abẹ̀òkúta Street, which was a short distance away from Chief Ikúdáísí Ọdúnmbákú's residence and office.

As said above, his experience and doggedness as a unionist made the UAC terminated his appointment in 1949. He was however, not bothered. Instead, he saw the termination of his appointment as a challenge and a means towards personal development. The interruption gave him the opportunity to learn electrical works from several individuals until he started working on his own and later established his own company, which he then registered as Ọpẹ́ifá Works Limited (OWL). Sakariyau Opeifa explained how he initially enrolled in an electrical firm as a trainee. Still, his master would always give him and other trainees domestic job like breaking melon and washing clothes from morning till evening without doing any electrical work. He had to move from one trainer or instructor to the other but ended up not graduating from any of his instructors. He also explained how his closeness to Odunmbaku greatly enhanced his career development within the power industry.

Opeifa Works Limited, was registered in 1961 as one of the few indigenous electrical construction firms in the entire country at the period. Thus, with the registration, Chief Sakariyau Opeifa was able to make tenders for government jobs through which he eventually became successful and affluent through the many contracts he won from the Federal and State Governments, including private firms and individuals.

The first job to be executed by the Opeifa Works Limited (OWL) was the electrification of the Nigeria Police Barrack, Ikeja. It was Cappa and D'alberto that gave out the electrification contract. Sakariyau Opeifa explained that his enterprise with Cappa and D'albeto brought him to limelight because he got the first substantial job and other jobs that brought him to limelight from Cappa. According to him, OWL was part of the several electrical firms that applied for the Nigeria Police Barrack, Ikeja electrification job. Still, OWL quotation was the least in terms of amount. Therefore, the management of Cappa and D'alberto thought that OWL would not be able to do the job satisfactorily. Hence, OWL was awarded the least job. But to the surprise of the Cappa and D'alberto, OWL was the first to complete its part of the work. At the same time, the company also showed through what it did that it was a very efficient, reliable and experienced organisation. The management of Cappa and D'alberto was satisfied with OWL work and as such rewarded the company with extra £200. The management of Cappa and D'aberto later explained to Sakariyau Opeifa why his company was given the smallest part of the contract and also told him how happy the management was for what he did.

This was how he won the heart of Cappa and D'alberto. Consequently, he became their major contractor across Nigeria. He worked for Cappa and D'alberto in Ibadan and Onitsha apart from Lagos where he undertook several of their projects. At the expiration of any of his contract with Cappa and D'alberto either in Lagos, Ibadan or Onitsha, the management always awarded him extra 200 pounds. The award of extra money was, however, challenged by the Ibadan branch of Cappa and D'alberto. Nonetheless, the complaint was rebuffed by the head office of the Cappa and D'alberto in Lagos.

Sakariyau Opeifa later established a branch of Opeifa Work Limited in Ibadan and Onitsha to handle the Ibadan and Onitsha business. The Ibadan office was in the care of his friend and associates. Mr Kolawole Oronti, while the Onitsha branch was in the care of another friend. When the electrical business in the Onitsha axis was expanding, particularly with the electrification of the Onitsha township contract, he had to acquire a house in Onitsha for

Opeifa Electrical Works. The house was later sold in mid-1980s when he closed his company's branch in Onitsha. It is worth mentioning at this juncture that Opeifa Works was the company that took electricity to Onitsha.

The Ibadan branch of the company that was handled by his friend Mr Kolawole Oronti, an Ijebu man, lasted only for few years after its establishment because Mr Kolawole Oronti was only accountable for the first three or four years and refused to make returns to the Lagos Office. He completely took over the branch and even changed the name to Kolawole Electrical. This did not go down well with Chief Sakariyau Opeifa. Nevertheless, they later met to reconcile the Ibadan accounts after which he suspended further business relationship with Ibadan. Their friendship, however, continued even as before. The name of the Ibadan branch has since remained Kolawole Electrical Works after Mr Kolawole Oronti.

Furthermore, Opeifa Works Limited (OWL), secured several jobs from the public sector and became so accessible to the extent, that the company's name became a household name in electrical equipment supplies and installation across Nigeria. Chief Sakariyau Opeifa was a principal electrical contractor to Lagos State Government, Nigerian Railway Corporations and the Federal Government of Nigeria among others. He was possibly the best among his equals in the first generation of electrical contractors in Nigeria. His involvement in the electrification of many Nigerian towns and cities attests to the quality of services he rendered to his customers. Due to his wealth of experience, he was co-opted into the preparation for Nigeria's Independence Celebration of October 1, 1960. He awarded the electrification and Street Lightning of the Carter Bridge in 1959.

He undertook the electrification of more than forty Federal Government Rural Electrification Projects and parastatals. Including, the Police Officers' Mess in Lagos Island, Doddan Barracks; the Army Military Hospital, Yaba, General Hospital, Lagos, National Population Commission Office, Yaba (1963); the Nigerian Minting and Printing at Yaba 1969 and the National Stadium Súrùlérè, Lagos (February 1971-1973). Also, the Army Resettlement Camp, Ohafia in Imo State was awarded to him in 1979 by the military government, including St. Nicholas Hospital, Lagos Island with the Iju Water Works (1967), and the Lagos State Transport Corporation (LSTC) 1979–1981 awarded by the Lateef Jakande administration. He was also involved in the electrification of the Nigerian Naval Base, Kirikiri, Lagos, the University of Ifẹ̀ (now Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ University) 1960-1962, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Warri Office 1972-1973 and the Advanced Teachers College, Sokoto 1975-1976. The Nigerian Customs Office Complex at the Niger Republic and Sokoto Border (Ileta Village) 1975-1976, the Post and Telecommunications, Office in Kano, 1975-1979 were parts of his job in the Northern part of Nigeria.

Ọpẹ́ifá Works Limited was also involved in the electrification of Falọmọ Shopping Complex, Lagos (1968-1969), the Army Resettlement Centre, Oshòdì (1967-1970), Bhojson Nigeria Limited (1969), Post and Telecommunication Office, Òǹdó́ town 1967-1968, the Western Nigerian Marketing Board Offices and projects in Onípàrágà, Ọ̀rẹ̀, and Aráróọ̀mí Rubber Plantation. Others include Advanced Teachers College, Okene, Police Teachers College, Iléṣà, The Railway Station in Ifọ̀ and the staff quarters (1988-1989), Norma Williams House, Ribadu House and Lagos-State Government House, Bourdillon. The Nigerian Railway Station at Èbúté-Mẹ̀ta, Lagos State Secretariat, Aláùsá, Ìkẹjà (1979-1981), Lagos State House of

Assembly, Dopemu Village, Yaba College of Technology, Armed Forces Medical Centre, Yaba, The University of Lagos, Akọ́ka, Tafa Balewa Square (TBS), Adéníji Àdèlé Palace Project, and Bornu–Maiduguri Rail Stations which ended in April 1968. Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá traversed the length and breadth of Nigeria while serving his fatherland indefatigably as an electrical contractor for more than five decades.

Moreover, he undertook electrical installations for several private companies such as the Oshinolowo Transport Services at Yaba, Elias Transport Services and Benson Transport Services.[i] He was in charge of all the electrical installations in these three major transport companies. In the course of servicing the above organisations, he had over five hundred members of staff with several apprentices in his workforce, including Àkanní Gíwá who joined him on March 3, 1962. Àkanní Gíwá was one of his uncle's children, and he was under his tutelage for eighteen (18) years. His colleagues at that period included Taju, David, Goríọlá, and Báyọ̀, Bàbá Ghana, Bíọ́dún Àdìsá, Jimoh Ewú (who later became the Ọ̀túnba of Ewútutun in Oshòdì), Saminu, Safari, Mr Onatayo and many others.

Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá was very hardworking and honest. He would not allow any lazy or visionless person to come closer to him. He incorporated his children and friends into his organisation and paid them monthly salaries. His philosophy was 'no food for lazy man' since, it is those who think that have headache. He was concsious of accountability even to himself. Chief Sakariyawu Ọpẹ́ifá ensured kept day to day records of his company, and he was taking monthly salary like other staff.

Family Life and Associates

Chief Sakariyau was a man whose pedigree and winsomeness was valued by many people, nevertheless, he had his heart in his business. His social life and background dictate his personal friends on the one hand and his business associates on the other. His friends and associates can be group into three categories. The first group were his friends from childhood at Orile-Agege including Chief Malowo, a septuagenarian the present Chief Imam of Orile Agege. Majority of the people in this category had passed on except a few ones. According to the Chief Imam Malowo, Chief Opeifa was though an older person with about five years but they were very close and related as friends. As youths, they all admired him because he was not only hardworking but also respectful and passionate about his family. He would not want anything to affect his family and friends, and whenever anything happened, Sakariyau Opeifa would stand by the individual. He was a friend that would never deny his friend under any circumstance. He was a true friend who did not care about age disparity. He interacted with his friends and was always ready to assist them.

Chief Sakaruyau Opeifa's sterling qualities again attracted him to the second group of friends who later became his business associates. These include Chief Sonukan, the proprietor of Kenro Electrical who hailed from Isara-Remo. Chief Sonukan was just a contractor, but he relied so much on OWL for his supplies. Therefore, whenever he got any supplied job, he would come directly to Chief Sakariyau for his supply and when the money was paid, he would bring the total cash to Sakariyau Opeifa without removing anything from it. He would always insist that Sakariyau Opeifa should deduct the payment for his goods first before anything. He was a sincere man, and his honesty and openness made Sakriyau trust and loved him. He was always ready to support him ditto Chief Sonukan. Chief Sonukan was impressed

by Chief Sakariyau's attitude that he went home to inform his mother that he had found his father whom his mother had told him was dead. He said the mother that 'my father is not dead o, I have found him in Lagos'. Chief Sakariyau like him and always supported his business due to his sincerity. In appreciation of Chief Sakariyau Opeifa's steadfast support for his business and family, he bought three Jaguar cars the same day. He gave one to Chief Sakariyau Opeifa, the second to Chief Kolawole Oronti whom we mentioned above and kept the third one for himself.

His friends include Mr Kehinde Sofola (SAN) a Nigeria foremost lawyer, and Minister of Justice under Alhaji Shehu Shagari led administration. They were together in the Zikist Movement. Kehinde Sofola crossed to the National Party of Nigeria during the second republic 1979-1983, but Sakariyau Opeifa refused to join any political party. Another notable friend of Chief Opeifa was Chief Omotosho, an employee of the Electricity Company of Nigeria (ECN). Chief Omotosho was probably Sakariyau's best friend and confidant. It was only him that knew all the children of Sakariyau by their names and would always bring enough pounded yam every first day of January for the entire family to eat. His colleagues in the electrical contractor business included Chief M. O. Bakare, Sànyà Olú Electrical, Ajíbódù Electrical Works, Sunny Electrical Works in Ìbàdàn, and Chief Kọ́láwọ́lé Òróǹtí, an Ìjẹ̀bú man. Chief Kolawole Oronti rose from a trainee with the Opeifa Works to become a partner of the Opeifa Works Limited and was posted to Ibadan to head the Ibadan Office. He, however, change the name of the Ibadan office to Kolawole Electrical without informing his boss in Lagos; thus confirming the words of George Washington, that 'we should be courteous to all, but intimate with few and allow those few be well tried before we give them our confidence'. Chief Opeifa had confidence in many, even though few betrayed him, several others have remained grateful for his benevolence and relationship.

Also, within the last group are the retinue of followers though very younger, he accorded many of them due respect as his friends. Samuel Johnson and English lexicographer who lived between 1709 and 1784 noted that 'If a man does not make new acquaintance as he advances through life; he will soon find himself left alone. A man..., should keep his friendship in constant repair'. This group of friends were those he had contact with when he began to grow in business and simultaneously with his involvement in Awori affairs in Lagos and Ogun State. They included Chief Benjamin Adekunle who later became his secretary in the Awori Welfare Association of Nigeria. Chief Adekunle lived on Haastrup street where they became friends, and he then enlisted him into the Awori army. He, Chief Adekunle and his family were beneficiaries of Chief Opeifa's generosity. Chief Adekunle enumerated how Chief Opeifa spent his money and time in their bid to retrieve thousands of acres of land from the Egwu people whom his grandfathers accommodated on their farmland as farmers in the early part of the 20th century. Chief Adekunle explained that through legal actions solely financed by Chief Opeifa, the property was reclaimed by his family. Another notable individual in this category is Chief Sufianu. Chief Sakariyau Opeifa shared a profound love with his friends and associates, through which he was able to keep his friends; he was actually a cheerful giver.[ii]

Negotiating Identity and Culture without Border

Every society has its men of the moment with varied traits of transformation, but it is usually circumstances that reveal them. The features of change in great men like Abraham Lincoln, Muhammed Ali, Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Abubakar Tafawa Balẹ̀wa, Nnamdi

Azikiwe and Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólọ́wọ̀ reflected in Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá. He was the leader of the Awori Welfare Association for about (33) thirty-three years during which period he consistently charged the Awori elites to develop their 'land' and families. Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá preached development through freedom and self-determination passionately among all the Awori and the Ketu people of Lagos and Ogun States.

Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá's was deeply concern in the socio-political emancipation and development of the Awori and the Ketu society in Lagos and Ogun States. Thus, he was a voice of the Awori and the Ketu people in Lagos and Ogun States initiating forums for the inclusion of Awori sons and daughters in the administration of Lagos and Ogun States. His contributions endeared him to the entire Awori people that made him the Aṣíwájú Awori in 1976 among other chieftaincy titles within Awori and Ketu societies. Ọba Dàda, the late Ọlọ́tà of Ọ̀tà, described Ọpẹ́ifá as a leader who passionately loved his people. He founded several social groups, creating awareness among the youths. He was revered and adored by the Ketu and the Awori social groups during his lifetime. Culturally, he was the guardian of the two social groups. He was a faithful and real liberator for his generation and a blessing to the world around him. As a tireless leader, he fought for the social and political rights of the Awori and Ketu people within Lagos and Ogun States.

The Chief Imam of Súrùlérè, Alhaji Abdullahi Mustapha described the role of Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá in Lagos State Muslim Community as outstanding. According to Alhaji Mustapha, his demise remains a great loss and left a vacuum that would be difficult to fill. He was a role model to the Ulama because he participated in all the activities of the Muslim Community most especially in Agége, Òkè-Odò and Súrùlérè. He served as the Youth Missioner from 1990-1996 when he became the patron of the group, offering advice, support and financial wherewithal. He ensured that the youth remained vibrant in all areas of Islamic tenets. He provided structural support for the uplift of the youth wing in Lagos by acquiring a plot of land for them in Abúlé-Ẹ̀gbá and organised them to form the ROSULLULAHI Society of Nigeria in 1996. He single-handedly formalised the documentation of the land with Five Hundred Thousand Naira (N500, 000). Even when the land was on lease to the Nasrul – Lahi-L – Faith Society of Nigeria (NASFAT) group, he did not interfere in the affairs of the organisation; rather, he made several financial donations towards the uplift of Islam.

In 1994, he was made the Gíwá Adinni of Súrùlérè for his outstanding support to the entire Muslim Community in Súrùlérè, and subsequently Bàbá Adinni of Súrùlérè by the Muslim Ulama of the entire Súrùlérè local government area (made up of Ìtìrẹ̀, Ìkàté, Coker and Àgùdà). Following the conferment of the title, Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá became the head of the Islamic Community in Súrùlérè local government, a section that has now been divided into three local council areas. As the Bàbá Adinni of Súrùlérè in 2007, he had over one hundred and fifty (150) mosques under his watch. As the spiritual leader of the Muslims, he offered direction and guidance just as he shouldered the responsibilities of the over 150 mosques in the area. Regularly, he donated money to them, always attended to the needs of the individual members of the mosques. He presided over and supervised the activities of several committees in the various mosques. He neither condoned stealing nor encouraged misunderstanding rather; he ensured that all forms of misunderstanding within the Muslim community and the Ulamas were nipped in the bud. Though an ardent Muslim, he had no grudge against the Christian faith or any other religion. His family life actually epitomised

religious liberalism. He often frowned at Muslims who tries to prevent their children marrying Christians. He actually settled several cases of interreligious marriages among children and parents, including those that changed from one religion to the other.

In April 27th, 2014, he was made the Aṣíwájú of Ìjègun central mosque at a grand style event that featured prominent Àwórì standard bearers in Ìjègun community of Àlímọ̀shọ́ local government area of Lagos State. He was until his death the Aṣíwájú of Agége, Aṣíwájú of Ìgbẹ̀sàland and Bọ́bajírò of Ìgbẹ̀sà among other traditional titles in recognition of his service to the Àwórì community.

In addition, he ensured that Islam was propagated and widely publicised like Christianity. In 2012, Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá called the meeting of the Chief Imams under him, (under the leadership of Imam Abdullahi M. Baa) to find out what they were doing on the propagation of Islam and how they had been helping the less privileged Muslims within and around them. After the discussion, Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá suggested the need for a radio programme that will be devoted to Islamic teachings and tenets. His position was to make sure that Islam was practised according to the Quran. Those at the meeting accepted the suggestion and he immediately constituted a committee to work out the modalities of the radio programme. Within months, he initiated the programme on Radio 1 in Ìkẹ̀jà.It was named "Ìtọ́sọ́nà Òdodo" and aired before *Jumat* every Friday. The core messages of the radio programme centred on marital issues, its challenges and fulfilment within Islamic tenets. Imam Abdullahi Mustapha, the presenter of the programme said it was aired throughout the Southwestern Nigeria because people always phoned-in from different parts of Yorùbáland for Islamic counselling and guidance. Chief Ọpẹ́ifá Sakariyau devoted his life to serving God first, the Àwórì Community and mankind at large. As a religious leader, he did not shy away from his religious responsibilities. He made donations towards the completion of several mosques, payments of land for the construction of worship and Islamic centres. He also donated a Mosque for his people at Òkè-Odò, which he developed up to decking level in 1998 and donated the sum of One million naira towards its completion.

Àwórì Welfare Association

Àwórì Welfare Association, as the name indicates, is envisioned as a provider of a better life for the teaming indigenous population of the Àwórì people in Lagos State. In other words, Àwórì National Welfare Association of Nigeria (ANWAN), an umbrella of all Àwórì sons and daughters in Lagos and Ògùn States and in the diaspora has a core responsibility of providing a better life for the teaming indigenous Àwórì population. The association incorporated all Àwórì descents with the philosophy that once the entire Àwórì groups remain united; there would be the rapid development of Àwórì towns and settlements. In other words, the founders of ANWAN felt that the union would not only project the Àwórì people as the aboriginal group in Lagos but would become a pressure group through which the Àwórì people could channel and obtain demands from government.

According to Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá, the need for homogeneity using ANWAN, the umbrella body, was borne out of the fact that Àwórì people perceived that they were being marginalised by the government of Lagos and Ògùn State in all areas of development. Their towns and villages were neglected, including their people. Despite being aboriginals of Lagos especially, the Àwórì were not included in the mainstream of government and governance of

Lagos State, even when non-indigenes and "foreigners" found their way into the State cabinet as commissioners and local government executive, among others. Essentially, he joined ANWAN to fight vigorously against the neglect and marginalisation of the Àwórì people by Lagos State Government and also made sure that he raised the consciousness of the Àwórì people towards the unification of the Àwórì communities.

The association, though did not start at once, rather it was a product of the conscious efforts and activities of Pa Ọdẹ́yalé while in Ìbàdàn (where he organized several activities aimed at promoting Àwórì people and their culture), Pa Akapo from Orílé Agége, Pa Ògúdípẹ̀ from Ìgbẹ̀sà, Pa Táíwò Adégbóyèga, who later became the Bálẹ̀ of Ìkòsì, Pa Durosimi (Bálẹ̀ Àgbòyí), Chief Adamo Ọlátà, (Bálẹ̀ Ọ̀rẹ̀gún), Pa Ashade, the Ọba of Ìsọlọ̀, Wahab Ìràwọ̀, Ọba Muhammed Ìlọ̀ of Ìkẹjà, Mr Okùnọlá and Mr Franklin Akínyẹmí with Barrister Badà and Chief Ọpẹ́ifá.

Thus, in 1965, Pa Ọdẹ́yalé, Barrister C. O. Badà, Chief Fágbénró Béyìòkú, Chief Adegbotega Táíwò, the Báálẹ̀ of Ìkòsì and Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá collaborated to and midwived the Àwórì Welfare Association of Nigeria (ANWAN). Chief Badà became the first Chairman. His deputy was Mr J. Ògùnyemi and the Secretary was Alhaji G. A. Seriki. ANWAN later transformed into Àwórì Welfare Association of Nigeria. The first sets of meetings of the association were held at Sabo Oníkẹ́ Methodist Church, Nigeria. The first meeting of the association was attended by Pa Ọdẹ́yalé, Chief Ògúdípẹ̀, Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá, Mr Isiaka Tajudeen, Chief Adégbóyèga Táíwò, Alhaji Apènà and Chief Ọlọ́tà, the Báálẹ̀ of Ọ̀rẹ̀gún. Subsequent meetings were later transferred to Chief Sakariyawu Ọpẹ́ifá's house on Hastrup Street. Later, the venue was rotated among members. It gradually attracted more activities, evolved into a concert infused with the fanfare and cultural display.

After some time, Chief Ọlọ́tà, the Báálẹ̀ of Ọ̀rẹ̀gún donated a parcel of land at Ọ̀rẹ̀gún to AWAN for the construction of a secretariat. To make the place usable, Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá provided money for clearing of the bush and insisted that AWAN holds its meetings there saying he would keep providing money for clearing the bush anytime the need arose. In addition, he rented canopies and provided refreshment for entertainment at the meetings. However, when Chief Badà became a judge around 1970, Chief Béyíòkú was appointed as leader of AWAN while Alhaji Ganiyu Seriki from Àgbòyí served as the secretary general.

On the demise of Chief Béyíòkú in 1975, Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá was elected the President of AWAN while, Pastor Israel Àlàgbé, an indigene of Ìlògbò Erémi was made the Secretary until December 1983. Chief Sakariyau Adékúnlé Ọpẹ́ifá was the Chairman/ President of the Association until 2011, about thirty-six (36) years. During the period Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá and Engineer (Pastor) Àlàgbé gave the association a lift by laying solid foundation and reputation. From their tenure, the attendance of people to the meeting increased and they came from Ọ̀tà, Adó-Odò, Ìjègun, Ìsọlọ̀, Ọ̀rẹ̀gún, Ìshẹ̀ri Ọ̀shun, and from all Àwórì towns in Lagos and Ògùn States. The noticeable increment in attendance impressed Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá who conceived the idea of building a house for the meeting so that it will serve as a secretariat for the association. He was so concerned about the project of Àwórì development that he started holding meetings with Àwórì people from the village to village in Lagos and Ògùn State. His aim was to identify with the people, know their problems and challenges, and needs among others. At every Àwórì town, his main concern was to promote

the education of Àwórì children, an agenda he never got tired of proclaiming across all Àwórì land. In some of the communities, he distributed pamphlets on the benefits of education to societal developments. In his bid to achieve this aim, he searched for the best brains among the Àwórì and brought them together under the umbrella of AWAN. In fact, this was how many Àwórì people became members of the association. To further achieve the ambition of building a house for the association, Chief Ọpẹ́ifá committed his personal resources to building the secretariat for AWAN on the land initially donated by the Báléè of Ọ̀rẹ̀gún. After the demise of Chief Ọlọ́tà , the Báálẹ̀ of Ọ̀rẹ̀gún in the 1970s, his children rose up to retrieve the land, Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá ensured that parcel of land remained that of the AWAN by formalising the land documents with the Lagos State Government and members of Chief Ọlọ́tà family.

Therefore, Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá will be remembered for the building of the Àwórì House at Ọ̀rẹ̀gún in his capacity as the Executive's President of the association. Other members like Chief Adégbóyèga Táíwò, the Báálẹ̀ of Ìkòsì always provided money available for the secretariat project. However, sometimes in 1983, Chief M. A. F. Akíndé, another patriotic and devoted Àwórì suggested that the Executive Council be changed to have another crop of leadership disposed to all Àwórì people. This led to an election on 3rd March 1983 at the Ìkẹjà Club where the representatives of all Àwórì from Ògùn and Lagos States were present. At the end of the election Chief, Ọpẹ́ifá Adéyínká was returned unopposed and Chief Benedict Adémọ́lá Adékúnlé defeated Chief Olu Àlàgbé with 39 votes to 12 votes. Chief Sakariyau Adékúnlé Ọpẹ́ifá and Chief Benedict Adémọ́lá Adékúnlé took over the secretariat from Chief Àlàgbé on 3rd March 1983 as the Secretary for 23 years. He handed over to Mrs Grace Olúwakẹ́mi Ọláòpin who was the Acting Secretary for about six months before she also handed over to Prince Y. A. Oseni Agedegudu who served the union till 2013. Chief S. Òjòlowó became the President of AWAN. It must be noted that Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá registered the association with the Current Affairs Commission (CAC) in 1973 and also championed the recognition of Àwórì Chieftaincy institutions in Lagos State. He ensured that the Àwórì Oba was officially recognised by Lagos State Government. He indeed argued that they must be remunerated being traditional leaders of the aboriginal settlers. This yielded a positive result and in the late 1990s and early 2000, the Lagos State Government Law on Chieftaincy incorporated the Àwórì Ọba in the Council of State with social benefits and allowances for chieftaincy upkeep.

In addition, as a pan-Àwórì, he led the struggle for the establishment of the Adó-Odò Ọ̀tà Local Government. The challenges of land ownership between the Àwórì and the Ẹ̀gbá coupled with the incessant crises and court cases on traditional titles called for the liberation of the Àwórì people from the Ẹ̀gbá. Chief Sakariyawu Ọpẹ́ifá led the Ọba in the struggle. He was fully supported by Ọba M. A. Tàlàbí, Èdúmèrí II, the Onílogbò of Ìlogbò and his council of chiefs who on 22nd March 1994 petitioned the State Governor, Colonel Daniel Akíntọ́ńdé, (December 1993 to August 1996) on the shift of boundaries between the Ẹ̀gbá and the Àwórì. The petition was later submitted to the Governor by five members of the council led by Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá. The other committee members included Chief B. A. Shadeko, Ọ̀dọ̀fin of Ìlogbò, Chief B. A. Bánkọ́lé, Balógun of Ìlogbò, Chief I. O. Abatan, Olúwo of Ìlogbò and Chief Adélẹ́yẹ, Bashorun of Ìlogbò. Four years after submitting the petition, Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá sent another delegation comprising Chief Òjòlowó and Chief Benedict Adémọ́lé Adékúnlé to Chief Olúṣẹ́gun Ọbásanjọ́ at his Ọ̀tà farm to specifically demand a separation of the Àwórì

from the Ẹ̀gbádò, the Yewa and the Ìlaró. It meant that they needed a local government for the Àwórì people but were told by Ọ̀básanjọ́ that though a local government would be granted but it would not be named after Àwórì people because it would combine both the Àwórì and the Yewa group. Subsequent interaction between Chief Ọpẹ́ifá, AWAN and the government led to the creation of Adó-Odò Local Government with headquarters in Ọ̀tà in 1989.

In addition, Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá also began the struggle for the unification of Àwórì people in Ògùn and Lagos States for even social and economic development of the people and their culture. In 1975, Chief Ọpẹ́ifá joined other Àwórì eminent group to demand the merger and separation from Ẹ̀gbádò. In 1976, with the support of Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá, the Ọba, the Eminent people and Chiefs wrote the Justice Mamman Nasir Committee on State, Local Government and Boundary adjustment demanding for the incorporation of Àwórì people in Ògùn into Lagos State and the adjustment of boundaries to Ifọ̀/Ọ̀tà and Ẹ̀gbádò South local government areas to create two (2) local government areas for the Àwórì in Ògùn State. Chief Adékúnlé Adémọ́lá, AWAN secretary also led another delegation to the National Assembly in 1983 to demand for a State for the Àwórì people or a possible merger of all Àwórì people into Lagos-State. According to Chief Adékúnlé Adémọ́lá Benedict that led the delegation, it was almost yielding a result but was truncated by the coup of 31st December 1984. Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá was not deterred by the failure of the earlier missions to yield a result and in 1996; another delegation was dispatched to the Chief Arthur Mbanefo committee on boundary adjustment and local government creation. Though, the struggle for the merger of Àwórì towns was uppermost in his heart, such that between 1999 and 2005 several other delegations and request was made.

Chief Adékúnlé Adémọ́lá he was drawn to late Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá by his benevolence in the 1970s. While living on the same street with him, he said he heard that Ọpẹ́ifá loved helping people who had problems and subsequently went to meet him with six of his family members who had been denied their right to family land by the Ogwu settlers in Adó-Odò. After explaining their predicaments to Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá, the latter invited them to the Àwórì meeting at Ìsọlọ̀ in January 1970 where the matter was tabled before the Executives and the Association resolved to take up the matter. He recalled that Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá used to travel from Lagos to Adó-Odò twice every month (1983 to 2006) to inspect the land (about four thousand acres) and also to Ìlaró whenever the case was to be heard in court. In some instances, he travelled around 8 o'clock pm in the night. The case was consequently won on 30th July 1990 at the Supreme Court. Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá paid all the required legal expenses for the prosecution of the case from the High Court to the Supreme Court and never demanded a penny from the family. Chief Ọpẹ́ifá was also said to have assisted and supported Àwórì people on several land issues. Some of them include the Arílégbolórò, Ìsọlọ̀ family of Ìsọlọ̀ quarters in Adó-Odò versus the Ogu (Egun) people of the Isokiere land from 1980 to 1990; the Ìgbẹ̀sà, Ọ̀tọ̀ Àwórì versus the Ìjàníkin, Ìshẹ̀ri-Ọlọ́fin Ìbáràgú in Ifọ̀ Local Government, among other land matters. All these land cases cost Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá time and resources and he never demanded a penny or land as compensation for the services.

In the area of Chieftaincy, Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá led the Àwórì people back to restoring many to their forefather's thrones, when non-indigenes were beginning to encroach on Àwórì land in many towns and villages including Atan, Ìjú, and Ìjokò; and also struggling with the Àwórì people on traditional chieftaincy. He led the struggle and ensured the Àwórì people

took their rightful place in the scheme of things both Lagos and the Ògùn States. Under his leadership, many Àwórì elites were appointed into public offices in the administration of Lagos State. Chief Badmus from Ọ̀jọ́, Chief Kòsọ́kọ́ from Ìworò Àjídó, Chief Shọla Agbábíàká became honourable commissioners. Chief Rafiu Jàfójo became the deputy governor under the Lateef Jakande administration. Chief F. A. O. Akínyẹmí was elected the Chairman of Àlímọ̀shọ́, Chief Shọ́nibárẹ́ was in Ìkẹjà local government, Chief Adékúnlé was the Chairman in Mushin local government, and Alhaji Saamota Aríyíbí became the head of land allocation committee. In Ògùn State, Chief R. S. O. Ògòlowó-Ojúko, Chief Akínbọ̀dé and late Chief Ọdọ́nsì were elected to the Federal House of Representative. He awarded scholarships to deserving recipients through AWAN and urged all families to send their children to schools. He believed that bringing the Àwórì people together in a State would further encourage the development of their tradition and culture and thus, he initiated the move for the creation of Awori State.

The idea was lofty, nethertheless, it did not see the light of the day; in the opinion of some members of the AWAN, it was politicised by the Ọbásanjọ́ administration because of the incessant crises and land disputes between the Àwórì and the Ẹ̀gbá around Ọ̀tà that often led to open hostilities among severally communities. He undertook a lot of peaceful resolutions of traditional conflicts and crises before escalating and degenerating to serious clashes among the Àwórì people and within Àwórì society. He resolved the kingship dispute at Idimu, Ìshẹ̀ri Ọlọ́fin, Agége, Oto-Àwórì, Ìjànílkin, among others and installed reliable and responsible leaders in these communities. He was famous as a good cultural enthusiast who always sponsored the Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ́ festivals at all Àwórì functions.

Chief Sakariyau Adéyínká Ọpẹ́ifá's tenure as the president reached a crescendo by making AWAN the leader among other Àwórì social clubs. AWAN is presently the umbrella body for all other Unions and Organs in the struggle for the development of Àwórì. He was involved in the formation of Àwórì National Congress (ANC), the Awori Resource Group (ARG) and indeed co-founded the Indigenous Peoples' Association of Lagos.

Chief Sakariyau Ọpẹ́ifá noted, that his achievement were made possible by all Àwórì leaders in AWAN who never looked back but made use of every opportunity to lift up Àwórì society.

He was full of gratitude for the services each and everyone rendered the association including the General secretaries, Vice-presidents, the treasurers, financial secretaries, the assistant Secretary Generals, the Ọba and chiefs, eminent Àwórì sons and daughters who joined him in the management of the association from 1975 when he took over. Until he joined his ancestors in 2015 at the age of ninety-eight.

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