No Fig Leaves

Contributed by Ray Ekpu
Sunday, 19 July 2009

Alausa can lecture us on the principle of fetish oath-taking, but I cannot swear to any oath that he can lecture us on much else that any self-respecting man would want to hear...

Gbenga Daniel, the embattled governor of Ogun State, had come to Newswatch interview armed with the photograph of a man, stark naked, looking well fed and carrying in the form of a belly something like a pot. In his hand was some whitish stuff which by the escalating controversy is said to be some fetish object he had to hold at some oath- taking ceremony in Ijebu-Igbo, Ogun State. The man’s name is Wale Alausa, chairman of the Ogun State House of Assembly Committee on Water Resources. He is said to be a member of the group in the House called G15 which is at war with Daniel. A few years ago when Chris Uba wanted Chris Ngige, governor of Anambra State, that he said he enthroned to swear to an oath at Okija shrine, it was like a false pregnancy: all signs, no baby. Ngige refused to enter the shrine, refused to avail us of his anatomical endowments, and instead carried with him a huge Bible. The Bible, apparently, was intended to keep at bay the small gods of the shrine. This frustrated Uba and deprived us of the opportunity of seeing a male strip tease show performed by a high calibre politician. At the Daniel interview, I asked the governor to give me Alausa’s photograph. He said he knew I would not publish it. I said I needed it as a souvenir. He laughed it off; little did I know that a day or so later, the Compass newspaper, the efficient echo chamber of Ogun State government, would do it for us. Smack on the front page, it fed us with the imposing photograph of Alausa in fetish nudity. In the laser glare of the public eye he was there; he had made a deal with the devil and had to live with it; no fig leaves to cover his wetin-call. Alausa admitted that it was his photograph that we saw, but that the picture was taken in Daniel’s house, that it was an oath of allegiance to the governor, not an oath of unity and secrecy in the manoeuvring of the G-15 to impeach the governor. He said since he joined the G15, the governor has been pressuring him to backtrack. He tried to make a royal mess of the situation by dragging Oba Sikiru Adetona, the Awujale of Ijebuland, into this cesspit of shame, but the man says his royal fingers are not in this murky pie, that Alausa was telling lies. He called his father, Agboola, as witness, but the old man said: “I want to confirm to the whole world that there was no time that the Awujale asked me, persuaded or compelled my son to go and take an oath from Gbenga Daniel. There is nothing like that.” Alausa said other bla-bla-blas including the fact that he is being victimised by the governor because of his “principled stand” on the N50 billion bond issue. Alausa can lecture us on the principle of fetish oath-taking, but I cannot swear to any oath that he can lecture us on much else that any self-respecting man would want to hear. The way he has spoken, you’d think he has just hacked the jungle with his bare hands or has just circled the globe. A man who stands naked and swears to an oath for whatever reason is not a man to be trusted; he is simply a desperado, someone who wants something, anything, at all costs. I have it on good authority that among Nigerian politicians, fetish oath-taking is routine engagements like drinking water; you do it to collect money, you do it when you drop your CV for a political job, you do it to get sponsorship for an election, you do it to get a contract for which you have to make returns. The oath, I’m told, is often to make you lose your life or lose your first son or both. That way you nail your colours to the mast. This promiscuous invocation of oath is another vulgarisation of politics and governance. We know about the Ghana-must-go syndrome, now this. So if this is a common and rampant practice, can we make a silk purse out of a sow’s ears? The tap of publicity in Ogun State has been running torrentially for several months because of the stand-off between some members of the House of Assembly and the governor. Now Alausa is yukking it up. No one knows how many oaths each politician takes in a lifetime of moving from one political post to another. The oath-taking saga is evidence of two things (a) lack of trust between politicians and (b) the desperation of some politicians to get to office by hook or by crook. This promiscuous engagement can lead to policy atrophy in place of political loyalty which the oath-givers and oath-takers commit themselves to. Alausa can start something new: set up SOP-Society of Oath-taking Politicians, considering that a fraternity like that can be a formidable force if the members enroll in the club by first doing the obvious: taking oaths.