

African Chief Babalawo Adeyela Adelekan Dies at Age 72

Written by Robert ID4354

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African Chief & Member of The National African Religion Congress dies at age 72.

The world of African-based religion is deeply saddened by the death on May 9, 2008 of Chief Babalawo Adeyela Adelekan, Amulewaye Iledi-Ooni Ile Ife, who served as an Executive Board Member for the National African Religion Congress/NARC World International since 1999.

Chief Baba Adelekan was born in Ife on October 15, 1936. His maternal grandfather was the late Araba of Ife, who reigned from 1910 to 1934. (The Araba is the head of all Babalawos worldwide.) Chief Adelekan's father, Chief Laadin, was descended from the Ooni Ilare Quarters, one of the three royal households of Ile-Ife (the ancestral home of the Yoruba). Chief Laadin was fifth in rank to the Ooni.

Chief Adelekan began his training as a Babalawo in 1944 under Oluwo Akoda Akanni the son of the Araba. He also underwent a Western education, unlike many of his predecessors, in order to prepare him for his work as an instructor in Yoruba traditional philosophy outside of Yorubaland. It is on record that Chief Adelekan was born with a green leaf wrapped around a sixth finger on his left hand, which was a sign that he was the reincarnation of his grandfather, Araba Akanni.

Chief Adelekan held four titles: first, "Amulewaye" (he who seizes earth upon entering the world), a title which was conferred by the Council of Elders in Ife, the Ogboni; secondly, the title of "Alatunse Awo" in which capacity Chief Adelekan acts as a moderator of all Babalawos worldwide – this is an office conferred by the present Araba and the council of Babalawos in Ife; thirdly, the title of "Orisa Tunwase" (the Emissary of Obatala) bestowed by the elders of the Obatala temple headed by Chief Obalesu; lastly, the title of "Olumesin Oduduwa" (the Promoter of the Religion) - this title was conferred by the Council of the Oduduwa Temple headed by Chief Obadio.

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Chief Adelekan was a sixteenth-generation Babalawo, who traveled widely outside of Ife for the purpose of instruction and healing, and is celebrated for his knowledge of roots and herbs and his tireless work in healing and in promoting understanding Yoruba religion. He was the founder and patron of Egbe Isese Esin Yoruba (The Root of Yoruba Religion, Science and Cosmology), a society based in London which is a focus for the practice of Yoruba tradition.

Chief Adelekan was a member the National African Religion Congress" Executive Board and was one of NARC's most ardent supporters. As a global proponent of the preservation of African-based religion, Chief Adelekan showed consistent leadership and conviction that the unification of African-based religions is the key to their survival.

Until his health made it impossible, he attended every major NARC conference and major event and was, in spite of ill health, always available to consult with NARC's leadership on policy matters.

His testimony was pivotal to the court's determination, in *Le Peristyle Haitian Sanctuary v. Weaver*, that in a dispute involving spiritual matters in the Voodoo religion, the Court must accept and enforce the decision of a tribunal convened by the National African Religion Congress.

The court determined the issue of the ownership of the shrines was of such a spiritual nature that, under Pennsylvania law, a civil court must give deference to the decision reached by a properly-constituted tribunal of the National African Religion Congress, a recognized spiritual authority, and ordered that the shrines taken from LePeristyle Haitian Sanctuary be immediately returned.

This landmark decision confirmed that practitioners of African-based religions may enforce their own organizational decisions on conflicts involving spiritual issues in American civil courts and is Chief Adelekan's legacy to NARC.

The strength of our organization is a testimony to his steady influence and patient guidance.

His contributions will be sorely missed.

For further information, contact the National African Religion Congress, 5104 N. Broad St., Philadelphia, PA 19141, at 215.455.0815.